

# Giants on the Earth

- <sup>1</sup> When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them,
- <sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.
- <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."
- <sup>4</sup> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

Genesis 6:1-4

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## History of a Controversy

### *A Great Battle*

“So it begins.” Thus says King **Théoden** as the orcs stand ready for war at the walls of **Helm’s Deep**. Sometimes I feel like the passage before us today is the Helm’s Deep of the Bible—the first great exegetical battle over Scripture. To the victor belong the spoils and the right to govern the worldview of Christians regarding the interpretation of many supernatural things in the Bible.

Here is a sampling of the language used to discuss this passage. “Genesis 6:1-4 is one of the most controversial passages in the Bible.”<sup>1</sup> “The four verses of our pericope have generated controversy and many different interpretations.”<sup>2</sup> “There is great controversy over the identification of the phrase ‘the sons of God.’”<sup>3</sup> “Textual Controversy: Mischievous Angels or Sethites?”<sup>4</sup> “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 context is perhaps just as controversial as the [phrase] ... The controversy over the identity of the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘daughters of men’ has implications.”<sup>5</sup>

What is a **controversy**? A controversy is a “disagreement, typically prolonged, public, and heated.” What is the controversy? It is over the interpretation of several words or phrases in **Genesis 6:1-4**: “the sons of God,” “the daughters of

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<sup>1</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, <http://www.angelfire.com/realm3/thetruth77/gen614study.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Willem van Gemeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4 (An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?).” *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1981): 322 [320-348].  
[http://www.godawa.com/chronicles\\_of\\_the\\_Nephilim/Articles\\_By\\_Others/Van%20Gemeren%20-%20The%20Sons%20of%20God%20in%20Gen%206.1-4-Evangelical%20Demythologization.pdf](http://www.godawa.com/chronicles_of_the_Nephilim/Articles_By_Others/Van%20Gemeren%20-%20The%20Sons%20of%20God%20in%20Gen%206.1-4-Evangelical%20Demythologization.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Free Bible Commentary, “Special Topic: ‘The Sons of God’ in Genesis 6,” Bible Lessons International. [http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/special\\_topics/sons\\_of\\_god.html](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/special_topics/sons_of_god.html)

<sup>4</sup> Chuck Missler, “Textual Controversy: Mischievous Angels or Sethites?”, Personal Update News Journal [Aug 1997]. <http://www.khouse.org/articles/1997/110/>

<sup>5</sup> Thomas A. Howe, Ph.D. “Who are the Sons of God in Genesis 6? Part 2: The Tyrants View,” Professor of Bible and Biblical Languages at Southern Evangelical Seminary, 2004: 1. <http://www.richardghowe.com/WhoaretheSonsofGodinGenesis6Pt2.pdf>

men,” “and also afterward,” “Nephilim,” and “men of renown.” That is a lot of storm over four little verses.

In my mind, there are two basic interpretations of this passage, each having their own sub-interpretations. There is a **supernatural interpretation**: the sons of God are heavenly beings, the daughters of men are human women, the Nephilim and men of renown are the same group—gigantic hybrids who were on the earth both prior to and after the flood. How these giants came to be is the subject of the sub-interpretations: angels and women mated, angels somehow manipulated human DNA, and so on.

Then there is the **natural interpretation**: the sons of God are godly male Sethites from the lineage of Seth, the daughters of men are ungodly women from the line of Cain. Together they produced a line of very wicked but perfectly human tyrants, **not physically gigantic**, but spiritually gigantic in their own eyes—tall with pride. They were only on the earth prior to the flood.

There is a **third view**, which some see as distinctly different from the other two, but which I see as being compatible with either a supernatural or natural interpretation. This is the so-called **dynastic ruler view**. It holds that the Nephilim were great rulers and kings of old. Most who hold this view, like the Rabbis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. and later, believe that they were perfectly human. But some who hold it believe that they were the giants and

demigods like **Hercules** or **Gilgamesh** (supernatural fathers/human mothers). There seems to me nothing about a king *per se* that would limit him to one category or the other.

### *A Brief History*

The very brief history of interpretation of this text is that from somewhere in the mid second century as far back as you want to go in Jewish circles and for the first two and a half centuries of church history (or longer than the United States has been a nation), the **only view even known** was the **supernatural view**. Not only is it found dozens of times in different Jewish works, and it was held by the likes of **Justin Martyr; Irenaeus; Athenagoras; Pseudo Clement; Clement of Alexandria; Tertullian; Lactantius; Eusebius; Commodian; Ambrose; Jerome;** and **Sulpicius Severus**.<sup>6</sup>

Sometime near the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., a historian named **Julius Africanus** wrote about an idea that he had heard, probably from the Jews, which said Sethite men were marrying Cainite women. He said this seemed probable to him, but he admitted that it could also be angels. This natural interpretation mentioned by Julius seems to have been invented by Rabbis sometime well after their temple was destroyed, quite possibly because they began losing so many of their people to this sect called Christianity, a religion that taught that a God-man had come claiming to be the Messiah.

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<sup>6</sup> A good summary is Robert C. Newman "The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4." *Grace Theological Journal* 5.1 (1984): 13-36.

It was not until **Augustine** and **Chrysostom** came along at the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that the natural interpretation really gained any traction in the church.<sup>7</sup>

### *A Sharp Tongue: The Weapon of a War*

If you don't know anything about this controversy, you can probably see from these differences why it has been such a heated debate. I mean, heavenly beings and human women? It just seems absurd, perhaps even blasphemous. So **how heated** has this controversy been? Let me use the language that has been used by some of my own personal church heroes of centuries past. Calvin said, “**That 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, Genesis 6:1**).<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther called the supernatural view, “**The silly ideas of the Jews**” (**Martin Luther, Genesis 6:2**).<sup>9</sup> **Theodoret**, a contemporary of Augustine, calls anyone who holds the angelic view “**mad fools**” (**Theodoret, Questions on Genesis: XLVII**). **Chrysostom**

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<sup>7</sup> I deal with all of this in the Introduction of my book *Giants: Sons of the Gods* (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2013).

<sup>8</sup> John Calvin and John King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2010), Gen 6:1.

<sup>9</sup> **Martin Luther**, vol. 2, *Luther's Works, Vol. 2 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 6-14*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, Luther's Works (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), Gen 6:2. In reality, the Sethite interpretation would also be a “silly idea of the Jews” except it would be a newer idea.

seems to border on turning it into an all out war, throwing the whole tradition not only under the bus, but sending those poor run-over souls right into the pit of hell when he says, “[We need to] confute the fanciful interpretations of those people whose every remark is made rashly ... by demonstrating the absurdity of what is said by them ... so that you will not lend your ears idly to people uttering those blasphemies and presuming to speak in a way that brings their own persons into jeopardy” (Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 22.6*).

Every one of these objections to the older view is rooted in the logical fallacy called an *ad hominem*, basically, **name calling**. This is what children do on the playground during recess when they say, “**Your momma wears combat boots.**” Unfortunately, it isn’t an argument, but a cut down, an attempt to win by making the other side look like idiots or even non-Christians.

Augustine is a little different. His basic argument is, “**I could by no means believe that God’s holy angels could at that time have so fallen**” (Augustine, *City of God 15:23*).<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Luther similarly says, “**That anything could be born from [the union of a devil and a human being],<sup>11</sup> this I do not**

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<sup>10</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. II* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 303.

<sup>11</sup> Luther is most likely technically incorrect. The supernatural view is not that devils mated with women, but that the heavenly sons of God did. The early church saw a big difference between these two kinds of creatures. See below.

believe.” In other words, it is just too incredible. I wonder though, if the supernatural view is to be rejected simply because it is incredible, what would happen to the virgin birth, the deity of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, miracles and the resurrection if all theology was accepted or rejected because it is difficult to accept?

### *A Moral Imperative*

Before we start looking at this passage, I want to begin with a moral imperative, something that I believe may in fact be much more important than the interpretation of our passage today. How are we as Christians to deal with such controversies? I’m not talking about a controversy that strikes at the heart of the Christian faith, destroying something essential to the gospel. I’m talking about something that, while important and having far reaching implications for one’s worldview, nevertheless is not a gospel essential (it isn’t even a confessional issue). Both views actually get to the gospel, but neither saves nor damns anyone.

Let me suggest a couple of things. First, using logical fallacies such as name calling and arguments like “I couldn’t believe it” are not befitting the people of God. The latter are not helpful, and the former border on being out and out sinful. I have seen much passion on both sides of this interpretive battle. That can be fine. But not always. I’ve seen an over-zeal that comes when people (myself included) come to a different interpretation than the one they grew up

holding. I've also seen **visceral anger** from some that are quite fine where they are and do not want to be bothered with another opinion. Neither of these reactions are the best for God's people to engage in either. And does not the way we conduct ourselves mean as much, if not more, to the Lord God than what we believe about a thing like this? Yes, doctrine matters, but so too does our behavior, both internally and externally. Our internal behavior keeps us from being fair and objective, our outward behavior can cause us to sin against our brother.

Let me suggest that we **reason together**, that we each look within and think about our own presuppositions, why we hold them so tightly, that we each be willing to fairly examine the evidence (all of which I cannot possibly give in a sermon like this), and that when we come to our own conclusions on a matter, that we hold one other in the highest esteem in the bonds of love, as those for whom Christ has also died and shed his blood. This, it seems to me, may be the most important thing we can take away practically speaking from a controversy such as the one we will now explore together. Otherwise, we may find ourselves behind the wall of Helm's Deep.

## **A Defense of the Supernatural View**

My basic view of **preaching on a topic of controversy** is that if I have an opinion on the matter, I'm going to preach it. I'm not going to preach as, "**Here are the views, go and**

decide for yourself.” I will only do that if I don’t have an opinion. If I believe something, it is because I believe I have reasons for it. I believe those reasons are sound, otherwise I wouldn’t believe it (do you believe something you think is wrong?). Since I believe they are sound, I believe others ought to believe what I believe (do you believe things that you don’t think others should also believe?). So, I’m going to try and persuade you of my position.

Nevertheless, at the same time, because it is not a matter of gospel-salvation, I also want to make sure you know that if you disagree with me at the end of the day, I respect your position, *especially* if you can give reasons for it. I want you to know that if you disagree with me on a matter like this, that I still love and respect you. My hope is that you will offer me that same charity and kindness. As its pastor, this is what I desire our congregation to be known for. Not necessarily how much we believe. Nor how passionately we believe it. But that **we believe things passionately and are still willing to talk about them** with one another, loving one another in Christ-like love with the fruit of the Spirit.

**My view has changed** on this matter over the past half-dozen years or so. I used to hold Augustine’s natural-Sethite interpretation of the two-cities. I now believe this is an error, and hold instead that the older church view was correct. The sons of God are heavenly beings. Let me tell you some reasons why.

## The Language of the Text

The first reason is **linguistic**. There are four main phrases up for grabs in this passage. The first is the “**sons of God**.” This phrase occurs 10 times in the OT, if you count the LXX.

“SONS OF GOD” PASSAGE	HEBREW PHRASE
Genesis 6:2	<i>beney ha-’elohim</i>
Genesis 6:4	
Job 1:6	
Job 2:1	
Job 38:7	
Psalms 29:1	<i>beney ’elim</i>
Psalms 89:6	
Psalms 82:6	<i>beney ’elyon</i>
Deut 32:8	<i>aggelōn theou*</i>
Deut 32:43	<i>uioi theou*</i>
* signifies only found in LXX	

In each case, the phrase means a heavenly being.<sup>12</sup> You can see this best in **Job 38:7**, a creation story that says the sons of God were shouting for joy prior to God creating mankind.

Those who take the Sethite interpretation will say that Israel is sometimes called God’s son (**Ex 4:22**; **Hos 11:1**). This is true enough, but I want to say two things here. First, our phrase is actually a **technical phrase** used outside of Israel, and it always refers to the heavenly divine council, the 70 sons of El who administer the affairs of the cosmos. There is no technical phrase involved in calling Israel his son. Second, this phrase is **always translated as angels by the LXX**, showing

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<sup>12</sup> I realize people dispute this. So I deal with it at length in my Introduction in the Giants book.

that this was the view of those in the early days.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there is absolutely no evidence anywhere in the Bible that “sons of God” means “sons of Seth.” It is never used like this anywhere else. In fact, when you think about it, what sense does it even make to substitute “Seth” for “God?” It says sons of “God,” not “godly sons.” It is a noun, not an adverb.

In a similar fashion, there is absolutely no biblical evidence that “daughters of men” are Cainites. Cain was a man, yes. But there were many more lines of men than just Cain’s. These are the daughters of “men.” Is not Seth a man? Why couldn’t they be Sethites? According to Jewish tradition, Adam had thirty other sons, besides Cain, Abel, and Seth.<sup>14</sup> Given how long he lived and how long they were fertile, that seems reasonable to me. Why couldn’t the daughters of men be those descendents? Aren’t they men too? With all things being equal, each child of Adam having the same number of babies, simply put, the Sethite view only even deals with 6% of all human beings on earth.<sup>15</sup> Yet the next verse says that all human beings had become utterly corrupt (Gen 6:5), and our passage is here partly to

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<sup>13</sup> I do not have time to deal in the sermon with how “angels” and the “sons of God” relate. Basically, the “sons of God” was an early term used in early books of the Bible. “Angel” in those days was a technical term for a messenger, almost always heavenly in origin. By the time the LXX was translated, the term “angel” had become a broad word that could encompass almost any kind of heavenly being. We still use “angel” in this broad sense today.

<sup>14</sup> Life of Adam and Eve 24:3.

<sup>15</sup> 30 other sons divided by 32 sons (not counting Abel) is 6.25%.

demonstrate this and provide justification for exterminating mankind, save Noah and his family.

The final two words are important. The word “**Nephilim**” is surrounded by controversy. What does it mean? Most of your Bibles won’t give an opinion, so they just transliterate the word. Many say it comes from the word *naphal*, meaning “**to fall**.” So Nephilim are “**fallen ones**.” The better ground to stand on here is that Nephilim means “giant.”<sup>16</sup> This is how the LXX, Vulgate, and Aramaic Targums all translate the word, and it is the only way to account for the alternate spelling of the word in the Hebrew of **Numbers 13:33**. In that passage, it is very clear that the Nephilim are giants.

The “**mighty heroes of old**” are the Nephilim. The LXX translates both words as *gigantes*. This is introduced here because in a few chapters, the first of these mighty heroes, a fellow named Nimrod, will be discussed. At any rate, the linguistic evidence for the Sethite view is scant to completely absent in my estimation.

### *NT Interpretation*

The second reason I hold my view is **historical**. To me, this is even more powerful, in fact was the final nail in the

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<sup>16</sup> This view is proposed by **H. Gunkel**, *Genesis* (Göttingen, 1910), 58-59, and elaborated on by Michael Heiser, *The Myth That Is True* (unpublished), 79-83. Heiser interacts with a recent objection to his view here: <http://michaelsheiser.com/TheNakedBible/2013/03/thoughts-Nephilim-answering-criticism/>

coffin for me personally holding the natural interpretation. This history is both outside and inside of the Bible. [Outside the Bible](#), this view of the sons of God is exactly what Israel's neighbors believed, using in fact the exact same phrase to talk about the heavenly beings of the divine council. They did not believe that the sons of God were humans. Neither does the OT.

The [biblical history](#) is much more important. It circles around the books of [2 Peter and Jude](#). Again, the supernatural view is the only known view of our text at the time of the NT. If the NT differs, it goes against all known interpretation for 250 years in both directions, with the exception of those Rabbis in the second century A.D. that I mentioned earlier.

The NT speaks directly to these verses. [2 Peter 2:4](#) says, “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (*tartarus*) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment...” Some commentators will say that Peter is referring to the initial fall of the angels when Satan fell. This is problematic for three reasons. First, we don't know that a host of angels fell with Satan. Second, Peter uses the unique word *tartarus* for “hell.” Tartarus has only one use in the ancient world. It is the place where God bound the angels who fell in the Gigantomachy (the Greek equivalent of the supernatural interpretation of our passage). Here is Hesiod on the matter:

Among the foremost Cottus and Briareos and Gyes<sup>17</sup> insatiate for war raised fierce fighting: three hundred rocks, one upon another, they launched from their strong hands and overshadowed the Titans with their missiles, and buried them beneath the wise-pathed earth, and bound them in bitter chains when they had conquered them by their strength for all their great spirit, as far beneath the earth to Tartarus.

(Hesiod, *Theogony* 313-320)

Third, and most importantly, Peter has in mind the book of **Jude**. Jude and 2 Peter parallel one another in remarkable ways. Jude says, “And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day-- (**Jude 1:6**).

Here is where I want to return to Genesis 5 for a moment, and the person of **Enoch**. It says that Enoch did not die, but was translated (**Gen 5:24**). Presumably, he was taken to heaven. Later in his epistle, Jude quotes Enoch, saying that Enoch prophesied before the flood (**Jude 14-15**). These words of Enoch were remembered for generations by Jews, until they were finally put into writing in the book we know as 1 Enoch.

Now, 1 Enoch is not in our Bible, and most Christians do not consider it to be inspired.<sup>18</sup> The reason Augustine gave for

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<sup>17</sup> Giants of incredible strength and ferocity, even superior to that of the **Titans**.

<sup>18</sup> The Coptic Ethiopian church is the one exception in our day. A few church Fathers such as Tertullian also believed it was inspired.

why is that it was *too old* to trust (*City of God* 15:23). That is, we couldn't be sure that words not from Enoch were added, and in fact, in certain parts later in the book, this seems to be the case. Nevertheless, Jude says the words of Enoch are recorded here.

What is important is that throughout his tiny letter, Jesus' half-brother quotes or alludes to the book of 1 Enoch *almost a dozen times*. These are *always* favorable. Considering that the letter is only 25 verses long, one could almost call Jude the "*Little Enoch*." He clearly holds this book in very high esteem. I believe, based on this, that we should treat 1 Enoch much like Reformed Christians treat Calvin: In very high esteem, certainly capable of telling us truth and giving us actual history like any other book, but not holy Scripture.

SOME OF JUDE'S ALLUSIONS TO 1 ENOCH			
JUDE	1 ENOCH		
Jude 6	"The angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling."	"[The angels] have abandoned the high heaven, the holy eternal place."	1 En 12:4
	"until the judgment of the great day"	"preserved for the day of suffering"	1 En 45:2 (1 En 10:6)
	"angels ... kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness"	"this is the prison of the angels, and here they will be imprisoned forever"	1 En 21:10 (1 En 10:4)
Jude 12	"waterless clouds"	"every cloud ... rain shall be withheld"	1 En 100:11
	"raging waves"	"ships tossed to and fro by the waves"	1 En 101:2
	"fruitless trees"	"fruit of the trees shall be withheld"	1 En 80:3
Jude 13	"wandering stars"	"stars that transgress the order"	1 En 80:6
	"the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever"	"darkness shall be their dwelling"	1 En 46:6
Jude 14	"Enoch the seventh from Adam"	"my grandfather [Enoch] ... seventh"	1 En 60:8

<p>Jude 14-15</p>	<p>... saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones,<sup>15</sup> to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly</p> <p>of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."</p>	<p>from Adam"</p> <p>"And behold! He comes with ten thousands of His holy ones To execute judgment upon all, and he will destroy all the ungodly, and convict all flesh about all works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed,</p> <p>And of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.</p>	<p>1 En 1:9</p>
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Why is Jude's treatment of 1 Enoch important? It is because when Jude makes this comment about angels, he does so in the context of a book that spends chapter after chapter explaining our very passage, explicitly telling us that the sons of God are heavenly beings and that the Nephilim are demi-gods and giants. To me, it is absurd to think that Jude would favorably cite or allude to 1 Enoch almost a dozen times in 25 verses,<sup>19</sup> and yet at this one point, the most basic point of 1 Enoch, he would give a view that goes directly against it without even telling us that he is doing so. As I said, when I realized these things about 2 Peter and Jude, that was the nail in the coffin for me, because I can't find an honest way to get

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<sup>19</sup> In fact, the book of 1 Enoch seems to be alluded to throughout the NT. I have three books that each give various cross references between certain NT verses and corresponding verses in 1 Enoch. These are Steve Delamarter, *A Scripture Index to Charlesworth's The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2002); Craig Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 1992), 190-219; Ronald K. Brown, *The Book of Enoch: Second Edition* (San Antonio, TX: Guadalupe Baptist Theological Seminary Press, 2000).

around that fact that these two NT books are talking about Genesis 6:1-4, and I believe as Holy Scripture that they are inspired by God. Thus, I am compelled to believe the supernatural view, even though it seems bizarre.

## Why is this Passage Here?

So that is the controversy, and that is my position. For the last section of this sermon, I want to ask the question of why this passage is here, and then how it contributes to our understanding of the gospel, even though it, in fact, is not good news but bad news. So [why is it here?](#)

When we consider what comes before it and after it, in some ways, it seems out of place. However, it does serve both the immediate context and the larger context of the whole OT going right on into the NT. As for the [immediate context](#), we should look at the last verse of Genesis 5. It says, “[After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth](#)” ([Gen 5:32](#)). This introduces us to the hero of the flood story, if we can call Noah a hero. In contrast, this story shows how everyone but Noah became [polluted](#). If the daughters of men really could include any and every lineage from Adam, as I believe, then we see that the corruption that spread to mankind, both of their own prerogative and angelic initiative, was indeed universal. Rather than a mere 6% of the population from the lines of Seth and Cain, everyone is involved.

Furthermore, the kind of pollution involved here is almost unthinkable. It is a pollution of the very meaning of what constitutes a human being. The idea of a Nephilim is that it is not fully human. Using Genesis 1 language (which is part of the larger context), it is a **pollution of the kinds**. To put it bluntly, human beings were ceasing to be human beings.

There is a frightening parallel to this going on in the minds of mad scientists today in the form of something known as **Transhumanism**. According to the Wiki, Transhumanism is “an international cultural and intellectual movement with an eventual goal of fundamentally transforming the human condition by developing and making widely available technologies to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.” It sounds wonderful, until you consider the dark side portrayed by movies like **The Island of Dr. Moreau** or **Splice**. It sounds like science fiction, until you realize that we have fully mapped the human genome. Basically, these guys are now tinkering with DNA. We already have **state laws** on the books outlawing animal hybridization, *because we actually have the scientific know-how to make animal hybrids*. These guys want to do the same thing to human beings. Consider this the idea behind the supernatural view of Genesis 6:1-4, only it occurred at the hands of heavenly beings that have been around a lot longer and have an intellect that far outstrips that

of the human being. As we will see next week, on the supernatural reading, this seems to be the idea behind telling us that Noah was “perfect” in his “generations” (Gen 6:9). This would refer not to moral perfection (have you read the story of Noah and the vineyard immediately after the fall?), but to biological purity.

## How This Helps our View of the Gospel

So how does this passage fit into our view of the gospel? First, let me say something about the natural interpretation of Augustine. I will say up front that I think Augustine had **the best of intentions** in giving his proposal that the sons of God are Sethites and that the problem was basically Christians marrying non-Christians. His idea that there is a godly line that was being mixed through these marriages does point us to election and God’s choice to preserve a line through which Christ would come. He was very concerned with two-cities, and making sure that we understand how these interact and how they are to remain distinct for Christians. That was his context, but he seems to have read his context into the text. As we saw last week (in Genesis 5), I believe the essential theology of a godly line and a wicked line is basically correct. I’m not fully convinced about all of the particulars, but the basic idea is biblical follows from Genesis 4-5.

It was out of this context and a zeal for the two cities that Augustine read Genesis 6:1-4. **His concern is pastoral.** God wiped out the whole world because Christians were not

keeping themselves separate from the world. Who can blame Augustine for that? The problem is, I'm personally convinced that Genesis 6:1-4 is just not talking about this. Rather, its context comes from something earlier.

I heard a defense of the Sethite view which said there is nothing supernatural in the entire Bible up to **Genesis 6:1-4**. So all of the sudden, out of the blue, with no warning or prior foreshadowing, I'm just supposed to accept that angels are meant in this passage? When I heard this, I was struck by **Genesis 3**, because I know this pastor believes in **Satan**. Isn't he a supernatural being? And then, aren't there **two cherubim** that are guarding the gates of Eden? Don't forget the LORD himself walking around. The whole of Genesis 3 teaches that many supernatural beings were walking around on earth in the paradise of God.

Then there is that promise that God gave to Eve: **She would have a Seed who would crush the head of the serpent**. But the serpent would also have a seed. As we saw, spiritually speaking **Satan** had a seed. His name was Cain, and this is part of the purpose of **Genesis 4**, to show what happens when people spiritually belong to the devil.

But to be consistent, if Eve's seed is physical and biological, it would make sense that Satan would also have a physical and biological seed. I believe this is exactly what the story of the Nephilim is. It introduces us to a lineage that not only was partially responsible for the Flood, but which will

also play a major role in the rest of the story of Genesis, *and beyond*.

And I believe this strikes at the heart of Satan's anger and futile plan to overthrow the prophecy. "If God is going to have a seed from the woman, then I will ensure that there are no women left that can have a seed." And so he corrupts the human line through the daughters of men. That way, Messiah cannot come. Satan cannot be defeated. This idea fits the context of the supernatural of Genesis 3 and the "kinds" that play such a prominent role in Genesis 1 and again in Genesis 7 when God brings the kinds into the ark. It makes sense of the NT's interpretation, and of the great story of the Bible—the coming seed of Christ. It makes sense of why God would elect Noah and preserve his line all the way to the NT.

In fact, this allows us to see a golden thread of the Bible, a supernatural war that God is waging through his chosen people that almost all commentaries miss. It will begin with Abraham and the giant wars of Genesis 14. It will continue on with Esau and Jacob and Judah and Moses and especially Joshua and David. You find it also with Saul and Balaam and even Esther. You find it in the prophets: Isaiah, Amos, Ezekiel, and Daniel. This war will finally culminate in none other than a war that Jesus Christ himself will wage in both his life and his death on the cross.

This war involves both the demons of Jesus' earthly ministry and the heavenly beings that he conquers in his

death, resurrection, and ascension. Do you remember last week that I told you about Hesiod who believed that the Heroes before the flood became the demons? Well, this was the same view of the early Jews and Christians. In fact, this view was taught throughout the ancient world in one form or another. Somehow, this became a stock belief of ancient peoples. Justin Martyr and Eusebius are good examples of how the early church thought. Justin says, “But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons” (Justin Martyr, *2 Apology* 5). “For one might say that these daemons are those giants [Gen 6:4], and that their spirits have been deified by the subsequent generations of men, and that their battles, and their quarrels among themselves, and their wars are the subjects of these legends that are told as of gods” (Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 5.4).

As for the heavenly beings, the Scripture tells us that because of his great work, Christ is now “above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named” (Eph 1:21). This was God’s plan all along, a secret unveiled only after the fact. For it says, “None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8). 1 Peter even uses the story of the flood to teach us about Christ’s great work and concludes that Christ, “Has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and

powers having been subjected to him” (1 Pet 3:22; cf. vv. 18-21 for context).

But there is one final thing to say. The NT uses our passage very specifically, as a warning to us today. Both Jude and Peter use this passage along with Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning against sexual immorality, for they understand that supernatural beings can be involved in the sexual sins of mankind, tempting us and even being lured by us in a kind of evil erotic dance from hell. This is why it says, in my opinion, that a “wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (1 Cor 11:10). We have no idea what kinds of things we are messing around with in sexual sin. As bad as it is for us, it also brings the very heavens and pits of hell into the mix. Do you think you have the power to fight both them and yourself?

Then our passage is used as a warning by Jude to keep us under the authority of Christ, not forsaking authority which is the cause of so much disruption in the churches. As it also says, there are angels over the seven churches, and some have become the very synagogues of Satan. This is supernatural language involving these beings, is it not? We must watch ourselves, lest we pervert or disregard God’s authority structure in the churches, as angels did, as Korah did, as Satan did with the body of Moses.

Each of the sins listed in Jude and 2 Peter contribute to this supernatural uprising, as well as to the uprising of

wickedness in our own hearts. Beloved, there is a supernatural world, and it is tied to this world in ways that we cannot possibly imagine. The Scripture is clear about it. Beware and open your eyes. But most of all, trust in Christ who has overcome the devil. He is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.