

## The Rebellion of Man

### I. The Fall of Man

#### A. The Command

1. “The unit provides a perfect test case for the subject of temptation, for the disobedience cannot be blamed on the environment, and certainly not on heredity.” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 130.)
2. The command that God gave Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 gave Adam great freedom of choice, for He only forbade eating from one of all the trees. God’s command implies that He alone knows what is good and not good for man. By giving Adam a choice, however, the text makes it clear that mankind has free will either to obey or disobey God; this gift is given to no other creature.
3. God has to offer a choice in order to truly allow for free will, which provides mankind with the ability to truly love God (or not). Without choice man would love and obey God because he had been programmed to do so. Since he has the ability to disobey God, then when he chooses to obey, despite the alternative, this shows he loves God out of his own desire and ability. Thus, because God desires to have a genuine relationship with man, He chooses to take the risk of sin entering His creation in order to have that relationship.
4. There is nothing evil about the tree itself; rather, the title “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” describes what will be the result of such a disobedient act against God. There is no sin or evil in eating of the tree; rather, the sin or evil is in the act of violating God’s command. Having the knowledge of good and evil is not an evil thing, for God states in Genesis 3:22 that He and the angels have this knowledge. What makes this knowledge wrong is the desire to take it—immediately and through one’s own initiative rather than obtaining knowledge gradually through a dependent relationship with God. God’s desire was for Adam and Eve to grow into an understanding of wisdom (knowledge of good and evil) through a relationship with Him. The test was whether they would achieve this wisdom under God’s teaching or by their own means.
5. God makes it very clear that the consequence for disobeying Him is death. In Genesis 2:17 the Hebrew literally says, “...dying you will die.” This construction emphasizes the certainty of the death if they disobey. Though the death mentioned here includes physical death, the emphasis is on their spiritual death, which is a separation from God relationally. The basic idea seems to be more of separation rather than annihilation.
6. “On the whole it seems probable that we should understand ‘death’ to mean a spiritual state, but a state aptly symbolized by physical death. When man sinned he passed into a new state, one dominated by, and at the same time symbolized by death. It is likely that spiritual death and physical death are not being thought of as separate, so that the one involves the other.” (Leon Morris, *The Wages of Sin*, p. 10.)
7. “Before Adam and Eve fell into sin, God made a proposition to them that some have regarded as a covenant, as stated in Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:16-17. God gave Adam authority over the creatures of the world, commanded him to be fruitful, and gave him permission to eat from every green plant. The only restriction was that Adam and Eve not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if they did so they would

surely die (2:16-17). Basically, the covenant was conditional, requiring obedience; but it also declared God's purpose to elevate humanity to a place of authority and prominence, ultimately fulfilled by Christ.” (John F. Walvoord, “The New Covenant,” *Skillfulness of Hands*, pp. 187-88.)

## **B. The Temptation and Sin**

1. The test is to see if Adam and Eve will grow willingly into the kingship and wisdom that God has purposed for them through their obedient relationship with Him or will seek to gain this by their own means.
2. The best guess for the allowance of Satan into the garden is that, due to the perfect nature of Adam and Eve and the perfect environment in which they live, there needs to be a test in order to determine which choice they will make; thus, there needs to be an influence that is less than perfect.
3. Though Genesis 3 does not specifically declare that Satan is the one behind the serpent, we can conclude from the context that this is so. It is clear that the serpent is not just an evil snake that can talk since Yahweh had pronounced all of the animals as good (1:25), and nothing in the text suggests a corruption of His creation before this point. The conclusion is that the serpent is an evil being from outside of creation.
4. Some have suggested that the serpent was literally Satan, but this does not seem likely in light of 3:1 and 14 where he is called a beast of the field and is judged as a snake. Most likely, the tempter was Satan who possessed and controlled a literal snake just as he did with demoniacs in Jesus’ day. The author is not specific on this matter because this would be understood by the original audience, and the author is not as concerned with the snake’s nature as he is with what it says. Notice that Genesis does not explain the *origins* of evil in the universe but how it *entered God’s creation and humanity*.
5. The fact that the serpent can speak indicates that there is something unusual going on. The serpent also shows an uncharacteristic malevolence of purpose toward Yahweh and His creation, which is not found anywhere else in a text that paints an otherwise perfect garden in harmony with God. Likewise, Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3 makes the connection between the serpent and Satan.
6. We learn from the words and actions of the serpent that Satan works in a very cunning, manipulative, and deceitful way to undermine the character of Yahweh and the obedience of His people. His sole intent is to separate mankind from Yahweh by suggesting an alternate understanding of what Yahweh said and intends for mankind, all the while deceiving the individual into thinking that it is the best for himself. The Word of the Lord brought life and order, but here the serpent brought death and chaos.
7. In Genesis 3:1 the word “shrewd” (NET), “crafty (NIV, NASB), or “subtle” (RSV) in the Hebrew means “wise,” not wicked. In a negative sense it is understood as “cunning” (Job 5:12; 15:5) and in a positive sense as “prudent” (Prov. 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12). Jesus himself tells us to be shrewd like serpents (Matt. 10:16). Eve’s sin was more an act of great folly than wickedness since she already had all the good she needed – but she wanted more. There is a word play between the words “naked” (2:25) and “shrewd” (3:1). Adam and Eve are seen as vulnerable and open to the serpent’s attack. At the beginning they are naked and he is shrewd; afterward, they will be covered and he will be cursed.

8. Eve was vulnerable to Satan's suggestion because she distorted the word of God (see Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 134):
  - She minimized the provision of the Lord. The Lord said, "You may freely eat," whereas Eve said, "We may eat."
  - She added to the prohibition. The Lord said nothing about not being able to touch the tree, yet Eve adds, "Neither shall you touch it."
  - She weakened the penalty for sin. The Lord said, "You will surely die," but Eve said, "...lest you die."
9. "It is interesting that three times the Word of the Lord is quoted, but never appropriately: once it is questioned in a misleading way, once it is paraphrased with major changes, and once it is flatly denied." (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 132.)
10. Everything you need to know about Satan's character and how he works can be found in the dialogue of Genesis 3. "The serpent said to the woman, 'Surely you will not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil.'"
11. First, he questions the command of God and creates doubt in the mind of the woman. Her subsequent weakening of the command makes the appeal to sin stronger. This then makes the serpent's denial of the penalty of death easier (notice that his words are more accurate). He then attacks the character of God by suggesting that He is keeping something good from the woman. He turns God's command into a question, doubting His sincerity and defaming His motives. By raising doubts around God's integrity, her disobedience seems justified. Finally he tells her that she can do a better job of taking care of her life and achieving happiness on her own—in essence, that she can become her own god. This theme will show up over and over throughout the Bible.
12. "What Satan said about Eve's being as God was a half-truth. Ironically she was already as God having been made in His image (1:26). She did become like God in that she obtained a greater knowledge of good and evil by eating of the tree. However, she became less like God because she was no longer innocent of sin. Her relationship with God suffered. Though she remained like God she could no longer be with Him. The consequent separation from God is the essence of death (2:17)." (Thomas Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, p. 49.)
13. Eve's desire to be like God was not a sinful desire for this was God's desire for her as well. What made the desire to be like God evil was that she chose to seek it in a way contrary to the will of God. The sin committed by Adam and Eve was in their violation of God's command, not in their eating from the tree. By taking of the fruit of the tree, Adam and Eve showed that they were not willing to be dependent on God but desired instead to obtain this knowledge on their own and now!
14. Satan's desire is to keep you from learning and understanding the Word of God and His truth, and into that which you have learned and understood, he sows doubt as to the interpretation of what it means. He uses the mystery of God and the fact that there is so much that we do not understand to cause us to doubt whether God has our best intentions in mind or if He is really even there. And ultimately, it is our pride that causes our downfall. Every time we sin, we are either saying that we do not think God

- is able to care of my life, that He does not care about my life, or that my way is better (because I can be my own god).
15. All three avenues of fleshly temptation are present in Genesis 3:6:
    - She saw that the tree was “good for food” (the lust of the flesh: the desire to *do* something contrary to God's will, i.e., eat the tasty fruit).
    - It was a “delight to the eyes” (the lust of the eyes: the desire to *have* something apart from God's will, i.e., possess the beautiful fruit).
    - It was “desirable to make one wise” (the pride of life: the desire to *be* something apart from God's will, i.e., as wise as God).
  16. Notice that verse 3:6 states that Adam was there with her; whether he was there the whole time or showed up later is not clear. However, the story does show that he did not need clever words; rather, he went along with the sin without any thought. All throughout Scripture the sin in the garden is referred to as the sin of Adam. Adam takes the blame for the sin because he was appointed theocratic administrator and head of the family, yet he failed to rule properly and protect his wife from harm.
  17. 1 Timothy 2:14 states that Eve was deceived; however, Adam was not deceived because he sinned with his eyes wide open. This does not mean that Eve was weaker and more open to the temptation; nowhere in Scripture is this suggested. Satan most likely approached her since she probably received the command from her husband and not directly from God, so it would have been easier for Satan to twist God’s words.
  18. “Sin consists of an illicit reach of unbelief, an assertion of human autonomy to know morality apart for God. The creature must live by faith in God’s word, not by a professed self sufficiency of knowledge (Deut. 8:3; Ps. 19:7-9; Ezk. 28:6, 15-17).” (Bruce Waltke. *Genesis: A Commentary*, p. 87.)
  19. “It is because ‘Yahweh Elohim’ expresses so strongly the basic OT convictions about God's being both creator and Israel's covenant partner that the serpent and the woman avoid the term in their discussion. The god they are talking about is malevolent, secretive, and concerned to restrict man: his character is so different from that of Yahweh Elohim that the narrative pointedly avoids the name in the dialogue of 3:1-5.” (Gordan J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 57.)
  20. It is important to understand that Adam and Eve’s sin was not a sin against their neighbor but against God. It was not a social sin, which means that the problem of sin cannot be fixed by social reform and humanitarian efforts. Even if we could make people better this way, people and societies may seem “better” when compared to others, but compared to God’s righteousness they are still wretched sinners. The only solution to sin is one that comes from God, since He is the offended, and not through humanitarian efforts.
  21. What is primordial is the goodness of the world and humanity. What is radically intrusive is the evil that humanity becomes through the fall. Genesis 3 is not a story of a fall but of a separation and a drive to try it alone. Yahweh, the Creator of a good humanity, is not held responsible for the occurrence of evil in the world.

### C. The Effects of the Sin

1. When Eve noticed the tree, she saw that it was good, attractive, and desirable; the thought of evil was nowhere in her thoughts. Yet when she and Adam eat, the knowledge of evil is overwhelming.
2. The fact that they feel ashamed not only carries the idea that they are ashamed of what they have done but also of who they are and of being discovered. They notice that they are different in a new sense that makes them uncomfortable. They now have obtained a low self-esteem and a sense of fear. From this point on mankind will strive to overcome these by seeking acceptance and security in ways outside of God's perfect will.
3. After they sinned, rather than turning to God who has already proven Himself as more faithful and loving than the god they just obeyed, their first instinct was to try to change their condition by their own efforts (Gen. 3:7). They are still trying to be their own god, even knowing the first attempt failed. Instead of turning to God, they hid from God out of fear (3:8, 10). They now see Him as the God Satan described not as God revealed Himself.
4. In Genesis 3:9 God is not to be seen as ignorant of His creation when He called out to them saying, "Where are you?" Rather, God is drawing them out—wanting them to confess their sin to demonstrate their desire to be in a right relationship with Him. This is similar to a father who knows his son has been at a friend's house drinking, and when the son returns home, the father asks, "Where have you been?" The father already knows the answer; he just wants the son to respect and love him enough to tell him the truth on his own.
5. When questioned by God, they immediately passed the blame rather than confessing and seeking forgiveness. The fact that Adam viewed God's gift to him (the woman) as the source of his trouble shows how far he had fallen. He basically accuses God of causing him to fall because God had given him Eve.
6. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God to represent Him as regents over the creation, yet in their giving in to the tempter they surrender that authority and power to him. No longer will man have dominion and power over the creation; rather, Satan becomes the new ruler over this world because man submitted to him (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Matt. 12:24; 16:21-31; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

### D. The Consequences

1. As the result of man's disobedience to God, the creation suffered a curse and began to deteriorate. Having been thrice blessed by God (1:22, 28; 2:3), the creation now experienced a triple curse (3:14, 17; 4:11). Because there is no longer a perfect ruler exercising dominion over the earth, creation will now exist in chaos.
2. The only time the word "curse" is used here is over the serpent, from which the Lord did not seek a confession. Genesis 3:14 appears to bring a curse on the animal as a constant reminder of the event, but verse 15 suggests that the force behind the animal would perpetuate the struggle that took place in the garden. (See Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 145.)
3. The fact that God causes the serpent to crawl on his belly and eat dust is symbolic of how despised and low he will be made (Ps. 72:9; Isa. 49:23; 65:25; Mic. 7:17). How

- literally we can take this and how it directly applies to the snake and Satan are not clear. Since Satan is the prince of this world now, this may be yet to be completely fulfilled.
4. There will also be antagonism between the man and the serpent. This is not only true of the animal but certainly of Satan in our spiritual warfare with him.
  5. In Genesis 3:15 the Hebrew word translated “offspring” is a collective singular. This does not refer to a specific offspring, rather to humanity as a whole and to all the offspring of the serpent (see Gen. 16:10; 22:17; 24:60 for other examples of singular verbs used in the collective sense).
  6. It has been understood that man’s offspring will “crush” the serpent’s head and the serpent will “strike” or “bruise” the man’s heel. However, the Hebrew uses the same word for both of these translations, which is “attack” or “bruise” in both cases (see the NET, NASB, RSV). Both of these are *fatal* blows. For a man to attack a serpent’s head is fatal, and for a venomous serpent to attack a man’s heel, pre-hospitals and antibiotics, is fatal as well. Death will continually be dealt out and spread by both the man and the serpent because of sin. The immediate seed of the woman is Cain, and then all humanity. By the New Testament period, the seed is all those who reject the Lord and oppose His kingdom (Jn. 8:44).
  7. This is not a prophecy of hope for Jesus; rather, God is giving the consequences for their sin. There will be an ongoing struggle between humanity and the serpent. Hope and restoration do not fit the context of this section and do not come until Genesis 3:20. Notice that the man’s attack against the serpent is mentioned first; if this were a prophecy of Jesus, most likely the man’s attack would be the conclusion rather than the serpent’s attack.
  8. For the woman, God states that her pain in childbirth will be increased tremendously. The word for “pain” entails emotional as well as physical suffering (1 Peter 3:7). Rather than new life coming easily, it will be introduced into the world through great distress.
  9. In Genesis 3:16 the sentence “your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (NIV, NASB, RSV) should be translated “You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you.” She will no longer be satisfied with the man as the head of the family but will seek to dominate the relationship. The word “desire” here should be understood as a prompting to do evil. In return, instead of being the head of the family in a sacrificial, loving sense, the husband will return with a tendency to dominate her. “The woman at her worst would be a nemesis to the man, and the man at his worst would dominate the woman.” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 147.) Not only has sin marred man’s relationship with God, it has created a rift between the two who should become as one (Gen. 2:24).
  10. For the man the blessings of life will no longer come naturally. The land will no longer produce fruit freely; rather, man will now have to toil just to maintain *survival*, let alone gaining anything on top of that, because of the land being cursed. The headship of Adam is also seen in the fall, for though it was Eve who sinned first it was Adam who is held responsible for both his and her actions (Hos. 6:7; Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22).
  11. Genesis 3:22 shows that man’s happiness does not consist in being *like* God but in being *with* God. Where once they experienced unbroken fellowship with God, they are now cast out of His presence. Likewise they no longer have access to the Tree of Life,

- which granted immortality. It is ironic that the very thing Satan promised to them is the very thing that they lost.
12. “Eating from one tree kept the humans from eating from the other; or if we say it in terms of spiritual reality behind the story, when the human beings disobeyed God and experienced evil, they were prevented from living on perpetually in that state.” (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*, p. 142.)
  13. Man will no longer experience physical immortality; rather, he will experience death and the painful separation of his body and spirit. He will return to the dust and become the serpent’s prey once again (Gen. 3:15).
  14. Adam and Eve did not die immediately in the sense that Satan said that they would, but they did experience death in the following three ways, which will be developed more fully throughout scripture:
    - Physical—separation of the body and soul (material and immaterial parts of the person)
    - Spiritual—separation of humanity from God
    - Eternal—permanent separation of humanity from God
  15. The first verse of chapter 5 says, “This is the written account of Adam’s line.” The chapter then lists Adam’s descendants, and after each name it states, “And then he died.” Other than right after the flood, this phrase is not seen connected to a genealogy anywhere else in scripture. This phrase emphasizes here the consequences of the fall on Adam’s descendants and the fact that God spoke truthfully.
  16. However, there is mercy here as well. By being excluded from the Tree of Life, they would not have to live eternally in that state of sin as well. “God’s response to human grasping is exile from paradise, which is at the same time a merciful act that prevents His deluded creatures from obtaining eternal life in sin and thus joining the ranks of the devils, condemned forever. By placing the cherubim, celestial guardians, at the gate of Eden, the author makes clear that the way back to paradise is not through the heavens or the ‘sons of God’ but by the dust of the earth and the reproduction of offspring as an inheritance.” (Stephen F. Noll. *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan and Principalities*, p. 55.)

#### **E. Image Defaced, Not Erased**

1. Though the image as God in mankind was corrupted and marred by sin, and though he lost his dominion over the earth, he did not lose completely the image as God. Certain biblical texts suggest that all persons still exist in the image as God, while other texts treat the image as something that needs to be restored through salvation. Gen. 9:6 and James 3:9 show that the image is still present even in man’s fallen state.
2. By contrast, other New Testament texts seem to treat the image of God as something that is exemplified in Christ (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) and that needs to be restored in people (Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). The need for renewal implies that the image was not lost but defaced or damaged in some way through the fall.
3. “If the glory has been lost, then what has been retained? There is apparently something to be said for the capacity to demonstrate God’s likeness even when that

capacity is not fully realized. Unbelievers retain the ability to make moral decisions (even if they continue to make them wrongly). In the same way, their bodies, though fallen, still give testimony to the Creator who designed people to reflect His glory. Likewise, all persons retain the capacity to rule as God's vice-regents in spite of the fact we committed mutiny through sin, essentially transferring our allegiance to another god (2 Cor. 4:4). In short, though sin prevents us from fully demonstrating God's likeness, something special remains about people. We were made in the image of God." (Robert A. Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, p. 67.)

## F. Restoration

1. Notice in Genesis 3:9 it is God who seeks out Adam and Eve. He takes the initiative to reestablish a relationship with them. Genesis 3:21 shows that despite the debacle they have created, it is God who makes provision for their sin. Through the slaughter of the animal He not only provides forgiveness through the blood, but He also provides acceptance and safety through the animal's skins. The fact that God provides clothing for Adam and Eve out of animal skins shows that He made on their behalf a sacrifice that will cover their sin. Likewise, His means are superior and more effective than the clothing that they tried to create.
2. Ironically, the fact that man will die is seen as a hope for man, who will not have to live in the state of sin forever—death will be a release. With the death of the corrupted spirit and body comes the potential for re-birth, which will be developed later in the Bible.
3. In chapter 4 Adam names his wife, and she names her children. From this we can see an acceptance of the consequences, a renewed faith in God, and a hope for the future. Adam names his wife Eve, which means "the mother of all living."
4. "Man's dignity rests in God who assigns an inestimable worth to every person. Man's origin is not an accident, but a profoundly intelligent act by One who has eternal value; by One who stamps His own image on each person. God creates men and moves heaven and earth to redeem them when they fall. Our origin is in creation and our destiny is for redemption. Between these points every human heartbeat has value." (R. C. Sproul, *In Search of Dignity*, p. 94.)

## II. The Rebellion of Humanity

### A. Cain and Lamech

1. The major theme of Genesis 4 is the spread of sin from the family to society. This is not how sin spread literally; rather, this is how it is developed in the narrative to show its effects. Through Cain's rebellion and his subsequent establishment of a city—which leads to the development of the nations—we can see that sin was not exclusive to just one line or a few people.
2. Cain shows through both his lack of desire to give God his best and his jealousy of his brother that he does not serve God out of love but because he feels obligated. His view of God is the same view of which Satan convinced Eve when he got her to doubt God. The fact that the person is mentioned before the offering in Genesis 4:3-4 suggests that the offering is not as important as the attitude of the person.

3. As with Adam and Eve it is the Lord who initiates a relationship with Cain in hopes of restoring Cain to Himself (Gen. 4:6-7). The Lord approaches Cain because He knows what Cain is planning and does not want Cain to make that mistake. These verses show that the Lord is involved in Cain's life even if Cain chooses not to follow Him. While Eve had to be talked into her sin, even the Lord could not talk Cain out of his intended sin, which shows the true heart of Cain and the depth of corruption with which sin had infected humanity so early in its growth.
4. In Genesis 4:7 the statement "sin is crouching at the door" is an allusion to the seed of the woman and the serpent (3:15) in conflict. The participle "crouching" is a cognate to an Akkadian term used of a type of demon, "sin is the demon at your door." "It desires to have you, but you must master it," in comparison to the oracle of God to the woman in 3:16, clearly shows that the Lord was warning Cain by reminding him of the fatal outcome of the earlier conflict.
5. Cain's self-focus and his refusal to heed God's warning before his murder of Abel shows that he viewed himself as a higher authority over his life than God. Cain decided that it was he who knew better and would thus take matters into his own hands.
6. Despite Cain's horrific sin the Lord shows His desire for a relationship in that He seeks Cain out in order to prompt a confession, just as He did with Adam and Eve. Though Cain suffers the consequences for his sin, God makes provisions for him to be protected by marking him as untouchable (Gen. 4:15). What Cain did to Abel God prevents from happening to Cain.
7. However, there is no remorse on the part of Cain, which is demonstrated in his settling in Nod and building a city, which is his last act of defiance. There is an ironic word play here: "Nod" means *fugitive*. It is interesting that the narrative begins with Eve giving birth to Cain and saying, "I have created a man with the Lord." However, the narrative ends with Cain's departure from the Lord; "Cain went away from the Lord."
8. Genesis 4:17 tells of Cain's attempts to evade the effects of the curse through his own ingenuity. The building of the city is seen as a defiant act against God since he was condemned to be a wanderer.

## **B. The Sons of God and the Flood**

1. Genesis 6:1-8 shows that while humanity was following the divine decree to multiply and fill the earth, so evil was also abounding. The central theme of this passage is the wickedness of mankind. Whereas demonic influence was alluded to with Cain, here it is directly involved in the sin of humanity as Satan was with Adam and Eve in the garden. (See *The Sons of God* excursus on page 13.)
2. Through the intermarriage of angels and humans man attempts to become divine outside the will of God. Once again we see man trying to obtain divinity through its own means rather than obedience to God through a relationship with God.
3. The wording of Genesis 6:2 reminds the reader of the fall of Eve (3:6), for when she saw that the fruit of the tree was *good*, she *took* and ate. Much as Eve tried to seize divinity through the eating of the fruit so humanity tries to seize it through a union with the sons of God.

4. The passage follows two parallel developments that are indicated by “the sons of God saw” in verse 2 and “the Lord saw” in verse 5. The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were *good* and they took. God saw that humanity was *evil* and He grieved and decided to blot them out. Verse 5 shows that mankind had become so evil that there was literally nothing good about them and that they could not even comprehend a righteous thought or deed.
5. The consequence for mankind was complete annihilation. God was so horrified by their evil that He was willing to rid the earth of them all. This shows how great their evil was, for other than the future judgment found in Revelation God has not brought such a judgment on earth since. God will bury humanity under the sea just as He buried Adam under the dust.
6. God’s judgment for this sin is that in 120 years He will flood the earth to wipe out mankind. As the watery chaos once threatened to unform and empty creation, God allows it to do so here as a judgment against the sin of humanity. However, God’s provision can be seen in the judgment once again. The 120 years will provide time for a means of provision for humanity through Noah and the ark. And though the waters will bring destruction they will also purify the earth of the sin that has corrupted it through the unholy offspring of the angels and humans.
7. God decided to preserve a remnant in Noah and his family in order to work out His salvation. “Found favor” in Genesis 6:8 means “grace,” which carries the idea that God would have been justified in including Noah and his family in the punishment. The righteousness of Noah is not his works that earn his reprieve; rather, it is his heart for God and his faith. Notice the passage says nothing about the righteousness of Noah’s family; they were brought along because of his righteousness.
8. With the flood we see again the sovereignty of the Lord over the sea, which represents evil and chaos. In Psalm 74:12-17 and 89:8-14 the Lord defeats the sea and brings it under His subjection so that He can create a world that is orderly and good (Gen. 1). Just as the Lord subdued the sea and placed boundaries around it in the beginning (Ps. 104:6-9) He now releases those boundaries to allow the sea to rage and chaos cover the earth, thus undoing creation (Gen. 7:11-12). The “watery deep” in Genesis 7:11 is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:2 and shows that this judgment is the returning of the world to its earlier condition of being enveloped with water—a reversal of creation. This is further demonstrated by the waters below and the waters above rejoining each other, which is the opposite of God’s separation of the waters in Genesis 1:6-7. However, the Lord does not allow it to remain in this state and so subdues the sea once again, reestablishing its boundaries in order to reveal His “new” creation and starting over with Noah as the “new” Adam (Gen. 8:11).
9. Noah is portrayed as the second Adam in that he is blessed as God’s image bearer (Gen. 9:6) and is given the same commandments given to Adam (Gen. 9:1). This passage alludes to the covenant in the Garden of Eden with the words “be fruitful,” “multiply,” and “fill the earth.” It also parallels God’s command in the garden with the permission to eat any animal and the prohibition against eating blood. Notice that the one command God does not repeat is for them to “subdue” the earth; they lost this right in the previous judgments.

### C. The Tower of Babel

1. Genesis 11:1-9 appears at first to be a testimony to the divine commission to fill the earth (9:1), but the account actually tells how the nations were dispersed after the tower of Babel. This section ends with the people scattered across the earth, divided from one another and from God. It is the climax of the primeval events and the transition into the patriarchal narratives. It is also the explanation for the development of the nations in chapter 10, since this event precedes chapter 10 chronologically.
2. The people's desire to be like the gods (Gen. 3:5) is reflected in the statement of Gen. 11:3, "Come, let's make bricks," which is an allusion to God's statement "let us make man" (Gen. 1:26). Through this building they desire to make a name for themselves and ascend to the position of the gods by their own resources and skills.
3. They also express in verse 4 their fear of being scattered across the earth, which is exactly what God commanded humanity to do (Gen. 1:28; 9:1). Not only do they desire to elevate themselves to a position of deity, but they are also directly disobeying the foremost command of God.
4. Genesis 11 implies that mankind had built nothing before for their own glory, and doing so was evidence of their disobedience rather than worship. It was the rebellious work of a united race rather than the worshipful work of a united nation.
5. God's judgment is to alter their language and scatter them so that they cannot unite and accomplish such a task again. What they fear the most, being scattered, comes true because they tried to resolve this fear through their own evil desires and resources and not through a dependence on the Lord.
6. Genesis 11:7 stating that the Lord had to come *down* to see the tower demonstrates the irony in their futility to reach heaven on their own. The Lord coming to see the city also demonstrates His interest and involvement in human history. It also implies prior knowledge. The "let us" in verse 7 shows that God is the true all-sovereign Being.
7. From here on the nations will develop in utter futility and confusion until God makes a great nation through a man who will himself be scattered. Abraham becomes the hope in the midst of the judgment.

#### D. Conclusion

1. Another instance where man comes in contact with angels with evil intentions is in Genesis 19 where the men of Sodom desire to shame the two visiting angels by raping them. All this time they have been seeking divineness through their own ambitions, yet they have strayed so far from God that they do not even recognize divine beings when they show up in their city.
2. In all of these cases mankind tries to become godlike through his own capabilities. What he does not realize is that this is God's desire for him as well—but only through his dependence on Him and in His timing.
3. Because man tries to elevate himself to a state of power that he has lost due to his rebellion, God judges him in each case for stepping out of his bounds. Yet in all of the cases God's grace and preservation is always present and is demonstrated in the midst of the judgment.

	<b>Genesis 3</b>	<b>Genesis 6:1-4</b>	<b>Genesis 11:1-9</b>	<b>Genesis 19</b>
<b>Protagonist</b>	Woman	Woman	Man	Man
<b>Temptation</b>	Spiritualism	Sensualism	Spiritualism	Sensualism
<b>Role of Human</b>	Tempted	Tempted	Tempter	Tempter
<b>Consequences</b>	Exile	Disaster	Exile	Disaster
<b>Remnant</b>	Seth	Noah	Abraham	Isaac

## The Sons of God

One of the reasons Genesis 6 gives for Yahweh's judging the world is that the "sons of God" were taking the "daughters of mankind" as their wives (Gen. 6:1-4). The problem with these titles is that it is not obvious for readers today to know who they are referring to. There are three major ways to understand these titles.

### View One: The Line of Seth and Cain

The "sons of God" are seen as referring to the godly line of Seth and the "daughters of mankind" are seen as referring to the ungodly line of Cain. In Genesis 4 there is a contrast made between Cain as an ungodly son who begets an ungodly line and Seth as a godly son who came at a time when people began to call upon the Lord. Those who take this view see that contrast being continued on into Genesis 6 and that one of the reasons for the flood was the mixing of the godly and ungodly lines in marriage.

Unfortunately, nowhere in Genesis is there any hint that the "sons of God" are to be seen as Seth's line and the "daughters of mankind" as Cain's line. In fact, the Hebrew word "mankind" is not talking about a specific group within mankind but about mankind as a whole. It would also be unnatural to restrict the title "daughters of men" to just Cain's line and ungodly women; it is better to instead see it as a designation for "womankind." It also does not seem natural to see godly men having sexual relations with ungodly women, for would this not make those men ungodly?

There is nothing in the text that states that Seth's line was godly—only a few in his line are said to be godly. In fact, the text makes the opposite point: that all of humanity was evil and that Noah was the only righteous one that Yahweh found on the whole earth (6:5-8).

### View Two: The Polygamy of Kings

The "sons of God" refer to tyrant kings who seize the "daughters of men" in its basic meaning. The sin here is the polygamy of the kings in order to gain power.

There is no hint in the text to any idea of kings or political alliances. In fact, there is no concept of nations until Genesis 10, after the flood. The mention of kings does not appear until the story of Abraham. The sin of polygamy and marriage for political alliances was a common thing after the flood, even with David, a man after God's own heart. However, the text makes it clear that the evil of Genesis 6 was so great that it was unique and deserving for the earth to be wiped out. This view, in fact, only came about as a *reaction* to the third view.

### View Three: Fallen Angels

The "sons of God" refer to fallen angels and the "daughters of men" to the female descendants of mankind. (See G. J. Wenham. *Genesis*. Word Biblical Commentary, p. 1:135.)

The phrase "sons of God" is used in the Scriptures to refer always to angels—*bene elim* (1 Sam. 2:12; 25:17, 25; Ps. 29:1; 89:6; 103:20) and *bene elohim* (Deut. 14:1; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Hos. 1:10; 11:1). This is true of extra-biblical material as well (1 Enoch 6-7).

There is the distinction between "sons" and "daughters" in each category. The phrasing is not the "daughters of God" and the "sons of men." The distinction here imposes a *contrast* between the types of groups: those who are "of God" and "of men." This seems to be the focus—those who

belong in the category of the divine (elohim) and those who are belong among humans (mankind). This contrast is lost with the first two views.

In verse 2 the taking of wives refers to the mutual consent of both groups in the unholy union. This was not a kidnapping and raping of women; rather, humanity was a willing participant. Verses 1-4 present the angelic cause for the flood whereas verses 5-6 present the human cause.

Those who disagree with this view often quote Matthew 22:29-30 as a rebuttal to the fact that angels, in Genesis 6, were able to have sex. The first problem is that this is not even the point of Matthew 22:29-30 (resurrection is the point). Second, in mentioning the angels, Jesus never said that angels were sexless; he only said that they are not given in marriage. We all know that one does not have to be married in order to have sex. Likewise, Jesus said that *holy* angels were not given in marriage in *heaven*; He never mentioned what *fallen* angels are capable of doing on *earth* outside the will of Yahweh.

There are places where the Scriptures describe angels who are able to take on human form and interact with mankind (Gen. 19:1-5; Heb. 13:2). Beyond this we do not know enough about angels to say of what they are and are not physically capable.

### **The Imprisoned Angels**

This understanding of Genesis 6 is supported by 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Jude 6-7. These passages describe the punishment of a certain group of angels due to a sexual sin during the time of Noah and the flood. 2 Peter 2:4-5 puts the event in the time of Noah and the flood, and 2 Peter 2:6 and Jude 7 show that it preceded Sodom and Gomorrah. In the context here, Peter is talking about the immoral lifestyle of the false prophets (2 Peter 2:2, 13-14, 18). His point is that these false prophets will be judged for their misdeeds just as the demonic angels and Sodom and Gomorrah were. The implication is that these two were judged for their sexual perversions. Jude 7 explicitly says that the sin of the angels was a sexual perversion just like those of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their sin is also said to be sexual in 2 Peter and Jude where it is compared to the sexual perversion of an unholy union as in Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:1-3, 12-15, 18; Jude 7). The time sequence connects it to the time of the flood.

The event in 2 Peter and Jude cannot be referring to the original fall of the angels because then all the demonic angels would be imprisoned according to 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. Jude 6 also states that the angels did not keep their own domain (*archen*, a place of assigned authority and activity), but abandoned their proper abode (*idion oiketerion*, “peculiar place of residence”). The implication is that they took on a state that they were not supposed to. This cannot mean that they were on earth and not in heaven because this is true of all demons—yet they have not experienced the same fate as these particular demons have. These are the angels that await the great judgment of the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10).

### **The Nephilim**

Though it is not clear, the context of Genesis 6 seems to indicate that the *nephilim* and the “mighty heroes of old” are the offspring of the unholy union. Though it is not clear what the Hebrew word *nephilim* means, the context suggests an understanding of great and mighty warriors who were famous throughout the world. The Greek equivalent in the LXX *gigantes* does not refer to monstrous size; rather, it means “fallen ones” and refers to the unusual offspring of an unholy union. This word was used of the Titans, who were the offspring of male gods and human women.

(See C. Fred Dickason. *Angels: Elect and Evil*, pp. 244-45 and Merrill F. Unger. *Biblical Demonology*, pp. 45-52.)

The difficulty is with Genesis 6:6, which states that the *nephilim* were on the earth *after* this event as well. If all humankind (except for Noah and his family) died in the flood, it is difficult to understand how the post-flood *nephilim* could be related to the pre-flood *nephilim* or how the Anakites of Canaan could be their descendants (Num. 13:33). This is a problem no matter which view one holds. A possible understanding is that in Numbers 13:33 it is not the author who connects the Anakites to the *nephilim* but a misconception circulated by the people of Israel. Just because the people believed the Anakites to be *nephilim* does not mean it is true. We should not trust the opinions of those who are not divinely inspired.

### **Historical Understanding**

This third view is how the Jews of the ancient Near East understood this passage. In fact, they wrote a lot on it in the Jewish Apocrypha, which presents this as the major event that disrupted the world order, both spiritual and physically. 1 Enoch 6-12 tells the whole story of the angels taking women as wives and the flood that followed. The language of Jude, in fact, parallels 1 Enoch (10:4-6, 12; 13:2; 14:5; 12:4; 15:3) and even quotes it. There is little doubt that Jude and Enoch share a common understanding of the angels of Genesis 6. Jude, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, apparently endorses Enoch's interpretation of the identity of the sons of God in Genesis 6.

This third view was the only view held by the Jews throughout antiquity and by the early Church fathers (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian). It was not until the third century with Augustine (354-430 AD) that the first view was proposed.

## Bibliography

- Allen, Ronald B. *The Majesty of Man: The Dignity of Being Human*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000.
- Blocher, Henri. *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984.
- Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part I. From Adam to Noah*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964.
- Chisholm, Robert B. *Knowing God Through the Old Testament*. Audio Class. Dallas Theological Seminary, 2004.
- Constable, Thomas L. *Notes on Genesis*. Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 2001.
- Deffinbaugh, Robert. *The Book of Genesis*. Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 1997.
- Hasel, G. F. "The Fountains of the Great Deep," *Origins* 1 (1974): 67-72; "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood," *Origins* 2 (1975): 77-95.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1—17*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament series. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990.
- Hill, Andrew E. and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000.
- Kidner, Derek. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries series. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1967.
- Mettinger, Tryggve N. D. *In Search of God The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*. Translated by Frederick H. Cryer. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
- Merrill, Eugene H. "A Theology of the Pentateuch." In *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 7-87. Edited by Roy B. Zuck. Chicago: Moody Press, 1991.
- Noll, Stephen F. *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan, and Principalities*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Pyne, Robert A. *Humanity and Sin*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.
- Ross, Allan P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988.
- Speiser, E. A. *Genesis*. The Anchor Bible series. New York: Doubleday, 1964.
- Sproul, R. C. *In Search of Dignity*. Ventura: Regal, 1983.

Von Rad, Gerhard. *God at Work in Israel*, trans. John H. Marks. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.

Waltke, Bruce K. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary series. Waco: Word Books Publishers, 1987.

Westermann, Claus. *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*. Translated by John J. Scullion. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984.