



# Truth

## On Tough Texts

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A MINISTRY OF GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

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### *Who In the World Were Those “Sons of God”? (2)*

Gen. 6:4; 1 Pet. 3:18-20; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6

In our last issue, we looked at the Biblical evidence that demonstrates that the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2 and 4 cannot possibly refer to “fallen angels,” as is commonly taught by some interpreters. With that in mind, we turn to two other points.

#### **II. The Identity of the “Sons of God”**

Before dealing with the identity of these “sons of God,” a brief word is in order concerning one other alternate view of their identity, a view that is gaining popularity. Recent archeological discovery supposedly suggests that the “sons of God” were sometimes used to describe kings. But the main problem with that view is that the Scripture nowhere else describes human rulers using this term, so why would it be so here?

Who then were the “sons of God” and “Daughters of Men” in Genesis 6? The simple, natural, and Scriptural answer is: “the sons of God” represent the godly line of Seth, and “the Daughters of Men” represent the ungodly line of Cain. *The strongest proof of this is the context*, that is, chapters 2-7. More problems of Biblical interpretation arise from taking Scripture out of context than from any other reason. All one has to do is look at the surrounding context in Genesis and the meaning becomes obvious:

- ❑ Chapter 2 details the creation of man;
- ❑ Chapter 3 records the fall of man;
- ❑ Chapter 4 presents the line of Cain (a man);

- ❑ Chapter 5 presents the line of Abel (a man);
- ❑ Chapter 6 records the time when the two lines crossed, represented by the terms “sons of God” and “daughters of men.”
- ❑ Chapter 7 shows the judgment of man through the flood showing that the whole world was corrupted by the mixture of the godly with the ungodly.

The most amazing thing about the “Fallen Angel Theory” is that it seems to cast aside the context as though it were irrelevant. *But without exception, the surrounding context speaks of MAN.* Then, all of a sudden, according to the angel theory, like magic, angels appear to corrupt man. *But man did not need fallen angels to corrupt him.* He was already corrupt to the core, with “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [being] only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). This view is held by that great British scholar and commentator, W. H. Griffith Thomas:

It is . . . in every way better and truer to the context to explain the passage of the two lines of Seth and Cain, and as giving the explanation of the judgment and the flood.<sup>1</sup>

Neither was there a question in the mind and heart of Puritan Matthew Henry:

The posterity of Seth did not keep by themselves, as they ought to have done, both for the

preservation of their own purity, and in detestation of the apostasy; they intermingled themselves with the . . . race of Cain.

Warren Wiersbe also writes:

When the Sethites compromised by mingling with the Cainites, they fell from God's blessing. God was grieved that they married godless Cainites, choosing wives as they pleased without considering God's will (Gen. 6:2). In doing this, they endangered the fulfillment of the 3:15 promise; for how could God bring a Redeemer into the world through an unholy people? The people of that day "married and were given in marriage" (Matt. 24:37-39) and thought nothing of the warning that Enoch and Noah gave about the coming judgment. Human history was now at the place where only Noah and his family—eight people—believed God and obeyed His Word. God's spirit was striving with lost people, but they resisted the call of God; and God was grieved at what man was doing.<sup>2</sup>

This is likewise the view of theologians Augustus Strong,<sup>3</sup> Millard Erickson,<sup>4</sup> and the great Seventieth Century Francis Turretin, who first writes that the angel theory is "false and immodest," which underscores this theory's objectionable character, which we emphasized in Part 1. Turretin goes on to write:

the "sons of God" referred to are no other than the posterity of Seth, who on account of still retaining the purer worship of God, are distinguished from the profane posterity of Cain or "the sons of men."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, contemporary theologian Wayne Grudem makes this comment on the context:

In fact, there is an emphasis on sonship as including likeness to one's father in Genesis 5:4. Moreover, the text traces the descendants from God through Adam and Seth to many "sons" in all of chapter 5. The larger purpose of the narrative seems to be to trace the parallel development of the godly (ultimately messianic) line of Seth and the ungodly descendants of the rest of mankind. Therefore, the "sons of God" in Gen. 6:2 are men who are righteous in their imitation of the character of their heavenly father, and the "daughters" of men are the ungodly wives whom they knew.<sup>6</sup>

May we ask, then, *could the context be clearer?*

One objection to this view is why is the term "sons of God" not used with this meaning in any other place? J. Sidlow Baxter brilliantly answers:

But we may even turn this objection back upon the objectors, for in the New Testament the title "sons of God" (in the exact Greek equivalent of the Hebrew) is used again and again of *men*, that is, of the regenerate in Christ. [Angel theorists] "explain" this as being because all who are the direct creation of God are called His "sons," and the new nature which is in us as regenerate believers is a direct creation of God. So the regenerate are "sons of God." Look back, then, over the Seth line. Were not the worshipping Seth and Enos and the sanctified Enoch and the "just" and "perfect" (upright) Noah who "walked with God"—were not *these* men regenerate? Who will dare say "No?" And were they not, then, truly "sons of God?"<sup>7</sup>

Another objection is how can these men be considered holy when the Bible says that only Noah was holy (Gen. 6:8, 9)? But as mentioned earlier, the Sethites were clearly the *godly* line but "intermingled themselves with the . . . race of Cain" (Matthew Henry).

Others ask why is it that only "sons" and not "daughters" are associated with the line of Seth? This demonstrates an ignorance of the patriarchal system in Scripture, which views the male as the family representative. Just as Paul included women when he wrote, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14; cf. Phil. 2:15; I Jn. 3:1-2), the "sons of God" in Genesis would also include women.

### III. The Identity of the Angels in Jude 6

In the final analysis, it is actually Jude 6 that forms the foundation of the entire "Fallen Angel Theory." As one authority puts it, "This ancient viewpoint hinges in part on the assumption that Jude 6 and 7 refer to these angels."<sup>8</sup>

The extremely important point here is, as stated in Part 1 of this study, the "Fallen Angel Theory" is based on *the mythology of the Pseudepigrapha*. The Pseudepigraphal books were those books rejected by virtually everyone as being part of the canon of Scripture. These books claim Biblical authors, but are full of religious fancy and magic from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100. Now, it is an incontrovertible fact that this theory first appeared in the Pseudepigraphal book, *The Book of Enoch*, a spurious book that is full of far-fetched stories. The author without doubt got his ideas from pagan myths, which are full of stories about "the gods" cohabiting with human women. In fact, the story in *The Book of Enoch* goes so far to say that the number of angels in Genesis 6 was

200. Why don't the proponents of the "Fallen Angel Theory" believe and teach this? One writer recounts the story thusly:

Two hundred angels in heaven, under the leadership of Semayaz, noticed that the humans had unusually beautiful daughters. These they desired for themselves, so they took a mutual oath to go down to earth together, and each took a wife. They taught these wives magical medicine, incantations, the cutting of roots and the care of plants. When the women became pregnant, they gave birth to giants that reached three hundred cubits. The giants in turn consumed all the food, thereby arousing the deep hatred of the earthlings. The giants turned to devouring the people along with the birds, wild beasts, reptiles and fish. Then it was that the earth, having had enough of these huge bullies, brought an accusation against them.<sup>9</sup>

Now may we ask, are we to believe that Jude is following such pagan myth? Are we to believe that a man writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit would be so tainted by such superstition? Why would anyone want to hold to something so ridiculous? Why not just believe the plain language and context of Scripture and hold only to that? It is because of these very questions that our next issue of *Truth on Tough Texts* will answer the question: "Does Jude Quote from Pseudepigraphal Literature in Jude 6, 9, and 14?"

Finally, to what then does Jude 6 refer? The answer is simple: The angels in Jude 6 can refer only to *the angels who followed Lucifer at his fall*. Satan's fall is described in Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:12-19. His sin was, of course, pride and arrogance. He was going to exalt his throne above God's Throne. We then read in Revelation 12:4 that one-third of the angels followed Lucifer and were cast out of heaven.

Jude 6 bears this out. Note the words "kept not their first estate." "Estate" is the Greek, *archē*, which carries the basic meaning "beginning." But it also refers to "the beginning or first place of power." Hence, it gives the ideas of sovereignty, dominion, and elevated position. Jude is saying, then, that these angels had an elevated position, a place of dominion, and a certain degree of sovereign power. This same word is translated "principalities" in Ephesians 6:12.

The word "habitation" is *oiketerion*, which means "dwelling place," that is, heaven. These angels left heaven behind and left the position and dominion they once had.

We should make note of the judgment of these fallen angels. Some of these angels are right now confined in "darkness," which is the Greek *zophos*, "Used of the darkness of the nether world."<sup>10</sup> Peter calls this place

"Tartarus" (2 Pet. 2:4). These angels are awaiting "the judgment of the great day," that is, the final judgment at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15.).

The question now arises, why are these angels reserved in judgment? As we've seen, some speculate and then insist that it is because these angels cohabited with human women. But, of course, the main problem with this is *the Word of God doesn't say that*. So, what is the reason? We are not told the reason! God, for some reason unknown to us, has not chosen to tell us the specifics. Consider 2 Peter 2:4 once again: "God spared not the angels that sinned." These angels did *something*, we know not what, for which God severely punished them. Warren Wiersbe wisely comments on this verse:

It is not necessary to debate the hidden mysteries of this verse in order to get the main message: God judges rebellion and will not spare those who reject His will.<sup>11</sup>

Let us not concoct a story based on pagan mythology just so we can explain a verse of Scripture. Rather, let us look to the main message of the verse. One thing is clear: the doom of all the fallen angels is sealed. *That is really all we need to know*. Whether some of them are chained in darkness now awaiting judgment, or whether some are loose and doing Satan's bidding while they, too, await judgment, their doom is clear. Let us not violate God's Word by adding something that isn't there.

In the same vein, however, we also see that *the doom of all men who reject God is already sealed*. Note very carefully John 3:18: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned ALREADY, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (emphasis added). Those who reject Christ don't have to wait for judgment—it is already marked out. What still awaits is the actual *punishment*, but the *judgment* is already sealed.

Note also John 16:8-11:

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is [HAS BEEN] JUDGED (literal translation and emphasis added).

Verses 11 does not read, "The ruler of this world is *going to be judged*." No, he has *already been judged*. He is guilty and now only awaits sentencing. What then of apostasy? At first glance we might think, "Well, God is going to condemn them for their perversion of His truth." On the contrary, God has *already* condemned the apostate. We can stand before an apostate today and say, "You may blaspheme God, but you are already con-

demned because Jude 6 says that you are just like the fallen angels, already condemned.”

So, with this historic incident, Jude warns us about apostasy. To reject the Word of God results in condemnation both now and forever. Let us, therefore, truly hate paganism and traditionalism! We find that Christianity today, in many ways, is *bathed in* and sometimes even *based on* both of those. May we not be guilty of thus tainting the Word of God.

**In our next issue**, we will examine in more detail the important question, “*Does Jude Quote from Pseudepigraphal Literature?* (Jude 6, 9, 14).”

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 66.

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- <sup>2</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Basic* (Wheaton: Victor Books), 1998, p. 89-90.
- <sup>3</sup> Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1907), p. 445.
- <sup>4</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 467.
- <sup>5</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, three Volumes, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1997), Vol 1, p. 548.
- <sup>6</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 414.
- <sup>7</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Studies in Problem Texts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 177 (emphasis in the original).
- <sup>8</sup> Spiros Zodhiates and Warren Baker (General Editors), *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (Iowa Falls, IA: World Publishing, 1994), p. 17 (footnote).
- <sup>9</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, et. al., *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.).
- <sup>11</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Alert* (Wheaton: Victor Books), 1984, p. 42.

**Let this point therefore stand: that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning.**

**John Calvin, *Institutes*, I.vii.5**

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## *The Kind of Preaching We Need*

Vance Havner (1901-1986)

**I**n these wild and weird and wicked times, the work of the preacher is being rethought and revamped and re-examined. Some think the preacher is just to be an equipper of the laymen for their ministry. He's been pushed from the center of the platform to the wings in favor of celebrated experts and entertainers. But the Book still says, “How shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

What kind of preaching do we need today? We need the same kind we've always needed. Nothing important has changed. Just because we've split the atom and sent a man to the moon doesn't mean we need a new kind of Christianity. We have a new kind of preacher in some quarters, but we don't need him.

### **1. The preaching that we do need is *apostolic*.**

Of course, there are no apostles today in the original sense, but an apostle is one sent, and a preacher is also a

man sent from God. The apostles studied at the feet of Jesus Christ. Our Lord said, “Learn of me,” and that means studying in the school of Christ Himself. It's possible to have a *magna cum laude* from a college and be a first-grader in the school of Jesus Christ. The apostolic preacher was *anointed* by the Holy Spirit.

### **2. The preaching that we need today must be *authoritative*.**

My Lord taught us having authority and not as the scribes. Too much today sounds like the scribes. There's no king in Israel; every man does what is right in his own eyes. Authority goes out, and anarchy comes in. Jesus met the devil not in His own name, not in His own power, but with the Scriptures: “It is written.... It is written.... It is written.” If He could defeat the devil with three verses out of Deuteronomy, we ought to be able to do it with the whole Bible.

### 3. Then it must be *absolute*.

This is a day of relativism. Right used to be right, and wrong used to be wrong. Now black and white have been smudged into indefinite gray. We've had two wars that we've neither won nor lost. We're afraid to win them and ashamed to lose them. But General Douglas MacArthur summed it up when he said, "There's no substitute for victory."

Joseph Parker said of Spurgeon, "The only colors Mr. Spurgeon knew were black and white. In all things he was definite. You were either in or out, up or down, alive or dead."

### 4. It ought to be *affectionate*.

"Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Some preach the truth and don't have love. Some preach love and don't have the truth. Get the mixture right. You have to mix it. A man puts one foot in hot water and the other foot in ice water and feels very uncomfortable. But when he mixes the waters, he's quite all right.

The truth will keep you from dissolving into sentimentality; love will keep you from hardening into severity.

### 5. Finally, it ought to be *apocalyptic* preaching.

Beloved, we're living in a terrible time, in a day of beasts and seals and trumpets and four horsemen and the harlot on the beast and scorpions and dragons and a sea of glass mingled with fire and earthquakes and falling stars and Babylon and the bottomless pit and the lake of fire and Gog and Magog and six-six-six and the downfall of the devil and the great white city coming down.

It's no time to tiptoe through the tulips in the administrative end. In such an hour, good news is bad news and bad news is good news. "When they shall say peace and safety" sounds like good news, but no: "Destruction cometh."

Good news is bad news. "But when you see all these things come to pass, famines, wars and rumors of wars, men's hearts failing them for fear," that is bad news. But "lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

It's a great day for preaching—apostolic, authoritative, absolute, affectionate, and apocalyptic.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

**The Word is a rule of faith, a canon to direct our lives. The Word is the judge of controversies, the rock of infallibility. That only is to be received for truth which agrees with Scripture, as the transcript with the original. All maxims in divinity are to be brought to the touchstone of Scripture, as all measures are brought to the standard.**

**Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (1692), p. 30**

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This monthly publication is intended to address Scriptures that have historically been debated, are particularly difficult to understand, or have generated questions among Believers. We hope it will be an encouragement and challenge to God's people to carefully examine and discern Truth. Periodically, we will also include book reviews of popular books, for much that is published today demands discerning reading. While the positions presented here are based on years of careful Biblical research, we recognize that other respected men of God differ.

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