

HUB LECTURES

DIVINE AND HUMAN REBELLIONS

Colin Dye



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THE HUB LECTURES

**DIVINE
AND
HUMAN
REBELLIONS**

STUDENT NOTES



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THE HUB LECTURES 2024

Advanced Biblical Study

Interacting with the Scriptures to affirm a fully biblical worldview

PART TWO: Divine and Human Rebellions

INTRODUCTION:

Why is the world the way it is? What's gone wrong? 21st Century Christians might point to The Fall (Genesis 3:1-24) as the explanation. But a 1st Century Jew would probably also mention two other events. First, Genesis 6:1-5 where the "sons of God" cohort with the daughters of man, producing the Nephilim and greatly exacerbate the corruption of humanity. Second, Genesis 11:1-9, the story of Babel, where people defy God's injunction to reproduce Eden in all the earth. Instead, they settle in one place and attempt to make "a name" for themselves by building a tower (Ziggurat) with the intention of bringing God down to where they decided he should be.

As we shall see, all three sorry episodes involve both divine and human rebellions which have dire consequences. The Fall ends in estrangement from God and death for humanity as well as the banishment of the serpent (nachash) to the underworld as "lord" of the dead. The Nephilim incident results in the Flood by which "everything in whom is the breath of life" perishes, except for Noah and his family. The Babel debacle ends in the confusion of language and the scattering of the nations now placed under the jurisdiction of divine beings who fail in their task and draw worship to themselves.

In all this, God does not give up on humanity, but provides hope of redemption and ultimate fulfilment of his plan to bring heaven and earth together in a global manifestation of Eden and his kingdom. The seed of the woman will one day crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15), Noah takes up the Creation Mandate (Genesis 9:7) and Yahweh begins to build a new nation, Israel, as his inheritance. He starts with Abram through whom all the families of the earth will one day be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

These three divine-human rebellions underline an important element in a fully biblical worldview. The spiritual and natural realms are closely connected. What goes on in the spiritual realm affects what plays out on the earth. Disorder in the heavenlies is linked to disorder in the earthly realm.

However, in each of these accounts, God remains in charge. As well as instituting judgements, he acts in grace to restore order, bring salvation and ensure that his plan continues.

LECTURE ONE: THE NACHASH AND THE FALL OF HUMANITY THE DIVINE-HUMAN REBELLION OF GENESIS 3

Eden as a Temple

In ANE¹ culture, the gods were believed to dwell in gardens. They were luscious and had a plentiful supply of water and food. Holy mountains were also view as the abode of the gods. They were suitably remote, high and distant from ordinary life of humans. Finally the gods were thought of as inhabiting specially-constructed temples, tents or shrines which usually housed images of the god or gods.

In biblical thought, Eden was temple garden, a place where God and his heavenly entourage (the sons of God) dwelt together with his human family. In a sense, the whole Genesis creation was a preparation of a human habitat and the establishing of a sacred space for God where divine-human fellowship could take place. Adam had a priestly role to tend the garden. The Creation Mandate directed the man and the woman as God's imagers to be fruitful and multiply and so extend God's Eden rule, his presence, over all the earth. They were to fill the earth and "subdue" it (set it in order under God's rule).

The possibility of divine-human rebellion

One of the divine attributes God shared with his human and heavenly imagers was free will. Since neither humans nor the heavenly sons of God shared God's perfect nature, this gift of free will opened the possibility of rebellion.

Job 15:15

Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones², and the heavens are not pure in his sight.

Despite this, God still went ahead with his plan to have both a human and a divine family comprised of truly relational beings, not programmed automatons. The alternative was not to create either humans or the heavenly sons of God.

The identity of the נחש *nă'ħăš* (serpent) in Genesis 3

ANE background

In ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Canaan serpent imagery held important cultural and religious significance:

- Symbol of evil power, chaos and the underworld
- Symbol of fertility, life, healing and rebirth
- Associated with divination – the verb form means "to practice divination and fortune telling".

¹ ANE, that is, the Ancient Near East

² Hebrew שִׁדְדִים *qāḏōš*, "holy ones" refers to the divine beings otherwise known "the sons of God". See Job 1:6, 38:7; Deuteronomy 32:8-9; Psalm 29:1; 82:1.

Ancient Mesopotamian tablets describe cherub throne guardians, depicting them as snakes and dragons. In Egyptian throne iconography, the throne guardians were also represented by serpentine creatures, especially the cobra with its hood extended like the wings of a bird.

Ambiguity and shades of meaning

RS Hendel writing on the word 'serpent' in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* points out that serpent imagery crosses or blurs the boundaries between the categories of animal, human, and divine. He says,

In terms of dazzling ambiguity, the snake surpasses every other animal in Egyptian mythology... The image of the snake embodies a symbolic content whose depth and ambiguity know no limits... the snake is an animal, but is like humans with respect to the power of language, and is like the gods with respect to secret knowledge... one of the creatures of the field, yet distinguished from them by his cleverness" [*arum*]... Like a human, the snake has the power of speech (cf. Gen 2:19–20 in which the power of naming clearly differentiates human from animal)... Unlike the humans, but like God, the snake knows that the humans will not die upon eating the forbidden fruit, but will become 'like the gods, knowing good and evil' (Yahweh God acknowledges that this is the case in Gen 3:22).³ [Note: Some scholars say the original sentence of death was commuted, or that it referred to loss of immortality by being denied access to the tree of life.]

The meaning of the Hebrew שָׁחַשׁ *nă'·ḥăš*

Another ambiguity is the meaning of the Hebrew word *nă'·ḥăš*. Michael Heiser in *Unseen Realm* comments on the Hebrew *n-ch-sh*⁴:

- As a noun it means, 'serpent, snake', *nachash* – the plain meaning of the word.
- As a verb it means, 'the diviner', *nochesh* – divination means communication with the supernatural world in order to gain divine knowledge, wisdom, information, oracles.
- As an alternative noun, which is sometimes used descriptively as an adjective 'shining one', *nachash* – the Hebrew word for 'copper', *nechosheth* is related to *nachash*, and copper is bright and shining when polished. The OT uses *nechosheth* to describe heavenly beings.

There is therefore, in addition, to the plain meaning, a group of ideas associated with the Hebrew *n-ch-sh*.⁵

The *nă'·ḥăš* was not a mere snake but a divine being, most likely a throne guardian in Yahweh's heavenly council⁶. He is not called "Satan" in Genesis 3, but this passage lays the foundation for the being who was later known as Satan, the arch-enemy of God. See Romans 16:20 (Genesis 3:15); Revelation 12:9; Revelation 20:2.

³ R. S. Hendel, "Serpent," ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Cologne; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 744.

⁴The consonants שָׁחַשׁ, as Hebrew originally had no vowels.

⁵ Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, p78f.

⁶ The Heavenly Council is a term used by scholars familiar with ANE culture to describe the heavenly beings created by Yahweh to serve him in the administration of the heavens and the earth. For an example of the heavenly council in operation see 1 Kings 22:19–23.

The motive and actions of the *nǎ'ḥǎš*

In certain passages, Isaiah and Ezekiel describe the rebellion of a spiritual being which provides the supernatural background for the fall of the King of Babylon and the Prince of Tyre. It is also the background to the Genesis 3 story and the fall of the *nǎ'ḥǎš*. An ambitious, self-promoting *elohim* pits himself against God in an obvious attempt at a spiritual *coup d'état*.

Isaiah 14:13-14

¹³You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north'; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Ezekiel 28:14

¹⁴You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

Clearly, the *nǎ'ḥǎš* disagreed with Yahweh's plan to have a human family alongside his heavenly family. He set about to prevent it and so overthrow God's Eden plan.

The attack on male & female identity

The *nǎ'ḥǎš* attacks at the level of identity. Eve was deceived into eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil⁸. Failing to express herself as the woman God made her to be, she embraced and nurtured the wrong thing. Adam abdicated his responsibility by not protecting his wife. He denied his identity by standing by passively and not asserting himself as the one who moves with strength to protect and promote that which is right and good.

The consequences of this rebellion

Humanity was now out of relationship with God and could only be restored through the grace and mercy of God.

Human relationships were also broken. Not only was humanity estranged from God, but also from one another. Interpersonal relationships were now strained and subject to conflict. The simplicity of the close and open relationships of Eden was now lost.

Both the man and woman were cursed by God along the lines of their identity and roles. There would be conflict between the sexes and a distortion of their roles which, from that moment on, would be fraught with pain and toil.

⁷The Hebrew, צפון *šāpôn* is used 152 times in the Hebrew text and often means "the north". However, both Isaiah and Ezekiel use the word to refer to the sacred Mount Zaphon. See Ps. 48:2,3; Isa. 14:13; Ezk. 38:6,15; 39:2.

⁸ For an exploration into the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, see Lecture 2 in these notes.

A further the consequence was the loss of immortality. The human quest for power ended in death. So serious was the threat to Yahweh's order, that he could not allow humans to live forever in that condition.

The bad news

Genesis 3:14-19.

The man and the woman:

- Their eyes were opened as a consequence of “knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5).
- Ashamed of their nakedness they were afraid and hid themselves from the presence of the Lord.
- The woman will now have increased pain in childbearing.
- Her desire will be toward her husband. The Hebrew word for “desire” indicates a desire to control. The NET Bible (New English Translation) translates this as “You will want to control your husband”. See the translation note in the New English Translation Bible⁹.
- Her husband will be prone to rule over her. The Hebrew word “rule” denotes domination. See the translation and study notes in the New English Translation Bible¹⁰.
- The ground was cursed making cultivation difficult and painful.
- Barred from the Tree of Life, they were now subject to death and will return to the dust.

⁹ **Translation note:** *Heb* “and toward your husband [will be] your desire.” The nominal sentence does not have a verb; a future verb must be supplied, because the focus of the oracle is on the future struggle. The precise meaning of the noun תְּשׁוּקָה (*téshuqah*, “desire”) is debated. Many interpreters conclude that it refers to sexual desire here, because the subject of the passage is the relationship between a wife and her husband, and because the word is used in a romantic sense in Song 7:11 HT (7:10 ET). However, this interpretation makes little sense in Gen 3:16. First, it does not fit well with the assertion “he will dominate you.” Second, it implies that sexual desire was not part of the original creation, even though the man and the woman were told to multiply. And third, it ignores the usage of the word in Gen 4:7 where it refers to sin's desire to control and dominate Cain. (Even in Song of Songs it carries the basic idea of “control,” for it describes the young man's desire to “have his way sexually” with the young woman.) In Gen 3:16 the LORD announces a struggle, a conflict between the man and the woman. She will desire to control him, but he will dominate her instead. This interpretation also fits the tone of the passage, which is a judgment oracle. See further Susan T. Foh, “What is the Woman's Desire?” *WTJ* 37 (1975): 376–83 (NET Bible).

¹⁰ **Translation note:** The Hebrew verb מָשַׁל (*mashal*) means “to rule over,” but in a way that emphasizes powerful control, domination, or mastery. This also is part of the baser human nature. The translation assumes the imperfect verb form has an objective/indicative sense here. Another option is to understand it as having a modal, desiderative nuance, “but he will want to dominate you.” In this case, the LORD simply announces the struggle without indicating who will emerge victorious (NET Bible).

Study note: This passage is a judgment oracle. It announces that conflict between man and woman will become the norm in human society. It does not depict the NT ideal, where the husband sacrificially loves his wife, as Christ loved the church, and where the wife recognizes the husband's loving leadership in the family and voluntarily submits to it. Sin produces a conflict or power struggle between the man and the woman, but in Christ man and woman call a truce and live harmoniously (Eph 5:18–32) [NET Bible].

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- They are banished from Eden losing their access to the immediate presence of God.

The Nachash

- The serpent was also cursed and brought low, condemned to the dust of the earth.
- As humanity returns to the dust of death, so the serpent is also condemned to “eat dust”. Taking account of the background story in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, the word “dust” here carries connotations of “under the earth” or “the underworld”, the place of the dead.
- The *nachash* now is lord of the underworld and since all will die, humanity is under his control and power. See M. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, page 91¹¹.

The good news

God’s mercy is present in this story. Yahweh still cared for Adam and Eve and clothed them with tunics of animal skins. This is suggestive of what later is understood as blood sacrifice and what we call substitutionary atonement. The clothing was not merely for covering nakedness but possibly also a recommissioning. The same word is later used of priestly clothing in Leviticus 28:4, “a tunic of special woven fabric”. Joseph’s tunic was a symbol of favour and firstborn status (Genesis 37:3). Elijah also wore a tunic of leather (2 Kings 1:8).

All this suggests that, although the couple had been expelled from Eden, the command to “fill the earth and subdue it” had not been rescinded.

Genesis 3:15 is also seen as pointing towards the gospel. In Christ, the seed of the woman crushes the serpent’s head. The NT references this in relation to believers and not to Christ himself. Believers will overcome Satan through the grace of Christ, that is, through his accomplished work on the cross. The redeemed earthly sons of God become the means by which Satan’s defeat is put into effect.

¹¹ “The *nachash* was cursed to crawl on its belly, imagery that conveyed being cast down (Ezekiel 28:8, 17; Isaiah 14:11–12, 15) to the ground. In Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, we saw the villain cast down to the *’erets*, a term that refers literally to the dirt and metaphorically to the underworld (Ezekiel 28:17; Isaiah 14:9, 11–12, 15). The curse also had him “eating dirt,” clearly a metaphorical reference, since snakes don’t really eat dirt as food for nutrition. It isn’t part of the “natural snake diet.” The point being made by the curse is that the *nachash*, who wanted to be “most high,” will be “most low” instead—cast away from God and the council to earth, and even under the earth. In the underworld, the *nachash* is even lower than the beasts of the field. He is hidden from view and from life in God’s world. His domain is death. After the fall, though humankind was estranged from God and no longer immortal, the plan of God was not extinguished. Genesis 3 tells us why we die, why we need redemption and salvation, and why we cannot save ourselves. It also tells us that God’s plan has only been delayed—not defeated—and that the human story will be both a tragic struggle and a miraculous, providential saga.”

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Romans 16:20

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

NT believers know that Christ defeated the one who holds the power over death, that is the devil, and in Christ we are delivered from Satan's grip over us through death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Summary

The *nacash* was a supernatural being, later identified as Satan. He rebelled against the plan of God to involve humanity as his imagers to fulfil his plan to spread Eden throughout the earth. The Genesis 3 story is set against the background of a cosmic rebellion in which a high ranking spiritual being's ambition to be like the Most High results in him being condemned to the underworld, the realm of the dead¹². From this place, the *nachash* rules over humanity who, as a result of disobedience to God is now also subject to death.

Humanity lost both intimate relationship with God and eternal life. But God did not abandon his Eden plan and promised the final defeat of the *nachash*. He provided a merciful covering for the sin of Adam and Eve and promised restoration and redemption for humanity. God sticks to his original plan.

¹² No other divine beings are said to have been involved with the Nachash prior to or during the Genesis 3 story. There is also no biblical reference to a pre-creation fall of Satan together with a third of the angels. What is described in Revelation 12 took place at the birth of Christ.

LECTURE TWO: THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

טוב הדעת ורע *haddat tob va ra*

At the heart of the rebellion in Genesis 3 is the seductive temptation of the *nachash* regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:16-17

¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Genesis 3:4-5

⁴But the serpent said to the woman "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

What is the knowledge of good and evil, and what actually happened to the couple when they ate it? Scholars present many different interpretations. Nathan French provides a useful analysis of scholarly views on the subject¹³. In his thesis, *A Theocentric Interpretation of The Knowledge of Good and Evil טוב הדעת ורע*, he concludes that the most consistent understanding of the phrase is, "the knowledge for administering reward and punishment".

French translates the phrase as "The Tree of knowing good and bad/evil". He undertakes a thorough survey of the major scholarly views and groups them into the following categories:

1. Distinguishing the Beneficial and the Harmful
2. Moral Discrimination
3. Wisdom
4. Omniscience
5. Cultural Knowledge
6. Sexual Knowledge
7. Maturity
8. Moral Discernment
9. Magic

¹³ Nathan French, *Theocentric Interpretation of טוב הדעת ורע*:

The Knowledge of Good and Evil as the Knowledge for Administering Reward and Punishment, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021.

Next, he explains the need for 3 methodological parameters to be set in place in order to arrive at a correct understanding of “the knowing of good and evil/bad”. A correct interpretation must address:

1. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL AS DIVINE KNOWLEDGE¹⁴

“The first parameter is the classification of **ורע טוב הדעת** as divine knowledge; a nonhuman knowledge that is first possessed by Yahweh and the divine beings of Genesis 3:5 and 3:22”.

2. THE FUNCTION OF GOOD AND EVIL IN RELATION TO YHWH

“The second parameter requires that an interpretation must show how the Hebrew lexemes **ורע** and **טוב** [good and evil] function when Yhwh is the subject or causation of these extremes in the EN [Eden Narrative] and its surrounding context (e.g., Gen 1:4; 3:14–19, inferred; 4:7; 6:5; see too, § 2.4.1 below). If **ורע טוב הדעת** [the knowledge of good and evil] is divine knowledge, and too, if Yhwh is said by the EN to have this knowledge (so Gen 3:5, 22), then it would only be reasonable to consider the function of **ורע** and **טוב**, [good and evil] when Yhwh is the subject or causation of these extremes, in the EN and its surrounding context. This parameter is practically missing from the history of research. It will be the bedrock of my exegetical work moving forward, and it is the foundation of what I call a theocentric interpretation of **ורע טוב הדעת**”.

3. THE FORBIDDENNESS OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

“The third parameter requires that an interpretation reasonably demonstrate why it is that the knowledge of good and evil is forbidden on pain of death (Gen 2:16–17) and why human acquisition of it serves as a threat to Yhwh (Gen 3:22–23). Many of the interpreters in the history of research dismiss other interpretations based upon an unsatisfying answer to this question.

For example, if **ורע טוב הדעת** [the knowledge of good and evil] is best interpreted as wisdom (§ 2.2.3), then why would it be forbidden to humans on pain of death, especially when its acquisition by humans is so positively praised in the HB [Hebrew Bible] (e.g., Prov 4:7)? However, it is not the only reason as to why interpretations are deemed insufficient as interpretations by some scholars. For example, consider the interpretation of **ורע טוב הדעת** as a greater metaphor for sex (§ 2.2.6). This interpretation is unreasonable because it violates the first and second parameters even though it may remain within the third parameter to an extent”.

“In this way, I suggest that these three parameters must be taken into account for any interpreter moving forward. In my judgment, all of the interpretations presented in the history of research breach at least one or all of these parameters”¹⁵.

French then argues that in addition to the scripture references considered in the history of interpreting the phrase (Genesis 3:14, 29; 2 Samuel 14:17; 19:36-37, 1 Kings 3:9, Deuteronomy 1:39, and Isaiah 7:15–16), Bible interpreters should examine the importance of such passages as 2 Samuel 14:17, then 2 Samuel 11:27 and 2 Samuel 12:11. These texts have Yhwh as the subject or causation of “good and evil”.

¹⁴ The Hebrew phrases in this section are presented from left to right, unlike French who correctly quotes the Hebrew from right to left.

¹⁵ See French (ibid) pages 69-70.

After surveying these and many others biblical references, French concludes that “the knowledge of good and evil” is the knowledge which enables God (and the divine beings) to act as judges dispensing divine reward and punishment. The Life and Death Blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 30 support this view.

Deuteronomy 30:15

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live

Knowing good and evil as loss of innocence

A common view among Bible teachers is that knowing good and evil is the loss of innocence. This links to the moral discernment view. A person who knows good and evil has the capacity to discern right from wrong.

Some biblical verses seem to confirm this approach.

Deuteronomy 1:39

And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.

Isaiah 7:14-17

¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

Mike Heiser supports this view:

The little children referred to here [Deuteronomy 1:39] are the generation of Israelites that would arise after the original generation that had escaped from Egypt at the exodus. That first generation had been sentenced by God to wander in the desert for forty years until they died off for their refusal to enter the promised land in conquest (Num 14). The new generation did not know good or evil and would be allowed entrance into the land.

The meaning is clearly that the second generation *was not held morally accountable* for the sins of their parents. Though as children they were under the authority of their parents, they had no decision-making authority in the matter and were thus not willing participants. Therefore they were not considered liable. They were *innocent* [emphasis in the original].

The same perspective makes sense in Genesis 3. Prior to knowing good and evil, Adam and Eve were innocent. They had never made a willing, conscious decision to disobey God. They had never seen an act of disobedience, either. When they fell, that changed.

They did indeed know good and evil, just as God and the rest of his heavenly council members—including the nachash (“serpent”)¹⁶.

Despite this explanation being one of the simplest and is seemingly supported by some biblical texts, this view does not fulfil all the criteria French puts forward. If innocence is defined as making “a willing, conscious decision to disobey God” then how does the loss of such innocence make them like God and the spiritual beings? Also, Adam and Eve must have had some knowledge of right and wrong before the snake’s temptation. They had at least some discernment in order to know that they shouldn’t eat of the tree of knowing good and evil/bad and to held accountable when they did. Finally, this kind of knowledge is highly-prized elsewhere in the Bible. How could it be forbidden by God on pain of death?

1 Kings 3:9

Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"

It is worth quoting French arguments the moral discernment view in full.

Moral Discernment

There are only a few commentators that suggest the specific interpretation of moral discernment for *ורע טוב הדעת* [knowing good and evil]. In this category, the particular human capacity emphasized is that of moral and ethical discernment. One of the primary arguments of support suggested by these commentators is that the permutations of the Hebrew lexemes *טוב* and *רע* [good and evil] are the primary way in which the HB [Hebrew Bible] expresses these notions of ethical and moral good and evil. In passages such as Amos 5:14, Hos 8:3, Deut 1:39 and 1 Kgs 3:9, to name a few, the overall theme is one of moral and ethical discernment that is expected and desired in mature adults as well as in leadership roles of all sorts.¹⁷

Major Contention Against ‘Moral Discernment’

The central argument against this interpretation is that the commandment given in Gen 2:17 already assumes the human ability, at least on some level, to exercise moral discernment. If *ורע טוב הדעת* is the knowledge of moral discernment, then how could the human couple be held responsible for any actions of wrong doing prior to having acquired moral discernment? Finally, it is difficult to know how such knowledge is believed to have made a person like the divine beings. Likewise, is it reasonable to assume that Yhwh would have forbidden moral discernment to humans on pain of death in the EN?¹⁸

Human knowing good and evil/bad after the Fall

It is obvious that subsequent to the Fall, humanity had the capacity to act as judges. They knew that good actions deserved reward and blessing and that evil actions deserved cursing and punishment.

¹⁶ See Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, pages 62-63.

¹⁷ French, page 56.

¹⁸ French, page 59.

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Genesis 50:15

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him."

However, as fallen human beings they would tend to judge according to their own understanding and not in line with the will of God.

Judges 21:25

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Here we see a perversion of justice and judgement. In biblical narration "the eyes" are instruments of discernment¹⁹. Doing something that is right or wrong in the eyes of God leads to reward or punishment.

The phrase the "eyes of the Lord" is used in the context of God administering reward and punishment.

- Genesis 6:8 *Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.*
- Deuteronomy 11:12 *The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it [the land].*
- 1 Kings 15:5 *David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him.*
- 1 Kings 15:11 *Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.*
- 2 Chron 28:1-5 *'Ahaz ... did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done, 2 but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel...⁵Therefore the Lord his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria.*
- Psalm 34:15 *The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous.*
- Proverbs 15:3 *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*
- Proverbs 22:12 *The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor.*
- 1 Peter 3:12 *The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*

Another example of the "eyes of the Lord" at work is the word of Hanani the seer to Asa, King of Judah. Instead of relying on the Lord when under threat from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Asa asked for help from Ben Hadad, the King of Syria. Hanani delivers the verdict of the all-seeing God:

¹⁹ See Gen 6:8; Deut 11:12; 2 Sam 15:25; 1 Kings 15:5,11; 2 Kings 12:2; 2 Kings 14:3; 2 Kings 15:3, 34; 2 Kings 16:2; 2 Kings 18:3; 2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chron 14:2; 2 Chron 16:9; 2 Chron 24:2; 2 Chron 25:2; 2 Chron 26:4; 2 Chron 27:2; 2 Chron 28:1; 2 Chron 29:2; 2 Chron 34:2; Ps 34:15; Prov 5:21; Prov 15:3; Prov 22:12; Isa 49:5; Amos 9:8; Zech 4:10 & 1 Peter 3:12.

2 Chronicles 16:9-10

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."

Naked and ashamed

The opening of Adam and Eve's eyes was the result of eating of the tree of knowing good and evil/bad (Genesis 3:5 and Genesis 3:22). But their nakedness and shame was not because their eyes had been opened and they now had the knowledge for administering reward and punishment. It was the result of their disobedience. Whereas before they sinned they were "naked and not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25), now they knew they were naked and exposed to the judgment of God.

This is the condition of every human being since the Fall.

Hebrews 4:13

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Unrighteous judges

Since the Fall human beings are prone to exercise judgement unrighteously.

John 7:24

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.

People judge unrighteously when they judge according to their own self-righteous standards. Unrighteous judgement also includes bitter and harsh criticism, double-standards, partiality, unwarranted judgments against self and others, snap judgements, vengeance, judgement without mercy, cursing others and destructive talk. This is how fallen humanity perverts the knowledge of good and evil. But the story does not end there. Jesus came to reverse the curse and redeem humanity, restoring his original plan.

Ruling with Christ in the future kingdom

In the future manifestation of the kingdom, God's plan for humanity will be fulfilled. Those who are in Christ will be perfected and exalted to rule and reign with him. Not only will we have eternal life but we will have the knowledge and wisdom to rule over the nations as part of the heavenly council. We will even participate in the governing of angels.

1 Corinthians 6:3-4

Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

Hebrews 2:5-10

⁵Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere,

"What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Summary

French's interpretation complies with the parameters he established as necessary in order to make full sense of the phrase "the knowing good and evil/bad."

1. *Divine Knowledge* – God and the other divine beings would have possessed the necessary knowledge for administering reward and punishment. This knowledge certainly belongs to the divine realm.
2. *The Function of "knowing good and evil" as relating to Yahweh* – it makes sense to examine how Yahweh exercises the knowledge of good and evil, which invariably is in the context of reward and punishment.
3. *Forbidden Knowledge* – It is understandable that this knowledge was forbidden to humans who did not yet possess the authority or maturity to rule in the divine realm. The expulsion from Eden by Yahweh blocked humanity from access to the Tree of Life. This made it impossible for them, in their fallen condition, to enter the divine realm and act as judges. It also prevented them from living forever as fallen human beings possessing such knowledge.

The story of the Fall exposes the rebellious desire of the first humans to be prematurely promoted to positions of power and governmental authority in the spiritual realm. But God has acted through the redemption provided by Christ to put things right.

In sheer rebellion and self-assertion, the First Adam snatched at power. This is contrasted with the Second Adam who did not consider this equality with God as something to be grasped. He was given his exalted position only after he submitted to the Father in incarnational servanthood and sacrificial obedience on the cross (Philippians 2:5-11).

As a result, humanity in Christ will one day be perfected and given a position of authority in the divine realm. We will rule and reign with Christ in the coming ages and be given authority over the heavenly beings to the praise of his glory and grace (Hebrews 2:5-12, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

THE HUB LECTURES

Ephesians 2:4-7

⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

LECTURE THREE: THE SONS OF GOD AND THE NEPHALIM

THE DIVINE-HUMAN REBELLION OF GENESIS 6:1-5

This is an often-misunderstood account of the corruption of humanity. It is an important explanation of why the complete annihilation of the Flood was necessary. Once again, supernatural entities are involved, although many scholars prefer a more naturalistic interpretation.

Genesis 6:1-2

¹When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives²⁰ any they chose.

Taken at face value, this passage shows that some sons of God (*b^enê-hā·'ēlō·hîm'*) abandoned their proper authority and heavenly place of abode and came down to live an embodied existence on earth. With their newly-adopted corporeality they took for themselves wives from the “daughters of man” whoever they chose. This was a serious infringement of God’s created order as the Apostle Peter and Jude make clear in the NT.

2 Peter 2:4-6

⁴For 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; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly

Jude 5-6

⁵Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶And 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

Both Peter and Jude refer to Genesis 6 as a supernatural event, and speak of the judgment Yahweh imposed on these “angels who sinned” following the LXX which translates “sons of God” as “angels of God” (*angeloi tou theou*).

²⁰ *ishshah* can mean “woman” or “wife”. Victor P. Hamilton in *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, argues for marriage as the meaning: “they took women as wives” He argues, “The Hebrew verb here, *lāqah*, commonly describes marital transactions, including taking a wife for oneself (4:19; 11:29; 12:19; 20:2, 3; 25:1; 36:2, 6; Exod. 34:16) and taking a wife for another (Gen. 21:21; 24:4, 40, 48). One might also take somebody else’s wife (2 Sam. 11:4). [It may] involve polygamy or potential adultery but not rape. When indiscriminate rape is described some verb like “forced” (2 Sam. 13:14) is necessary.” However, the translation “women”, as opposed to “wives” is also possible in this context, which would highlight the sensual as well as the indiscriminate nature of these unions.

THE HUB LECTURES

In Genesis 6, the offspring of the union between the sons of God and the daughters of man are called “Nephilim” or “giants”, pointing to the supernatural nature of the event.

Genesis 6:4

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.

Some scholars take the word “Nephilim” to mean “fallen ones” or, “those who fall upon”. See the article on Nephilim in the Dictionary of Deities and Demons²¹. However, this is not the universal view, and the word “Nephilim” is best translated as “giants”²². The Nephilim were the offspring of divine and human liaisons, an evil consequence of divine-human rebellion. Mixing the divine and human was in defiance of the fundamental distinction established by God in creation. The result was the proliferation of a deepening human corruption²³.

Genesis 6:5

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This provoked God’s judgement in the form of the Flood, a return to conditions similar to Genesis 1:2. God cleansed the earth by destroying every being in whom was the breath of life. He began again. It was a divine reset.

Later on in the Pentateuch, we discover a connection between the Nephilim and the giant clans encountered during the conquest of Canaan. The spies Moses sent into Canaan reported the presence of these giants.

Numbers 13:33

And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

²¹ P. W. Coxon, “Nephilim,” ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 618–620.

²² Heiser in *Reversing Hermon*, page 17, points out that the LXX translates the Hebrew, “nephilim” as “giants” (Greek: *gigantes*, γίγαντες; singular: γίγας). He demonstrates that the correct translation becomes clear once the Aramaic influence on the spelling of *nephilim* in the Hebrew is taken into account. He also ties Genesis 6 to the giants or “tall people” found in Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:20-21 & 3:1-11.

²³ Drawing from the Mesopotamian background to this story, Second Temple Judaism developed this theme of corruption, to include inventions of lethal warfare, magical arts, astrology and sexual immorality. But “the view that the ‘sons of God’ were angels was replaced in second century CE mainstream Judaism by the theory that they were righteous men” (DDD, *ibid*). Christian interpretation of Genesis 6 generally accepted that the sons of God were divine beings, until the 4th Century AD, when theologians like Augustine started to reject it in favour of the human interpretation. The Mesopotamian background was unknown to most scholars of our era until recently (2010) when previously-discovered Mesopotamian texts were translated and analysed by scholars. See Lecture 4, “The Sethite Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4”.

THE HUB LECTURES

The Nephilim (giants) are variously called Rephaim, Emim, Anakim, Zamzummim and Amorites.²⁴

From the beginning, the focus of the Conquest was upon the giant clans (Numbers 13:33). In the first place, it was their presence in Canaan that deterred Israel from possessing the land promised by God. This disloyalty to Yahweh led to the Israel wandering for 40 years in the wilderness.

At the end of the 40 years, Moses led Israel through the Transjordan region through the land of Moab and Ammon where the giant clans had already been eliminated by the descendants of Esau. Then, they were directed by Yahweh into the land of Bashan, which according to Second Temple Jewish literature was the place where the "Watchers²⁵" or the "sons of God" originally descended from heaven in order to dwell in physical/human form on the earth²⁶.

Caesarea Phillipi, was also located in this region which was also the place where Jesus famously stated, "On this rock I will build my church and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 18:16). Bashan was the home of Og, the giant King of the Amorites. He was the last of the Rephaim and is described by the Prophet Amos.

Amos 2:9

Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath.

Total eradication was necessary: both his "fruit above" and his "roots beneath". This is why God explicitly told Joshua to destroy the entire nation where the giants lived, whereas other Canaanite communities were only to be driven out, not totally destroyed. It demonstrates the spiritual warfare context of the Conquest.

When we understand the supernatural rationale behind the Conquest, things become more clear. God was protecting his people from a cosmic threat coming from hybrid human beings, descended from rival gods, who were intent on destroying God's people and stopping God's Eden Project altogether. God's plan

²⁴ See: Genesis 6:4; Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 1:28, 2:10,11,20, 21; 3:11,13; 9:2; Joshua 11:21,22; 12:4; 13:2,12; 14:12,15; 15:8; 17:15; 18:16; Amos 2:9.

²⁵ The offspring of the Watchers (sons of God) in 1 Enoch were giants (1 Enoch 7). Some fragments of 1 Enoch among the Dead Sea Scrolls give names for some of the giants. Other texts that retell the story and are thus related to 1 Enoch do the same. The most startling of these is known today by scholars as The Book of Giants (M. Heiser *ibid* p104).

²⁶ Psalm 68:15-16 speaks of Bashan, first conquered by Joshua as the mountain of God with many peaks. Evidently, the Watchers intended Bashan to rival Mount Sinai and later Mount Zion which Yahweh made his dwelling place: "Why do you look with hatred, O many peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode." See Psalm 132:13-14; 78:54; 87:1-2; Deuteronomy 12:5.

for the salvation of Israel and the nations would have been thwarted. Yahweh had to act decisively and conclusively (Joshua 11:12-23).

Eventually, there were no more Anakim in the land, except in Gath where Goliath lived²⁷. The story of David and Goliath is about the final destruction of the Giants who were part of the Philistine population.

After the flood

Having cleansed the earth in an action similar to re-creation, Yahweh who had saved Noah and his family, re-commissioned him with the original Creation Mandate. The Eden Project was to continue.

Genesis 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

But soon, there was going to be another rebellion.

Summary

Genesis 6:1-5, is an important explanation as to why the complete annihilation of humanity through the Flood was necessary. This is a divine-human rebellion with the emphasis on the supernatural beings, the "sons of God" (*bene elohim*), leaving their proper heavenly abode and entering into the earth realm taking on physical bodies. They take women, "the daughters of man", as sexual partners²⁸ and produce hybrid offspring called the Nephilim (giants). This is the origin of the giant clans who continued a supernaturally-instigated rebellion against God and his redemptive plan. In the Conquest of Canaan, Joshua is commanded to eradicate them completely.

The rebellious sons of God cause deepening corruption to spread rapidly and widely among humanity which provokes God to act in the severe judgment of the Flood. This is also a divine reset in which Noah and his family are saved through the Ark. The Eden Commission is reissued and God's plan continues.

²⁷ Joshua 11:21-23 shows that prior to Joshua's northern campaign in Canaan, some Anakim remained in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod.

²⁸ Bear in mind, the production of offspring may or may not have entailed actual sexual contact. The descriptions may refer to some other means of producing offspring as in the case of Yahweh causing Isaac to be conceived supernaturally to aged Abraham and barren Sarah.

LECTURE FOUR: THE SETHITE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 6:1-4²⁹

The ancient understanding of the “sons of God” was that these were spiritual beings who left their proper place of abode in heaven, taking on an embodied existence on earth and producing giant offspring known as the Nephilim who caused corruption to deepen and spread to all humanity. Gradually, this view gave way to a more naturalistic understanding of the phrase. The “sons of God” began to be regarded as human, not divine beings. The Jewish Rabbis appear to have moved away from the supernatural interpretation by around the end of the 2nd Century AD.

In Christian tradition, the non-supernatural view of Genesis 6:1-4 seems to have begun with the influential Julius Africanus³⁰ in the late 2nd or early 3rd Century. From around the time of Augustine³¹ in the late 4th Century AD, the Church has been predominantly on the side of the “Sethite” view which identifies the “sons of God” as the godly offspring of Seth and the “daughters of man” as the ungodly offspring of Cain³². It was taught by Aquinas³³ in the 13th Century, and later by Martin Luther³⁴, John Calvin³⁵ and other theologians of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN BACKGROUND

Since from around 2010, an analysis of numerous ancient Mesopotamian tablets by the cuneiform scholar, Amar Annus³⁶, has led scholars to reemphasise the ANE context of Genesis 6:1-5. This Mesopotamian backstory sheds much light on the meaning and intent of the biblical text.

The focus is on the *apkallu*³⁷, the Babylonian equivalent of the Watchers, or the fallen sons of God in Jewish literature. These accounts bear some remarkable similarities to the biblical text. However, in the Mesopotamian traditions, the *apkallu* are the heroes of humanity, responsible for the greatness of Babylonian

²⁹ For a full treatment of naturalist interpretations of Genesis 6:1-4, see Heiser *Unseen Realm* pages 92-100, Heiser, *Demons*, pages 109-126 and Heiser, *Reversing Hermon*, pages 9-22.

³⁰ Sextus Julius Africanus (c.160 – c.240) was an historian in the early church. He influenced the great historian Eusebius.

³¹ See Augustine, *City of God*, Bk. XV, Ch. 23.

³² An alternative “human view” of Genesis 6:1-6 is that the “sons of God” refers to human kings who in the ANE were thought to be divine. According to this view, the union with the daughters of man were polygamous marriages of kings. But polygamy is not mentioned in the narrative. In fact, the text does not specifically refer to marriage. The sons of God are simply described as having sexual relationships with women: “They took for themselves women” (Genesis 6:2). Also, the ANE references to divine kings all refer to individual kings. There is no example of a group of kings being referred to as divine sons or sons of God. See Heiser, *Demons* pages 113-115.

³³ *Summa Theologica*, part 1, question 51, article 3.

³⁴ See Martin Luther, *Commentary on Genesis: Creation, Sin and the Flood*.

³⁵ See John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, Chapter 6:1-5.

³⁶ Amar Annus, *On the Origin of the Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions*.

³⁷ In Mesopotamian religion the *apkallu* are described as divine beings who taught humanity “the secrets of the angels” including omens and magic.

civilisation. In Genesis 1:1-6, the sons of God are evil divine beings in rebellion against the one, true God. This exposes the polemic undertones of the biblical text. The author is correcting the record by rejecting the idolatrous paganism of Mesopotamian polytheism.

1 Enoch 6 – 11 and Jubilees 4 – 5 are important Second Temple texts when understanding this background which also informs New Testament writers (Peter and Jude) when dealing with this subject. The author of Genesis 6:1-4 appears to have assumed a certain amount of background knowledge on the part of ancient readers. To the modern reader, the jump from Genesis 6:1-4 to Genesis 1:5-7 is puzzling. What was it about the appearance of the “sons of God” and the Nephilim that caused corruption to proliferate so rapidly and to such an extent that Yahweh regretted that he had made humanity and decided to destroy it along with all living beings?

Only an understanding of the “sons of God” (*bene elohim*) as spiritual beings, adequately explains this.

The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman

In order to examine the Sethite view and the thinking behind it, it is important to establish what the Bible means by the “seed of the serpent” and the “seed of the woman” and the nature of the enmity between the two. Included in the curse Yahweh pronounced on the serpent is this declaration:

Genesis 3:15

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Not only does Yahweh cast the serpent down into the dust of the earth, but he also promises his final defeat. The seed of the woman will eventually crush the serpent’s head. This is often referred as the *protoevangelium*, the first promise of the gospel in Scripture as it points to the final victory of Christ over Satan through his people³⁸.

So who are the seed/offspring of the serpent and the seed/offspring of the woman?

While the language appears to point to literal lineage, spiritual rather than physical offspring, must be in view. Who would be the physical descendants of the *nachash*? And how would they be produced? Would they be human or divine-human hybrids? None of these questions are asked or answered in the entire biblical record.

³⁸ While it is commonly thought that Genesis 3:15 is a reference to Christ himself, nowhere do the NT writers draw attention this application. Instead, we have a reference to the God of peace crushing Satan beneath the feet of believers (Romans 16:20). This indicates that believers participate in the administration of Christ’s victory over Satan.

THE HUB LECTURES

However, what is plainly taught in Scripture is that “sons of the evil one” do exist. They are those human beings who reject God and remain under the power and ownership of Satan. While those who show believing loyalty to Christ and his Father are called his offspring (sons and daughters or children). They are “God’s seed”. See the following scriptures:

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Matthew 23:33

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?

1 John 3:8-12

Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

This last reference identifies those who through their evil deeds are like Cain who was of the evil one. For this reason, some take the view that the unrighteous seed of the *nachash* runs through the line of Cain and that the righteous seed of the woman runs through Seth, the righteous offspring of Eve born after the death of Abel.

But this doesn't make sense. Righteousness is not a matter of physical birth but of loyal obedience to Yahweh. Were all the sons of Cain evil and all the sons (or daughters) of Seth righteous? These lines are established on spiritual grounds not on natural bloodlines.

It is also worth remembering that by the time of the NT, the term “sons of God” is used of believers, those who belong to Christ and are part of his kingdom. Whereas, in the OT the phrase “sons of God” is used only of divine beings, never of human beings³⁹ unless, of course, you take the Sethite view of Genesis 6.

³⁹ We defer discussion of Psalm 82:1 until a later study.

What is the Sethite view of Genesis 6:1-4?

As we have seen, the Sethite view regards the “sons of God” not as supernatural beings, but men from the line of Seth (Genesis 4:25-26, Genesis 5:3-4). This godly lineage is contrasted with “the daughters of humankind” the ungodly women belonging to the *nachash* coming through the lineage of Cain. The idea of the godly line of Seth is said to be supported by Genesis 4:26.

The preferred translation of those who hold to the Sethite view is,

*To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time **Seth** began to call upon the name of the Lord.*

However, most translations use the word, “people” or “humankind”. For example, the ESV has,

*To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time **people** began to call upon the name of the Lord.*⁴⁰

Those who hold to the Sethite view suggest the godly line of Seth is established in Genesis 4:26 and its purity had to be preserved. But it was eventually polluted by union with the ungodly “daughters of humankind.” According to this view, it was a purely human rebellion that resulted in the judgement of the Flood.

Arguments against the Sethite view

- There is no biblical text that explicitly identifies the lineage of Seth as the “sons of God” or the lineage of Cain as the “daughters of humankind”. There appears to be no justification to do so in Genesis 6, other than to avoid the uncomfortable notion of supernatural beings somehow procreating with human women.
- The assertion that the “sons of Seth” were godly, doesn’t make sense. Were all the sons of Seth godly? Were all the “daughters of humankind” ungodly? Where’s the textual evidence for this?
- If the Sethite view is correct, we would expect the ungodly line to be specifically described in Genesis 6:1-4 as the “daughters of Cain” rather than the more general phrase, “daughters of humankind”.
- There is at this point in no prohibition against marriage between any groups of men and women. So what was the offense? The sons of God saw “that the daughters of man were attractive and they took as their wives any they chose”. This could be taken to imply a degree of seductive sensuality on the part of the women and carelessness on the part of the

⁴⁰ The word “humankind” (or “people”) does not appear in the Hebrew text which literally reads, “to call was begun”. The text does not specify the subject of this verb, so translators have to supply one. Those who follow the Sethite interpretation suggest the most natural subject in the sentence is “Seth”. If the standard translation is correct, the Sethite view falls. Furthermore, there is no textual reason to identify the “sons of God” as the godly seed of Seth. Neither can any textual reason be established to portray the “daughters of humankind” as the ungodly seed of Cain. The Sethite view reads meaning into the text that is simply not present.

men, but this does not account for the sudden spread of corruption leading to the Flood. It would also detract from the status of the sons of God as “godly offspring” and therefore undermines the Sethite interpretation.

- The text becomes clear if the sin of Genesis 6:1-4 is divine beings intermingling with human women, producing offspring and bringing supernatural corruption to earth (in line with the Mesopotamian backstory).
- The Nephilim (giants), offspring of these unions, indicate that something quite out of the ordinary is taking place. The Sethite view does not account for this.
- The giant clans and their antagonistic role in the subsequent history of the Conquest point to a pernicious and persistent force of evil unleashed against Israel. Fear of the giant clans prevented Israel from entering the promised land in the first instance (Deuteronomy 3:33) and were the first to be eliminated (without mercy) when the Conquest finally took place.
- The strange descendants of the Nephilim were an evil above all evils and had to be totally eradicated. None of the other nations were handed over to such total destruction. This does not sit well with a naturalistic interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4.

Peter and Jude take the supernatural view

However, the biggest objection to the Sethite view is that it is not how Peter and Jude interpret Genesis 6:1-4. Both Peter and Jude refer to the same events that took place around the time of the Flood. They understood that Genesis 6 spoke of “angels who sinned” and who “left their proper dwelling”. The fallen sons of God were sent to Tartarus (the Greek word for the underworld, or hell) for their transgression. They would stay there until the Day of the Lord at the end of days.

2 Peter 2:4-5

4For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [Tartarus, the Greek word for the realm of the dead] and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly...

Jude 6

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...

These details are not recorded in Genesis 6, but are included in the New Testament revelation. The sources Peter and Jude drew on are highly likely to be the Jewish writings of Second Temple Judaism, including the extra biblical 1 Enoch.

THE HUB LECTURES

The idea of angels entering earth in physical bodies and somehow producing hybrid offspring, is offensive to many minds. But this is not true of all societies either in world history or today. What is implausible and unpalatable to us, may just be the correct understanding of the Bible. The supernatural realm is real and we cannot discount it just because it is offensive to us. After all, don't we criticise atheists and naturalists for doing the very same thing?

It is inconsistent for those who believe in angels taking on temporary physical form⁴¹ and the extraordinary supernaturalism involved in God taking on permanent human form through the incarnation of Christ⁴², to disavow the possibility of angels taking on corporeality capable of procreation with women.

However, the text of Genesis 6:1-4 does not necessarily mean that the Nephilim were the product of sexual intercourse with the embodied sons of God. The author could be employing euphemism. His intent is to show that the Nephilim are the supernatural product of a divine rebellion. Metaphorical language is used when Yahweh is called Israel's son (Exodus 4:23). He intervened supernaturally as Sarah who had been infertile and was also post-menopausal when she conceived Isaac. The sons of God may also have produced offspring by some means other than actually engaging in sexual intercourse.

Summary

The Sethite view of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4 holds to a natural/human view. Rather than supernatural beings, in line with other uses of *bene elohim* in the OT, the phrase is taken to mean the human line of Seth. The godly sons of Seth intermarry with the ungodly "daughters of man", who are seen as the ungodly offspring of Cain. Weaknesses in this view include the fact that it involves reading into the text what is never explicitly stated, the inconsistency of seeing only the "daughters of man" as being ungodly and the fact that Jude and Peter in the NT clearly interpret Genesis 6 in its supernatural context. Recent scholarly use of the Mesopotamian background and the emphasis found in Second Temple Judaism has led to a revival of the supernatural view.

⁴¹ See Genesis 18:1-8, 19:10, 32:22-32; Hosea 12:3-4; Matthew 4:11 (cf. Mark 1:13), Matthew 28:5; Luke 1:11-21; Luke 1:11-21, 30-38); Acts 5:19, 12:7.

⁴² John 1:14

LECTURE FIVE: THE TOWER OF BABEL

THE DIVINE-HUMAN REBELLION OF GENESIS 11:1-9

The third divine-human rebellion took place at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), but it must be understood in the light of Deuteronomy 32:7-9 (see below). As the ESV Study Bible Notes suggest, the Babel story is highly significant in OT history and theology.

The Tower of Babel

This episode is significantly more important than its length suggests. It presents a unified humanity using all its resources to establish a city that is the antithesis of what God intended when he created the world. The tower is a symbol of human autonomy, and the city builders see themselves as determining and establishing their own destiny without any reference to the Lord. (The tower story may also be a polemic against Mesopotamian mythology. *Eridu Genesis*, a fragmentary text found at Ur, Nippur, and Nineveh, describes the goddess Nintur's calling for humanity to build cities and to congregate in one place. Her desire, according to this text, is that humans be sedentary and not nomadic. Yahweh demands just the opposite, so that the earth would become populated.)⁴³

But the Babel narrative is about far more than the human pride and self-reliance we observe in all humanistic endeavours. There are significant supernatural elements in the story that show us its true meaning. This would be immediately apparent to the ancient Israelite who would most likely have been aware of the Mesopotamian mythology which is the likely background to this story.

The significance of the Babel story is also seen in the role Babylon plays in Israelite history and prophecy, which reaches its climax in the Apocalypse of John:

- Babylon was the earthly symbol of supernatural rebellion (Isaiah 14:1-22)
- Babylon took Judah captive (2 Kings 25)
- Babylon was judged and overthrown by Yahweh (Isaiah 21:9; Daniel 5:13-28)
- Babylon became the symbol of the rebellious system upheld by rival gods in partnership with rebellious humanity
- At the end of time, symbolic Babylon, the seat of the Harlot who seduced the nations and persecuted the righteous, is destroyed and along with it, the whole evil and corrupt system of global divine-human rebellion (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:1-6; 18:2-21).

The Narrative

At that time, all the inhabitants of earth had one language. This is also attested in the literature of Israel's ANE neighbours. Those migrating from the east settled in the plain of Shinar. Apparently, they wanted to abandon the nomadic life. This could have been a natural cultural development, but the story is set in the wider context of Genesis 1-11. The first two rebellions threatened God's

⁴³ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 69.

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Eden Plan – to reproduce the conditions of Eden in the whole earth. The Flood story ends with the re-introduction the Creation Mandate given to Noah:

Genesis 9:1-2

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

Genesis 10, the so-called Table of the Nations, and Genesis 11 give the author's explanation of how the nations, with their different languages, cultures and religious traditions came to be.

But, more than that, Genesis 11 presents yet another rebellion and threat to the Eden Plan. Instead of filling the earth and expanding the knowledge of God, this population settled in one place in order to make a name for themselves.

The rebellion involved building a city with a tower reaching to the heavens,

Genesis 11:4

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

Notice the emphasis on human planning and motivation: "build for ourselves" and "a name for ourselves". There is no mention of God's plan to fill the earth and no mention of the name (*ha shem*) of God. It seems that they were determined not to respect but to control the name of the Lord, and they expected Yahweh to comply. This is made clearer by the nature of the tower they built and its significance in ANE culture.

Ziggurats⁴⁴

Scholarly consensus holds that the tower of Babel was a Ziggurat, a building that was both supernatural and religious in its significance and function. Ziggurats were essentially stairways, a connection between heaven and earth. The function of this stairway was not that humans could ascend to the gods, but that the gods would be encouraged to descend to earth. Ziggurats were invitations to the divine beings to come and inhabit the temples built near the base of these stairways.

This motivation is inherent in the text of Genesis 11. They wanted Yahweh to come down and settle with them there, in the plane of Shinar. They rejected his plan for dwelling with humanity which was intended for the whole earth, not one locality. As we have seen, Eden was a garden temple, the place that Yahweh made and chose as his earthly dwelling place.

⁴⁴Follow this link to find out more about the ancient ziggurat at Ur:
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/ancient-near-east1/x7e914f5b:neo-sumerian-ur-iii/a/ziggurat-of-ur>

ZIGGURATS

Though they may resemble pyramids in appearance, ziggurats are nothing like them in function. Ziggurats have no inside. The structure was framed in mud brick, and then the core was packed with fill dirt. The facade was then completed with kiln-fired brick. Ziggurats were dedicated to particular deities. Any given deity may have several ziggurats dedicated to him or her in different cities. Furthermore, a given city may have several ziggurats, though the main one was associated with the patron deity of the city. Archaeologists have discovered nearly 30 ziggurats in the general region, and texts mention several others. The main architectural feature is the stairway or ramp that leads to the top. There was a small room at the top where a bed was made and a table set for the deity. Ziggurats range in size from 60 feet (18 meters) per side to almost 200 feet (60 meters) per side.

Most important is the function of the ziggurat.

The ziggurat did not play a role in any of the rituals known to us from Mesopotamia. If known literature were our only guide, we would conclude that common people did not use the ziggurat for anything. It was sacred space and was strictly off-limits to profane use. Though the structure at the top was designed to accommodate the god, it was not a temple where people would go to worship. In fact, the ziggurat was typically accompanied by an adjoining temple near its base, where the worship did take place.

The best indication of the function of ziggurats comes from the names that are given to them. For instance, the name of the ziggurat at Babylon, Etemenanki, means “temple of the foundation of heaven and earth.” One at Larsa means “temple that links heaven and earth.” Most significant is the name of the ziggurat at Sippar, “temple of the stairway to pure heaven.”

The word translated “stairway” in this last example is used in the mythology as the means by which the messenger of the gods moved between heaven, earth, and the netherworld. As a result of these data, we can conclude that the ziggurat was a structure built to support the stairway. This stairway was a visual representation of that which was believed to be used by the gods to travel from one realm to another. It was solely for the convenience of the gods and was maintained in order to provide the deity with amenities and to make possible his descent into his temple.

At the top of the ziggurat was the gate of the gods, the entrance into their heavenly abode; adjoining the tower was the temple, where hopefully the god would descend to receive the gifts and worship of his people. In summary, the project is a temple complex featuring a ziggurat, which was designed to make it convenient for the god to come down to his temple, receive their worship, and bless his people.

The key for understanding the tower of Babel is to realize that the tower was not built so that people could ascend to heaven, but so that deity could descend to earth.

(NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Zondervan).



Ziggurat of Ur (largely reconstructed), c. 2100 B.C.E., mud brick and baked brick, Tell el Mukayyar, Iraq (photo Kaufingdude, C)

God and his heavenly council (the sons of God) and humanity dwelt together in Eden. God's ruling was that Eden should be spread over all the earth. It was the height of rebellion to alter that plan and expect God's presence and his kingdom to reside in the place and by the means instigated by human beings.

Yahweh did come down accompanied by the heavenly beings (the sons of God), but not dwell with them. Instead he came down in judgement (Genesis 11:5-8).

The dispersal

The reason Yahweh gave for the judgment is significant:

Genesis 11:6

And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them."

It was not to slow down human technological progress. Rather, it was to impede humanity's regression into rebellion. There is mercy here as well as judgement.

The form in which the judgement is presented follows the pattern we saw in Genesis 1:27-28. Yahweh addresses the heavenly beings, "Let us go down there

and confuse their language".⁴⁵ But the text makes clear that the action was taken by Yahweh himself.

Genesis 11:6-8

⁶And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

This did not prevent the future building of cities and ziggurats which became common Babylonian practice. But Yahweh refused to allow humanity to treat him in the way they later treated the false gods of the nations.

Deuteronomy 32 Worldview

So much for the account in Genesis 11. It falls now to the commentary on this event in Deuteronomy 32, to fully explain the full nature of the divine-human rebellion at Babel and its consequences for the whole of humanity and the future trajectory of Yahweh's plan of redemption.

Summary

Genesis 11:1-9 – the sons of God at Babel.

The human sin was to build a city with a tower (Ziggurat) reaching to the heavens, attempting to bring God to them rather than obeying the renewed creation mandate to spread Eden to all the earth. But this also involved a divine rebellion as Deuteronomy 32 goes on to explain. The consequences were confusion of languages and scattering of the nations whom God "disinherited" and whose territories he placed under the rule of the sons of God.

⁴⁵ The consequences of God's actions are portrayed in two verses. The city's construction was brought to a halt by God's scattering the builders over the face of the earth. What they had hoped to avoid (see v. 4) was triggered by their own folly. The city was called Babylon, and Moses connects this to the word for *confuse*. This is an ironic twist on the city's name which later Babylonians would claim to mean 'gate of God'. A further irony is that the builders wanted to make a name for themselves. They accomplished that, but it was a mocking name—Babylon, a city of confusion. This verse [v.7] links the name of the city, Babel (Hb. babel), with the verb balal, which means "to confuse, to mix, to mingle." But babel is also the name used in the OT for the city of Babylon. As a city, Babylon symbolizes humanity's ambition to dethrone God and make the earth its own (see Revelation 17–18). *The ESV Study Bible* (Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008).

LECTURE SIX: THE DEUTERONOMY 32 WORLDVIEW

HANDING OVER THE NATIONS AND THE CALL OF ABRAM

Deuteronomy 32:8-10,12,15-18

Deuteronomy 32:8-9 is a continuation of the Babel story. Without it, we would not have a full understanding of what took place at Babel, particularly with reference to the supernatural realm. Once again, some Bible exegetes tend to downplay the role of supernatural beings in this passage and focus only on the human rebellion at Babel. You might conclude that Babel was merely a story about human arrogance and defiance of God: “man’s futile attempt to gain security apart from God through city-building.”⁴⁶

But, that is only one part of the story. Both human and divine rebellion were involved, but to grasp this we need to turn to Deuteronomy 32 where the story of Babel is told from the divine perspective.

Deuteronomy 32 takes us right into the divine realm of Yahweh where God (*‘elyôn*⁴⁷) is surrounded by his heavenly council of spiritual beings, the sons of God (*‘benê ‘ēlōhîm*). The key verses are:

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

⁸When the Most High [‘elyôn*] gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind [*b‘enê’ ā-dām*], he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God [*‘benê ‘ēlōhîm*]. ⁹But the LORD’s [*Yahweh*’s] portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.*

Sons of God, or sons of Israel?

Some Bible translations, have “sons of Israel” (*benê yis·rā·‘ēl*), and not “sons of God” (*‘benê ‘ēlōhîm*). The question is, do we follow the Masoretic Text (MT) or the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and the Septuagint (LXX)?⁴⁸ The Masoretic Text has “sons of Israel”, but this cannot be correct. Israel did not exist at the time of Babel and is not listed in the Table of the Nations (Genesis 10). The Dead Sea Scrolls read

⁴⁶ See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*.

⁴⁷ The adjective *‘elyôn*, “most high” is derived from the noun *‘āl*, meaning, “height”, followed by *-ôn* which gives it superlative force. It refers to God himself, also called *Yahweh* in Deuteronomy 32:9. See Hans-Jürgen Zobel, “יְיָ” ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 122.

⁴⁸ *Masoretic Text (MT)*: Named after the Hebrew word for “tradition”, the Masoretic Text is the traditional Hebrew Text of the Jewish Bible (Tanach). It contains diacritical marks (a pointing system) to enable correct pronunciation. This meticulous work of Jewish scholars began around the 6th Century CE and was completed in the 10th Century CE.

Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS): The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in the Qumran Caves on the northern shore of the Dead Sea between 1946 and 1956. They contain the oldest surviving manuscripts of OT books and also many extrabiblical writings including those of the Jewish Sect who resided in the desert there.

The Septuagint (LXX): The Greek translation of the OT. Translated by Jews living in Egypt during the 3rd and 2nd Centuries BCE. This was the Bible of the Early Church.

“sons of God” and the Septuagint has “according to the number of the angels of God” (ἀγγέλων Θεοῦ) referring to spiritual beings. We can conclude the correct reading is “sons of God” not “sons of Israel”.

How did this variant text come about? Perhaps there was concern that Israel had become too involved in the worship of other *elohim* and, at a certain point, a scribe thought it prudent to leave out the reference to sons of God. It is interesting to note that the phrase “mankind” in Hebrew is *b^enê' ʾā·dām'*. The text, then, refers to Yahweh’s two families: “the sons of God”, his heavenly family, and “the sons of Adam”, his earthly family.

The dispersal of the nations

We have seen that God dispersed the nations at Babel.

Genesis 11:8

So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth

As the Faithlife Study Bible explains, this dispersal was more than the confusion of human languages and scattering the nations across the earth:

Yahweh scattered them This dispersal will eventually result in the fulfilment of Yahweh’s command after the flood (9:7), but at a terrible price. This event is central to understanding how nations came to worship other gods besides Yahweh who had created them (see chs. 1–2). This is where Yahweh shifts from focusing on all the peoples of the earth to electing Israel (see 12:1–3). In a sense, the Babel event marks Yahweh disowning the nations of the world as His human family in favor of electing Israel, whom He will also use to reclaim the nations as His people (Deut 32:8–9; 4:19–20; compare Isa 2:1–5; Hos 1:8–11).⁴⁹

Yahweh allotted the nations their territorial borders and, as Deuteronomy 32:8 states, handed them over to the sons of God.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.

This is the OT background to NT teaching on the principalities and powers, the spiritual rulers over geographical areas on the earth, and the basis for what scholars call “cosmic geography”⁵⁰.

The scene in Genesis 11 is of Babel, with the people of the world gathered to worship from the top of a tall structure. When God said, “Let us go down and confuse their language” (11:7), we are reminded of what he had said as Adam and Eve left the garden of Eden: “Now they have become like one of us” (3:22). The “us” in each case suggests that God was bringing the situation to the attention of someone else. And in both cases God sends the offending people out, or away from where they had been living. These scenes introduce

⁴⁹ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Ge 11:8.

⁵⁰ Cosmic geography — The belief that certain locations were under the dominion of specific divine beings. Douglas Mangum, *The Lexham Glossary of Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

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the idea of cosmic geography, where God used land—physically defined borders, inherited rights of ownership, even the dirt in its fields—to tell the story of his people and their ultimate salvation. *Supernatural* carefully describes the critical moment after the Tower of Babel incident in which God apportioned or divided the world to the interests and powers of created spirits. This theme of spirit-controlled land influences a surprising number of Old Testament narratives and conversations, coming to full bloom in the ministry of Jesus Christ (Ronn Johnson, *Supernatural (A Study Guide)* Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

We see “territorial” spiritual rulers operating in Daniel 10:13, 20-22 & 12:1. The concept of cosmic geography is also behind the actions of Naaman, the commander of the army of the King of Syria in 2 Kings 5:15-19. After he was healed from leprosy he took two mule loads of soil from Israel (the territory of Yahweh) back to Syria, because he wanted to worship the God of Israel when he returned home to Syria.

It is clear that the “gods” of the nations became hostile to the one true God, the God of Israel. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul describes them as, “the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”.

Alongside rejecting the nations, Yahweh purposed to create a new nation, Israel whom he chose to be his inheritance. In other words, he handed the nations over to the sons of God⁵¹ and chose another nation to be the object of his special care and revelation. Through this nation he would also work to reclaim all nations and, finally, bring salvation to the whole world.

We know that the sons of God did not faithfully fulfil their task and were later to be judged for their rebellion.

Psalm 82:6-8

⁶I said, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; ⁷nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince." ⁸Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

They sought worship for themselves and this rebellion led to the rise of the different religions we see in the world today.

Deuteronomy 32:12,15-18

¹²the Lord [Yahweh] alone guided him, no foreign god [El] was with him. ¹⁵"But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God [Eloah]⁵² who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. ¹⁶They stirred him to

⁵¹ This is the Romans 1 moment of the OT. See Romans 1:24,26 & 28.

⁵² The OT uses three different words for “God,” viz., ‘el, ‘eloah, and ‘elohim. In general these words are interchangeable, as is clear from the following examples: in Ps. 29:1 and 89:7 (Eng. v. 6), we find bene ‘elim, lit. “sons of the gods” (RSV—“heavenly beings”), while in Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 we find bene ‘elohim, with the same meaning. The OT has ‘el chai, ‘elohim chayyim, and ‘elohim chai, all meaning “the living God,” as well as ‘el nekhar and ‘elohe nekhar, meaning “foreign god.” In Ex. 34:14 we find ‘el ‘acher, “other god,” while elsewhere we find ‘elohim ‘acherim (→ אֲחֵרִים ‘achēr).

jealousy with strange gods [Heb. bezarim, meaning 'strange'. The word 'gods' is supplied by the translator] ; with abominations they provoked him to anger. ¹⁷They sacrificed to demons [shedim]⁵³ that were no gods [lo Eloah], to gods [lo Elohim ie. 'no gods'] they had never known, to new gods [Heb. hadashim, meaning 'new' with the word 'gods' supplied by the translator] that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. ¹⁸You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God [El] who gave you birth.

Notice the association of the word "gods" with idols and abominable practices in this passage. The Hebrew תועבה *tô·'ē·bā(h)* refers to the abomination of idolatry. Later in the NT, the apostle Paul draws from Deuteronomy 32 and shows the connections between idols and demons.

1 Corinthians 10:18-21

¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

This shows that even in NT times the existence of others gods was taken seriously. But the gods of the idols are a demonic presence. In the ANE, polytheistic rituals were performed to entice the demon gods to inhabit idols. This enabled the idolators to solicit the help of these gods by offering worship and sacrifices in exchange for their much-needed provision and protection.

Allotment language

The language of allotment and the handing over of the nations to the lesser spiritual beings is found in several other places in the OT.

Ps. 18:32(31), "Who is 'eloah (God) but Yahweh?" is parallel to 2 S. 22:32, "Who is 'el but Yahweh?" Ex. 15:11 has, "Who is like thee ba'elim (among the gods)?" while Ps. 86:8 expresses the same thought in this way: "There is none like thee ba'elohim." In Dt. 32:17 we find the expression lo 'eloah, "no god," and in v. 21 lo' 'el. No clear rule for the use of these words can be recognized in the OT, but 'el occurs mainly in poetic and archaic or archaizing texts (→ אל 'ēl).

See: Helmer Ringgren, "אֱלֹהִים," ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, trans. John T. Willis, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 272.

⁵³ "The Hebrew word used here, *shedim*, occurs rarely in the OT; it is only found elsewhere in Psa 106:37. The word is most likely related to the Akkadian name for protective spirits, known as *shadu*—beings with far less power than Yahweh. This verse and Psa 106:37 may be describing Israel as worshiping lesser spiritual beings instead of worshiping God (compare Lev 17:7)". See John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016).

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Deuteronomy 4:19-20

¹⁹And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. ²⁰But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.

Deuteronomy 17:2-3

²"If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing his covenant, ³and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden

Deuteronomy 29:25-26

²⁵Then people will say, 'It is because they abandoned the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, ²⁶and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them.

The same thought is also found in the NT.

Acts 17:24-31

²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸for

"In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

This shows that God did not totally or permanently abandon the nations. He would ultimately reverse the Babel judgement and regather the nations.

Zephaniah 3:9-10

⁹"For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. ¹⁰From

beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.

The turning point for the nations was the Day of Pentecost when Jews from the Diaspora gathered from all the nations that had been dispersed at Babel. The gift of tongues granted to the 120 meant that Babel was being reversed and from that time the gospel would be sent to all nations.

Acts 2:7-11

⁷And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

From the time of Babel, Yahweh continued to provide for the nations through his providential care. He revealed himself through his creation and gave them moral guidance through the gift of conscience, the inner-knowing of basic right from wrong. He overlooked their wider ignorance until the coming of Christ. Then, through Christ, he defeated the evil powers controlling the nations and removed their territorial authority. Finally, Yahweh opened up the way of salvation to all nations who through Christ are brought into the covenant community of believing Jews and Gentiles.

The call of Abram

Immediately after the Babel event we have the record of the call of Abram in Genesis Chapter 12. This was the beginning of the new nation, Yahweh's special people, Israel.

Yahweh's abandonment of the nations and his narrow choice of Israel was with a view to bringing salvation, not only to Israel but also to the nations of the world.

Genesis 12:3

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 17:4-6

⁴"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.

Genesis 22:18-19

and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

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All this was to be fulfilled through Abraham's offspring who is the Messiah, the promised King who would redeem Israel and rule over the nations forever.

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

Summary

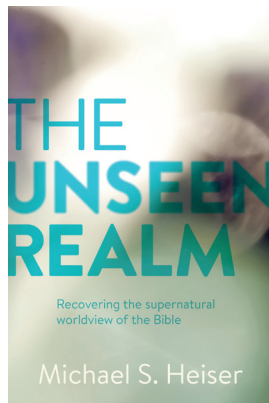
The divine rebellion of Genesis 32 is linked to Babel.

1. Deuteronomy 32:8-10,12,15-18 – the consequence of the judgment at Babel.
2. Psalm 82:1-8 - the judgment of the rebellious sons of God.
3. But not without hope:
 - a) God wanted the nations to be ruled justly and the rebellious sons of God were to be judged for not doing so
 - b) He gave the nations his general revelation and his providential care
 - c) Abram was to bring blessing to all the families of the earth
 - d) Israel was to be a witness and a light to the nations
 - e) The Davidic kingdom was to spread to all the earth (the eschatological hope for all nations)
 - f) The NT shows that the coming of the Kingdom of God brought defeat to the rebellious sons of God, and Satan's power was stripped, no longer able to deceive the nations or accuse the believers. See Revelation Chapter 12
 - g) Jews and Gentiles are both included in the gospel promise.

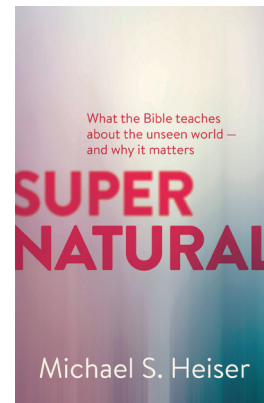
THE HUB LECTURES

Q & A - NOTES

RECOMMENDED READING



Michael S. Heiser,
The Unseen Realm
Lexham Press, 2015



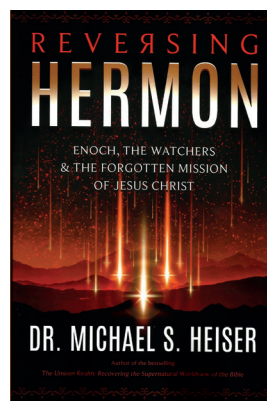
Michael S. Heiser
Supernatural,
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Michael S. Heiser
Angels
Lexham Press, 2020



Michael S. Heiser
Demons
Lexham Press 2020



Michael S. Heiser
Reversing Hermon
Defender, 2018



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