JESUS AND GENESIS 6:1-4: THE INCARNATION AS PARODIC REVERSAL OF THE **בני האלהים** REBELLION

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First, I want to thank you for being here and am honored that you chose to come. A handout is available to help follow. I will also have copies of my paper available after I deliver it.

Second, this paper serves as a conceptual sequel to my previously published study, "Corruption of the Imago Dei: The **בני האלהים** Motif, Giants, and Jude 5–7," in *JETS* 67, no. 4. It is also condensed from an article currently under review by *JETS* and began from a Sunday morning sermon series in Dec 2024. I have three main parts for my paper: orientation, canonical framework, and argumentation.

I. ORIENTATION

Studies of the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, have often been shaped by traditional systematic theology or Platonic frameworks.[1] This paper argues from a canonical-theological perspective that it may be more accurately read as a parodic reversal of the **בני האלהים** ("sons of God") rebellion in Genesis 6:1–4. The proposal is grounded in three movements: (1) an overview of the polemical and retributive pattern of a major Old Testament theme—YHWH against the gods; (2) a methodological extension of early patristic reasoning concerning the **נחש** ("serpent") of Genesis 3 to Genesis 6:1–4; and (3) substantiation through eight canonical corroborations. Accordingly, the study offers a canonical reading of the incarnation as the ironic undoing of a primordial rebellion and illuminates Christ's victory over rebellious cosmic powers within the grand narrative of Scripture, contributing to New Testament theology and ecclesiology.

This proposal requires more than thematic observation; it depends upon demonstrating that Scripture itself presents a recurring pattern of divine reversal in response to cosmic rebellion. If such a pattern can be established canonically, then the question becomes whether the rebellion of Genesis 6 likewise invites, and ultimately receives, a corresponding reversal in the incarnation. But first, a quick word on the angelic view of Genesis 6:1-4.

The angelic view concerning Gen 6:1-4 was predominant in Second Temple texts and early Christianity, largely displaced in the Western church by Augustine's Sethite interpretation for over a millennium, and significantly recovered in modern scholarship as the most historically coherent interpretation.[2]

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[1] For example, classical treatments such as Thomas Aquinas and Louis Berkhof frame the incarnation primarily through ontological and doctrinal categories, while figures like Origen and Augustine of Hippo reflect varying degrees of Platonic influence in their emphasis on divine transcendence and the descent of the Logos into the material realm.

[2] G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 401; E. Earle Ellis, "Foreword," in *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, by Leonhard Goppelt, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), x. And so, James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 19–20. See also Warren Austin Gage, *Gospel Typology in Joshua and Revelation: A Whore and Her Scarlet, Seven Trumpets Sound, A Great City Falls* (Fort

Lauderdale, FL: St. Andrews House, 2013); G. K. Beale, *Redemptive Reversals and the Ironic Overturning of Human Wisdom*, ed. Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 22. The following early church fathers held to the angels view and seem to constitute a consensus: Justin Martyr (c. 110–165); Athenagoras (c. 133–c. 190); Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 202); Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215); Bardaisan of Edessa (c. 154–c. 222); The Pseudo-Clementine Literature, The Homilies (c. 200–c. 400, attributed to Clement I, bishop of Rome); Tertullian (c. 145–c. 220); Origen (c. 185–c. 254); Cyprian (c. 200–c. 258); Commodian (c. 240, probably bishop of North Africa); Methodius (c. 260–c.312); Lactantius (c. 260–c. 312); Eusebius (c. 260–c. 340); Ambrosius (c. 340–c. 397); Sulpicius Severus (c. 363–c. 420); Didymus the Blind (c. 310–c. 398). See Jaap Doedens, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4: Analysis and History of Exegesis*, OtSt 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 124–63. And so, Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 139; Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1-4 in Early Jewish Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 90-96; *DDD*, 794; *ABD*, 156; *DOTP*, 797; *DNTB, 29, 153; DLNT*, 44, 716; James Crichton, "Sons of God (OT)," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915) 2835; Ryan E. Stokes, "Sons of God," *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 1251; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (London: SCM Press, 1961), 110; Duane Garrett, *Angels and the New Spirituality* (Nashville: B & H Books,1995), 47; Matthew James Hamilton, "Sons of God," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016); Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: The Common Grace Covenants* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 167; Gene M. Tucker and Mark Allan Powell, "Sons of God, Children of God," *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 985; Francis Kimmitt, "Sons of God," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1520; Biblical Studies Press, *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Ge 6:2; Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 49; Norman R. Ericson, "Spirits in Prison," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 745; Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 18 of *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 191–192; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 45–46; Robert Harvey and Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter & Jude*, ed. Grant R. Osborne, vol. 18 of *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 191–192; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter,* 50-51; Robert C. Newman, "The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4," *Grace Theological Journal* 05:1 (Spring 1984): 13-36; Frank Jabini, "Sons Of God Marrying Daughters Of Man: An Exercise In Integrated Theology," *Conspectus* 14:1 (Sep 2012): 81-121; Walter M. Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics Of Jude And 2 Peter: The Use Of Ancient Jewish Traditions," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31:3 (Sep 1988): 287-292; I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 17 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 1 Pet 3:19-20; Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1946), 315; Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Peter 3:19 and Its Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1946), 90-91, 131-32; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 139-140; Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004); Amy Elizabeth Richter, "The Enochic Watchers' Template and the Gospel of Matthew" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2010); Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 255; John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 37B (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 702; Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude,* vol. 37 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 451.

Contra to these scholars, Green claims, "the apostasy of the angels to which Jude refers is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures" and explains that Jude is referring to "a very well-known Jewish interpretation of Gen. 6:1–4 that understood the passage as a reference to angelic sin." See Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 66. But he does not corroborate the claim nor consider how the phrase **בני האלהים** is also used in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 and related to Num 13:33.

The Sethite view is contrived for the following reasons: (1) the line of Seth is never referred to as the "sons of God;" Godliness is not based upon bloodline, (2) Genesis 4:26 does not say all Sethites called upon the Lord, (3) the daughters of men are not identified as being from Cain, (4) is it equitable that all the "daughters of men" should be considered sinful? (5) there is no command to prohibit intermarriage of any human lines at the time, and (6) the Sethite view fails to explain the Nephilim. If both lines are human, why the abnormal offspring?

See also Amar Annus, "On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 19, no. 4 (May 2010), 280. Annus's work was followed by David Melvin, "The Gilgamesh Traditions and the Pre-history of Genesis 6:1-4," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 38, no. 1 (2011); Ida Fröhlich, "Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions," in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian*

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the angelic view is the consistent use of ordinary human terminology in narrative contexts which indicate that angelic beings do indeed possess the capacity to assume physical human form.[3]

Angelic Manifestation as Human ("Man") in Canonical Narrative[2]					
Passage	**Context**	**Original Term**	**English Rendering**	**Narrative Presentation**	**Ontological Identity**
Genesis 18:2, 16, 22	Three visitors to Abraham	**אֲנָשִׁים** (ʾănāšîm)	men	men	YHWH + angels
Genesis 19:5, 8, 10, 12, 16	Angels in Sodom	**אֲנָשִׁים** (ʾănāšîm)	men	men	angels
Ezekiel 9:2, 3, 11	Judgment executioners	**אִישׁ** (ʾîš) **אֲנָשִׁים** (ʾănāšîm)	man / men	men	angels
Daniel 10:5, 18	Radiant heavenly figure	**אִישׁ** (ʾîš)	man	man	angelic being
Daniel 12:5, 6	Two heavenly figures	**אִישׁ** (ʾîš)	men	men	angelic beings
Luke 24:4	At the empty tomb	**ἀνήρ** (anēr)	men	men	angels
Acts 1:10–11	Ascension scene	**ἀνήρ** (anēr)	men	men	angels
Hebrews 13:2	Exhortation about hospitality	**ἀγγέλους** (angelous)	angels	men (implicit)	angels

My proposal may invite two objections. First, one might argue that linking Christ's incarnation to the Genesis 6 rebellion is an interpretive overreach lacking explicit New Testament support, and thus imposes an unintended typology. However, this study does not depend on a strict typological claim, but on a canonical-theological approach that reads Scripture as a coherent, intertextually unified narrative in which such a connection may be warranted. As Beale explains,

> "Typology can be called contextual exegesis within the framework of the canon, since it primarily involves the interpretation and elucidation of the meaning of earlier parts of Scripture by latter parts.… Rather than exegeting a text only in light of its immediate literary context within a book, we are now merely exegeting the passage in view of the wider canonical context."[4]

Traditions, ed. Angela Kim Hawkins, Kelley Coblentz Bautch, and John C. Endres (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014); Henryk Drawnel, "The Mesopotamian Background of the Enochic Giants and Evil Spirits," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 21, no. 1 (2014).

[3] In addition to Genesis 6:1-4, see Genesis 18:2, 16, 22; 19:5, 8, 10, 12, 16; Ez 9:2, 3, 11; Dan 10:5, 6, 18; Lk 24:4 (cf. v. 23); Acts 1:10–11; and Heb 13:2.

[4] G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 401.

Moreover, E. Earl Ellis has demonstrated that the two main features of typology are: 1) *historical correspondence* between events, persons, and institutions in the Bible's salvation-historical unfolding, and 2) the following *escalation in significance*.[5] Beale has also demonstrated that retributive irony is the rule rather than the exception throughout the canon, reaching its zenith in Satan.[6] Therefore, the study presented here constitutes a theological synthesis rooted in the biblical narrative of divine rebellion and ironic redemptive reversal.

Second, one might argue that early patristic interpretations of Genesis 3, particularly the Eve–Mary parallel, should not be extended to Genesis 6. However, this reading does not fully reflect the fathers' intent. Their argument is grounded in a broader theological principle; that being, divine reversal through corresponding means. Because Genesis 6 presents the next major fall narrative, introducing both celestial and terrestrial corruption through the sons of God rebellion, this same logic provides a methodological precedent for reading the incarnation as God's decisive subversion of that rebellion and its offspring. While individual lines of evidence vary in strength, the cumulative case supports the thesis with theological and canonical coherence.

II. CANONICAL FRAMEWORK

If the incarnation is to be read as a parodic reversal of the Genesis 6 rebellion, then such a claim must be grounded in a demonstrable canonical pattern rather than isolated textual parallels. Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized the role of divine council traditions and rebellious cosmic powers within the biblical worldview (e.g., John Walton, Michael Heiser), while canonical approaches to biblical theology (e.g., Brevard Childs, John Sailhamer, G.K. Beale, James Hamilton, Jr.) have highlighted the importance of reading individual texts within the unfolding narrative of Scripture. Building on these developments, two canonical patterns provide the foundation for this proposal: (1) retributive irony in the Old Testament and (2) the patristic principle of analogical reversal.

1. *Retributive irony in the Old Testament.* The Old Testament frequently portrays YHWH engaging rival divine powers through forms of ironic reversal. He does not merely defeat; he subverts them. His judgments often mirror and overturn the strategies of those opposing forces.

For instance, in 1 Samuel 5, where Dagon is humiliated before the ark: the captured ark, ostensibly a symbol of defeat, becomes the instrument of YHWH's victory, and the Philistine deity is reduced to a decapitated idol. Isaiah 44:9–20 presents satirical idol polemic: the craftsman uses half the wood for fuel and fashions the other half into a god, so that the object of worship is itself consumable and humanly produced, reversing the creator–creature distinction. Jeremiah 10:1–16 depicts idols as powerless—unable to speak or walk and requiring transport—likened to scarecrows, such that supposed protectors cannot protect themselves; indeed, the gods who should bear their people must be borne by them (cf. Isaiah 46:1–7). In 1 Kings 18, Baal is defeated on his own terrain: the storm and fire deity fails to answer, while YHWH immediately sends fire from heaven. Finally, Daniel 5 recounts how YHWH's temple vessels are used in profane praise of Babylonian gods becomes the occasion of divine judgment, as the kingdom falls that very night. This demonstrates that the gods invoked are powerless to save and that idolatrous worship results in self-condemnation.

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[5] E. Earle Ellis, "Foreword," in *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, by Leonhard Goppelt, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), x. And so, James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 19–20. See also Warren Austin Gage, *Gospel Typology in Joshua and Revelation: A Whore and Her Scarlet, Seven Trumpets Sound, A Great City Falls* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: St. Andrews House, 2013).

[6] See G. K. Beale, *Redemptive Reversals and the Ironic Overturning of Human Wisdom*, ed. Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 22.

Rosner notes that idolatry warranted "the most disdainful polemic" and elicited prophetic scorn, being the chief identifying characteristic of the Gentiles.[7] Perhaps the most biting term of disgust used by the prophets is **גלולים**. Ezekiel employs this term 39 times.[8]

There is a very real temptation here to sanitize the text in the name of professionalism. But diminishing the shock diminishes the point God is making through Ezekiel. Wolff captures the force of the prophets when he describes the nations' gods as Scheißgötter—literally, "shitty gods." A toned-down rendering would be "dung gods." However, the shock is intentional. In texts like Ezekiel, rival powers are exposed as contemptible and humiliated.

Yet why would Ezekiel use such severe language? Bodi explains, "In the choice of such a particularly outrageous term, Ezekiel seems to be extrapolating from an element of ritual defecation in connection with the Ištar festival that was still regularly celebrated in the Babylonian exile in his time, the sixth century BCE. He elaborates a virulent attack against idolatry, which he identifies as an act of polluting oneself with excrement."[9] Gruber notes that medieval exegetes viewed *gillûlîm* as a dysphemism derived from *gĕlalîm* ("feces"), designed to provoke revulsion toward idolatry.[10] Such shocking rhetoric underscores the depth of love among the prophets for YHWH's glory: the greater the love, the deeper the contempt for rival deities.

Among the many, Isaiah 25:8 may be another instance of YHWH engaging in retributive irony upon contending powers, this time with the supreme enemy: Death. The Hebrew word **מות** (death) refers to more than the cessation of life; it is also the name of a specific Canaanite deity, as is attested in the Ugaritic literature.[11] This god is famous in the ancient world for having a big, cosmic mouth and matching appetite. He consumes both gods and men. As Fealey underscores, "Descent into the gullet of Mot is the equivalent of descent into the underworld."[12] Such are the notions of the pagan mind regarding Mot/Death, yet knowing this background may enlighten what the prophet Isaiah says in relation to YHWH's judgment of him.

Isaiah 25:8 reads, "He will swallow up death (**מות**) for all time." Ogden and Sterk affirm, "It is likely that this way of speaking has roots in the Canaanite story of Mot (Death)."[13] In other words, YWHW will swallow up the swallower in retributive irony at the end of all things. Perhaps the apostle Paul alludes to Isaiah 25:8 in his great explication of the resurrection, culminating with these words: "But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor 15:54).

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[7] B. S. Rosner, "Idolatry," 570.

[8] So Daniel Bodi, "Ezekiel's *gillûlîm* and Ritual Defecation in Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Between a Metaphor and a Symbolic Act (NB Akkadian, OB Mari, Greek, Aramaic, Talmudic Texts, and the Ugaritic marzeaḥ Feast)" *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society Special Supplement*, Studies in Honor of David Marcus, Edward L. Greenstein, ed. (New York: JTS, 2022): 97. H. W. Wolff suggests that the Hebrew term gillûlîm should best be translated with Scheißgötter, or "shit-gods." See Hans Wolff Walter, "Jahwe und die Götter in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Wirklichkeit Gottes und der Wirklichkeit der Welt" *Evangelische Theologie*, vol. 29, no. 8, (1969): 397-416. In addition, he cites Ezekiel as the author who first coined the outrageous term among the prophets. See also Z.C. Hill, *The Scatological Scriptures: A Biblical Theology of Dung* (PhD diss., Liberty University, 2024).

[9] Daniel Bodi, "Ezekiel's *gillûlîm* and Ritual Defecation in Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Between a Metaphor and a Symbolic Act (NB Akkadian, OB Mari, Greek, Aramaic, Talmudic Texts, and the Ugaritic marzeaḥ Feast)," 99.

[10] M. I. Gruber, "Gillulim," *DDD*, 346.

[11] So J.F. Fealey, *DDD*, 598.

[12] Fealey, *DDD*, 599.

[13] Graham S. Ogden and Jan Sterk, *A Handbook on Isaiah*, ed. Paul Clarke et al., vol. 1 & 2 of *United Bible Societies' Handbooks* (Reading, UK: United Bible Societies, 2011), 665. See also Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Is 25:7–8.

The image functions as theological inversion: the destroyer is destroyed by means corresponding to his own power. This pattern of retributive irony—where divine judgment reflects and overturns the offense—forms a recurring element in the canonical narrative.

2. *Patristic principle of analogical reversal.* Early patristic writers applied similar reasoning to Genesis 3. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Athanasius of Alexandria, among others, argued that the disobedience initiated through a virgin, Eve, was reversed through the obedience of a virgin, Mary.[14] Augustine writes:

> "It was necessary, therefore, that this carnal concupiscence should be entirely absent, when the offspring of the Virgin was conceived; *in whom the author of death was to find nothing worthy of death, and yet was to slay Him in order that he might be conquered by the death of the Author of life*: the conqueror of the first Adam, who held fast the human race, conquered by the second Adam, and losing the Christian race, freed out of the human race from human guilt, through Him who was not in the guilt, although He was of the race; that *that deceiver might be conquered by that race which he had conquered by guilt*."[15]

The logic is analogical: what entered through one mode is undone through a corresponding mode. The underlying theological principle is that God reverses rebellion through structurally analogous means. If such reasoning is appropriate in relation to Genesis 3, I argue it is worth extending to Genesis 6, the next major episode of primeval rebellion in the biblical narrative.

Taken together, these patterns establish a theological logic within the canon: divine rebellion is met with divinely orchestrated reversal through corresponding means. This logic is clearly applied to Genesis 3 in both Scripture and early Christian interpretation. Yet the rebellion of Genesis 6, which is marked by divine descent, unlawful union, and corrupted offspring, remains comparatively underexplored in this regard. If Genesis 6 introduces a further distortion within the primeval history, then the question naturally arises whether the incarnation constitutes its corresponding and climactic reversal. It is to this proposal, namely, the incarnation as the climactic reversal of Genesis 6, that we now turn.

III. ARGUMENATION: CANONICAL CORROBORATIONS

Genesis 6:1–4 presents two interrelated features that are crucial for this argument: 1) the sons of God's use of women, and (2) the nature and legacy of their offspring. The incarnation mirrors and inverts both dimensions.

1. *The sons of God use of women.* Genesis 6:2 states that "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose." The language recalls Genesis 3, where Eve "saw" and "took." The pattern of seeing, desiring, and appropriating signals transgressive acquisition. The annunciation narrative in Luke 1 reflects similar structural elements—divine descent, involvement of a woman, conception of offspring—yet reverses their moral and theological orientation.

A. *Desire.* In Genesis 6, the descent of divine beings is associated with acquisitive desire. The emphasis falls on visual appraisal and self-directed choice. In Luke 1, however, Gabriel addresses Mary as one who has "found favor with God." The initiative originates not in lust or exploitation, but in divine grace. The incarnation reframes descent as redemptive purpose.

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[14] See Justin Martyr, *ANF*, vol. 1, 249; Irenaeus of Lyons, *ANF*, vol. 1, 455; Tertullian, *ANF*, vol. 3, 536; Athanasius of Alexandria, *NPNF²,* vol. 4, 47.

[15] See Augustine of Hippo, *NPNF¹*, vol. 3, 180.

B. *Taking*. Genesis emphasizes that the sons of God "took wives for themselves," underscoring self-interest and autonomy. By contrast, the annunciation occurs within the context of formal betrothal. Mary is legally pledged to Joseph. The narrative stresses consent: "May it be done to me according to your word." The divine action does not override human agency but incorporates willing participation.

The unlawful appropriation of women in Genesis 6 is countered by covenantal and consensual participation in Luke 1.

C. *Union*. Genesis 6:4 describes the sons of God "coming in to" the daughters of men, employing terminology for sexual union. The annunciation narrative, however, avoids any such description. The conception of Jesus is attributed to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. No sexual act is implied. The contrast is deliberate: the incarnation replicates the structural pattern of descent and offspring while rejecting the transgressive mode of Genesis 6.

2. *The Offspring*. Genesis 6:4 characterizes the Nephilim as "mighty men of old, men of renown." The text associates them with abnormal stature, military prowess, fame, and pervasive violence. The New Testament presentation of Jesus parallels and reverses each of these features.

A. *Ontology (Nature)*. Among the various interpretations proposed regarding their ontology, Coxon rightly affirms that "most modern exegetes recognize the validity that the Nephilim were superhuman creatures, demi-gods, like Gilgamesh who was said to be two-thirds god and one-third human."[16] This understanding flows rationally since the **בני האלהים** are divine beings in corporeal form (cf. Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:2; 2:4; 38:7).

Conversely, the offspring of God is said to be "the holy Child" and "shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Thus, Jesus is not a hybrid being or demi-god like the Nephilim or Gilgamesh: he is of the same essence as God, his father, by God, the Holy Spirit. He is the Logos who was "with God, and the Word was God" (**πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος**, Jn 1:1). The word order in the original emphasizes the essence or quality of the Logos. In other words, Jesus had the very nature of God; he did not merely function as God. Paul explains, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (**ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς**), with **θεότητος** meaning divine essence in its absolute sense (Col 2:9).[17] Whereas the Nephilim were, *in parte*, of their divine progenitors, God the Son was, *in toto*, of his father, through the agency of God the Holy Spirit. Thus, in time, what was begotten of God made a mockery of what was begotten by the rebellious divine beings: they could not fully produce their own nature or **ὁμοούσιον** through women, as God did through Mary.

B. *Military conquest and cosmic authority*. The offspring of the disobedient sons of God are said to be "the mighty men (**הגברים**) who were of old" (Gen 6:4). This phrase pertains to their conduct in ancient times, and the definite article indicates a specific group of men; namely, they are strong

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[16] P. W. Coxon, "Nephilim," *DDD* 619. He considers this understanding, "as being a consistent picture of God's heavenly court and →council in the Hebrew Bible (Pss 29:1; 82:6; 89:6; Job 1–2; 1 Kgs 22:19–22; Isa 6:1–8). The NT notion of the fallen angels who like →Satan (Luke 10:18) plummeted to earth because they failed to recognise their position in the divine hierarchy (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6) has clear allusions to the Nephilim." Ibid. Correspondingly, the Gilgamesh Epic is the oldest extant epic in human history, impacting biblical studies. See J. M. Sasson, "Gilgamesh Epic," *ABD*, 1027.

[17] BDAG, 452. And so, John 5:18, "He was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God;" John 10:30, "I and the Father are one;" Philippians 2:6, "Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped;" Colossians 1:19, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him;" Hebrews 1:3, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature;" Hebrews 1:8,"But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever';" Titus 2:13, "…looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;" Revelation 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

warriors.[18] In ancient times, the most valiant and victorious warrior often rose to kingship, both by seizing spoils from conquered enemies and by attracting like-minded followers. Nimrod is said to be a **גבר** (mighty one) and a **גבור ציד** (mighty hunter) "before the Lord" (Gen 10:8-10). Hence, the one whose name means "we shall rebel" builds a kingdom by initially founding four cities, the first city being Babel (cf. Gen 10:10).[19] Babel, or Babylon, then becomes one of the dread images in the canonical metanarrative for all things idolatrous and anti-Christ (cf. Gen 11:1-9; Is 14:12–14; Jer 51:53; Dan 3–5; 1 Pet 5:12-14; Rev 17:5).[20]

As the grand storyline of the Christian canon expands from the flood narrative, the most pivotal OT characters had some involvement with the Nephilim or their offspring: Abraham (Gen 14), Moses (Num 21:33–35), Joshua (Josh 11:21–22), and David (1 Sam 17) — all of them warfighters. Joshua is most famous for leading God's people to eliminate the giant clans, and for defeating the ensconced kings within the promised land.[21] Some scholars have overlooked the many references to giant clans in their reading of the grand narrative of Scripture.[22]

The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua." In the Gospels, exorcism occupies a central role in Jesus's ministry. He exercises authority over unclean spirits and proclaims the arrival of the kingdom of God in conjunction with their expulsion.

Second Temple literature frequently associates demons with the disembodied spirits of the giants. Whether or not one adopts that full conceptual framework, the narrative pattern remains suggestive: the new Joshua confronts and subdues spiritual forces that stand in continuity with the legacy of primordial rebellion. Joshua defeated physical giants. Jesus exercises dominion over spiritual powers. The military dimension of Genesis 6 and its aftermath is thus reconfigured at a cosmic level in the ministry of Christ.

C. *Renown and name.* Genesis 6 describes the Nephilim as "men of renown," literally "men of the name." Their fame is tied to power and violence. In Philippians 2, God bestows upon Jesus "the name above every name." The scope of that name extends "in heaven and on earth and under the earth." The triadic formulation encompasses the entire cosmic order.

The contrast is not merely between two forms of fame, but between two kingdoms: one grounded in coercive dominance, the other in redemptive authority.

D. *Violence and blood.* Genesis 6 repeatedly emphasizes that "the earth was filled with violence." The offspring of the sons of God are embedded within a world characterized by bloodshed and

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[18] So, P. W. Coxon, "Gibborim," *DDD*, 345; James Swanson, in *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997); The *Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible;* Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ge 6:4.

[19] Although not entirely conclusive, Hamilton notes that most writers link the name Nimrod to the Hebrew verb mārad, which means, "to rebel." See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 338. And so, Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, in *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 185: "Nimrod (nim'-rod) = Rebel; a rebel; to be rebellious; (root = to be rebellious; to be contumacious). Valiant; strong; he that rules. We will rebel."

[20] See Leland Ryken et al., in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 68–69.

[21] The giant clans include the Nephilim (Gen 6:4; Num 13:33); Anakim (Num 13:22, 28, 33; Deut 1:28; 2:10, 11, 21; 9:2; Josh 11:21, 23; 14:12, 15; 15:13); Rephaim (Gen 14:5; 15:20; Deut 2:11, 20; 3:11, 13; Josh 12:14; 13:12; 15:18; 17:15; 18:16; cf. Josh 18:16, 2 Sam 5:18, 22; 23:13; Isa 17:5; 1 Chr 1:15; 14:9); certain Gibborim (e.g., Gen 6:4; 10:8-9; 1 Sam 17:51; 2 Sam 1:19-27; 2 Sam 23; 1 Chr 11; Ezra 32); the Emim (Deut 2:10); and Zamzumim/Zuzim (Deut 2:20; Gen 14:5).

[22] The *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996) does not mention the Nephilim, Anakim, Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, or Zamzummin, and has only one reference to giants; namely, Goliath. This stark omission is remarkable for a reference work of over 900 pages.

corruption. In the New Testament, the Son of God does not build a kingdom through the shedding of others' blood, but through the shedding of his own.

Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:8, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory,"s uggests that the crucifixion functions as ironic reversal. What appears as victory for hostile powers becomes the instrument of their defeat.

The violence associated with the Nephilim culminates in judgment through the flood. The violence directed at Jesus culminates in resurrection and exaltation.

Conclusion

When situated within the canonical narrative, the incarnation can be read not only as metaphysical mystery or soteriological means, but also as the grand theological counteraction to primordial rebellion. Genesis 6:1-4 portrays divine beings descending, appropriating women, producing violent offspring, and contributing to global corruption. Luke 1:30-35 portrays the triune God descending, honoring a willing virgin, bringing forth the holy Son, and inaugurating redemption.

The structural correspondences are evident; the moral and theological orientations are reversed. The incarnation thus functions as parodic and retributive inversion. The Son of God enters history in a manner that mirrors and overturns the rebellion of the sons of God.

Such a reading does not displace traditional Christological formulations. Rather, it situates them more fully within the narrative and polemical logic of the canon, where divine victory often takes the form of ironic reversal.

If what we've seen is true, that the incarnation functions as a parodic reversal within the canonical narrative, then our preaching must learn to move with that same canonical intelligence. Out of that conviction, I've been developing a web-based preaching tool shaped by Genesis 1–11. We'll be launching a beta version soon, and if you would like to participate, please contact me at marklrichardson@msn.com. Thank you.