

Jesus and Genesis 6:1-4:  
The Incarnation as Parodic Reversal  
of the בני האלהים Rebellion

Mark L. Richardson

*SW ETS* Meeting, Dallas Seminary, Houston, TX March 27, 2026

# Paper Outline

## **I. Orientation.**

- A. Abstract and objections.
- B. The angelic view.

## **II. Canonical framework.**

- A. Retributive irony in the Old Testament: YWHW vs. the gods.
- B. Patristic principle of analogical reversal.

## **III. Argumentation: Canonical Corroborations.**

- A. The use of women.
- B. The nature and legacy of offspring.

# Abstract

Studies of the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, have often been shaped by traditional systematic theology and Platonic metaphysical categories. This article argues, by contrast, from a canonical-theological perspective that the incarnation constitutes 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.

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# Angelic Beings as Human (“Man”) in Canonical Narrative

Passage	Context	Original Term	English Rendering	Narrative Presentation	Ontological Identity
Gen 18:2, 16, 22	Three visitors to Abraham	אַנְשֵׁים (’ānāšîm)	men	men	YHWH + angels
Gen 19:5, 8, 10, 12, 16	Angels in Sodom	אַנְשֵׁים (’ānāšîm)	men	men	angels
Ez 9:2, 3, 11	Judgment executioners	אִישׁ (’îš)	man / men	men	angels
Dan 10:6, 18	Radiant heavenly figure	אִישׁ (’îš)	man	man	angelic being
Dan 12:5, 6	Two heavenly figures	אִישׁ (’îš)	men	men	angelic beings
Lk 24:4 (cf. v. 23)	At the empty tomb	ἀνήρ (anēr)	men	men	angels
Acts 1:10–11	Ascension scene	ἀνήρ (anēr)	men	men	angels
Heb 13:2	Exhortation about hospitality	ἄγγελους (angelous)	angels	men (implicit)	angels

See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT), s.v. אִישׁ; Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (BDB), s.v. אִישׁ; Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), s.v. ἀνήρ. The consistent use of ordinary human terminology in narrative contexts indicates that divine beings are presented as men and thus possess the capacity to assume physical human form.

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Parodic Reversal		The Triune God vs. the Rebellious בני האלהים
<b>Desire</b> (Love vs Lust)	Gen 6:2a	“...saw (ראה) that the daughters of men were beautiful (טוב);”
	Lk 1:30	“Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.
<b>Took Wives</b> (Consensual vs Non-consensual)	Gen 6:2b	“...they took (לקח) wives for themselves, whomever they chose.”
	Lk 1:26-27; 38	“the angel Gabriel was sent from God...to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph...Mary.” “And Mary said, ‘Behold, the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”
<b>Sexual Union</b> (Non-physical vs Physical)	Gen 6:4c	“...the sons of God came in to the daughters of men...”
	Lk 1:35	“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”
<b>Nature</b> (Same vs Mixed)	Gen 6:4a-d	“The Nephilim were on the earth...when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them.”
	Lk 1:32a; 35c	“He...will be called the Son of the Most High;” “...the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

Parodic Reversal		The Triune God vs. the Rebellious בני האלהים
<b>Military Conquests</b> (Spirits of Giants Exorcized)	Gen 6:4e	“Those were the mighty men (הגברים) who were of old...”
	Lk 1:31b	“...and you shall name Him Jesus.”
<b>Fame</b> (Global restoration vs Global corruption)	Gen 6:4f	“...men of renown.”
	Lk 1:32a	“He will be great...”
<b>Kingdom(s)</b> (Everlasting vs Temporary)	Gen 6:4e	“Those were the mighty men (הגברים) who were of old...”
	Lk 1:33b	“...His kingdom will have no end.”
<b>Violence/ Bloodshed</b> (His own vs Others’)	Gen 6:4e	“Those were the mighty men (הגברים) who were of old...”
	Matt 1:21; Rom 5:9	“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

# Nephilim

*Gen 6:1, 4; Num 13:33*

# Rephaim

*Gen 14:5; 15:20; Deut 2:11, 20; 3:11, 13; Josh 12:4; 13:12; 15:8; 17:15; 18:16; 2 Sam 5:18, 22*

# Og

*Num 21:33; 32:33; Deut 1:4; 3:1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 13; 4:47; 29:7; 31:4; Josh 2:10; 9:10; 12:4; 13:12, 30, 31; 1 Kgs 4:19; Neh 9:22; Pss 135:11; 136:20*

# Arba

*Josh 14:15; 15:13; 21:11*

# Anak

*Num 13:22, 28, 33; Deut 9:2; Josh 15:13, 14; 21:11; Jgs 1:20*

# Ahima, Sheshai, Talmai

*Num 13:22; Josh 15:14*

# Anakim

*Deut 1:28; 2:10, 11, 21; 9:2; Josh 11:21, 22; 14:12, 15*

# Zuzim; Emim

*Gen 14:5;  
Deut 2:10, 11, 20*

# Goliath; Lahmi; Ishbi-benob; Saph (Sippai); Unnamed Giant

*1 Sam 17:4, 23; 21:9;  
22:10; 2 Sam 21:16, 18,  
19; 1 Chr 20:4-6*

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# SUMMARY

Parodic Reversal	The sons of God	↔		The Triune Godhead
1. Use of Women	Genesis 6:1-4	<b>Historical Correspondence</b>	<b>Increase in Significance</b>	Luke 1:26-38
• Desire	Lust			Love
• Took wives	Unlawfully, coerced			Took a willing betrothed virgin
• Sexual union	Physical in nature			No sexual union
2. Offspring				
• Nature	Giants; Hybrid beings			Shared essence with his Father
• Military conquests	Giants killed			Spirits of giants exorcised
• Fame	Global corruption			Global redemption
• Kingdom(s)	Temporary			Everlasting
• Violence/Bloodshed	Shed other's blood			Allows his blood to be shed

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