

## CORRUPTION OF THE *IMAGO DEI*: THE בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים MOTIF, GIANTS, AND JUDE 5–7

MARK L. RICHARDSON\*

**Abstract:** *This article asserts that the בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (“sons of God”) motif is a fundamental component of a canonical theological framework that helps the reader appreciate the coherence of Jude 5–7 and has important implications for theological anthropology, systematic theology, and homiletics. The article also fills a literature gap concerning the historical-religious background of Genesis 6:1–4, highlights significant omissions regarding the conquest period, clarifies the Greek text of Jude 7, and identifies the Old Testament content as part of the essentials of the faith previously taught to the original audience. While divine judgment has been rightly emphasized in the three epic Old Testament episodes that Jude describes, an additional commonality is the reality of anthropomorphic angels—a strange notion surpassed only by the conception and condescension of the Son of God in the form of man. This commonality becomes apparent as evidence from the Hebrew Bible, Mesopotamian and Second Temple sources, the Greek New Testament, early church fathers, and contemporary studies is used to interpret the passage and substantiate the article’s thesis.*

**Key words:** *Jude, sons of God, בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, imago Dei, Genesis 6:1–4, divine council, giants, Nephilim, Anakim, biblical theology, anthropology, systematic theology, anthropomorphic angels, מלאכים, catechism, false teachers, homiletics*

D. A. Carson once likened the Bible to a huge jigsaw puzzle that came with instructions from the manufacturer, but years later he corrected his own analogy. When a scholar of his importance and influence modifies his own comparison, all should take note. He writes, “It would be closer to the mark to imagine the same instructions with a gigantic three-dimensional puzzle, or, better yet, multi-dimensional puzzle beyond the third dimension.... The multidimensional nature of the Bible is always borne in mind by the better biblical theologians.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the

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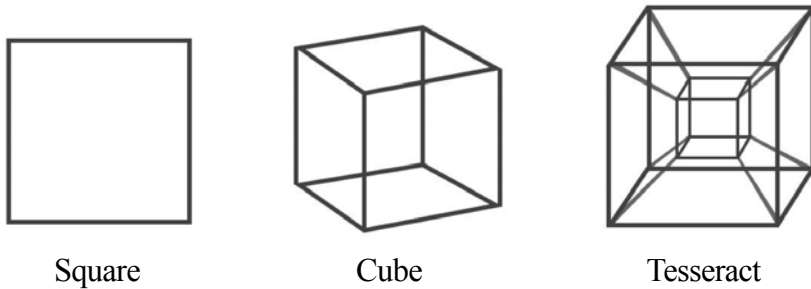
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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 30–31. In contradistinction to the fragmentation that some scholars perceive in the Christian canon, he argues, “Ideally, biblical theology will not only work inductively in each of the biblical corpora, but will seek to make clear the connections among the corpora, remembering all the while the complexity of the documents, the multidimensional nature of the synthesis we seek” (31).

following graphic of a two-dimensional square, a three-dimensional cube, and a four-dimensional tesseract helps to illustrate his point.

Figure 1. The Multidimensional Nature of the Bible Likened to a Tesseract



The reader of Jude enters tesseract-like territory and is immediately confronted with a rhetorical barrage involving a heated condemnation of false teachers—all of which comes with the fervor of an incandescent, iconoclastic OT prophet. Jude's collation of the judgment upon the unbelieving wilderness generation (v. 5), the angels who deserted their proper place (v. 6), and the Sodomites for their obscene desire (v. 7) has perplexed readers. How do these events correlate with the false teachers who have crept into the church? Why does Jude lead with this particular triad in the main body of his letter? Is the certainty of divine judgment their only commonality?

My thesis is that the **בני האלהים** (“sons of God”) motif is a fundamental component of a canonical theological framework that helps the reader appreciate the coherence of Jude 5–7 and has important implications for theological anthropology, systematic theology, and homiletics.<sup>2</sup> If correct, the proposal provides answers to the above questions and also yields insight concerning the sons of God motif across the Christian canon as a whole. In the pursuit of corroborating the thesis, I will suggest four hermeneutical hurdles that may obstruct the contemporary reader, which may explain why Jude has been generally neglected in NT studies, and which warrant a reassessment of Jude 5–7.

The four interpretive impediments are (1) segmentation: the established systematic theological tradition; (2) disassociation: modern dissonance with divine

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<sup>2</sup> By a “canonical theological” framework I mean what Sailhamer describes as “the study and presentation of what is revealed in the Old Testament,” and I would apply his definition and OT approach to the NT as well; hence, I have in view what is revealed in the entire Christian canon. See John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 197. He further delineates, “Our use of the word *canonical* should not be understood in light of the particular focus of *canon criticism*. Though there are surface similarities between canon criticism and the canonical theology of the OT..., there are, as well, fundamental differences. Chief among those differences are the understanding of the historicity of the biblical narratives and the nature of the composition of the biblical books” (198).

plurality; (3) inattention: neglect of the OT and Second Temple literature; and (4) fragmentation: postmodern deconstruction of the Christian canon. I argue that the sons of God motif, which contains the canonical concepts of anthropomorphic angels and giant clans, is apparent and intrinsically related to each of the three major OT events that Jude serves up at the beginning of his letter. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible, Mesopotamian cuneiform, Second Temple sources, the Greek text of verses 5–7, the early church fathers, and other contemporary sources are presented in support of this argument.

While discussions of authorship and historical setting are necessary and must be pursued, these will be set aside due to space constraints. Jude displays a canonical theology in view of the local issue of false teachers who have “crept in” (*παρεσέδυσαν*) among the people of God (v. 4).<sup>3</sup>

Jude 5–7 (NASB95)	Jude 5–7 (SBLGNT)
<sup>5</sup> Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.	<sup>5</sup> Ὑπομνήσαι δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, εἰδότας ὑμᾶς ἅπαξ πάντα, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς λαὸν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου σώσας τὸ δεύτερον τοὺς μὴ πιστεύσαντας ἀπώλεσεν,
<sup>6</sup> And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,	<sup>6</sup> ἀγγέλους τε τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφον τετήρηκεν·
<sup>7</sup> just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.	<sup>7</sup> ὡς Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα καὶ αἱ περὶ αὐτὰς πόλεις, τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον τούτοις ἐκπορνεύσασαι καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐτέρας, πρόκεινται δεῖγμα πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι.

## I. APPROACHING JUDE 5–7: HERMENEUTICAL HURDLES

Four hermeneutic hurdles should be briefly recognized in order to bring a measure of orientation. This sketch is also necessary because Jude tightly compresses epic, yet enigmatic, OT events involving supernatural beings into the one complex sentence that makes up the passage.

1. *Segmentation: the systematic theological tradition.* D. A. Carson rightly describes the difficulty of the exegetical, biblical theological task, given the systematic theological tradition. What is meant by the systematic theological tradition and how

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible references are from NASB 1995.

does it impact the interpreter? He explains, “Most systematic theology includes some sort of canvassing of earlier work by seminal theologians (Irenaeus, Anselm, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, and so forth). That means that many of the categories, not to mention the priorities for discussion and reflection on how various theological strands cohere, have been laid down by the ecclesiastical tradition, and it is very hard work to be informed by them without being controlled by them.”<sup>4</sup>

This interpretive difficulty becomes rather acute in the case of the sons of God motif found in the narrative arc of Genesis 1–11, which forms the backdrop to Jude 5–7. Prior to the call of Abram, there are three joint rebellions, each consisting of insubordinate **בני האלהים** and humanity in the storyline: (1) in the garden of Eden, (2) prior to the great flood where sin and violence proliferate, and (3) at the tower of Babel.<sup>5</sup> Regarding this third rebellion, Longman and Walton cite the ascent of the seventy nations in Genesis 10 and the scattering of the nations in Genesis 11, along with their allotment to the **בני אלוהים** in Deuteronomy 32:8.<sup>6</sup> A fragment of Deuteronomy discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls supports this interpretation and renders YHWH’s division according to the number of the **בני אלוהים**, or “sons of God.”<sup>7</sup>

Systematic theologies often overlook the historical-religious background of Genesis 6:1–4 and the crucial high point of Deuteronomy 32:8–9, perhaps because those works are born out of a logical and timeless segmentation of the biblical data.<sup>8</sup> Thus, continuing with Carson’s analogy, it is difficult to correctly assemble the

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 101.

<sup>5</sup> Seeing a joint rebellion connected with the tower of Babel is reliant upon a text-critical choice between **בני האלהים** and **בני ישראל** in Deuteronomy 32:8. Major Bible translations are divided on this textual choice and thus on the verse’s rendering. Some indicate that YHWH divides the nations according to the number of the “sons of God” (ESV, RSV), “gods” (NRSV), “heavenly beings” (GNT), “heavenly court” (NLT), or “heavenly assembly” (NET). Others indicate this division is according to the number of the “sons of Israel” (NASB, NIV), “children of Israel” (KJV, NKJV), or “people of Israel” (HCSB).

<sup>6</sup> Tremper Longman III and John H. Walton, *The Lost World of the Flood: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 138–39. Goldingay provides further insight: “It provides a form of explanation for the otherwise inexplicable fact that the nations do worship these deities.” John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Faith*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 46. See also Patrick D. Miller, *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 600.

<sup>7</sup> Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “4Q37 Deuteronomy J,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols. (New York: Brill, 1997–1998), 256. The LXX also supports this early Hebrew manuscript, rendering **בני אלוהים** as ἀγγέλων Θεοῦ. See *Septuaginta: With Morphology*, electronic ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), at Deut 32:8. Apart from the text-critical issue, the dividing of humanity could not be according to the sons of Israel because Israel did not exist at the time. For further substantiation, see Michael S. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God,” *BSac* 158.629 (2001): 52–74.

<sup>8</sup> The following systematic theologies do not discuss the historical-religious context of Genesis 6:1–4, nor do they address the division of humanity “according to the number of the sons of God”: Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner, 1872); John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892–1893); Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eer-

pieces of the jigsaw puzzle instead of following the way others have placed the pieces in an arrangement divorced from their original setting.

2. *Disassociation: contemporary dissonance with divine plurality.* The second interpretive hurdle involves a cognitive disconnection with the existence of lesser deities. But the Hebrew Bible clearly reveals the existence of supernatural beings other than YHWH. Simon B. Parker notes that

in several passages in the OT a group of heavenly beings other than Yahweh is referred to by the expressions *bēnē 'elyōn* “children of Elyon” (Ps. 82:6) and *bēnē 'elim* (Ps. 29:1; Ps. 89:7) or *bēnē (bā) 'elohim* (Gen. 6:2, Gen. 6:4; Job 1:6; Job 2:1; Job 38:7; and originally Deut. 32:8) “children of God,” “children of (the) gods” or “divine beings.”<sup>9</sup>

The phrase **בני האלהים** refers to a group of divine beings other than YHWH who are members of his **סוד** (“council”), and all ancient Mediterranean cultures had some conception of it (Jer 23:22).<sup>10</sup> Other passages acknowledge the existence of divine beings. Terms such as “gods” (**אלהים**), “god” (**אל**), “spirit” (**רוח**), “stars” (**כוכבי**), “holy ones” (**קדשים**), “seraphim” (**שרפים**), “watcher” (**עיר**), “watchers” (**עירין**), “prince” (**שר**), and “princes” (**שרים**) support this notion.<sup>11</sup> The process of putting a puzzle together becomes especially problematic if one discards or doubts the legitimacy of key pieces.

3. *Inattention: the neglect of the OT and germane Second Temple literature.* A third hermeneutic hurdle relates to the first two interpretive impediments and involves a disregard of the OT and Second Temple literature. Logos researcher Rick Brannan used data science analytics to examine the top one hundred most-cited Bible passages in systematic theologies. He explains, “First we identified all the systematic theology resources available on the Logos Bible study platform,” which, at the time,

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mans, 1938); James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive and Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999); R. T. Kendall, *Understanding Theology*, vols. 1–3 (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1996, 2000, 2001); Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002–2005); Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). Many of the above theologians are indebted to the work of Carl F. H. Henry. However, he too does not address the pivotal event concerning the sons of God and humanity at Babel in the storyline of Scripture. See Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word, 1976–1983).

<sup>9</sup> Simon B. Parker, “Sons of (the) God(s),” *DDD* 794. See also Torleif Elgvin, “Belial, Beliar, Devil, Satan,” *DNTB* 153; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Angels of the Nations,” *DNTB* 29. Parker also holds that corresponding Greek expressions appear in the NT to characterize the ultimate transformation of God’s people into heavenly beings. Further, the LXX renders the **בני האלהים** of Genesis 6:2, 4 as *οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ*, which indicates the LXX translators understood the sons of God to be spiritual beings.

<sup>10</sup> Michael S. Heiser, “Divine Council,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2012), 162.

<sup>11</sup> See, respectively, Exod 12:12; Deut 3:24; 2 Chr 18:20; Job 38:7; Ps 89:5; Isa 6:2, 6; Dan 4:13, 17; and Dan 10:13.

totaled over 300 systematic theologies that cited over 830,000 Bible verses.<sup>12</sup> He was surprised to find “the general lack of Old Testament references in the top 100; there are only nine.”<sup>13</sup> Brent A. Strawn documents the decline of the OT in the practice of preaching and worship.<sup>14</sup> Duke scholar Ellen F. Davis tracks the same trend, lamenting that “the Old Testament is ceasing to function as Scripture in the European-American mainstream church.”<sup>15</sup> It becomes difficult to connect all the pieces if one focuses on just one-fourth of the puzzle, that is, the NT.

J. Julius Scott Jr. rightly claims that evangelicals have left the Second Temple corpus as “largely unworked mines” due to a litany that includes “ignorance of content, baffling critical problems, prejudice against or fear of ancient non-canonical writings, abuses by scholars with antsupernatural biases or destructive intents, or simple lack of concern and misplaced priorities.”<sup>16</sup> Others may claim they have not made use of Second Temple literature because it is inconsistent in its reflection of actual Second Temple beliefs and practices. Yet when both OT and NT passages reflect terms, associations, themes, theology, and specific vocabulary from this era’s literature, they assist the interpreter to better understand the worldview of the canonical writers.

R. H. Charles notes that the influence of 1 Enoch upon the NT has been greater than all the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books taken together. His evidence includes one hundred NT phrases and ideas either directly dependent on or illustrative of passages in 1 Enoch.<sup>17</sup> In the most well-known evidence of 1 Enoch’s influence on the NT, Jude apparently quotes from 1 Enoch 1:9 (cf. Jude 15) or perhaps alludes to an earlier oral tradition. Accordingly, the process of putting the pieces back together may be enhanced if other similar puzzles are known.

4. *Fragmentation: postmodern deconstruction of the Christian canon.* Deconstructive approaches question the idea of an integrated, congruent message of the Bible. Scholars with this method challenge traditional assumptions concerning the authority and theological consistency of the Christian canon as a whole. The idea of a single authoritative understanding of a passage or book is scorned from a standpoint epistemology. However, Blank exposes the radical skepticism: “Deconstruc-

<sup>12</sup> Rick Brannan, “Writing a Systematic Theology? Top 100 Bible References to Cover,” *Word by Word* (Logos blog), 5 June 2017, <https://www.logos.com/grow/writing-systematic-theology/>. Unfortunately, Brannan has not formally published his findings to date. However, given his qualifications and the nature of the research, his blog post serves as corroborating evidence for my larger point.

<sup>13</sup> Neither Genesis 6:1–4 nor 11:1–9 were among the nine Old Testament references.

<sup>14</sup> See Brent A. Strawn, *The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*, Theological Explorations for the Church Catholic (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Ellen F. Davis, “Losing a Friend: The Loss of the Old Testament in the Church,” *ProEcl* 9.1 (2000): 83.

<sup>16</sup> J. Julius Scott Jr., “On the Value of Intertestamental Jewish Literature for New Testament Theology,” *JETS* 23.4 (1980): 322.

<sup>17</sup> See R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch: Translated from the Editor’s Ethiopic Text, and Edited with the Introduction, Notes and Indexes of the First Edition with a Reprint from the Editor’s Text of the Greek Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), xcvi–ciii. He also discusses theology in 1 Enoch that corresponds with NT doctrines.

tion finds meaningfulness in meaninglessness, certainty in uncertainty.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the very concept of a jigsaw puzzle itself is questioned, including what the pieces are, with no concern or care for the instructions given by the manufacturer.

## II. ARGUMENTATION: UNDERSTANDING THE COHERENCE OF JUDE

Jude 5 (NASB95)	Jude 5 (SBLGNT)
<sup>5</sup> Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.	<sup>5</sup> Ὑπομνήσαι δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, εἰδότας ὑμᾶς ἅπαξ πάντα, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς λαὸν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου σῶσας τὸ δεύτερον τοὺς μὴ πιστεύσαντας ἀπώλεσεν,

1. *Verse 5: The wilderness generation and fear of the Nephilim.* As Jude commences his address, he affirms a certain knowledge among his readers. He tells them they εἰδότας ὑμᾶς ἅπαξ πάντα, or “know all things once for all” (v. 5). Bauckham states, “πάντα (‘all things’) could mean simply ‘all that I wish to tell you,’ ... but with ἅπαξ, ‘once and for all,’ more naturally means ‘all the essentials of the faith in which the apostles instructed you at the time of your conversion’ (cf. v 17).”<sup>19</sup>

This explanation indicates that the subject matter to follow was among the fundamentals taught to new believers *previously*. The nascent disciples had already been catechized with the upcoming content. Jude was simply reminding them of these things. Regarding the Greek text, Frey concurs with the insight of Bauckham, noting, “So, what is said here is nothing new, but the tradition from the beginning, part of the original content of faith, in which the addressees share.”<sup>20</sup>

Jude begins with the unbelief manifest in the wilderness generation as the first case in point of rebellion and evil in view of the false teachers. But how does this relate to the stated purpose of Jude? Jude leads with the wilderness generation because they failed to do one thing—fight. This example flows rationally from his previous imperative. In verse 3, he exhorts his readers to “contend earnestly” (ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι) for the faith. The false teachers were turning the grace of God into ἀσέλγειαν (“licentiousness”), a kind of self-abandonment that violates all bounds of what is socially acceptable in the sense of sexual excess (v. 4).<sup>21</sup>

Beale and Gladd point to Numbers 14, “where the people of Israel disobey God by grumbling against Moses and God. In their view, Egyptian captivity is better than entering the Promised Land and being destroyed by the Canaanites (Num

<sup>18</sup> G. K. Blank, “Deconstruction: Entering the Bible through Babel,” *Neot* 20 (1986): 61–67.

<sup>19</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Dallas: Word, 1983), 48–49. He perceives that the particular topics in their original instruction are included in verses 5–16.

<sup>20</sup> “Was gesagt wird, ist also nichts Neues, sondern die Tradition des Anfangs, Bestandteil des ursprünglichen Glaubensguts, an dem die Adressaten Anteil haben.” Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, THKNT 15.2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 70. If so, the difference between the didactic content in Jude and in many subsequent Christian catechisms seems rather stark.

<sup>21</sup> See BDAG 141; TDNT 490.

14:1–4).”<sup>22</sup> But they do not discuss or point the reader back into the broader storyline to understand the reason for their thinking and action. The sons of God motif assists the reader in the grand narrative at this critical juncture: “There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Num 13:33). They failed to fight the Nephilim due to fear, and they did not believe YHWH had given the land over to them. Correspondingly, there are more pieces to the puzzle.

In addition to the Nephilim, who are first mentioned in Genesis 6:1–4, the narrator states that “the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim” (Num 13:33). Joshua 11:22–23 describes the end of the conquest period: “There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained. So Joshua took the whole land.” Thus, the entire narrative of the conquest period is bookended with the Anakim.

Hebron was initially known as Kiriath-arba, the city of Arba, and Arba was identified as אבי הענק (“the father of Anak,” Josh 15:13; 21:11; cf. Judg 1:10). Arba was also “the greatest man among the Anakim” (Josh 14:15). Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai are described as ילדי הענק (“the descendants of Anak,” Num 13:22; cf. v. 28), and the three were driven out by Caleb in the conquest period (Josh 15:14).

The Anakim were also regarded as Rephaim (cf. Deut 2:10). The defeat of king Og of Bashan, known as the last of the Rephaim (3:11), and of king Sihon of the Amorites, ranks with the exodus from Egypt as one of the great redemptive acts of God and is recollected in prayer for his enduring compassion to the returning exiles (Neh 9:22).<sup>23</sup> The Rephaim were also called the Emim by the Moabites (“tall as the Anakim”) and Zamzummin by the Ammonites (cf. Deut 2:10, 11, 20). As the redemptive story unfolds, the most outstanding OT figures have a dramatic connection with the Nephilim or their offspring: Noah (Gen 6:1–4), Abraham (Gen 14), Moses (Num 21:33–35), Joshua (Josh 11:21–22), and David (1 Sam 17).

From a canonical perspective, giants are walking, carnal corruptions of the *imago Dei*, fathered by the rebellious sons of God. They are anthropological nightmares. The Nephilim and related giant clans do not bear or convey the *imago Dei*, but, instead, the *imago angelorum malorum*. Wright raises noteworthy questions regarding the ontology of the giants pertaining to their human component. He ponders, “Was there an innate incompatibility between the angelic spirit of the giant and his physical body? Is this the reason they had such a violent nature? It seems the spirits of the giants were not able to exist within a physical body without bringing about violent behavior, because they are illegitimate and not properly constituted.”<sup>24</sup> Thus,

<sup>22</sup> G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *The Story Retold: A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 445. Schreiner also does not mention the giants in his analysis of Jude 5. Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 444–47.

<sup>23</sup> “Sihon,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1963.

<sup>24</sup> Archie T. Wright, “The Demonology of 1 Enoch and the New Testament Gospel,” in *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccac-



because of their origin and constitution, they are ripe for divine judgment and must be eradicated. YHWH does not commend genocide per se, as some scholars maintain. McKenzie reasons, “It may bring some relief to modern readers scandalized by the occurrence of this genocidal theme in the Bible to realize that it was probably never really carried out under Joshua.”<sup>25</sup> Rather, YHWH justly commands the utter destruction of wicked incarnations of evil, conceived with the awful intent to corrupt his original purpose for humanity. While a comprehensive accounting is not intended, Figure 2 depicts some of the associations regarding the Nephilim with other giant clans and individual giants in the OT.<sup>26</sup>

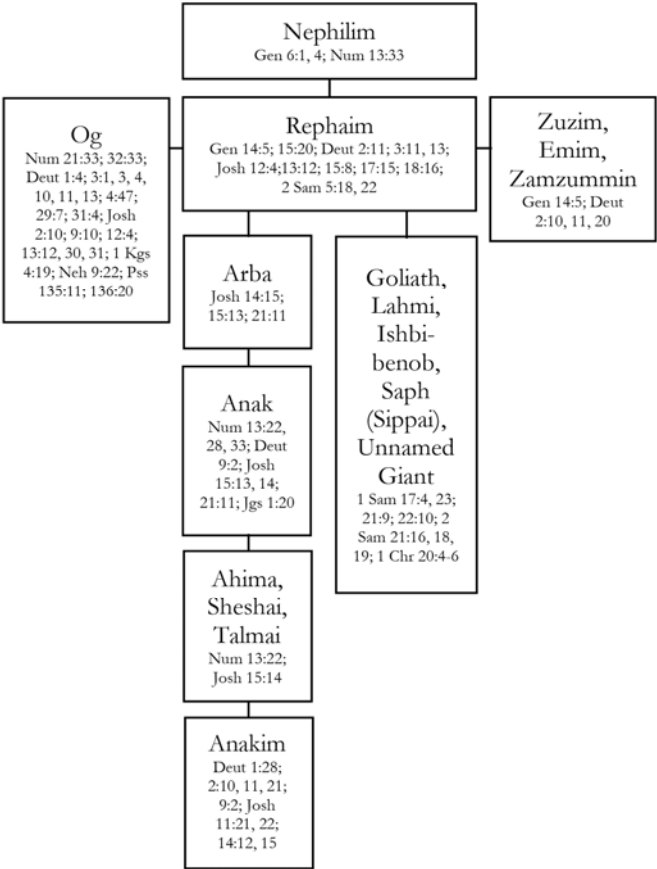
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cini (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 242. While he posits these inquiries based on the giantology of the Book of Watchers, they remain pertinent to the giant clans of the OT. Heiser concurs with this notion: “The Nephilim bloodlines had a different pedigree. They were produced by other divine beings. They did not belong to Yahweh, and he therefore had no interest in claiming them. Coexistence was not possible with the spawn of other gods.” See Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 203.

<sup>25</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, *Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 55.

<sup>26</sup> On the perplexing issue of giants existing after the flood, Heiser proposes two possible solutions: (1) the flood was a localized event, or (2) there was another incursion, or multiple incursions, by additional sons of God. See Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 189–91.

Figure 2. Jude 5: Giants and Giant Clans



The original audience of Jude had already been taught the OT backstory regarding the giants and the Nephilim. However, the OT giant clans can be overlooked by scholars in their reading of the grand storyline of Scripture.<sup>27</sup> Recall that in Jude 4 the false teachers are described as engaging in a kind of pedagogy that turned the grace of God into “licentiousness” (ἀσελγειαν), an unrestrained violation of the sexual order that God ordained. Therefore, the readers must “contend

<sup>27</sup> The *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) does not mention the Nephilim, Anakim, Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, or Zamzummin, and has only one reference to a giant: Goliath. This omission is remarkable for a reference work of over nine hundred pages. Neither are the Nephilim or Anakim mentioned in relation to the wilderness generation and Jude 5 in Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, 70–73; Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Jude*, *Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 172–74.

earnestly” (v. 3), something the wilderness generation failed to do, specifically because of the Nephilim and Anakim. The unrestrained violation of sexual order ordained by God, a dangerous byproduct of the false teachers now within the church, leads Jude to introduce the penultimate example of licentiousness found in the Christian canon. This example is in direct connection with the giants, as seen in the next verse.

Jude 6 (NASB95)	Jude 6 (SBLGNT)
6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,	6 ἀγγέλους τε τοὺς μὴ τηρήσαντας τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχὴν ἀλλὰ ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφον τετήρηκεν·

2. *Verse 6: The angels who deserted their domain.* What angelic episode does Jude refer to in verse 6? He describes certain angels who did not keep their own sphere of official activity or rule (ἀρχήν).<sup>28</sup> Instead, they departed from their sphere with a sense of finality or desertion.<sup>29</sup> In the grand storyline of the OT, Genesis 6:1–4 is the only incident where this angelic activity occurs. Schreiner rightly reasons that because so many cultures have “the presence of the story of the sexual union of angels and human beings ... such accounts are distortions of an event that once occurred, an event that is accurately recorded in Gen 6:1–4.”<sup>30</sup>

Correspondingly, Wenham claimed over thirty-five years ago, “the ‘angel’ interpretation is at once the oldest view and that of most modern commentators.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> BDAG 138.

<sup>29</sup> BDAG 115.

<sup>30</sup> Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter*, Jude, 451.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Dallas: Word, 1987), 139. So also Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1–4 in Early Jewish Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 90–96. See Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 255; Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 50–51; Brendan Byrne, “Sons of God,” *ABD* 6:156; James Crichton, “Sons of God (OT),” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: Howard-Severance, 1915), 2835; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 139–40; Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 49; Walter M. Dunnnett, “The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions,” *JETS* 31.3 (1988): 287–92; Elgvin, *DNTB* 153; John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 37B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 702; Norman R. Ericson, “Spirits in Prison,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 745; Duane Garrett, *Angels and the New Spirituality* (Nashville: B&H, 1995), 47; Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 18 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1987), 191–92; James M. Hamilton, “Sons of God,” *Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016); Robert Harvey and Philip H. Towner, *2 Peter and Jude*, IVPNTC 18 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 191–92; Michael S. Heiser, “The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004); Frank Jabini, “Sons of God Marrying Daughters of Man: An Exercise in Integrated Theology,” *Conspectus* 14.1 (2012): 81–121; Francis Kimmitt, “Sons of God,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1520; *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), at Gen 6:2; I. How-

These works reaffirm what most early church fathers held.<sup>32</sup> However, instead of rehashing the convincing evidence in support of the angels view, I will focus on what is not addressed in those works; namely, the historical-religious backdrop of the perplexing passage.<sup>33</sup>

Until recently, the historical and polemical background of the pericope has not been part of the discussion. However, Amar Annus has gathered the relevant, distinctly Mesopotamian primary sources germane to Genesis 6:1–4 and argues that the various accounts of antediluvian Mesopotamian and Jewish histories are primeval debates. Annus contends that Jewish authors frequently flip the Mesopotamian intellectual script in order to show their own cultural supremacy. His study comparatively explores “how Jewish authors systematically discredited the Mesopota-

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ard Marshall, *1 Peter*, IVPNTC 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 122–29; Robert C. Newman, “The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4,” *Grace Theological Journal* 5.1 (1984): 13–36; Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology: The Common Grace Covenants* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2014), 167; Parker, DDD 794; Bo Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Peter III. 19 and Its Context* (1946; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 90–91, 131–32; Amy Elizabeth Richter, “The Enochic Watchers’ Template and the Gospel of Matthew” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2010); Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 45–46; Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1946), 315; Ryan E. Stokes, “Sons of God,” *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1251; Stuckenbruck, DNTB 29; Gene M. Tucker and Mark Allan Powell, “Sons of God, Children of God,” *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, 985; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (London: SCM, 1961), 110; J. H. Walton, “Sons of God, Daughters of Man,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2003), 797. Contra these scholars, Green claims, “The apostasy of the angels to which Jude refers is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures,” explaining 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.” Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 66. But he does not corroborate the claim nor consider how the phrase בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים is also used in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 and how it is related to Numbers 13:33.

<sup>32</sup> The following early church fathers held to the angelic view and seem to constitute a majority: 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. Doedens’s research also indicates that in the writings of the fathers of the church from the fifth until the twelfth century, it is exclusively the Sethites interpretation that is found (163).

<sup>33</sup> Julius Africanus (c. 160–240) appears to be the first Christian writer to propose the Sethite interpretation prior to its adoption by the highly influential Augustine (see Dionysius of Alexandria, *ANF* 6:131). However, 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) It is not 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. (6) The Sethite view fails to explain the Nephilim. If both lines are human, why the abnormal offspring?

mian primordial sages (*apkallu* in Akkadian) as the Watchers and Nephilim, while making them a part of their national history.”<sup>34</sup>

Annus cites cuneiform tablets of scholarly texts from first-millennium Mesopotamia. They were thought to contain esoteric wisdom accessible solely to scholars. These secrets include crafts such as how to be free from evil spirits, how to obtain and maintain health, omen interpretation, ritual prayers, and astrology—all of which came from the secret wisdom of the antediluvian sages, the *apkallus*. These scholarly texts were to be kept secret within the scribal succession. Annus concludes, “Watchers revealing divine secrets to earthly women in exchange for sex must be taken as a hilarious irony, and as an indication of the polemical stance that the Jewish intellectuals took against their Mesopotamian colleagues.”<sup>35</sup>

This understanding of the historical-religious background and its theological polemic corroborates the angels view of Genesis 6:1–4. The work of Annus leads to greater precision in understanding the backdrop of the short, strange pericope of Genesis 6:1–4, bridging the knowledge gap between ancient and modern readers. The original audience was not in need of an explanation of the passage, otherwise it seems the author would have provided it, and this lack of explanation seems apparent with the audience of Jude as well.

Correspondingly, from a literary perspective, the angelic rebellion is linked with Eve’s rebellion. The biblical narrative uses the same three terms to describe how certain sons of God rebelled in congruence with her disobedience. She “saw” (ראה) the fruit from the tree of knowledge was “good” (טוב) and she “took” (לקח) it (Gen 3:6). In the Genesis 6:1–4 intrusion, it is heavenly beings whose rebellion is described in the same manner. They “saw” (ראה) human women as “good” (טוב), and they “took” (לקח) wives for themselves (v. 2).<sup>36</sup> Thus, the sons of God incursion may be seen as an ironic inversion of Eve’s rebellion. She, as an image bearer of God, sought to ascend to a greater status, while the divine sons of God descend in the form of mortal men.

But due to the strange nature of the angelic-human interaction, the literary trajectory of Genesis 1–11 has been obfuscated. Julius Wellhausen labels what is described in Genesis 6:1–4 as a “cracked, erratic boulder,” relative to the larger

<sup>34</sup> Amar Annus, “On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions,” *JSP* 19.4 (2010): 280. Moreover, he argues that both histories cover exactly the same ground in regard to Genesis 6:1–4. See also J. C. Greenfield, “Apkallu,” *DDD* 72.

<sup>35</sup> Annus, “On the Origin of Watchers,” 291. Annus’s work was followed by David Melvin, “The Gilgamesh Traditions and the Pre-history of Genesis 6:1–4,” *PRSt* 38.1 (2011); Ida Fröhlich, “Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions,” in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Angela Kim Hawkins, Kelley Coblenz Baultch, and John C. Endres (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014); Henryk Drawnel, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Enochic Giants and Evil Spirits,” *DSD* 21.1 (2014).

<sup>36</sup> The verb לקח is also used in the taking of a woman for sex (cf. Gen 34:2; 2 Sam 3:15; 11:4). These instances include rape and the taking of men’s wives. However, the Genesis 6:1–4 text is inconclusive.

narrative of Genesis 1–8.<sup>37</sup> Hermann Gunkel calls it “a torso” or “a fragment.”<sup>38</sup> G. K. Beale chose not to address the passage in his seminal, canonwide work.<sup>39</sup> However, if the reader would allow the passage to stand, as bizarre as it may seem, then the event is not a boulder to the OT storyline, but a significant bridge to the greater narrative.

Yet how does this event coincide with the false teachers in the church? There is evidence in both Second Temple and early Christian sources that indicates the belief that the sons of God gave instruction to humanity upon their descent.<sup>40</sup> Chief among the influential Jewish sources is 1 Enoch 6–11. The narrative names the complicit angels and the content of their illicit pedagogy. They teach mankind skillsets in four specific areas through which the sin of humanity proliferates: weaponry, immorality, pharmacology, and occultism. Much godlessness arises as mankind is led astray and corrupted through the illicit instruction by the evil angels. Table 1 lists the nine Watchers named and their pedagogical specialization.

Table 1: The Illicit Pedagogy of the Fallen Angels in 1 Enoch 6–11

Name	Subject	Specialization
Azâzêl	Weaponry Immorality	The making of swords, knives, shields, breastplates, and metallurgy; the making of bracelets and ornaments, the use of antimony, the beautifying of the eyelids, all kinds of costly stones, and all coloring tinctures
Semjâzâ	Pharmacology	Enchantments and root-cuttings
Armârôs Barâqijâl Kôkabêl Ezêqêêl Araqiêl Shamsiêl Sariêl	Occultism	Resolving of enchantments Astrology Constellations Knowledge of the clouds Signs of the earth Signs of the sun Course of the moon

<sup>37</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (1885; repr., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 317.

<sup>38</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901), 59. Childs describes the story as “a foreign particle of pagan mythology” that the Israelite tradition has radically altered; “even in the final stage the mutilated and half-digested particle struggles with independent life against the role to which it has been assigned within the Hebrew tradition.” Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT 27 (London: SCM, 1960), 54, 57.

<sup>39</sup> G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*. He chooses not to address the ontology or actions of the sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4 because a “lack of space prevents discussion of this controverted passage here.” This is a remarkable claim for such a significant work of 962 pages. See G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 402.

<sup>40</sup> See Jub. 4:15 (OTP 61–62); Justin Martyr, 2 *Apol.* 5 (ANF 1:190). Justin also holds to the worldview of Deuteronomy 32:8–9, where God assigns the sons of God to the nations and vice versa.

These Jewish and Christian sources indicate that the rebellious angelic descent involved teaching mankind to become more skillful in their depravity. This understanding of the Watchers incursion coheres with Jude 6 and the emphasis on false teaching in the letter as a whole. But how does the angelic incursion relate to the next verse regarding Sodom and Gomorrah?

Jude 7 (NASB95)	Jude 7 (SBLGNT)
7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.	7 ὡς Σόδομα καὶ Γόμορρα καὶ αἱ περὶ αὐτὰς πόλεις, τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον τούτοις ἐκπορνεύσασαι καὶ ἀπελθοῦσαι ὁπίσω σαρκὸς ἐτέρας, πρόκεινται δεῖγμα πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι.

3. *Verse 7: The unlawful lust of the Sodomites for the מלאכים called אנשים.* Jude tightly unites the third rebellion in verse 7 with the revolt in verse 6 by the phrase “in the same way as these” (τὸν ὅμοιον τρόπον τούτοις). But how is the conduct of the Sodomites directly connected with the angels who rebelled (cf. Gen 19)? They “indulged in gross immorality” (ἐκπορνεύσασαι). Ἐκπορνεύω is a *hapax legomenon* in the NT, meaning to engage in illicit sexual relations or debauchery.<sup>41</sup> However, if verse 6 refers to Genesis 6:1–4, what is the nature of the illicit immorality in verse 7, since there is no indication of homosexual activity in Genesis 6:1–4?

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.” At issue is the verb לקח (to take): Is this a benign taking of wives? Is the passage indicating normal, moral marriage protocol and wedding bliss? On the surface, the text of Genesis 6:1–4 is inconclusive. The verb לקח is used in Genesis 34:2 to describe what Shechem did to Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob. When Shechem “saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.” When David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, desiring Michal to be his wife, Ish-bosheth “sent and took her from her husband” Paltiel (2 Sam 3:14–15). Upon seeing the beauty of Bathsheba, David also “sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her” (2 Sam 11:4). Thus, the verb לקח is used in the contexts of taking a woman for violent rape, for the taking of another man’s wife to be one’s own, and for adultery. However, since Genesis 6:2 describes the state of the world prior to the great flood, it seems that the kind of taking of women as wives is not innocent, lawful, or normal—the whole world must be cleansed of such “taking” by the malevolent בני אלוהים.

Regarding Jude 7, Hamilton emphasizes that τούτοις (“these”) is masculine and refers to the rebellious angels, not to the feminine noun πόλεις (“cities”) con-

<sup>41</sup> BDAG 309.

nected to Sodom and Gomorrah. He observes, "If we identify the antecedent of *τούτοις* as the angels of v. 6, then Jude must be seeing in Gen. 6:1–4 not marriage, but rape and fornication, and titanic lust, an interpretation favored by pseudepigraphical literature."<sup>42</sup> Hamilton may go too far in stating that Jude does not see marriage in Genesis 6:2. Still, he is right to connect the angelic taking described by Jude with the militant homosexuals of Sodom. The apparent debased desire of the Sodomites for the homosexual gang rape of the two *מלאכים* called *אנשים* ("men") corresponds with the sin of the angels in Jude 7. Many scholars hold that this evil was the unlawful intent of the Sodomites regarding the anthropomorphic angels who came to rescue Lot and his family.<sup>43</sup>

Jude further describes the sexual decadence of the Sodomites. They went after "strange flesh" (*σαρκὸς ἑτέρας*). The adjective pertains to being dissimilar in kind or class from all other entities.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the connection that links the sin of the Sodomites (v. 7) with the sin of the angels (v. 6) is that both parties sexually desired (with the intent of rape) and went after flesh of a different kind or type. Bauckham comments regarding the meaning of *ἑτέρας*, "The sin of the Sodomites (not, strictly, of the other towns) reached its zenith in this most extravagant of sexual aberrations, which would have transgressed the order of creation as shockingly as the fallen angels did."<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, he affirms the ancient Jewish understanding that the incursion of the sons of God involved angels assuming the physicality of men, unlawfully and immorally taking women as wives, and producing hybrid offspring.

If anything further is needed to substantiate the strange reality of anthropomorphic angels, additional canonical evidence exists. Recall when the Lord ap-

<sup>42</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 272. The same grammatical observation is found in Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, 77, and Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 71–72. Bateman omits this rule of grammar in his own translation of Jude 7 and inserts "Sodom and Gomorrah" in parenthesis indicating his understanding of "these." Doing so misses the intent of Jude, obscures the comparative connection he makes with the angels in verse 6, and further obfuscates one of the fundamentals of the faith taught to the original recipients. See Bateman, *Jude*, 165–66.

<sup>43</sup> So J. M. Sprinkle, "Sexuality, Sexual Ethics," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, 748; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC 2 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 55, 63; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 135; 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), at Gen 19:4–10; K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, NAC 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 231; Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 276; William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 412; D. H. Field, "Homosexuality," *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 479; Victor Paul Furnish and Mark Allan Powell, "Homosexuality," *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 388; Paul H. Wright, "Gangs," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 622; John E. Anderson, "Genesis, Book of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*; "Lot, Son of Haran," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. The NET Bible includes this insightful note at Genesis 19:5, 9: "The fact that the sin involved a sexual act precludes an association of the sin with inhospitality as is sometimes asserted."

<sup>44</sup> BDAG 399.

<sup>45</sup> Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 54; and, so Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus*, 77.



peared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, along with two others (Gen 18:1–2). Abraham beckons the three visitors to come wash their feet and prepares a meal for them and “they ate” (v. 8). The activity would not be remarkable if they were normal, human men. But the narrator describes two of the male visitors as מלאכים (“angels”) in 19:1. The מלאכים are called אנשים (“men”) eight times in the pericope (18:2, 16, 22; 19:5, 8, 10, 12, 16).<sup>46</sup> Angels are called אנשים also in Ezekiel 9:2, 3, 11 and Daniel 10:6, 18; 12:5, 6. Angels are called ἄνδρες (“men”) at the resurrection of Jesus and at his ascension, both events also involving two (Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10, 11)—at the very height of the Christian canonwide redemptive storyline. The author of Hebrews also exhorts his readers to show hospitality to strangers, for in doing so some have “entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb 13:2).

### III. CONCLUSION

The preceding reassessment of Jude 5–7 contended that the בני האלהים motif is a fundamental component of a canonical theological framework that helps the interpreter perceive the cohesion of Jude 5–7 and has significant implications for theological anthropology, systematic theology, and homiletics. Concerning theological anthropology, it was shown that when viewed through a canonical lens, the Nephilim, Anakim, and other related giant clans are rival, distorted representations of the *imago Dei*, brought into existence by the rebellious בני האלהים (Gen 6:1–4; Num 13:33). They image utter evil in human form. In addition to unbelief, this awful reality of giant clans explains why the wilderness generation failed to fight and take the land and coheres with the imperative of Jude to “contend earnestly” for the faith (Jude 3, 5).

With regard to systematic theology, the omission regarding the historical-religious context of Genesis 6:1–4 among scholars was corroborated. The distinctly Mesopotamian sources fill a gap in the related literature. In keeping with the ancient context, the angelic incursion involved teaching humanity in specific arts that proliferate their depravity, which corresponds with the false teachers whom Jude excoriates. It was substantiated that the angels view has regained its preeminent status among interpreters, a return to what most early church fathers held from Justin Martyr (c. 110–165) to Didymus the Blind (c. 310–c. 398), in contradistinction to Augustine and those who echo him. The oversight among systematic theologians is most likely because those works are born out of a logical and timeless segmentation of the biblical data. The reality of anthropomorphic angels was also corroborated with eighteen additional passages drawn from across the Christian canon, and, in addition to judgment, all three OT episodes in verses 5–7 share a connec-

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<sup>46</sup> The labeling of angels as men is also common in 2 Enoch where Enoch is led by two angels on a journey through the seven heavens to see the Lord. Yet those two angels are called “men” at least twenty-two times throughout the major sections of the book (cf. 2 En. 1:6, 8, 10; 3:1; 7:1, 3; 8:1, 8; 10:1, 4–5; 11:1; 13:1; 14:1; 16:1; 18:1, 3, 9; 19:1; 20:1, 2; 21:2; 38:1).

tion to this strange phenomenon. It pushes our perceptive abilities to the limit and is only surpassed by the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God.

Finally, the content of Jude 5–7 exposes a gap in the field of contemporary homiletics. In a search of every journal published by the Evangelical Homiletics Society since its inception in 2001, Genesis 6:1–4, which Jude refers to in verse 6, is never cited or engaged with concerning its importance in the storyline of Scripture. The same is true for Jude 5–7. This is different from the catechetical content of Jude; it was shown that in these verses, Jude simply reminds his recipients the fundamentals of the faith, which they were taught *at their conversion*.

So, there is more work to do, to recover and reconsider the person and work of Jesus in view of these epic OT events. As Osborne rightly argues, “It is my contention that the final goal of hermeneutics is not systematic theology but the sermon. The actual purpose of Scripture is not explanation but exposition, not description but proclamation.”<sup>47</sup>

In sum, the three episodes of evil given by Jude are no mere ancient events of the past, but serve as typological portents for both the present and the future consummation of all things.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 29.

<sup>48</sup> Michael S. Heiser passed into eternity on February 20, 2023. I offer this article in tribute to his life, family, scholarship, and ministry.