

# A Brief Survey of the Pre-flood and Post-flood Origins of the Nephilim

By Mondo Gonzales

There has been much written over the past few decades concerning the identity of the “sons of God” and the Nephilim as found in the Bible. Additionally, there have been some speculations as to the exact process of the recurrence of the Nephilim as found in Numbers 13:32-33 which is long after the flood. I would like to share in this article some of the answers that I think might have been overlooked concerning these questions. As we go along, I want to provide a few opportunities for the reader to delve further through several well written essays or commentaries on this topic.

The first topic to be addressed in this survey is the identity of the “sons of God” (Hebrew *beney ha'elohim*). Literally this just means “sons of (the) God” and brings with it a variety of interpretations. Generally, there are four main views which fall under the two categories of having a supernatural or non-supernatural perspective. Consulting most any substantial commentary on Genesis provides a presentation of the various views. Here they are:

1) The sons of God are godly descendants of Seth (from genealogy of Gen 5:6-32) who marry wicked daughters of Cain (from genealogy of Gen 4:17-24). This marriage produces offspring which receive the fallen and wicked nature from their mother’s (and Cain’s) ancestry.

Those who hold this view emphasize that right after the genealogy of “wicked” Cain, Genesis 4:26 introduces Seth and in his generation, men began to call upon the name of the Lord. This is followed immediately by the genealogy of Seth. Additionally, according to Matthew 22:30 angels can’t marry and thus the “sons of God” cannot be angels.

The response against this view is summarized by Michael Heiser:<sup>1</sup> 1) The text does not say that the only people which called on God were Sethites. It simply says men; 2) The assertion that spiritually saved men and wicked women produce unnatural or inevitably wicked offspring (Nephilim- 6:4) is untenable biblically and theologically; 3) Genesis 6:2 does not call the “wicked women” daughters of Cain, but daughters of humanity; were only the wicked daughters of Cain beautiful? 4) Any prohibitions of specific types of marriage are not mentioned until much later in the Pentateuch; 5) Nowhere in the text is the idea that authentic spirituality comes through genealogy or family lines. This is true throughout the entire Bible; 6) The contrast between the two groups is between a species of God (non-human) and species of mankind; 7) Jesus’ comments in Matthew 22:30 speak explicitly about the angels who are in heaven and are in reference to the righteous at the end of the age. It is not giving a full theology of potential angelic rebellion and capabilities of angels in ancient times or any times at all.

Most of the criticisms above to the non-supernatural view entailing mixed unspiritual or incompatible human marriages apply to numbers 2 and 3 below also.

2) The sons of God are human rulers or judges who take and marry women outside their social status. The fallen offspring are simply the normal wicked sinful children of this unequally

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<sup>1</sup> Heiser, Michael. *The Unseen Realm*, (Lexham: Bellingham, 2015), 94-95.

yoked marriage. The Nephilim offspring continue the sins of their fathers and seek to create their own legacies and become men of renown in their lust for power and prestige.

3) The sons of God are human dynastic kings who either claim for themselves deified status (“sons of the Gods”) or are given this epithet by their followers. These kings are tyrants and seek unbridled power and polygamy. Their children also follow in their wicked fathers’ footsteps and the line of Cain through urbanization and industry.

4) The sons of God are actually fallen angelic beings who rebel and lust after human women in order to create descendants of their own which God had not allowed them to do. They take on the form of human men and marry human women producing the Nephilim who are hybrid beings of part human and other part angelic. The Nephilim, because of their fallen, but super human strength and height (Num 13:32-33) become famous individuals. They existed in ancient times before the flood and also afterward (Gen 6:4).

It's not possible here to give a full critique of these various interpretations, but for a full review and assessment of all these viewpoints see Willem Van Gemeren’s article.<sup>2</sup>

Another helpful essay by Robert Newman surveys all the various ancient interpretations of Genesis 6:1-4 from 300 BC to 300 AD.<sup>3</sup> In this article, Newman notes that the Septuagint translation into Greek from the OT Hebrew (approximately 270 BC) translates sons of God as “angels of God” in some manuscripts and in other manuscripts as “sons of God.” Further, it translates the word Nephilim with the root Greek word “*gigas*.” This word is used in ancient Greek as a reference to superhuman offspring of the goddess Gaia which is known from Greek mythology. The Greek translators used this word to translate several other Biblical Hebrew words in addition to Nephilim (*Rephaim, Anakim, Gibborim*). The Greek word itself doesn’t necessarily reference men of large stature (especially in Classical Greek), but the Bible makes it quite clear that the Nephilim were known for their large or tall size (Num 13:32-33; Deut 1:28; 2:10; 9:2; Amos 2:9; 2 Sam 21:20).

In addition to the ancient Septuagint version translators seeing the sons of God as heavenly angelic beings, so do other Jewish Second Temple period (intertestamental) texts. One of the most famous is the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC book of 1 Enoch (chapters 6-20). Another document in this group of literature is the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC book of Jubilees which understands the sons of God as angelic (4:15, 22). Newman goes on to list several other ancient texts including many from the Dead Sea scrolls showing that ancient Jewish exegetes saw fallen angels as the perpetrators of the sins involved in Genesis 6:1-4 and primeval history.

To be thorough, it should be noted that those scholars who hold to a supernatural view demonstrate convincingly that the context of both 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 give increased

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<sup>2</sup> Van Gemeren, Willem A. “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1981) 320-48.

<sup>3</sup> Newman, Robert C. “The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2, 4” *Grace Theological Journal* 5 (1984), 13-37. See also the summary by Victor P. Hamilton in the *Genesis New International Commentary of the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1990).

understanding to the sin of the angels in Genesis 6. These were heavenly beings who left their “domain” (Jude 6). The Greek *arche* has as one of its nuances the idea of rule or jurisdiction. Additionally, these angels abandoned their “proper abode.” The Greek *oiketerion* only appears one other place in the NT in 2 Corinthians 5:2 in reference to an innate type of dwelling. Another way to describe this would be a dimension. The context of 2 Corinthians 5:2 would be that of an earthly dimension in contrast to a heavenly dimension. The angels who sinned in Jude 6 not only left their jurisdiction (domain), but also their proper abode (dimension) to sin with women sexually in a way that is similar to those in Sodom and Gomorrah (illicit sexual actions; Jude 7).

The first century Jewish historian Josephus wrote often concerning his contemporary understanding that the Genesis 6 episode was a reference to angels who sinned with women and produced a race of large hybrid men. He writes of the pre-flood incursion (Antiquities 1:73) as well as the offspring existing again after the flood (Ant. 1:174; 3:305; 5:125; 7:71, 299, 301, 304). Other Jewish scribes of the Hebrew Bible translated the OT text into Aramaic (known as the Targums). Newman notes that the various Targum translations range from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD to many centuries later. Only some of these Targum translations take a supernatural angelic view of Genesis 6. It wasn’t until later Rabbinic theology that the Jewish view became solidified into a non-supernatural view following number two above (i.e., human judges or rulers).

It is well known that many of the early Church Fathers took a supernatural view and it wasn’t until the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries that the non-supernatural view took hold. The largest influencers in this regard were Julius Africanus and Augustine in his book, *City of God*. The non-supernatural view is the consensus view of scholars today (but certainly not all scholars). In summary, the most ancient understanding of the Genesis 6 narrative is that it involved rebellious heavenly beings taking human women as wives and producing hybrid offspring.

From a linguistic perspective, the phrase “sons of (the) God” is a collocation that should not be separated into its constituent parts. A collocation is a grouping of words that are used together in a single phrase that take on a unified meaning. For example, if I said I am diametrically \_\_\_\_\_ to going skiing, you would know which word almost always follows in our modern usage.

In the classic Hebrew grammar by Friedrich Gesenius, he makes mention of various kinds of collocations in the Old Testament. One of the classifications he notes is that in relation to the syntax of two nouns, they often stand in apposition to one another forming the collocation of *genus* and *species*.<sup>4</sup> Collocations should be viewed as units and do influence the understanding of semantic range. This exact collocation (sons of the God) appears in only five places in the entire OT (Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). It is universally accepted that the collocation “sons of (the) God” in the book of Job is in reference to angelic beings. If that is the case there, why does the modern scholar, who believes in the supernatural in other parts of the Bible, refuse to recognize the linguistic evidence in Genesis 6:2, 4? In this situation, the collocation of genus and species are specified. These are sons (offspring children in a non-physical sense) of the Elohim

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<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and Sir Arthur Ernest Cowley, 2d English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), § 131. *Apposition*.

(God) because they are direct creations as are all other heavenly beings. The contrast being made here is between the non-human angelic “sons of God” and the human “daughters of mankind.”

It is often asserted that the phrase “sons of God” and other similar phrases are clearly a reference to those who are authentic believers in God (whether OT or NT). However, most of the evidence used to show this is from the NT (e.g. Matt 5:9; Luke 20:36; Rom 8:14, 19; Gal 3:26). It is not good hermeneutics to read NT theology written in Greek back into OT theological understanding written in Hebrew. Opponents of seeing the sons of God in Genesis 6:2, 4 as angelic beings will often quote instances when either Israel as a whole or others are labeled as sons or when God is called a Father (Deut 14:1; 32:5-6; Ps 73:15; Mal 1:6). There is no disagreement that God calls Israel His firstborn (Ex 4:22) or that in one instance believers in the OT were called “sons of the living God” (this occurring only in Hosea 1:10; further, the modifier “living” is a different construction than the collocation in Genesis). However, none of these Hebrew constructions match grammatically that which appears in Genesis 6:2, 4. Interestingly, one of the nearest formations is “sons of God” (Hebrew *beney elim*) which appears in Ps 29:1 and 89:6-8. This construction is the closest to Genesis 6:2, 4 and clearly is a reference to angelic beings.

In Genesis 6:4, we might ask what is the specific connection between Moses writing that there were Nephilim **before and after the flood** (Genesis 6:4; cf. Numbers 13:33)? How is this possible? Didn't the flood wipe out all living and breathing creatures? How did the Nephilim reappear after the flood? Are the Nephilim tribes found in Moses' day from the same original antediluvian tribes?

There are generally five proposals given to answer these questions with varying degrees of plausibility:

1) It was a local flood and all life was not destroyed. Therefore, many of the Nephilim survived and spread throughout the land. When Moses returns after the wilderness wandering, he and the younger generation encounter the descendants of the original Nephilim. However, the text does not say that the sons of Anak were from the *original* Nephilim. It simply says that they were connected to the Nephilim (Num 13:33- Hebrew preposition *min* is connected to the word Nephilim here and has a wide range of use). Additionally, the universal language of Genesis 6-8 is hard to overcome in positing a local flood. One just has to read the text to see the extensive use of superlative language (“all flesh,” “every living thing under heaven,” etc.; e.g. Gen 6:13, 17; 7:4, 21; the Hebrew word *kol* meaning “all” or “every” appears almost 50 times in chapters 6-8 alone). If the flood was local, why would God have Noah bring such a large amount of land animals and birds on the ark? They easily could have naturally migrated to higher and non-local elevations.

2) The Nephilim did not die in the universal flood because they were good swimmers or held on to the outside of Noah's ark. The flood lasted for around a year (Gen 7:11; 8:14) and the idea that any breathing animals or persons survived besides Noah and his family contradicts the text (Gen 7:21-22).

3) The Nephilim went underground to come out later after the yearlong flood was over. This cannot be proven wrong, but there is no textual evidence for this. It is pure conjecture.

4) The Nephilim genetics were passed on through one of the wives of Noah's sons. This view has gained influence and popularity recently, but again, there is nothing in the text which explicitly teaches this viewpoint. Much of the argumentation is based on inference, conjecture, and eisegesis.

5) The angelic sons of God left their domain and abode by coming down to mate with women before the flood and received a severe punishment of chains and darkness (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Boldly and audaciously, another separate group of sons of God (angelic beings) came down some time after the flood and once again took human women and produced more Nephilim offspring which are found dispersed throughout the land. These Nephilim (and various other tribal names) are the enemies that Moses and Joshua encounter as they head towards and into the Promised Land. The typical argument against this viewpoint is the assertion that a second incursion cannot be demonstrated from the text. It is alleged that this second incursion proposal is an argument from silence and/or inference because nowhere in the later books of the Pentateuch or Joshua is a second incursion mentioned.

One of the goals of this article is to show that the Biblical text conclusively and explicitly demonstrates that number 5 is the correct viewpoint. Most current approaches to Biblical hermeneutics revolve around three primary foundations of a historical, literary and theological context.<sup>5</sup> If we examine Genesis 6:1-4 through a proper understanding of its full context, it will become evident that the best understanding of this passage substantiates number 5.

**Historical Context-** One of the major questions concerning the evidence of Nephilim offspring being on the earth is that the text says it was "in those days and afterward" (6:4). Moses is writing the book of Genesis most likely during the 40-year wilderness wandering. He is writing the historical and theological content of Genesis to a generation that has been steeped in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and Egyptian religious mythology for generations. Each of those Near Eastern cultures had flood myths as well as stories of heavenly beings mixing with human women producing hybrid super human beings. Contextually, Moses is giving to his audience the true version of the flood events as well as the incursion of supernatural beings into the human population. Not everyone agrees that the phrase "sons of God" is out of place in Genesis 6:2, but the most plausible reason the phrase "sons of God" seems to appear with no explanation in the early chapters of Genesis is that his audience didn't need any explanation. Understanding the historical and cultural context of the book of Genesis provides an insightful framework in understanding all the foundational doctrines of Genesis 1-11. These include comparative Near Eastern literature that reference flood myths, sons of God, Tower of Babel, spreading of humanity, diversity of languages, etc.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Köstenberger, Andreas J. and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011). This is a thorough examination of these foundations which they call the "Hermeneutical Triad."

<sup>6</sup> Walton, John. *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2013). Jonathan S. Greer, John W. Hilber, John H. Walton (editors). *Behind the Scenes of*

According to the Biblical text, Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt approximately 827-1707 years after the flood.<sup>7</sup> This means that at least a millennium of human history and culture had developed and dispersed over the known world. We know that Abraham's family were Mesopotamian idol worshippers (Josh 24:2). Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons lived in Canaanite territory for over 200 years followed by a sojourn in Egypt of at least 230 years. This is a lot of exposure to the various religious beliefs in their surrounding culture. When Moses brings them out of Egypt, they were saturated with all kinds of various beliefs. We must remember that the writing of Genesis 6:1-4 specifically is given as a rendering of the true primeval history (including the antediluvian period). The comparative literature shows conclusively that these cultures contained stories of angelic type beings coming down impregnating human women and producing hybrid beings of supernatural strength and accomplishments. This is exactly what Moses is seeking to expose when he writes the true version to the Israelites.

When Moses and the Israelites first approached the Promised Land, it was filled with Nephilim who were large and intimidating (Num 13:32-33). He taught the Israelites the true history of the stories they heard concerning the mingling of angelic beings and mankind producing hybrid offspring (Nephilim). In Genesis 6:2-4 he is reminding them that this intermingling happened before the flood and also afterward. As they were spying out the land and observed these Nephilim offspring, they were looking at proof that what occurred before the flood had occurred again.

**Literary Context-** There is much debate to how Genesis 6:1-4 bridges chapters 4-5 with the communication to Noah that God was going to flood the earth because of the wickedness and violence which was occurring on the earth. One interpretation highlights the numerous repetitions of the Hebrew *adamah* (meaning ground) in chapters 1-5 to help show the continuity of the episode of the sons of God which occurs immediately after. Chapter and verses were not introduced into the Bible until the middle ages, so we need to ignore the artificial chapter break between 5 and 6 of Genesis. The inclusion of *adamah* in 5:29 and 6:1 provide a connection from the emphasis on the birth of sons and daughters in 5:1-32 and then again in 6:1. Here is Genesis 6:1-3 from the NASB.

<sup>1</sup> Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup> that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

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*the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018). Heiser provides an extensive list of comparative literature to the Genesis 6:1-4 narrative in *Unseen Realm*, pages 101-103.

<sup>7</sup> The range in these numbers is based on the variations between the Hebrew Masoretic text (827 years after flood) and Greek Septuagint version chronology (1707 years after flood). For detailed information on the various discrepancies between the Masoretic, Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch chronologies, see Henry Smith's work at [biblearchaeology.org](http://biblearchaeology.org).

In chapter 5 it is repeated with each generation that both sons and daughters were born. However, the emphasis shifts in 6:1 to focus on the daughters of mankind, not just Seth or Enosh or Jared or any specific family line. In fact, 5:1 says that this is the genealogy of Adam through Seth through Enosh all the way down to Noah. There is absolutely no singling out of any one generation. The point is that many sons and daughters were born culminating in the generation of Noah which immediately precedes the flood. In 6:2, it describes how the sons of God took human wives (or women) from those whom they chose. It does not provide any other information about offspring or Nephilim at this juncture. We are then told in 6:3 that God's Spirit will not strive with men and gives mankind a 120-year time frame which God illuminates will end with a flood that destroys all life (6:7, 12-13).

We must remember that the generation that was receiving this text was the same generation who had already been introduced to the Nephilim as they spied out the land. Now, Moses begins to explain to them the connection between the Nephilim they saw in the land and the Nephilim that existed before the flood which they also would have known about through the various cultural and religious histories. Hence, the succinct language of 6:4. Because this specific verse is the crux of much debate, I have translated the Hebrew and block diagrammed the verse into English in order for us to visualize the grammatical flow and syntactical elements which often are missed. Words in italics are not in the Hebrew, but are implied from the context and help the English flow in a much smoother way.

The questions answered are: 1) Who are the Nephilim? 2) How did they come about?

- 1) The **Nephilim** were on the earth in those days, (Main clause with main verb "were")
- 2) and also, afterward, (Complex preposition creates adverbial subordinate clause)
- 3) when (Relative particle introducing subordinate clause)
- 4) the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, (subordinate clause)
- 5) and they bore *children* to them. (subordinate clause)
- 6) **Those** (*were*) the mighty ones (2<sup>nd</sup> main clause which is verbless)
- 7) who (Relative particle introducing subordinate clause)
- 8) (*were*) of old, persons of renown. (subordinate clause)

Notice that there are two main clauses which both focus on the Nephilim (lines 1-2 and 6). The first main clause describes the timing of their existence and includes lines one and two. The second main clause includes line six and introduces the description of their person and accomplishments.

Most scholars recognize that the demonstrative "those" in line 1 along with the complex preposition "also afterward" is a reference to the days before the flood and to the days after the flood. The days after the flood would include all the way up to the time when Moses and the spies see the post flood Nephilim in the Promised Land.

The reason why this verse is often misunderstood is because important elements of the Hebrew syntax are missed. One of the most recognized works related to Hebrew syntax states that in this verse (6:4), the complex Hebrew prepositional construction (*acharey-chen*) translated “afterward” in line 2, creates an adverbial clause.<sup>8</sup> Some people might not remember the grammar of adverbs or adverbial clauses. Adverbs are words that give a greater description to the verb it modifies. In English they end in “ly” such as “hastily” or “blindly.” For example, “he hastily went into the store.” The adverb hastily modifies and elaborates on how he “went” into the store.

Adverbial clauses (which must include their own subject, verb, and subordinating conjunction) provide increased understanding of the main verb of the main clause. It answers the questions of “how,” “where,” “when” and most importantly for this verse, the “manner” of how something happens. Line 2 above includes the complex preposition (“afterward”) operating as an adverb and is followed in line 3 by the relative particle (Hebrew *asher*) functioning as a subordinating conjunction introducing the dependent clauses of line 4 and 5.

Let’s summarize what the syntax is showing so far. The main clause states that the Nephilim were on the earth before and after (the flood). What is not explained so far in the first 3 lines is how they came to be on the earth before and afterwards. However, line 3 is the transition to explain the “how” or the “manner” in which the Nephilim came to be on the earth in both periods.

Line 4 specifically reveals and connects the “how” in that it occurred both before and afterwards when the sons of God (angelic beings) came down and intermingled with the daughters of mankind. This must not be missed. Line 4 is telling us exactly the manner in which this happened and elaborates on the main verb of line 1. The reason the Nephilim were existing on the earth in both time periods is because the sons of God “came into” the daughters of mankind.

Additionally, the verb “came into” is in the imperfect tense and Hebrew scholars recognize that the form of this verb is being used with “frequentative force” which means that it was happening repeatedly, frequently, or habitually. It was not a one-time event.<sup>9</sup> The fact that this adverbial subordinate clause is elaborating on how the Nephilim were on the earth both before and after the flood reveals that the sons of God were conclusively “coming into” human women. This decisively describes the “how” of them existing on the earth in “those days and afterward.”

Line 5 contains the continuing subordinate clause and another verb (“bore”) with the sons of God as the objects of the preposition. This line describes the daughters of men which “bore” children to the angelic sons of God. The verb “bore” is known as a perfect consecutive in Hebrew grammar. Gesenius writes that it’s connection to the imperfect verb “coming into” demonstrates that the verb “bore” also is functioning in a frequentative use.<sup>10</sup> This makes sense in that as the

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<sup>8</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 221.

<sup>9</sup> Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 315. See also Victor Hamilton who recognizes the frequentative use of this verb, *Book of Genesis, NICOT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 261, n.1.

<sup>10</sup> Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 332.



sons of God were repeatedly coming into the daughters of mankind, they were repeatedly bearing children to them. Again, this intermingling and birthing explains how the Nephilim were existing on the earth both before and after the flood. The spies and the conquest generation were observing the Nephilim in the Promised Land. Moses was providing them with how the Nephilim were in the land even though the flood had destroyed the pre-flood Nephilim.

Line 6 often provides confusion for some readers. The “those” of line 6 is often erroneously associated with the sons of God in line 4. This creates misunderstanding with many interpreting that the “mighty ones” and “men of renown” are in reference to the sons of God. This cannot be the case grammatically. The adverbial subordinate clause of lines 4 and 5 has its own subject and verbs. However, lines 6-8 do not have any verbs in them in the Hebrew. Therefore, it is preferred to read the “those” of line 6 (the 2<sup>nd</sup> main clause) as further elaboration on the subject of the 1<sup>st</sup> main clause, specifically the Nephilim.

I have bolded “Nephilim” of line 1 and “those” in line 6 to show this visually. The “were” in line 6 and the “were” in line 8 are added by translators so that the English will flow more easily. These two words are not there in the Hebrew.

Line 7 contains the relative particle “who” (Hebrew *asher*) which is introducing the subordinate clause of line 8 giving more explanation on the “these” of line 6. Literally, the Hebrew reads, “These, the mighty ones, who from ancient times, persons of name.” The Nephilim (offspring of sons of God and human women), who were on the earth before and after the flood were mighty ones. They were from ancient times, people of name (reputation). Based on later descriptions of the Nephilim in Moses’ day, it is understandable how they received their reputation. They were large in stature and extremely intimidating to the spies who saw them in the land.

Block diagramming 6:4 helps show the various Hebrew grammar and syntactical elements. Here is a made-up English verse which follows the same pattern as Genesis 6:4 and should illustrate what is happening in the Biblical verse.

- 1) There were **fires** all over the land in those days
- 2) and also, afterward,
- 3) WHEN
- 4) The lightning storms were striking the grass and fires were ignited from them.
- 5) **These** were the big ones that were well known, conflagrations of reputation.

Notice that the “these” of line 5 fits very well with line 1 in connection with the subject “fires.” The subject of “fires” reappears with the demonstrative (“these”) of line 5 and adds further elaboration of the main subject of line 1 (“fires”).

We also see that the adverbial clause of line 4 explains the manner (the “how”) of the fires’ coming into existence in the land (line 1). The verb “striking” and “ignited” in line 4 are functioning in a frequentative sense and follows the complex adverbial preposition of line 2.

**Theological Context-** Biblical theology most often deals with seeking to discover the purpose and authorial intention of a particular Scriptural book. In this case, it is possible to sketch Moses' theological motive in the whole Pentateuch as it relates specifically to the Nephilim and sons of God episode of Genesis 6:1-4. It is not known exactly when the Pentateuch was written by Moses, but it was obviously finished prior to his death in Deuteronomy 34. The historical context shows that the narrative of the book of Deuteronomy occurs after the 40-year wandering and immediately prior to entrance into the Promised Land by Joshua, Caleb and the younger generation. Moses had originally given them much of the Law back in Exodus 19-24, but now recounts the Law again to the surviving generation as they are about to cross the Jordan river. In addition, Deuteronomy recounts their progression from their final wanderings in the desert towards the land of promise.

We have observed the specifics of the literary context of Genesis 6:1-4 as it relates to primeval history, but another aspect that is beneficial is tracing the ways in which Moses writes concerning the Nephilim and the various tribes that are often used synonymously. The main Nephilim tribe is connected specifically with the Anakim and the Rephaim (cf. Deut 2:11; Num 13:32-33). As we have noted, the first mention of the Nephilim and related tribes occurs in Genesis 6:4, but the text describes all of them being killed in the flood (Gen 7:21-22). However, Moses reintroduces the Rephaim tribes in Genesis 14:5 as living east of the Jordan river during the time of Abraham. Some believe that Moses is introducing the Rephaim tribes out of nowhere, but based on our examination of Genesis 6:4, we understand that Moses has already explained how the Nephilim (and Rephaim, et al.) tribes came to exist on the earth before and after the flood.

The theological emphasis of Moses in the Pentateuch gives insight not only into the sins and rebellions of mankind (Gen 3:1-16; 6:5; 8:21; 11:1-9), but also provides background information to the rebellious actions of the fallen angelic sons of God in 6:1-4. They attempted to thwart God's salvation historical plan by corrupting mankind before and after the flood. Moses wrote that God promised Abraham he would receive the land of promise (Gen 12:1-18) and so the fallen angelic sons of God sought to frustrate this plan by taking human women as wives again after the flood and filled the land with Nephilim hybrid offspring. Moses informs the Israelites of his day that the Rephaim were back in the land not long after the promise to Abraham was given (Gen 14:5).

Additionally, Moses writes that God explains to Abraham that even though the land is full of the various tribes, his descendants would still inherit the land after four generations (Gen 15:13-21). God was going to judge and remove all these tribes from the land, but their iniquity was not yet complete (15:16). What we know from the rest of the Pentateuch is that God had planned to use His new nation of Israel to be the instrument of eradicating not only the wicked human tribes, but also the evil supernatural hybrids from the land.

The nation Israel chose fear instead of faith after the spies returned and reported seeing the large Nephilim tribes in the land (Num 13:32-33). Their lack of faith resulted in judgment and wandering the desert until that faithless generation died off. When the time came for them to inherit the land, Moses narrates their journey into the land from the south and east, then going

north into the land of Bashan (Deuteronomy 2-3). As they journeyed, they systematically destroyed any of the Nephilim (Amorite) tribes that they encountered (Num 21:21-26). Moses writes that some of these tribes had already been destroyed by God in previous times (Deut 2:9-12). As they reached Bashan, they encountered the giant king Og who was of large stature (Deut 3:1-11) and is labeled as the last remaining king of the Rephaim in that area.

In summary, it can be seen that the theology of the Pentateuch is consistent throughout as it details the origin of the pre- and post-flood occurrences of the Nephilim and the related tribes. When studying Genesis 6:1-4, the historical, literary, and theological context provide the needed background into understanding the unified material presented by Moses. It's not surprising that this theology is evidenced also in the book of Joshua. One of the goals and standards of success in the conquest of the land is specifically tied to the extermination of the offspring of the fallen angelic sons of God known as the Nephilim/Rephaim tribes both before and after the flood (Joshua 11:21-23; 14:12, 15; 17:15).

“Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.<sup>22</sup> There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained” (Josh 11:21-22).

The writer reveals that Joshua “utterly destroyed” the Anakim and their cities except for a few that were left in the coastal cities.

The Biblical theological evidence shows that Nephilim/Rephaim/Anakim tribes still remained to be fully exterminated. They reappear in the text of Scripture centuries later in the time of David. Goliath was from Gath, one of the cities mentioned in Joshua 11:22 where some Anakim remained. The Bible gives the final summary that David and his servants eliminated the rest of Nephilim/Anakim tribes (1 Samuel 17:4, 7; 2 Samuel 21:16-22; 1 Chronicles 20:4-8).

The fallen angelic sons of God sought to disrupt God's salvation historical plans, but they failed to plan that God will not allow His glory to be tarnished. He will redeem mankind despite His enemies' plans and machinations.

**Exodus 15:3** The LORD is a warrior; Yahweh is his name!

**Isaiah 24:21** At that time the LORD will punish the heavenly forces in the heavens and the earthly kings on the earth.