

## Transcript 120

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. This is the conclusion of our series on angels and demons. So if you haven't listened to some of the previous episodes where we discuss some of the stuff we talk about will apply today, but today is a conclusion. We're going to talk about an issue that's definitely an ancillary or it's a side issue, but it's also fascinating.

Shea Houdmann

So today's episode really talking about Genesis 6 verses one to four and the sons of God, daughters, women episode that resulted in the nepheline. What exactly is going on in this passage? Is it important? Why should we care? And all of that.

Shea Houdmann

So joining me today is Jeff, the managing editor for [Bibleref.com](http://Bibleref.com), and Kevin, the managing editor for Got Questions ministries.

Shea Houdmann

So gentlemen, let's maybe start out with the little story just going to illustrate some of the struggles with this issue. Several years ago I got a e-mail from a Christian financial accountability company that we work with to help make sure Got Questions is doing everything above the board. One of the other requirements they have to be a member is to agree with their statement of faith. Well, someone had made a complaint about Got Questions to this organization and so they had to follow through. So they e-mail and it's been a phone call with them and saying, well, so this person complained. And then it was about this issue and I was like, well, how in the world is this even related to anything else? And she explained that well, they're claiming that because you believe that the sons of God in Genesis six, one to four, were the fallen angels, and they even mentioned that literature outside the Bible strongly leans in that direction, that you are denying the sufficiency, inerrancy of scripture because you believe more in the Book of Enoch than you do in the Bible.

Shea Houdmann

Obviously, no. No, that is absolutely not what we're doing. Well, yes. Outside of the Bible, virtually all the literature up until really the last several centuries took the view that they were fallen angels. In no sense is this a view we take from outside of Scripture. You can very easily come to the conclusion that they were fallen angels just based on Scripture and how the term sons of God is used throughout Scripture. But that was just like if not before, a major wake up call for me is like, wow, for some reason this issue is blown out of proportion for a lot of people. They make it their hobbyhorse, their soapbox issue, and if you possibly have a different view than them on this, they want nothing to do with you to the point of they want to get you somehow punished or banished or I guess, cancelled would be the popular term these days.

Shea Houdmann

But that is not the view we take. I mean, we take the view that the Sons of God in Genesis six were fallen angels who somehow mated with human females, resulting in some sort of angelic, human hybrid, the men of renown, so to speak. That they were eventually wiped out in the flood, and possibly that either some of the DNA continued or some fallen angels repeated the act afterwards, or nephelae again after the flood, eventually through the conquest of Canaan seemed to be completely wiped out. But this is not a major issue. This is not something we spend all the time studying or thinking about, or we have a few articles related to it because it's a very common question, but there's not a hill to die on. This is not something we're fighting about or dividing over.

Shea Houdmann

So before Kevin kind of outlines the the viewpoint, let me just go ahead and read the passage here. So this is Genesis chapter 6 verses one to four from the ESV, when man began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were attractive, and they took as wives any they choose. Then the Lord said, my spirit shall not abide in man forever, for his flesh. His day shall be 120 years. The nepheline were on the earth in those days and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of man, and we bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old men of renown.

Shea Houdmann

So, Kevin, maybe break this down a little bit. In your study of the passage of what leads you to the conclusion that these sons of God in the passage were fallen angels?

Kevin Stone

Yeah, there are some some good reasons, I think, to take that position. This is the position that I lean toward. Some type of a angelic being had fallen. And we're committing a great sin. There are four groups that are listed in Genesis Chapter 6. There are the human beings. There are the daughters of these human beings. There are the sons of God, just listed as a separate category, and then the nepheline, which seemed to be the offspring of the daughters of humans, and the Sons of God. And so these four groups we have to identify. And all of them are pretty easy to identify I guess except for the the sons of God and then specifically you know, who are these nephilim that are mentioned here?

Kevin Stone

The Nephalem are called heroes of old. They're mighty men. They are powerful men. They are men of renown. That is, they're famous. They had made a name for themselves. And we get to Numbers chapter 13, I'll just throw this passage in here too, because they are mentioned again by some of the spies that go into the promised land as Caleb and Joshua are trying to get people to go in. And these ten other spies are saying no, no, we can't. Numbers 13, these spies that had gone up with Joshua and Caleb said, we can't attack those people that are in Canaan. They're stronger than we are. And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land that they had explored. They said, the land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the nepheline there, the descendants of Anich come from the nepheline. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.

Kevin Stone

So a couple possibilities here, as they mentioned nepheline and the descendants of Ainak being part of that nepheline Group, one is that these 10 spies were just exaggerating. They were talking about the the great stature of these of these people and they were they were trying their best to not go into the land and so they could have just exaggerated, blowing everything out of proportion. But because of this description we also sometimes see the nepheline, there in Genesis chapter 6, described as being giants. And in fact, that's how some translations actually put it. They don't. They don't transliterate the word Nephilim, they translate it as giants. And the CEV takes this position as well, or that the Sons of God are actually spiritual beings. The contemporary English version says, the children of the supernatural beings who had married these women became famous heroes and warriors, and they lived on the earth at that time.

Kevin Stone

I personally lean toward the position that these sons of God are fallen angels. So they basically said we're not going to live as angels anymore. We're going to take on a human form and we're going to have sex with human women. And so we know that Holy Angels can take on human form. We see examples of that in Scripture, as many Bible characters actually talked to angels in human form. Many of them thinking that they were human. We don't have any examples in scripture of a of a fallen Angel doing this, but since the Holy Angels can, it kind of makes sense that the fallen angels would be able to have that same ability. And we know that the Holy Angels, when they did take on human form, sometimes ate food and did other things that they know seem to be very human. And so who's to say that the fallen angels taking on human form could not also have the capability of having sex and procreating?

Kevin Stone

And so in doing so, assuming these are fallen angels, they are committing a great sin. They're rebelling against God's design for them, and they are corrupting the human bloodline. They're introducing some type of a, you know, a manufactured DNA into the human bloodline. And so the offspring of these illicit unions then had great strengths, performed mighty feats. They were famous in their day. They were, in fact half angelic and half human, I guess we could say. And then possibly of great size, if you throw in numbers chapter 13 there.

Kevin Stone

Some of the reasons that this seems to be a viable theory, and it's actually the most traditional theory. It's the one that probably goes the furthest back. Church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras, and Tertullian all held to this view. But the phrase sons of God throughout Scripture is used in reference to angelic beings. Probably the clearest example of this would be in Job one, in verse six, Job two and verse one, where the phrase sons of God undoubtedly refers to angelic beings that are being summoned before God in those two passages.

Kevin Stone

Also, we have a couple passages in the New Testament that speak of a special sin that some of the Angels committed not all of the angels, but some of the Angels committed some heinous sin and they were punished for it. Second Peter 2 verses 4 and following says, if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment. And then

Peter goes on in the next verses to speak of Noah's flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. So all three of these stories that he references come from the Book of Genesis. And possibly Peter is speaking of the Angels that sinned as being this passage in Genesis Chapter 6.

Kevin Stone

Also, Jude verse six says that the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling, these God is kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for the judgment on the great day.

Kevin Stone

So both Peter and Jude referred to some group of angels that did something that required them to be bound and awaiting a future judgment. And both of them talk about a sin, neither one of them, neither one of these apostles speak of the sin being, having sex with human women, but Jude does mention that they left the place that God had put them. They left their station and they did something different, and this was a big enough sin for God to judge them immediately.

Kevin Stone

So it's an interesting subject. It's not one that I spend a whole lot of time studying or delving into. But when I'm faced with the the passage there in Genesis Chapter 6, this is what my mind runs to, is just that this was a extraordinary sin, in a very unusual circumstance, in which some fallen angels decided that they were going to do something that was going to mess up the human race and God put a stop to it.

Jeff Laird

Probably a good idea for us to remember, as was said, that it's not a critical issue, and that's where I usually fall in with the nephlim conversation. There's a lot of things in Scripture that have a lot of immediate consequences. What you believe about that has really important impacts on your day-to-day life, what you believe, how you act, what you think. Everything that we believe means something, so it's not that what a person believes about Nephalem is totally inconsequential, it connects to other beliefs. If we take the position that angels themselves only an Angel and a human female were able to produce an offspring that implies beliefs about what angels are capable of doing and what life is like and things like that. If we believe that they were manipulating people, if we believe that they were possessing people, then all of those things have different implications. They mean something, but at the end of the day, it's not something that Scripture spends a lot of time talking about, and it's not something that has a really profound impact.

Jeff Laird

So the conversations are interesting. It's kind of fun to talk about what it might mean and what it might not mean, but it's not something that we need to stress over or divide over. Because as long as we're not crossing lines into blatant biblical contradiction, there's a lot of room in there for different interpretations.

Jeff Laird

One different interpretation, Kevin, you're mentioning the idea that there's references to sons of God being references to angels. There's also references in Scripture where Sons of God are made in reference to human beings in the terms of believers or Israel. In Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Hosea, we see places where those who believe in God worship God properly are referred to with that sonship sort of a reference and that's why some people believe that the the Nephilim were from the sons of Seth, the Sons of God, the believers, not Cane's, but Seth's who were tempted in some way to interact with the the daughters of men. And that's one of the options.

Jeff Laird

Another option is that, the the Sons of God and their influence was in some sort of almost a genetic engineering sense, that what they're doing is that they're possessing or they're manipulating physical human males in order to guide or to direct the procreation of the human race. Lead them in certain directions, come up with certain combinations, and so on and so forth. Science fiction fans will remember that's a major plotline in in Frank Herbert's Dune series is that there's this shadowy group behind the scenes who's manipulating, who marries who, and you know, in order to seek a particular kind of person. So that's a possibility.

Jeff Laird

Anytime that we go too far or too deep into a theory and get too obsessed with it, that's when we start to run into problems. So it's not that what we believe about the Neflin doesn't make any difference. Everything we believe matters to some extent. It's just a question of to what extent it matters. And when it comes to the actual nephlim as long as we're sticking to what's actually in the Bible, then I think we're in good shape.

Jeff Laird

And then that brings up the idea that there are a lot of things from outside scripture that we want to be careful not to draw in. There are ancient writings, and those are interesting because they do tell us what other people believed about this. The Book of Enoch, for example, may talk a lot about the neflin. That doesn't necessarily mean that what it says is something that we should take seriously. We certainly shouldn't take it as seriously as what we see in the Bible. We also don't want to let pop culture affect us.

Jeff Laird

I've brought up the idea before that there's a lot of things about the Bible that we we tend to just assume because we get them from pop culture. We don't realize that it's not from the Bible. Famous example of that is the idea that Moses didn't know that he was Jewish. We see that in movies all the time. That's there's nothing in Scripture that suggests that Moses somehow just magically learned one day, what? I'm Hebrew! That that's not actually in scripture. But we sort of just assume that because it's such a common theme in media.

Jeff Laird

We have the Nephalem presented in the movie with Russell Crowe where their fallen angels coated in lava or Playdough, something like that. It's it's interesting. It's it's it's OK. There's a computer game series, Diablo, where the Nephalem spelled a little differently. Is used as a reference to a group of superhero type people. Those things are interesting, but that's not exactly what Scripture says, so I I

tend to lean back on the idea that the the word, as Kevin mentioned, is often transliterated. And what that means is that when translators put the word into another language, they don't actually translate it, they just leave the same basic sounds in place. And that's sometimes a sign that it's a word that's very difficult to translate, or that it's meant to be used as a specific title. Then it doesn't really refer to some other thing, it just refers to that one thing.

Jeff Laird

So there's a lot of different ideas for how we can handle the neflin, what they can mean, what they don't mean. For me, the most important thing is not to get too far down a rabbit hole to where we we try to cram a specific belief about the Nephalem and force other things that we believe, into it.

Jeff Laird

The Got Questions position is that these are a supernatural type of event. That this is, this is fallen angels in some sense mating with human women. And that, that's very biblically plausible. And I think as long as we follow what we can see in Scripture and don't try to jam something else into there, I think we're OK. When we get in trouble is where we we just insist on something like a conspiracy theory, and then we just drive that into forcing other beliefs in a different direction.

Shea Houdmann

Jeff, you're absolutely right that you run into people on both sides of this equation who take extreme positions. People that think that there's still massive amounts of nepheline today, that half of humanity is polluted with demonic DNA and all these crazy wild conspiracy theories. And the Bible possibly indicates that the Nepheline incident was repeated after the flood, so I don't deny the possibility that could happen, but to think that like half of the human race? Really? And then all of our political leaders around the world are actually Nephilim, more their reptilians or their spawn of alien, or who knows what.

Shea Houdmann

I mean, you can take a very interesting passage in the Bible and then blow it into all sorts of weird conspiracy theories, and that's a even on the viewpoint that we take that we believe that a plain reading of Scripture would lead you to conclusion that somehow fallen angels mated with human women is the biblical viewpoint. You can take that and run with it way beyond what the Bible possibly even hints at.

Shea Houdmann

We recently did a podcast with a person who studied the different flood traditions around the world. And when I was talking with him and doing a little research, it's also interesting that there's a lot of ancient cultures that had some sort of story about the gods coming down, mating with human women, resulting in superheroes. I mean, if you look at Greek mythology, that's exactly the story of Zeus and Hercules. And I guess Zeus seemed to be particularly interested in mating with human females. So it's not just the Bible that mentions this concept or not just the Book of Enoch, or the Book of Giants or other ancient Hebrew literature. There's all around the world, there's stories like this that all seem to kind of point something happened with some sort of angelic, demonic, spiritual creatures coming and doing something you shouldn't, resulting in some sort of superpowered humans. So it's not just a myth in one particular culture. It's all around the world. I think just like the flood, all the stories are pointing to

something that actually happened. But then, over the centuries or millennia, even, the stories got warped and twisted to the point that, I aww, that's not even barely even resembling what the Bible says. So it's like it's again, fascinating to study, but this is not something we need to be focusing our time or attention on. And again, let me say this is not worth dividing over.

Kevin Stone

There are a couple other theories that are that could be conformable to the biblical text, and one is going right along with what Jeff was speaking of, with the Sons of God being the line of Seth. Well, an expansion of that or a variation of that is that the sons of God are simply godly people in general, who were going against God's will and going after ungodly women, whether you know, whether they were from descendants of Cain or what. But I kind of broadening out that theory to cover just all godly people.

Kevin Stone

And then another theory is that the sons of God is a reference to kings, or princess, magistrates of some kind that were gathering to themselves large harems, and this was also against God's will at that time. So a couple of other theories of, minor theories, that go along with Genesis Chapter 6 as well. But again, a lot of speculation, but we don't have a lot of detail in Scripture.

Shea Houdmann

In no sense am I accusing those who take the, the human Ruler, powerful kings or descendants of Seth viewpoint. But really, it didn't become common to deny the fallen angels view until there was kind of an anti miraculous, anti supernatural bent against the Bible is when those viewpoints started becoming more and more prominent.

Shea Houdmann

I remember had conversation with the the friend who takes that viewpoint and it's like, well, how can you even explain how can an Angel take on human form to the point that it can replicate human reproduction? And I'm like, I have no idea. Yeah, but I also have no idea how it's even possible for a being to be spiritual, to have no physical body, or how it would be possible for a spiritual being to take on any physical form, which clearly the Bible says angels can do. So just 'cause I can't explain how it's possible. There are a lot of things in the Bible I have no idea how to explain how it works. Does seem pretty extreme to think that a demon could take on human form to the point of replicating human reproduction. But there's so much about demons and angels and their essence and their being in their nature that we don't understand. The scripture just doesn't go into great deal.

Shea Houdmann

And there's a passage in Matthew where it talks about in heaven we will be like the angels who neither marry nor are given in marriage. And again, yes, I think that's absolutely true. The angels in heaven do not marry, but we're talking about the demons here, and even that passage says they do not. It doesn't say they can't. So I don't think that's a strong argument against this viewpoint either, but all that to say I have no interest in arguing for this viewpoint, again, I think it's fascinating, interesting to study, but it's not something we spend a lot of time on, nor that's something we want to spend a lot of time on.

Jeff Laird

That, to me, is an important thing to continue to emphasize. Is the idea that, as interesting as it is, and as much as it could affect certain things, I I sincerely wish that some of my Christian brothers and sisters who spend so much time and effort, the concept of the Nefalen would apply that much interest to what the Bible says about things like sanctification, and salvation, and spreading the gospel. And so on and so forth.

Jeff Laird

It's fine, I suppose, but in terms of what it means for our day-to-day life, what it means for our ability to spread the gospel, what it means for the choices that we have to make in the world and is so inconsequential that at some point in time, if a person can't just say, you know what? I just don't know. And I'm OK with not knowing then that's that's maybe a little bit of a problem. That's a hobbyhorse that they need to be careful about.

Shea Houdmann

For sure. I hope this conversation has been educational, encouraging to you. We have several different articles discussing the various things related to Sons of God, daughters of men and nepheline different theories that are out there. And don't have time to delve into this, but there are some who think that the when the nepheline were wiped out in the flood that their soul spirits whatever you want to call them, resulted in a special type of demon. So that's another interesting side issue related to this.

Shea Houdmann

So you've caught our spirit here that is interesting to study. Everything in Scripture has importance in value, but like Jeff just said, there are so many things we better things, more important things we could spending our time and energy on, including declaring the gospel and teaching people how to more closely follow Christ. So that's our heart, that's what we want to get across today.

Shea Houdmann

So so Jeff, Kevin thank you for joining me and we got a question the other day about the podcast someone asking like where we actually located, so not going to give you our address, but I record here from Colorado Springs at the main Got Questions headquarters. Jeff is actually in Ohio and Kevin is in Kansas. So there's a little more background on the podcast for our listeners.

Shea Houdmann

So again, hope this conversation has been encouraging to you. Please go back and listen to some of the other episodes we've done in the angels and Demons series, because a lot of the issues are very intertwined. Again, so this has been the Got Questions podcast on who are the sons of God, daughters of men and nepheline? Got Questions? The Bible has answers. And we'll help you find them.