

Angels and Demons.

(Exorcism and the Giants of Genesis 6)

Question 1—*What should we think of exorcism?*

Answer—The kinds of demonic possession range from the relatively harmless, such as the spirit of infirmity, *cf.* Luke 13:11; or the blind and dumb demoniac, *cf.* Matt. 12:22; to the more violent cases of possession where attacks come on in fits, after intervals of comparative quiet, *cf.* Luke 9:42; Mark 9:18. In these, we see a desire of sorts in the demons for a bodily tabernacle wherein to work their mischief and misery, *cf.* Matt. 12:45; or, barring that, some other corporeal body in which to give vent to their rage, *cf.* Matt. 8:31, 32. Moreover, the heathens themselves identify their gods with demons, “Ye Scythians ridicule us because we celebrate the Bacchanals, and the god possesses us (*ho theos lambanei*; ὁ θεος λαμβάνει), but now the same demon (*houtos ho daimōn*; οὗτος ὁ δαίμων) hath taken possession of your king, for he celebrates the Bacchanals, and is filled with fury by this god (*hypo tou theou mainetai*; ὑπο του θεου μαινεται).” [Herodotus.] Luke, the inspired historian, relates a similar account of demonic possession which produced like effects in the person possessed, Luke 9:39.

Additionally, there were those demonic possessions which consisted in inspirations such as the woman with the Pythian spirit (*pneuma pythōna*; πνεῦμα πύθωνα), a spirit of Python, the serpent god who guarded the oracle of Delphi, *cf.* Acts 16:16. So, Paul himself appeared to entertain no doubt regarding the demonical nature of the heathen gods, for although he says that an idol is nothing, 1 Cor. 8:4; yet, he affirms that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, 1 Cor. 10:20. This sentiment is simply a reflection of the teachings of Moses, in the law, *cf.* Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17.

Under the Old Testament Mosaic administration, the various activities and practices which might lead to such possessions were strictly forbidden, *cf.* Deut. 18:10-14. Those who engaged in such activities which would bring demonism into Israel were to be put to death, *cf.* Lev. 20:27. Nevertheless, through the neglect of magistrates enforcing this, or even themselves using such wicked practices, the society was increasingly demonized, *cf.* 2 Chron 33:6. Thus, by the time of Jesus and His apostles, demonic possession was not an uncommon phenomena, *cf.* Acts 8:9; nor were the Jews exempted from this spiritual plague, *cf.* Acts 13:6.

It is in this context, that the Lord Jesus gave to His apostles the power to cast out unclean spirits, *cf.* Matt. 10:1. This exorcism is to be contrasted with those who claim to have an office of exorcist (*exorcistōn*; ἐξορκιστῶν; meaning “to command under oath, or adjure out”), *cf.* Acts 19:13; notice the progression of this story which seems to warn against using the Gospel simply as a response to demonic speech, *cf.* Acts 19:14-16. It appears that there is a similarity between these exorcists and the “adjuring” of the demons, *cf.* Mark 5:7. There is no real efficacy against the incursion of demons, once the door has been opened to them, except in and through the name of Jesus, *cf.* Luke 11:19, 20. However, this name is not to be used as a talisman, but it must be used in faith to be effective, *cf.* Mark 9:38, 39. This power belongs to all saints, particularly to those who are called to minister in the apostolic succession, *cf.* Mark 3:14, 15 *with* 16:17, 18. To use the name of Jesus apart from faith is to take the Lord’s name in vain, *contra* Ex. 20:7.

So, when Jesus or Paul meet with demons, although the demons spoke to them, *cf.* Luke 8:28; Acts 16:17; the response of both is similar, they refuse the testimony of the demons, though they were accurate, because they sought that only Jesus have the pre-eminence, *cf.* Col. 1:18. It is certain that acceptance of the testimony of the demons could not be attended with freedom but with death, *cf.* Rom. 6:23. Whatever benefit is received from demons must serve only to work spiritual darkness and, therefore, it must be rejected, *cf.* 2 Cor. 4:4. Should there be deliverance from these spirits simply as unwelcome, and not unholy, the result will not be lasting, *cf.* Luke 11:24, 25; hence, deliverance does not consist in merely exorcising the demon but in establishing that faith relation with Jesus Christ, Who is the Deliverer, *cf.* Luke 11:21, 22.

Thus, they did not “adjure” but simply commanded (*ekballō*; ἐκβάλλω; “cast out”) with authority that these unclean spirits depart, *cf.* Matt. 9:33.

Question 2—*What should we think of the giants mentioned in Genesis 6?*

Answer—The term translated “giants,” in Genesis 6, is *Nephilim* (*nəpīlīm*; נֶפֶלִיִּם), Gen. 6:4; from the root *nāpal* (נָפַל) meaning “fall, be cast down, fail,” often to ruin, *cf.* Prov. 24:17. Elsewhere, it is only used in Numbers in reference to the sons of Anak (a word itself referring to the “neck;” נַעֲקָן), who are described as men of “a great stature,” from which comes the LXX translation *gigantes* (γίγαντες; giants), Num. 13:32, 33. The precise sense of *Nephilim* (*nəpīlīm*; נֶפֶלִיִּם), especially given its context in Genesis, may derive from a word meaning an untimely birth (*nēpel*; נֶפֶל), or abortion, *cf.* Job 3:16; Eccl. 6:3.

Additionally, there is the word *Rephaim* (*rəpā’im*; רֶפְאִיִּם) which is also translated “giants,” *cf.* Deut. 2:20. The justification for using the word “giants” to translate is based upon those details about the Rephaim where they are said to be “tall as the Anakim,” Deut. 2:11, 21. Elsewhere, this word *Rephaim* is used to describe those who are dead, *cf.* Isa. 26:14, 19; Ps. 88: 10, 11; especially the inhabitants of hell, *cf.* Prov. 9:18. So, while there is reason to think that some of these ancient peoples were of greater height, *cf.* Deut. 3:11 (Og was of the remnant of the *Rephaim*, Josh. 12:4; his bed is between thirteen and fourteen feet); a trait very useful for warriorlike people, *cf.* 1 Sam. 17:4-7 (Goliath is between nine and ten feet tall); yet, for example, the spreading of themselves in the valley of the Rephaim has the literary effect of making them denizens of hell, *cf.* 2 Sam. 5:18, 22; Isa. 14:9. Moreover, it carries the connotation of joining them to the demonic forces found in the abyss, *cf.* Job 26:5; Matt. 8:31, 32.

The passage regarding the “giant” offspring in Genesis stands as one of the most difficult in the history of the interpretation of the Pentateuch, Gen. 6:1-4. This passage stands in narrative relation to the previous chapter, which chronicles the descendants of Seth, Gen. 5:4. The rabbis have noted that each time the phrase “and it came to pass” occurs that trouble follows, *cf.* Ruth 1:1; Est. 1:1 (then comes Haman); and, so, here, “and it came to pass, when men began to multiply”...“and GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great,” Gen. 6:5. Also, Gen. 11:2, 4; 14:1, 2. The scene is set when “men,” literally “the Adam” (אָדָם) “began” to make himself great upon the face of the earth through the begetting of daughters, Gen. 6:1. The word translated “began” (הִתְחַלַּף) may have the connotation of “breaking a covenant vow,” *cf.* Num. 30:3; Ezek. 39:7. The “daughters” in view in this verse are the same as those in the next, Gen. 6:2. They are the fruit of a loosening of covenant bonds, *cf.* Ps. 55:20; evidenced in their sexual immorality, especially in their daughters, *cf.* Lev. 21:9; Gen. 49:4.

Who are the “sons of God,” or “children of God” (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים), who took of these daughters of “the Adam,” Gen. 6:2? It has been argued that wherever this term “sons of God” occurs, there is a definite reference to the angels, *cf.* Ps. 29:1; 89:6; and, it is asserted that this interpretation is the oldest in the history of exegesis (*cf.* Cassuto, *in loco*, p. 292). Moreover, it is indisputable that this term does sometimes reference angels, but as they are an order of intelligent beings of pure moral character, *cf.* Job 38:7. However, these beings mentioned here are not that nor do the angels have the capacity for procreation, *cf.* Matt. 22:30. Instead, the “sons of God” is *figurative* for those who are arrayed on the LORD’s side, *cf.* Ex. 32:26; Deut. 32:5; Isa. 1:2; Hos. 1:10; just as Noah is called the “son of 500 years,” Gen. 5:32; or Abraham calls Eliezer “son of my house,” Gen. 15:3. Yet, it does seem to connote the council of holy ones, those who are gathered for the true worship of God, *cf.* Job 1:6; 2:1; which clearly does not transpire in heaven because Satan has been cast out, *cf.* Rev. 12:9. Nonetheless, we know that these assemblies are under the scrutiny of angels, elect and evil, whereby the ministers are called by that name angel, *cf.* Eccl. 5:6; and those assembled are reminded of this supernatural dimension being present, *cf.* 1 Cor. 11:10.

The “daughters of men” has often been understood to refer only to the daughters of the Cainites which mingle with the sons of Seth, Gen. 6:2. However, this is both unnecessary and unwarranted because the “daughters of men” has already been defined in the previous verse as those females descended by a natural

generation from both the lines of Seth and Cain, Gen. 6:1. The problem is here outlined as twofold: *first*, the “sons of God,” those who were members of the true church and assembly of God, beheld that these daughters were “fair,” or, as the Hebrew “good” (טַיִם), replicating the sin of Eve, *cf.* Gen. 3:6. *Second*, again like Eve with the fruit, they took those women which they determined to be good for themselves for wives, *cf.* Gen. 3:6; thereby, substituting their choosing for that of God, *cf.* Gen. 6:2. In this, they not only replicate the fall of man but also the fall of the angels, *cf.* Jude 6; hence, this choosing is joined to the sin of the angels that fell as the reason for the flood, *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:4, 5. Theirs was not like the sin of Sodom, choosing “strange flesh,” *cf.* Jude 7; but the evil consisted in promiscuous intermarriage without regard to spiritual character so that the godly took wives from amongst the godly and ungodly without discrimination, thereby corrupting the church, *cf.* Matt. 24:38. This laxity of choice proves a laxity of principle which opens the floodgates of wickedness, *cf.* Gen. 6:5. Ungodly mothers will not train up children in the way they should go, they will coddle evil and encourage rebellion, *cf.* Prov. 29:15. Likewise, husbands who have taken the wrong step in marrying ungodly wives cannot prove to be exemplary or authoritative fathers, *cf.* Deut. 7:3, 4. In this way, the seed of the woman became mixed with the seed of the serpent, *cf.* Gen. 3:15.

Finally, the “giants” may have been men of extraordinary stature, but they all perished in the flood, for only eight souls survived, *cf.* 1 Pet. 3:20. They seem to be called *Nephilim* because, according to this story, they fell, as children untimely born, before the judgment of God and descended into the realm of the *Rephaim*, the dead, *cf.* Ezek. 32:20-27 (here they are called “the mighty” as in Genesis 6:4). Moreover, note that the Scriptures do not say that they were wicked and unjust among themselves (as the monsters of fables), but toward God, “He saw,” says Moses, “that they were evil,” Gen. 6:5. The eyes of God perceive and judge quite differently from the eyes of men, *cf.* Isa. 55:8, 9.