

SATAN, EVIL SPIRITS, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

AN OLD TESTAMENT PRIMER ON THE DEVIL AND HIS DEMONS¹

1. First reference to the devil: The devil as the serpent in the garden, **Genesis 3**. Why do we believe that this is Satan? 1) The level of consciousness, persuasion, and evil can only be explained by the personage of Satan. 2) Satan is twice referred to as a deceiver and “that ancient serpent” in the Book of Revelation. **Revelation 12:9** *The great dragon was hurled down-- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.* **Revelation 20:2** *He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.* 3) His deceptive strategy in the garden is clearly analogous to his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4).
2. Demon sacrifices: **Deuteronomy 32:17** *They sacrificed to demons, which are not God-- gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear.* Cf. **Psalm 106:37-38** *They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons.* ³⁸ *They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood.*
The Hebrew word translated “demons” in these two passages is “shedhim”—Always in the plural, this word has the idea of rulers or lords. It speaks of idols as lords, since the Hebrews regarded images as visible symbols of invisible demons.² The translators of the Greek Septuagint, rendered this and four other Hebrew words with the Greek “daimonion,” from which get our English word, “demon.” The other Hebrew words are “seirim” (**Leviticus 17:7**—he-goat idols), “elilim” (**Psalm 96:5**, *all the gods of the nations are idols*), “gad” (**Isaiah 65:11**, the demon god, Fortune), and “qeter” (**Psalm 91:6**, *the pestilence that stalks in the darkness...*)
3. Next possible reference to a demon: **Judges 9:23** *God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who acted treacherously against Abimelech.* **Bible Knowledge Commentary: An evil (demonic) spirit was sent by God to fulfill Jotham’s curse by arousing distrust or jealousy in the Shechemites...**³
4. First clear reference to demonic affliction: **1 Samuel 16:15-16, 23** *Saul’s attendants said to him, “See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you.”* ¹⁶ *Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better....”* ²³ *Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.* (Cf. **18:10; 19:9**)

1 Samuel 18:10—How could a good God send an evil spirit to Saul?

PROBLEM: According to this passage, the evil (“distressing,” NKJV) spirit came upon Saul so that he prophesied in his house, and then tried to kill David with a spear. However, the verse clearly states that the evil spirit was from God. How could a good God send an evil spirit to bring distress to Saul?

SOLUTION: Because God is absolutely sovereign, the actions of any evil spirit would be subject to the authority of God. Therefore, it was according to God’s permission that the spirit was allowed to come upon Saul to bring him distress. Saul had already rejected God, and God had rejected him from being king. God had a special reason for allowing this spirit to incite Saul to action against David. Saul’s attempts to kill David only made Saul realize that God was with David. By sending David away and making him captain over a thousand, Saul inadvertently increased David’s popularity with the people and

¹ Where did demons come from? See **Revelation 12:9** *The great dragon was hurled down-- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.* Satan’s angels are holy angels that followed Satan in his rebellion against God and are eternally confirmed in wickedness. See also **2 Peter 2:4** *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...* Cf. **Matthew 25:41** *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’* It is possible that Satan recruited a third of all the angels (**Revelation 12:3-4** *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.* ⁴ *His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky...*

² C. Fred Dickason, *Angels, Elect and Evil* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 152.

³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (Jdg 9:22–25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

hastened his own demise. The sending of the evil spirit upon Saul is similar to God's allowing Satan to afflict Job. God allows evil, but always uses it to accomplish His own good purposes....⁴

5. First Old Testament reference to Spiritism: **1 Samuel 28:7-8** *Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a **medium**, so I may go and inquire of her." "There is one in Endor," they said. ⁸ So Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name." Cf. **Isaiah 8:19** *When men tell you to consult **mediums** and **spiritists**, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?**
6. Old Testament appearances of Satan by name:
 - **1 Chronicles 21:1** ***Satan** rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.*
 - **Job 1:6** *One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and **Satan** also came with them. (See all of **Job 1-2**)*
 - **Zechariah 3:1-2** *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and **Satan** standing at his right side to accuse him. ² The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"*
 - **NOTE:** The King James Version has "Satan" in **Psalm 109:6**—but other versions translate this "an adversary." The name "Satan" means "adversary," and in this text it seems best to see the word used of a human adversary, not as the personal name of Satan.
7. A lying spirit from God: **1 Kings 22:19-23** *Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' "One suggested this, and another that. ²¹ Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' ²² "By what means?' the LORD asked. "I will go out and be **a lying spirit** in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. "You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' ²³ "So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you." (parallel in **II Chronicles 18:20**)*
8. A spirit of destruction: **Jeremiah 51:1** *This is what the LORD says: "See, I will stir up **the spirit of a destroyer** against Babylon and the people of Leb Kamai.*
9. A spirit of prostitution? **Hosea 4:12** *They consult a wooden idol and are answered by a stick of wood. **A spirit of prostitution** leads them astray; they are unfaithful to their God. This might simply refer to the spiritual tendency of a people, not a personal evil spirit.*
10. The spirit of impurity? **Zechariah 13:2** *"On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land. This also might simply refer to the spiritual tendency of a people, not a personal evil spirit.*
11. Satan and the king of Tyre. Satan appears (not by name) as the power behind the king of Tyre in **Ezekiel 28:1-19**. **NOTE:** The address shifts from the earthly king to the angelic power at **verse 11**. **Verses 14 & 16** identify Satan as of the cherub angel class. Most evangelical scholars do accept **verses 11-19** as referring to Satan as the evil power behind the earthly king.
12. Satan and the king of Babylon in **Isaiah 14:12-17**. **NOTE:** The application of this passage to Satan is disputed. Some see this as human address only, using powerful metaphors (*Bible Knowledge Commentary* votes for Sennacherib). Others believe that the person addressed shifts from an earthly king to Satan in **verses 12-17**. A third view that *perhaps...best answers the biblical evidence is that there is a dual reference. Verses 4-11 seem to refer to a future "king of Babylon," or the coming Antichrist associated with Babylon, a politico-religious system existing just before the second coming of Christ. This one is pictured in revelation 13, 17, and 18, and is described in 2 Thessalonians 2. There seems also to be an inclusion of Satan in verses 12-17 to retrace Satan's sin as analogous with Antichrist's character and actions in the future. We must remember that the Antichrist is empowered by Satan (2 Th 2:8-10). According to this view, Isaiah reveals the true nature of the Antichrist and his ultimate defeat, even though*

⁴ Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992), 165-166.

he is empowered by the highest of all heavenly creatures. Satan will be defeated and all his heavenly and earthly hosts.⁵

This is the passage that contains the classic fivefold arrogant “I will” statements. (verses 13-14) It is also where we get the proper name “Lucifer” (KJV and NKJV) which is variously rendered in other Bible versions as “star of the morning” (NASB), “morning star” (NIV), and “Daystar” (NJB).

13. In Daniel 10, a powerful demon is labeled as the “prince of Persia.” The holy archangel Michael is called “one of the chief princes.” **Daniel 10:12-13** *“Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I [this is probably the angel Gabriel speaking--see 8:16] have come in response to them. ¹³ But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. NOTE: **Daniel 12:1** Michael, the great prince who protects your people [i.e., Daniel’s people—the Jews]. Cf. Daniel 10:21, Michael, your prince. Jude calls Michael an archangel: **Jude 1:9** But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”*

AN OLD TESTAMENT PRIMER ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit as agent of creation: **Genesis 1:2** *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.*
2. Holy Spirit as agent of conviction: **Genesis 6:3** *Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.”*
3. Holy Spirit “coming on,” “indwelling,” or “filling” godly (or in Balaam’s and Saul’s case, ungodly) people:
 - **Joseph: Genesis 41:38** *So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”*
 - **The tabernacle artisan, Bezalel: Exodus 31:2-3** *“See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—*
 - **Moses and his seventy new leaders: Numbers 11:17** *I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.*
 - **Balaam: Numbers 24:2-3** *When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him ³ and he uttered his oracle: “The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly,*
 - **Joshua: Numbers 27:18** *So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him.*
 - **Othniel: Judges 3:9-10** *But when they cried out to the LORD, he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, who saved them. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war. (Cf. Gideon, Jephthah, Samson: *The Spirit of the LORD came upon him...*)*
 - **Saul: 1 Samuel 10:6** *The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. **1 Samuel 11:6, 11** When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger. ¹¹ The next day Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. **1 Samuel 19:23** So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even upon him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth.*
 - **David (and the related loss of the Spirit in Saul): 1 Samuel 16:13-14** *So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah. ¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.*
 - **David prophesies by the Spirit: 2 Samuel 23:1-2** *These are the last words of David: “The oracle of David son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted by the Most High, the man anointed by the*

⁵ Dickason, 131.

God of Jacob, Israel's singer of songs: ² "The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.

- **The warrior, Amasai: 1 Chronicles 12:18** Then the Spirit **came upon** Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said: "We are yours, O David! We are with you, O son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you." So David received them and made them leaders of his raiding bands.
- **David** is empowered by the Holy Spirit for temple **architecture: 1 Chronicles 28:12** He gave him the plans of all that **the Spirit had put in his mind** for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things.
- **The prophets:** Azariah (**2 Chronicles 15:1**), Jahaziel (**2 Chronicles 20:14**), Zechariah (**2 Chronicles 24:20**), Isaiah (**Isaiah 48:16; 61:1**) Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:2, et al), Micah (Micah 3:8),
- **The Spirit on the Servant of Jehovah: Isaiah 42:1** "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.
- **Prophecy regarding outpouring of the Spirit on Israel: Isaiah 32:15** till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. **Joel 2:28** 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.
- **Israelites and the Holy Spirit: Isaiah 63:10-14** Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them. ¹¹ Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people-- where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them. ¹² who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, ¹³ who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; ¹⁴ like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name. **Zechariah 7:12** They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry
- **The returned exiles and the Spirit: Haggai 2:5** 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'
- **Rebuilding the temple and the Spirit: Zechariah 4:6** So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.

HOW CAN AN EVIL SPIRIT BE SAID TO BE FROM JEHOVAH GOD?—COMMENTS FROM SELECT COMMENTARIES:

THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY: 16:14–20 David's new status before the Lord stood in sharp contrast to Saul's. When the Lord rejected Saul as king (15:23, 26; 16:1), "the Spirit of the LORD had departed from" (v. 14) him as well. Saul had lost the empowering reality behind the anointing that had marked his selection for divine service earlier (cf. 10:1, 10). But Saul's condition now was far worse than being without the Lord's Spirit, for "an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." The Hebrew word translated "evil" ...has a wide range of meanings from "misery" to "moral perverseness." Thus, it is possible—and perhaps preferable—to interpret the text not to mean that the Lord sent a morally corrupt demon³⁵ but rather another sort of supernatural being—an angel of judgment (cf. 2 Kgs 19:35)—against Saul that caused him to experience constant misery.

Saul's tortured state was not an accident of nature, nor was it essentially a medical condition. It was a supernatural assault by a being sent at the Lord's command, and it was brought on by Saul's disobedience.

The astounding declaration by the writer in vv. 14–15 reflects a worldview that bears further examination. God, the Creator of the universe, had issued a series of behavioral decrees applicable to all humanity, but especially to Israel, and these were revealed supremely in the Torah. The Torah was a path of life, and obedience to the Torah resulted in life and blessing. To disobey Torah requirements was to leave the path of life and enter into the realm of judgment and death. Through his repeated disobedience to the Torah requirements Saul had entered into a living, personal judgment that God brought against him. This punishment was carried out by a divinely created agent of judgment, "an evil [or "troubling"] spirit from the LORD."

This is the only time in the Old Testament that an individual is noted as being tormented by a troubling/evil spirit. Evidence that the writer considered Saul's condition to be unusual is provided by the fact that the verb that

describes Saul's condition...is used nowhere else in a narrative framework clause in the Torah or Former Prophets; furthermore, the combination of grammatical and lexical features in this clause is rated as the most abnormal in the narrative framework of 1, 2 Samuel.

Though Saul was the one being troubled by the spirit, the writer portrays him as being inert in dealing with it. It was "Saul's attendants" (v. 15), not Saul himself, who correctly diagnosed his condition; it also was they who suggested an effective treatment for helping him "feel better" (v. 16). Their remedy was one known in Israelite circles to have power in the spiritual world (cf. 2 Kgs 3:15), the playing of harp music. By listening to harp music "when the [troubling]/evil spirit comes" (v. 16), Saul "will feel better."⁶

R. TORREY: DOES THE GOD OF TRUTH AND LOVE SEND LYING SPIRITS AND EVIL SPIRITS TO MEN?

One of the most puzzling passages in the Bible is found in 1 Kings 22, and in the parallel account in 2 Chronicles 18. In these passages the Prophet Micaiah is reported as saying, "Therefore hear thou the word of the LORD" (v. 19, RV). Then he goes on: "I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." Jehovah is pictured as asking the assembled host who would go and persuade Ahab that he may go up to Ramoth-gilead. Then a lying spirit is represented as coming forth and standing before the Lord, and saying, "I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." Then Jehovah is represented as saying to the lying spirit, "Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also: go forth, and do so" (vv. 20–22, RV).

At first glance it appears as if the LORD sanctioned and took part in lying and deception. What is the explanation?

It is clearly given in the context. Micaiah, speaking by the Holy Spirit, is seeking to dissuade Ahab and Jehoshaphat from going up to Ramoth-gilead. All the false prophets have told the two kings that they should go up to victory. Micaiah, the messenger of the Lord, tells them on the contrary that they shall go up to defeat and to the certain death of Ahab. He tells them that the spirit that had spoken by the false prophets was a lying spirit. He puts this in a highly pictorial way. Though the picture is exceedingly vivid, it does not teach error, but truth, and teaches it in a most forcible way, namely, that it was a lying spirit that was in the mouth of the false prophets. But that Jehovah was not really a party to the deception appears clearly in the narrative, if we take it as a whole. Far from being a party to the deception, He sends His own prophet to warn them that the spirit that spoke by the false prophets was a lying spirit, and to tell them the exact facts in the case as to what the issue of the battle would be. If they would choose to listen to God and His prophet they would be saved from calamity, but if they would not listen to God and His prophet then God would give them over to the working of error, that they should believe a lie; but He would not do this without abundant warning.

This is God's universal method, not only as taught in the Bible but as taught in experience. He allows every man to choose either to listen to Him and know the truth, or to turn a deaf ear to Him and be given over to strong delusion. If men will not receive the love of the truth that they may be saved, then God gives them over to strong delusion to believe a lie. If men want lies, God gives them their fill of them (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12, RV).

Other passages of the Bible seem to teach that God sends evil spirits to men, and the question arises: How can we believe that a good God, a God of love, sends evil spirits to men? Let us turn to a passage in which this is taught, and we will soon find an answer to the difficulty.

In 1 Samuel 16:14 (RV) we read: "Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him."

What is meant by "an evil spirit"? The context clearly shows. It was a spirit of discontent, unrest, depression.

The circumstances were these: Saul had proved untrue to God. He had deliberately disobeyed God (1 Samuel 15:4–35, especially vv. 22–23), and consequently God had withdrawn His Spirit from him, and a spirit of discontent and unrest had come upon him.

This was not an unkind act on God's part. There was nothing kinder that God could have done. It is one of the most merciful provisions of our heavenly Father that when we disobey Him and wander from Him He makes us unhappy, discontented in our sin. If God should leave us to continue to be happy in sin, it would be the unkindest thing He could do. God in His great mercy will win every sinner possible back to Himself; and if we sin, God for our highest good sends us deep depression and unrest in our sin. If we make the right use of this spirit of unrest and depression that God sends us, it brings us back to God and to the joy of the Holy Ghost. Saul made the wrong use of it. Instead of allowing his unrest of heart to bring him to repentance and back to God, he allowed it to embitter his

⁶ Bergen, R. D. (2001). Vol. 7: 1, 2 Samuel (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; *The New American Commentary* (182–183). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

soul against one whom God favored. The sending of the evil spirit was an act of mercy on God's part. The misuse of this act of mercy resulted in Saul's utter undoing.

*There is many a man today who once knew something about the Spirit of the Lord and the joy of the Holy Ghost, who has fallen into sin, and God in His great love and mercy is sending him at the present time an evil spirit, a spirit of unrest, dissatisfaction, deep discontent, or even of abject misery. Let him thank God for it! Let him inquire humbly on his face before God where he has sinned against God and lost the joy of his salvation! Let him put away and confess his sin and come back to God and have the joy of God's salvation renewed to him. An evil spirit of unrest and discontent was sent to David, too, when he sinned; but when after some resistance David confessed his sin to the Lord, the Lord blotted it out and brought him into a place of glad joy in the Lord, where he could instruct and teach others in the way they should go (Psalm 32:4–8; 51:9–13).*⁷

JOHN CALVIN: *In like manner, in Isaiah, he says of the Assyrian, "I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey," (Isaiah 10:6); not that he intends to teach wicked and obstinate man to obey spontaneously, but because he bends them to execute his Judgments, just as if they carried their orders engraven on their minds. And hence it appears that they are impelled by the sure appointment of God. I admit, indeed, that God often acts in the reprobate by interposing the agency of Satan; but in such a manner, that Satan himself performs his part, just as he is impelled, and succeeds only in so far as he is permitted. The evil spirit that troubled Saul is said to be from the Lord (1 Sam. 16:14), to intimate that Saul's madness was a just punishment from God. Satan is also said to blind the minds of those who believe not (2 Cor. 4:4). But how so, unless that a spirit of error is sent from God himself, making those who refuse to obey the truth to believe a lie? According to the former view, it is said, "If the prophet be deceived when he has spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet," (Ezek. 14:9). According to the latter view, he is said to have given men over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28), because he is the special author of his own just vengeance; whereas Satan is only his minister (see Calv. in Ps. 141:4). But as in the Second Book (Chap. 4 sec. 3, 4), in discussing the question of man's freedom, this subject will again be considered, the little that has now been said seems to be all that the occasion requires. The sum of the whole is this,—since the will of God is said to be the cause of all things, all the counsels and actions of men must be held to be governed by his providence; so that he not only exerts his power in the elect, who are guided by the Holy Spirit, but also forces the reprobate to do him service.*⁸

MATTHEW HENRY: *I. Here is Saul made a terror to himself (v. 14): The Spirit of the Lord departed from him. He having forsaken God and his duty, God, in a way of righteous judgment, withdrew from him those assistances of the good Spirit with which he was directed, animated, and encouraged in his government and wars. He lost all his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of his being rejected by him. Now God took his mercy from Saul (as it is expressed, 2 Sa. 7:15); for, when the Spirit of the Lord departs from us, all good goes. When men grieve and quench the Spirit, by wilful sin, he departs, and will not always strive. The consequence of this was that an evil spirit from God troubled him. Those that drive the good Spirit away from the do of course become prey to the evil spirit. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by means of the corrupt humours of his body and passions of his mind. He grew fretful, and peevish, and discontented, timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling; he was sometimes, says Josephus, as if he had been choked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a burden to all about him.*⁹

ADDENDUM: WHAT ABOUT THE "SONS OF GOD" IN GENESIS 6:1-4? ARE DEMONS INVOLVED IN THIS PASSAGE?

NOTE: Tim does not accept the interpretation of this passage as referring to the intermarriage of evil angels with human women. His reasons for rejecting this are 1) It is fanciful. There is no corroborating evidence for such unions. 2) There is a simpler explanation, especially that this is referring to two lines of men, or that it is referring to ungodly men who are influenced by demons. 3) It runs counter to the "non-sex" nature of angels: **Matthew 22:30** *At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.* 4) It

⁷ Torrey, R. (1998). *Difficulties in the Bible : Alleged errors and contradictions*. Willow Grove: Woodlawn Electronic Publishing.

⁸ Calvin, J. (1997). *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁹ Henry, M. (1996). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (1 Sa 16:14–23). Peabody: Hendrickson.

creates a “third race” of spiritual creatures—half angel/half human. This creates unanswered implications regarding God’s plan of redemption. God redeems fallen men. God does not redeem fallen angels. So which would be these supposed creatures?

WALVOORD AND ZUCK: *Many have suggested that **the sons of God** were the godly line of Seth and **the daughters of men** were the Cainites. But this does not do justice to the terminology or the context. Others view the “sons of God” as angels (as in Job 1:6), who cohabited with women on earth. This, however, conflicts with Matthew 22:30.*

The incident is one of hubris, the proud overstepping of bounds. Here it applies to “the sons of God,” a lusty, powerful lot striving for fame and fertility. They were probably powerful rulers who were controlled (indwelt) by fallen angels. It may be that fallen angels left their habitation and inhabited bodies of human despots and warriors, the mighty ones of the earth.

It is known from Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Daniel 10:13 that great kings of the earth have “princes” ruling behind them—their power is demonic. It is no surprise that in Ugaritic literature (as well as other nations’ literature), kings are described as divine, half-divine, or demigods. Pagans revered these great leaders. Many mythological traditions describe them as being the offspring of the gods themselves. In fact bn’lm (“sons of the gods”) in Ugaritic is used of members of the pantheon as well as great kings of the earth. In the Ugaritic legend of the Dawn, the chief god of the pantheon, El, seduced two human women. This union of a god with human women produced Šḥr (“Dawn”) and Šlm (“Dusk”) who seem to have become goddesses representing Venus. Thus for the pagans, gods had their origin in copulation between gods and humans. Any superhuman individual in a myth or any mythological or actual giant would suggest a divine origin to the pagans.

*Genesis 6:1-4, then, describes how corrupt the world got when this violation was rampant. It is also a polemic against the pagan belief that giants (**Nephilim**; cf. Num. 13:32-33) and **men of renown** (Gen. 6:4) were of divine origin, and that immortality was achieved by immorality. The Canaanite cult (and most cults in the ancient Near East) included fertility rites involving sympathetic magic, based on the assumption that people are supernaturally affected through an object which represents them. Israel was warned to resist this because it was completely corrupt and erroneous.*

*The passage, then, refutes pagan beliefs by declaring the truth. **The sons of God** were not divine; they were demon-controlled. Their marrying as many women as they wished (possibly this is the origin of harems) was to satisfy their baser instincts. They were just another low order of creatures, though powerful and demon-influenced. **Children** of these marriages, despite pagan ideas, were not god-kings. Though **heroes** and “men of renown,” they were flesh; and they died, in due course, like all members of the human race. When God judges the world—as He was about to—no giant, no deity, no human has any power against Him. God simply allots one’s days and brings his end.¹⁰*

K. A. MATTHEWS: *Church Fathers, such as Augustine, as well as the Reformers (Luther, Calvin) interpreted the “sons of God” as a reference to “godly men,” that is, the righteous lineage of Seth. Although this view has its share of difficulties, we find that it is the most attractive.¹⁰⁶ We already have shown how chaps. 4 and 5 contrast the two lines of descent from Adam—the Cainites and Sethites. Genesis 6:1–8 relates how the two lines intermarry, resulting in a community of unprecedented wickedness. The flood account, we have shown, is actually embedded within the Sethite genealogy, which is not completed until the notice of Noah’s death (9:29). This provides the appropriate interpretive key for understanding 6:1–8. During this period of amazing Sethite expansion (chap. 5), the Sethite family marries outside its godly heritage, which results in moral decline.¹¹*

THE “DEMON” IDEA WAS ADVANCED IN THE ANCIENT JEWISH PSEUDEPHIGRAPAL¹² WRITING, THE FIRST BOOK OF ENOCH: The idea that the Genesis 6 offspring were demon/human beings

¹⁰ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Ge 6:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ Mathews, K. A. (2001). *Vol. 1A: Genesis 1-11:26* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; *The New American Commentary* (329–330). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹² *Pseudephigrapha* means literally “false writing.” These books are those ... *which are distinctly spurious and unauthentic in their overall content. While they claim to have been written by biblical authors, they actually express religious fancy and magic from the period between about 200 B.C. and A.D. 200....There are eighteen worthy of mention...* --Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 166.

was advanced in the Jewish pseudepigraphal writing of *First Enoch*. This account appears in the first of its five sections as follows: *The Book of Watchers* (§1-36): a third century or early second century BCE text on the Last Judgment and the reason why God will judge harshly.

- introduction (§1-5): the Last Judgment;
- narrative (§6-36): the fallen angels, their children by mortal women, the corruption of mankind, Enoch's unsuccessful intercession for the fallen angels, a vision of mankind's doom, and Enoch's journey to Earth, Hell, and Heaven.¹³

The oldest known Jewish work not included in the Bible is the *Book of Enoch*. This is a complex work, written in the third (or perhaps even the late fourth) century BCE, after the return from the Babylonian Exile and the establishment of the Second Jewish Commonwealth (6th-5th centuries BCE) and before the [Maccabean revolt](#) in 172 BCE. The oldest copies of the *Book of Enoch*, dating from the third century BCE, were discovered among the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) (see below).¹⁴

TEXT EXCERPT FROM FIRST ENOCH:

[Chapter 6] 1 And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto 2 them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men 3 and beget us children.' And Semjaza, who was their leader, said unto them: 'I fear ye will not 4 indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.' And they all answered him and said: 'Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations 5 not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.' Then sware they all together and bound themselves 6 by mutual imprecations upon it. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn 7 and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. And these are the names of their leaders: Samlazaz, their leader, Araklba, Rameel, Kokablel, Tamlel, Ramlel, Danel, Ezeqeel, Baraqijal, 8 Asael, Armaros, Batarel, Ananel, Zaqlael, Samsapeel, Satarel, Turel, Jomjael, Sariel. These are their chiefs of tens.

[Chapter 7] 1 And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives, and each chose for himself one, and they began to go in unto them and to defile themselves with them, and they taught them charms 2 and enchantments, and the cutting of roots, and made them acquainted with plants. And they 3 became pregnant, and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: Who consumed 4 all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against 5 them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and 6 fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.¹⁵

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¹³ <http://www.livius.org/ei-er/enoch/enoch.htm>. Accessed 112311.

¹⁴ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/apocrypha.html>. Accessed 112311.

¹⁵ <http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/book-of-enoch>. Accessed 112311.