

A Hermeneutical-Theological Analysis of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4: A Pentecostal Systematic Theology Approach

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Abstract

The Nephilim have long been a controversial topic in biblical theology and can give rise to conflict due to differing interpretations across various denominations, which in turn can weaken the unity of the body of Christ. One interpretation holds that the Nephilim were giants resulting from relations between human and spiritual beings, while another view argues that the Nephilim were simply large humans with no connection to spiritual entities. The question is whether Pentecostal believers, as part of the body of Christ, can respond more wisely to the existing differences in interpretation and discover alternative interpretations by using qualitative research methods, literature review, and exposition of biblical texts through a hermeneutical-theological study with a Pentecostal systematic approach? This study is limited to understand the Nephilim according to what is written in the canonical Indonesian Bible (Terjemahan Baru by Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia TB-LAI), without relying on conclusions drawn from apocryphal writings. The urgency of this research lies in its effort to offer a Pentecostal systematic approach to Nephilim theology, highlighting the root cause of humanity's fall as rebellion against God and the restoration of the church through the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides and leads the new men to live as sons of God. The results of this study demonstrate that the Bible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is capable of providing answers to the theology of the Nephilim and adequately explaining the identity of the sons of God in a way that supports the growth of Pentecostal believers' faith in the dynamics of the modern era.

Keywords: *bene Ha'elohim*; Genesis 6:4; Nephilim; pentecostal hermeneutics; pentecostal systematic theology

Abstrak

Nephilim telah lama menjadi topik yang kontroversial dalam teologi biblika dan dapat menimbulkan pertentangan karena perbedaan penafsiran dari berbagai denominasi, yang ujungnya dapat melemahkan persatuan kesatuan tubuh Kristus. Ada penafsiran mengatakan Nephilim adalah makhluk raksasa dikarenakan hubungan antara anak-anak manusia dengan makhluk roh, dan ada juga penafsiran bahwa Nephilim hanyalah anak-anak manusia berbadan raksasa yang tidak ada hubungannya dengan makhluk roh. Pertanyaannya apakah insan Pentakosta yang adalah bagian dari tubuh Kristus dapat menyikapi perbedaan penafsiran yang ada dengan lebih bijak dan menemukan penafsiran alternatif dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif tinjauan pustaka dan eksposisi teks-teks Alkitab melalui kajian hermeneutis-teologis dengan pendekatan sistematika Pentakosta? Penelitian ini dibatasi pada pemahaman Nephilim menurut Alkitab kanon standar Terjemahan Baru yang diterbitkan Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (TB-LAI), tanpa perlu bergantung pada hasil akhir dari tulisan-tulisan apokrifa. Urgensi penelitian ini terletak pada upaya menawarkan respons pendekatan Sistematika Pentakosta terhadap teologi Nephilim yang menyoroti akar penyebab kejatuhan manusia sebagai pemberontakan manusia terhadap Allah dan pemulihan gereja melalui karya Roh Kudus yang membimbing, memimpin manusia baru untuk hidup sebagai anak-anak Allah. Hasil dari penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa Alkitab dengan tuntunan Roh Kudus mampu memberikan jawaban akan teologi Nephilim dan menjelaskan predikat anak-anak Allah secara memadai untuk mendukung pertumbuhan iman umat Pentakosta dalam dinamika zaman modern ini.

Kata kunci: *bene Ha'elohim*; Kejadian 6:4; Nephilim; hermeneutika pentakosta; teologi sistematika pentakosta

INTRODUCTION

The Nephilim remain a challenging subject because although they are mentioned only briefly in the Bible, yet they have given rise to numerous interpretations throughout theological history. At least four major interpretations of the Nephilim have emerged, intersecting with both Reformed and Orthodox theological traditions. Accordingly, this study seeks to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective through a hermeneutical-theological analysis. In addition, the research proposes an alternative perspective that has not yet been widely explored, examined through a Pentecostal systematic approach that highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding Pentecostal believers into all truth (John 16:13).

In Genesis 6:4, the term Nephilim is frequently connected with the phrase “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*), whereas in Numbers 13:33 the Nephilim are portrayed as fearsome giants descended from the Anakites (the descendants of Anak) in the land of Canaan, a region associated with Canaan, the son of Ham and the grandson of Noah. Interpretations of the Nephilim vary greatly across theological traditions. Some traditional perspectives, including the rendering found in the Indonesian Bible Society’s New Translation version or *Terjemahan Baru* by Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (TB LAI), understand them literally as giants. In contrast, a number of modern scholars detached the Nephilim from the term “sons of God” and propose alternative explanations, such as the Reformed view that the Nephilim were the descendants of the godly line of Seth¹ who intermarried with the wicked human line of Cain,² or that they referred to various kings or the powerful rulers of that era.³

In apocalyptic literature embraced within parts of the Eastern Orthodoxy and believed to have been written after the third century BC, particularly in the Book of Enoch, the Nephilim are portrayed as fallen angels, known as the Watchers, who took human women as wives and produced giant offsprings.⁴ Historical-critical scholars connected to the Biblical Archaeology Society (BAS) argued that the word Nephilim (נְפִילִים) has a phonetic similarity to the Hebrew word “*naphal*” (נָפַל), meaning “to fall.” Thus, the Nephilim are interpreted as the offspring of the “sons of God” namely the fallen angels who descended to earth and engaged in sexual relations with human women.⁵ The deeds of these fallen angels, identified as the Watchers or Nephilim, are considered responsible for the spread of wickedness in the world and for provoking God’s regret or anguish in Genesis 6:6, which led Him to send the flood in Noah’s time as a means of restoring order to humanity.⁶ Nevertheless, other critical perspectives maintain that the phonetic similarity between Nephilim and *naphal* is insufficient as a reliable basis for interpreting the term of Nephilim.⁷

Given the diversity of interpretations across theological traditions, this study raises the following research question: through a hermeneutical-theological examination of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 and the application of a Pentecostal systematic approach, can these differing interpretations be addressed more thoughtfully while also offering an alternative perspective

¹ Ronal Parandan and Yohanes T. Rompon, “Kajian Teologis Terhadap Istilah ‘Anak-Anak Allah’ Dan ‘Anak-Anak Manusia’ Berdasarkan Kejadian 6:1-3,” *PROTOS Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 2, no. 1 (2026): 11–20.

² Rezeki Putra Gulo, “Kajian Teologis Frasa Anak-Anak Allah Dan Anak-Anak Manusia Dalam Narasi Kejadian 6:1-4,” *Academia* (2022): 1–13.

³ Christine Natalia, “Studi Eksegesis Mengenai Identitas Anak-Anak Allah Dalam Teks Kejadian 6:1-4” (Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Satyabhakti Malang, 2013).

⁴ Jay Winter, *The Complete Book of Enoch: Standard English Version*, Digital. (Winters Publications, 2015).

⁵ Elen White, “Who Are the Nephilim? - Biblical Archaeology Society,” *Biblical Archaeology Society*.

⁶ Miryam Brand, “The Benei Elohim, the Watchers, and the Origins of Evil - TheTorah.Com,” *The Torah*.

⁷ Michael S Heiser, *Hebrew Bible, and Ancient Semitic Languages, “The Meaning of the Word Nephilim: Fact vs. Fantasy”* (2005).

that emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding God's people into all truth? This research is confined to the understanding found in the canonical Bible New Translation version by Indonesian Bible Society (TB-LAI). Therefore, a further question emerges: can this translation sufficiently explain the theology of the Nephilim without relying on the conclusions drawn from apocryphal writings which often become sources of controversy and division that may undermine the unity of the body of Christ? The urgency or significance of this study lies in its attempt to provide a Pentecostal response to the theology of the Nephilim in the Old Testament by emphasizing humanity's rebellion or sin against God as the fundamental cause of the fall, while also underscoring humanity's restoration through the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides and leads believers in the New Testament to live as righteous children of God without becoming entangled in unnecessary myths or speculative interpretations.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is qualitative research using a hermeneutical-theological approach through literature review and biblical text exposition within a Pentecostal systematic framework. Since this research seeks to examine church teachings and doctrines, the first step of the study consists of gathering and identifying various relevant Christian sources, including printed books, e-books, academic journals, articles, and Christian studies from a range of websites related to the topic and title of the research. The TB-LAI Bible serves as the primary reference. The second step involves critically evaluating the selected literature in order to identify its principal findings as well as its findings and limitations.

The third step of this research will present and analyse four common interpretations regarding the theology of the Nephilim and the "sons of God" in the Old Testament, particularly where these interpretations intersect with Reformed and Orthodox perspectives, through a hermeneutical-theological study and exposition of biblical texts.

At the fourth step, this study will offer an alternative perspective through a Pentecostal systematic approach that refers to the theological understanding and teaching of the fulfilment of God's covenant accomplished by Christ and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, which helps believers attain salvation and live as children of God. Finally, this study argues that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the canonical Bible as a whole is sufficient to explain and address the theology of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 without having to depend on conclusions drawn from additional Apocryphal books.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Genesis 6:4 is widely regarded as one of the most controversial and difficult passages to interpret. The passage has become a significant subject of debate among Christians who read the Bible alongside the Deuterocanonical books and other Apocryphal writings, such as the Book of Enoch and Book of Tobit, including within Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and such groups. In contrast, other Christian groups adhere to the standard biblical canon of 66 books (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament), particularly Protestant traditions that generally emphasize logical and analytical approaches. Subsequently from these traditions emerged Pentecostal movements, which maintain the use of the standard biblical canon while placing strong emphasis on the understanding and experiencing the person of the Holy Spirit.

Differences in reference texts and interpretive methods often give rise to disputes among various Christian denominations. This situation can be observed in theological classroom discussions where debates often emerge between groups that view the Nephilim as descendants of Seth and groups that regard them as fallen angels. Such factional attitudes, as cautioned by the Apostle Peter, often foster disputes over "who is most correct" and may

ultimately weaken the unity of the body of Christ, as warned by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:12 and by the Lord Jesus in Mark 3:24–25 and Matthew 12:25. Accordingly, this study does not seek to determine which interpretation is absolutely correct, but rather to broaden readers' perspectives by encouraging consideration of the limitations within each view and by presenting alternative perspectives that are more agreeable based on mature theological study.

In the book of *The Unseen Realm*,⁸ particularly in the section "Obstacle and Protocols," Michael S. Heiser argues that one of the major challenges in modern Christianity, especially within non-Pentecostal circles, is the tendency to interpret the Bible through a modern worldview. First, the Bible is often understood as a product of modernist thinking in which only empirical realities are considered real, rather than as a text that should be read through the perspective of its original authors, who lived in a world where supernatural reality and the physical world were viewed as closely interconnected.

Second, within modern society, particularly among non-Pentecostal who are less familiar with supernatural experiences, discussions concerning the spiritual realm often generate discomfort, and there may be scepticism toward practices considered too "spiritual," and difficult to explain rationally, or beyond empirical observation. As a result, there is a growing tendency to reduce or dismiss the spiritual dimension in favour of a purely naturalistic approach, causing biblical interpretation to become increasingly disconnected from the worldview of the early Christians, who understood the spiritual and physical realms as inseparable. Consequently, spiritual experiences, including Pentecostal phenomena such as encountering God through the person and work of the Holy Spirit, initially evidenced by speaking in different kinds of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10) in languages not understood (1 Corinthians 14:2) are frequently viewed by some Evangelical theologians as mistaken practices or as forms of interpretive error requiring correction.⁹

Third, many biblical passages considered difficult, such as Genesis 6:4, are often viewed as too strange or even too trivial to become subjects of in-depth study. As a result, such texts are not seriously examined through hermeneutical-theological methods that can reflect revelation and spiritual experiences which deepen the knowledge of God as part of systematic theological study.

The subject of Nephilim is one such particularly challenging topic because they appear quite briefly in the Bible, yet generated diverse interpretations throughout theological history. The word Nephilim appears only three times in the Old Testament of TB-LAI Bible and from the Septuagint, commonly abbreviated with the Roman numeral acronym LXX, a designated associated the legendary seventy Jewish scholars who translated the Pentateuch: the first five books of the Bible in the third century BC. The first appearance of the word Nephilim in the LXX Bible is in Genesis 6:4, where the Nephilim are translated as giants who were oppressive or tyrannical. In interpretation, the Nephilim are often associated with the "sons of God" בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (*bene ha'elohim*) approaching the "daughters of men," more precisely the daughters descended from Adam בְּנוֹת הָאָדָם (*benowt ha'adam*), as their wives, as written in parallel in Genesis 6:2. The other two references occur in Numbers 13:33 as Nephilim הַנְּפִלִים (*ha'nepilim*), described as terrifying giant figures from the lineage of Anak אֲנָק (*Anaq*) among the Canaanites, generally traced to the descendants of Ham son of Noah. Explicitly, the word Nephilim, which

⁸ Michael S. Haiser or Haiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*, ed. David Lambert, Lexham Press, 1st ed., vol. 59 (Bellingham, WA 98225: Lexham Press, 2015).

⁹ Suanglangi Hermanto, "Bahasa Roh : Apa Dan Bagaimana?," *Jurnal Jaffray* 2, no. 1 (2004): 17–25.

is often translated into Greek as “giants,” does not appear at all in the New Testament TB-LAI Bible.

Table 1. Biblical Word Study List (Alkitab Terjemahan Baru LAI)

Word	Old Testament	New Testament
Sons of God	OT (5 times)	NT (6 times)
	Genesis 6:2	Luke 20:36
	Genesis 6:4	Romans 8:14
	Job 1:6	Romans 8:19
	Job 2:1	Galatians 3:26
	Job 38:7	John 1:12 1 John 3:1
Nephilim	OT (3 times):	-
	Genesis 6:4 Numbers 13:33 (2x)	
Giant	OT (10 times in 8 verses)	
	Genesis 6:4	
	Numbers 13:33	
	1 Chronicles 20:4	
	1 Chronicles 20:6	-
	1 Chronicles 20:8	
	2 Samuel 21:18	
2 Samuel 21:20 2 Samuel 21:22		

Interestingly, in the TB LAI Bible, the word “giant” is not consistently linked to the word Nephilim, which understood as oppressive giants or tyrants. Instead, it is frequently associated with the phrase “descendants of giants,” as written in 1 Chronicles 20:4, 6, 8 and 2 Samuel 21:18, 20, 22. When these “descendants of giants” are traced through the Indonesian Old Translation or *Terjemahan Lama Bible* (TL-LAI) and the Hebrew Bible, it is found that the giants in question came from the clan of Rapha רָפָא (Rapha), or in its plural form Rephaim רִפְאִים (Rephaim), who are associated with the early inhabitants of Canaan as recorded in Genesis 14:5 and Deuteronomy 2:11, 20; 3:11.

The phrase “sons of God” בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (*bene ha’elohim*) appears five times in the Old Testament and six times in the New Testament TB-LAI Bible. The term *bene ha’elohim* first appears in Genesis 6, where verses 1–4 describe its background. As humanity began to multiply and daughters of men (*benowt ha’adam*) were born. The “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) saw that the “daughters of men” (*benowt ha’adam*) were beautiful, and took wives among them. These anomalous intermarriages were displeasing to God and the Spirit from God’s breath which made the creations a living being (Genesis 2:7), was shortened. In the middle of this narrative appears the word Nephilim הַנְּפִלִים (*han·nə·pī·līm*), translated as oppressive giants or tyrants. Because נָפִיל (*nephil*) has a phonetic similarity to the Hebrew word *naphal* נָפַל meaning “to fall,” the word Nephilim is often interpreted as the offspring of the “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) namely fallen angels who descended to earth to have sexual relations with human women.¹⁰ However, this phonetic similarity alone is insufficient as a reliable basis for determining the actual meaning of the term Nephilim.¹¹

¹⁰ Robin Routledge, “The Nephilim: A Tall Story?: Who Were the Nephilim and How Did They Survive the Flood?,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 66, no. 1 (2015): 19–40.

¹¹ Heiser, Bible, and Languages, “The Meaning of the Word Nephilim: Fact vs. Fantasy.”

In one of the ancient literary works associated with Hebrew tradition, namely the apocryphal Book of Enoch chapter 6, frequently referenced by theologians, the story of the Nephilim is further developed by describing spiritual beings or angels who fell due to rebellion against God decree, marrying daughter of men and producing giant offspring known as the Nephilim. Deriving from these different references, the author identifies at least four interpretive views regarding the “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) in relation to the theology of the Nephilim (*han·nə·pī·lîm*) in Genesis 6:4.

View 1: The Sons of God Are the Descendants of Seth

In the first view, the “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) are understood as the descendants of Seth.¹² This perspective argues that the sons of God were humans who married the “daughters of men” (*benowt ha’adam*) from the line of Cain, so the event in Genesis 6:4 is interpreted entirely as marriage between humans, men and women. Accordingly, the Nephilim in this view is regarded as descendants of human marriages rather than supernatural beings.¹³ Some proponents also conclude that no hybrid offspring were ever produced from unions between humans and fallen angels.¹⁴

The distinction between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” is understood as a spiritual difference. Seth’s lineage is viewed as the line of the righteous, whereas the “daughters of men” refer to women who did not know God. These mixed human marriages are seen as displeasing to God because they united the righteous with unbelievers.

Many supporters of this interpretation refer to the context of the previous chapter. Genesis 4:26 states that during the time of Enosh, Seth’s son, people began to call upon the name of the Lord. Genesis 4 also presents two spiritually opposing lineages, Cain and Abel. The entire narrative remains within the realm of humanity, not angels. Furthermore, Jesus in Matthew 22:30 states that angels in heaven do not marry, and the title “Son of God” more often refers to Jesus Himself.¹⁵

However, upon closer examination, the author identifies several weaknesses in this interpretation. It may be influenced by the concept of extreme predestination, specifically Double Predestination in Reformed or Calvinist theology, which teaches that God from eternity has ordained some people for salvation and others for condemnation. In this context, the interpretation suggests that all descendants of Cain were destined from birth for destruction, with no possibility of being born innocently, growing in repentance, following God’s will, being saved by faith, or walking with God. Conversely, all descendants of Seth seem predestined for salvation and automatically become “sons of God,” incapable of losing salvation or once saved, always saved.

The weaknesses of extreme predestinarian theology are quite significant. First, it portrays God as unjust and cruel. Second, it implies that God orchestrates human sinfulness in order to punish humanity and demonstrate His justice, contradicting His holy and righteous nature. Third, it conflicts with God’s desire to save humanity. Fourth, it removes human responsibility and choice, because if destiny is predetermined regardless of actions, human decisions become meaningless and holiness becomes futile.

¹² Parandan and Rompon, “Kajian Teologis Terhadap Istilah ‘Anak-Anak Allah’ Dan ‘Anak-Anak Manusia’ Berdasarkan Kejadian 6:1-3.”

¹³ Gulo, “Kajian Teologis Frasa Anak-Anak Allah Dan Anak-Anak Manusia Dalam Narasi Kejadian 6:1-4.”

¹⁴ Oky Otto Otto, “Mitologi Anak-Anak Allah Di Dalam Kejadian 6:2,” *Jurnal Teologi Biblika* 5, no. 1 (2020): 24–35.

¹⁵ Ray Tonny Kevin, “Konsep Yesus Anak Allah: Suatu Apologetika Terhadap Pandangan ‘Allah Tidak Beranak Dan Tidak Diperanakan,’” *Antusias Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan* 2, no. 3 (2013): 1–36.

Generally, Pentecostal systematic theology rejects extreme predestination because the central theme of the Bible is the covenant of salvation (*soteriology*), derived from the Greek *soteria* meaning deliverance or salvation, and *logos* meaning word, truth, or teaching.¹⁶ This concerns God's plan to redeem men from the wage of sin. It begins with God's covenant in Genesis 3:15, where the seed of the women would crush the serpent's head. Continues with God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:6–7), in which Abraham's descendants would become nations, kings, and believers entitled to receive God's promises. Reaffirmed in God's covenant with King David (2 Samuel 7:12–13) where from David's line come forth eternal King and Kingdom. Prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31–34), describing the "new men" who will be called children (sons and daughters) of God, where God's law written in their hearts; God becomes their God and they become His people. They know the Lord, and He forgives their sins.

Finally, the covenant of salvation is fulfilled in the New Testament (Testament=Covenant) through Jesus Christ, whose blood provides forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28), and through His resurrection fulfils the coming of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Spirit filled born-again men to help, to guide, so to live according to the law of Christ (Matthew 22:37–40) and to live as children of God (1 John 3:1).

View 2: The Sons of God Are Human Kings

This view is originates from myths or stories of "ancient human kings" rooted from ancient Near Eastern cultures that regarded kings as incarnations of gods or god's divine sons.¹⁷ With this framework, the sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4 are interpreted as human kings or nobles who took daughters of men (*benowt ha'adam*) as wives. Their descendants were then understood as mighty men called Nephilim, who were fully human.¹⁸

The biblical text support of this view includes: first, passages in Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:13–14, where it is understood to be for king David where God call his descendant as "my son" whose kingdom forever. In Psalm 2:7, the royal son is also called God's son. Second, this interpretation avoids the complexity arising from understanding the "sons of God" as supernatural beings. Third, it aligns with Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:30 that angels in heaven do not marry, making Genesis 6 appear more reasonable as human marriages.

However, this interpretation has weaknesses. When the phrase "sons of God" (*bene ha'elohim*) is examined through exegetical hermeneutics¹⁹ and contextual theology²⁰, the parallel phrase found to appear in Job 1:6, Job 2:1, and Job 38:7. In those texts, the *bene ha'elohim* appear in the spiritual divine council with the God the Creator. Therefore, *bene ha'elohim* is understood as spiritual beings or angels, among whom Satan is also present.²¹ Since God is Spirit, and Satan likewise, the *bene ha'elohim* in this context also referred to as members of a spiritual family rather than earthly physical beings.

A clearer understanding appears in Psalm 82:1 מִזְמוֹר לְאֶסְרָא אֱלֹהִים נֹצֵב בְּעֵדוּת־אֵל בְּקִרְבֵּי אֱלֹהִים יֵשֶׁפֶט, where God the Creator אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*, (plural form refer to the Trinity) stands in the divine

¹⁶ Rubin Adi Abraham, "Teologi Keselamatan," *Bethany Church Singapore*.

¹⁷ Anisa Septianingrum, *Sejarah Peradaban Dunia Kuno Empat Benua*, ed. Nurti Lestari (Yogyakarta: Anak Hebat Indonesia, 2017).

¹⁸ Natalia, "Studi Eksegesis Mengenai Identitas Anak-Anak Allah Dalam Teks Kejadian 6:1-4."

¹⁹ Agus Kriswanto, "Melampau Eksegesis Dan Eisegesis: Tinjauan Kritis Terhadap Hermeneutika Teologi Pembebasan," *IMMANUEL: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 1, no. 2 (2020): 52–62.

²⁰ Hikman Sirait, *Hermeneutika Dasar, Aplikasi Ke Dalam Teks Pilihan*, ed. Afifah Azhaar, First. (Yogyakarta: Deepublish Publisher, 2023).

²¹ "Ayub 1:6 - Tafsiran/Catatan - Alkitab SABDA," *Alkitab Sabda*.

council among other gods אֱלֹהִים (elohim), judging His creation.²² The TB-LAI translation correctly distinguishes between the God the Creator (capital letter) and other “gods” (lowercase), indicating the existence of other spiritual beings there besides God the Creator Elohim. The term Elohim refers to the God Creator and literally be translated as “the God of many gods,” or more simply, “God of all gods” or “Lord of lords”.²³

Likewise, the narrative style in Job 1:6–12, opened with the story of “now there was a day when *bene ha’elohim* came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them,” indicates a distinct dialogue occurring in the spiritual realm. This reflects the perspective of the author of the book of Job, who saw the supernatural world and the empirical physical world as two interconnected realms.

View 3: The Sons of God Are Angels, and the Nephilim Are Their Offspring

The third view sees the “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) as fallen angels who rebelled against God’s will ordained for them. The anomalous acts described in Genesis 6:1–4 were carried out by the fallen angels, either directly against human daughters (*benowt ha’adam*) or indirectly through the humans they possessed, thereby triggering God’s anger and judgment. According to this viewpoint, the “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) were the fallen angels who had sexual relations with human daughters (*benowt ha’adam*), and resulting in hybrid unions called Nephilim. Thus, Nephilim were understood to be the hybrid offspring of spirit beings and human beings.

Several factors support this interpretation. First, the phrase “sons of God” in the Old Testament often refers to spiritual beings or angels, as seen in Job 1:6, Job 2:1, and Psalm 82:1. The term “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) distinguished from the term “daughters of men,” (*benowt ha’adam*) which clearly referring to Adam’s human descendants. Second, although Jesus stated that angels in heaven do not marry (Matthew 22:30), Genesis 6 describes the anomalous activity on earth, not in heaven, leaving open possibility of fallen angels committing deviant acts on earth. Third, Genesis 6:4 describes the Nephilim as “mighty men” and “men of renown,” suggesting extraordinary strength or stature and opening the possibility of supernatural elements. Fourth, the writings of Peter (2 Peter 2:4-5) and Jude (Jude 1:6-7) in the New Testament appear to confirm the existence of angels who rebelled during Noah’s time.

This point of view is also closely tied to the description in apocryphal Book of Enoch chapters 6–11, which narrates the fallen angels called “sons of God” who took human daughters as wives. The Book of Enoch also describes how the fallen angels taught humanity evil knowledge and skills, which resulted in increasing wickedness and ultimately bringing the flood judgment.

However, the major problem with this view is that the Book of Enoch is apocryphal and not part of the biblical canon, Its authorship is unclear and its credibility is doubtful. The apocryphal books have long generated theological controversy among scholars.²⁴ In a journal article titled “Hermeneutical Study: The Problematic Nature of Enoch 15:7 in Relation to Its Use in Matthew 22:29–30” “*Studi Hermeneutik: Problematika Teks Henokh 15:7 Terhadap*

²² Joel Muddamalle, *The Unseen Battle*, e-Pub Edit. (Zondervan Reflective, 2025). Chapter 2, page 32

²³ Scott Alan Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of the Nephilim: The Untold Story of Fallen Angels, Giants on the Earth, and Their Extraterrestrial Origins*, Digital. (New Page, 2025). Page 47

²⁴ Edward C Unmack, “Why We Reject The Apocrypha,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1929): 361–366.

Penggunaannya dalam Matius 22:29-30” concludes that the Book of Enoch should not be regarded as the Word of God but merely as an ordinary literary work.²⁵

Within the book of Enoch itself there are sections considered theologically inconsistent and potentially contradictory. For example, in 1 Enoch 10:2: “Go to Noah and tell him in My name, ‘Hide yourself!’ and reveal to him that the whole earth will be destroyed...” The problem is that Enoch writes about Noah, whereas the Bible records that Enoch was taken to heaven long before Noah was born, and not only that but also the end time would no longer be associated with a flood (Genesis 9:11).

Likewise, 1 Enoch 13:1 recorded Enoch saying to Azazel, “You shalt have no peace a severe sentence has gone forth against thee to put thee in bonds” This implies that Enoch himself is the judge to the fallen angel Azazel, whereas Psalm 82:1 clearly states that God Himself judges all creation. Then, there are also eschatological contradictions in Enoch 10:15–11:2 implying permanent restoration is after the flood, while the Bible teaches that permanent restoration only occurs at Christ’s second coming (Revelation 1:7). There are many additional examples of inconsistency in Enoch. Although Jude 1:14–15 appears to quote from it, the Book of Enoch lacks clear historical references concerning its date and authorship. It is highly possible that it was not written by Enoch before the flood but was merely an ordinary literary work. Because of these inconsistencies, the third view, that the Nephilim were descendants of fallen angels associated with the apocryphal Book of Enoch, is difficult to be considered credible.

View 4: The Sons of God Are Angels, but the Nephilim Are Not Their Offspring

The fourth view resembles the third but argues that the Nephilim were not hybrid offspring from unions between humans and fallen angels. The sons of God (*bene ha’elohim*) understood as rebellious angels, while the daughters of men (*benot ha’adam*) are women descended from Adam. Marriages occurred and children were born. However, unlike the third view, the Nephilim were not the children of these unions. Rather, the biblical writer explains that these marriages and offspring occurred during a period in which there was also a genetic factor within Adam’s descendants producing giant humans called Nephilim.²⁶

The argument is that the concept of fallen angels marrying on earth may seem contradictory because angels are believed to be genderless, the Bible clearly teaches that while angels are essentially spiritual beings (Hebrews 1:14), they may transform to human bodies enabling physical appearance and communication. Mark 16:5 records an angel at Jesus’ empty tomb appearing as a young man in a white robe speaking to Jesus’ disciples.

Likewise, the two angels appearing in human form to Lot in Sodom (Genesis 19) prompted the men of Sodom to seek sexual relations with them. Genesis 19:5 records them saying: “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally”.

Modern empirical knowledge has limitations concerning supernatural realities and spiritual beings. Nevertheless, though not explicitly explained in exhaustive detail, the Bible opens the possibility that angels appearing in physical human form may have relationships with humans on earth.

Support for this interpretation includes: First, the phrase “sons of God” (*bene ha’elohim*) in the Old Testament may still refer to angels. Second, the anomalous activity of angels

²⁵ Vanny Miracleson Waruwu and Dicky Kansil, “Studi Hermeneutik: Problematika Teks Henokh 15:7 Terhadap Penggunaannya Dalam Matius 22:29-30,” *Saint Paul’s Review* 3, no. 2 (2024): 179–189.

²⁶ Tay; Stefanus and Listiati Ingrid, “Apakah Itu Manusia Raksasa/ Nephilim (Kej 6:4)?,” *Katolisitas.Org*.

occurred on earth and not in heaven, so it does not contradict Matthew 22:30 stating that angels in heaven do not marry. Third, Peter and Jude appear to confirm rebellious angelic activity in Noah's time. Fourth, Genesis 6:4 does not explicitly state that the Nephilim were offspring of marriages between the sons of God and daughters of men. Linguistically, the Nephilim were already on the earth "in those days, and also afterward" when these unlawful marriages occurred. In other words, the existence of giant-like Nephilim may simply be a reference point for the events of Genesis 6:4.

Fifth, Numbers 13:33 states that the Israelite spies saw the Nephilim (descendants of Anak) and said, "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." If the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 is understood as gigantic humans rather than offspring of supernatural beings, the reference in Numbers 13:33 becomes logical. Conversely, if the Nephilim were offspring of supernatural beings (as in the third view), their death in Noah's flood would contradict the later existence of Nephilim in Canaan after the flood as recorded in Numbers 13:33.

Pentecostal Hermeneutics as an Interpretive Framework

The Pentecostal hermeneutical approach emerged as a response to modern hermeneutical models that primarily emphasize historical-critical objectivity while often neglecting the dimensions of spiritual experience and the role of the Holy Spirit in biblical interpretation. In contemporary Pentecostal studies, hermeneutics is understood not only as a method of textual interpretation but also as a pneumatological process that encompasses the interaction between the Holy Spirit, the faith community, spiritual experience, and the Scripture.²⁷

Kenneth J. Archer argues that Pentecostal hermeneutics is grounded in a dialogical relationship among the Spirit, the Scripture, and the faith community. He maintains that biblical interpretation within the Pentecostal tradition depends not only on grammatical-historical analysis but also on the active involvement of the Holy Spirit, who guides believers in discerning the meaning of the text within their contemporary context. In this framework, faith experience does not replace the authority of Scripture; rather, it functions as an integral part of the epistemological process through which God's revelation is understood.²⁸

Within the framework of Pentecostal epistemology, theological truth is understood not solely through propositional reasoning but also through pneumatological experience. Consequently, spiritual experience is not regarded as contrary to academic inquiry; instead, it is considered an essential component of the theological discernment process. This perspective differentiates Pentecostal hermeneutics from modern rationalistic approaches that often restrict reality to empirical and naturalistic dimensions alone.²⁹

Amos Yong who expanded the "Spirit-Word-Community" approach, identifies the Holy Spirit as the epistemological agent in biblical interpretation. According to Yong, the reading of the Scripture occurs within a trinitarian relationship involving the Spirit, the Word, and the faith community. As a result, biblical interpretation cannot be confined to only

²⁷ L. William. Oliverio Jr, "An Interpretive Review Essay on Amos Yong's Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18, no. 2 (2009): 301–311.

²⁸ Kenneth. A Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (London: T&T Clark, 2004). Hal. 11

²⁹ Marius Nel, "Defining Elements and Challenges of a Pentecostal Hermeneutics of Experience." 77, No. 2 (2021): 1-7., " *HTS Theological Studies* 77, no. 2 (2021): 1–7.

historical reconstruction alone, but must also account for the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the church in guiding believers into all truth.³⁰

In the study of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4, a Pentecostal hermeneutical approach allows for consideration of the supernatural dimension that is frequently neglected by modern naturalistic interpretations. This perspective is consistent with the views of Michael S. Heiser, who stresses the importance of interpreting the Old Testament through the supernatural worldview of the Hebrew Bible writers. Heiser maintains that the term *bene ha'elohim* in several Old Testament texts, such as Job 1:6 and Psalm 82:1, refers to spiritual beings within the divine council or heavenly assembly. Consequently, the reading of Genesis 6:1–4 should not be interpreted apart from the framework of ancient Hebrew cosmology, which understands the spiritual and physical realms as deeply interconnected.³¹

Nevertheless, the Pentecostal approach does not accept the entirety of Michael S. Heiser's framework uncritically. Pentecostal hermeneutics continues to uphold the biblical canon as the highest authority while exercising theological discernment toward various intertestamental traditions and apocalyptic writings, including the Book of Enoch. In this perspective, spiritual experience and openness to the supernatural realm must still be evaluated in light of Scripture and the witness of the faith community. Communal discernment is therefore essential, since interpretation is undertaken not in isolation but within the body of Christ and the tradition of the church.³²

This perspective aligns with the thought of John H. Walton, who emphasizes the necessity of interpreting the Old Testament within the framework of the ancient Near Eastern worldview. Walton argues that many Old Testament passages cannot be fully understood when detached from the cultural and intellectual context of the ancient Near East in which the biblical authors lived. Accordingly, the study of the Nephilim and the *bene ha'elohim* should take into account the cosmological framework of ancient Hebrew thought while avoiding mythological speculation that extends beyond the canonical witness of Scripture.³³

Therefore, Pentecostal hermeneutics in this study is understood as an interpretive framework that integrates the biblical text, the activity of the Holy Spirit, the experience of faith, and the discernment of the church community in the process of comprehending God's revelation. This approach enables the study of Genesis 6:4 to remain receptive to the supernatural dimensions of the Scripture while also maintaining a critical, canonical, and academically responsible perspective.

The Author's View of Nephilim Theology with a Pentecostal Systematic Approach

By considering the Trinity as a belief affirmed across orthodox Christian traditions, namely one God the Creator in His three forms of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the author holds a view that in the Old Testament the designation of "sons of God" (*bene ha'elohim*) refers to created spiritual beings made alive by the Spirit of God רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים (*ēlōhîm*). The presence of Spirit of God within these beings constitutes the basis for their designation as sons of God (*bene ha'elohim*). Due to the fulfilment of the Covenants by Christ in the New Testament the title "sons of God" (*bene ha'elohim*) is also applied to "new men" or born-again Spirit led men and

³⁰ Amos Yong, "Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective," *Routledge* (2017). Hal. 11-13

³¹ Michael S. Heiser, "Are Yahweh and El Distinct Deities in Deuteronomy 32:8–9 and Psalm 82" *HIPHIL* Nov (2006): 1–24.

³² Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community*.

³³ John H. Walton, "The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate," *InterVarsity Press* 2 (2010).

women, whose bodies are temple of God dwelling place of Holy Spirit and whose life led by Him (1 Corinthians 3:16). Hebrews 2:7-9 describes the new men a little lower than the angels but crowned with glory and honour by God.

The Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33, are the giants, tyrannical, oppressive, and physically superior human beings associated with the descendants of the *Anakim*, whose dwelling place is mentioned in Joshua 14:15. The Nephilim is not hybrids from unions between humans and angels. Likewise, the Scripture also does not record that the Nephilim were indwelt or led by the Spirit of God. The author's hold view, that the Nephilim are presented as a parallel reference within the narrative describing events that grieved God which is the rebellion of the *bene ha'elohim* fallen angels who transgressed their created order by taking the "daughters of men" (*benowt ha'adam*) as wives. Consequently, the narrative is best understood as portraying the escalation of rebellion against God's divine order, culminating in the judgment of the flood.

The term "children of God" in the New Testament is interchangeable with the term "sons of God" that described the "new men"³⁴ or born-again men and women who are led by the Spirit of God Πνεύματι Θεοῦ (*Pneumati Theou*). through a close relationship with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-15). Through this relationship, they are sanctified, restored from the glory lost through sin, and being prepared to be glorified in heaven. It is described in Luke 20:35-36, where the resurrected are described as "like the angels" and called "sons of God" (*bene ha'elohim*). The Apostle Paul also emphasizes in Romans 8:18-19 that life on earth cannot be compared with the glory to be revealed when the sons of God are manifested in heaven "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God". Likewise, Galatians 3:28, John 1:12, and 1 John 3:1 affirm the promise of restoration of Spirit led born-again men and women through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, who testifies that we are children of God as we walk in obedience led by His Spirit.

This approach also aligns with the thought of Amos Yong, who expanded the "Spirit-Word-Community" model as a Pentecostal epistemological framework. Yong emphasizes that theological interpretation emerges through the interaction between the Holy Spirit, the Scripture, and the believers. Therefore, interpreting Genesis 6:4 should not be approached merely rationalistically or through speculative supernaturalism, but rather through consideration of the whole biblical canon, the tradition of the church, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the believing community.³⁵

Pentecostal faith should not be understood, as some critics suggest, as a faith grounded only in spiritual experience without serious hermeneutical and theological engagement of the Scripture. Genuine Pentecostals should recognize the inseparable interaction between theological understanding in knowing God and the personal experience living in communion with Him. Therefore, the Bible is not merely an object of interpretation, but rather the living Word that leads believers to remain open to the guidance, surprises, and fresh insights of the Holy Spirit. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, believers may gain deeper understanding of the Scripture as the living Word of God and be empowered to live in truth, fulfilling the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21, Mark 12:28-31), and sanctified to be called sons of God. Therefore, the criticism that Pentecostals are merely emotional or spiritual experience while lacking

³⁴ Candra Gunawan Marisi, *Manusia Seutuhnya; Esensi Kemanusiaan Dalam Perspektif Kelahiran Baru* (Batam: Yayasan Yuta Pendidikan Cerdas, 2024). Hal 117

³⁵ Yong, "Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective."

biblical understanding is a misunderstanding and does not accurately represent Pentecostal faith and practice.³⁶

One distinctive characteristic of Pentecostal theology is its understanding of the Bible as a living gift revealed through the work of the Holy Spirit. Douglas Petersen explains that Pentecostals interpret the Scripture by relating biblical texts to their spiritual experiences, thereby producing practical applications for daily life.³⁷ This perspective is consistent with the Pentecostal hermeneutical principles developed by Kenneth J. Archer, who emphasizes the dynamic relationship between Spirit, Scripture, and Community as the central framework for interpretation. does not depend solely on historical-grammatical analysis, but also acknowledges the active work of the Holy Spirit within the community of faith as an essential element in understanding Scripture. Accordingly, pneumatologically experience is not viewed as a replacement for the biblical text, but as part of the church's theological discernment.³⁸

It is believed that the Holy Spirit guides believers of the biblical canon, of which the early church fathers were only able to complete through the guidance and supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also leads believers to recognize the Scripture, when studied carefully and comprehensively, and sufficient to explain the theology of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 without a need of additional apocryphal writings whose authorship is uncertain and whose content often tends toward legend or myth rather than inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The same Holy Spirit reveals to see the pattern of original sin, often driven by fleshly desire (lust) and disobedience, and can be observed from Eve's temptation by the devil. In Genesis 3:6 Eve "saw" that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasant to the eyes, and "desirable" to make one wise, so she "took" it and ate it with her husband. This pattern was repeated in Genesis 6:2: "the sons of God "saw" that the daughters of human were beautiful (desirable), and "took" wives among them. What is good to one perspective may not necessarily mean good in God's sight. Fleshly lust or sinful desires stands in opposition to God's ordinances (Galatians 5:17), grieve God and would bring judgment.

Therefore, within the framework of the New Testament, the term "sons of God" points primarily to the spiritual identity rather than to empirical dimension. Systematic Soteriological Theology from a Pentecostal perspective teaches that sinful fleshly desire constitutes hostility toward God and rebellion against His law.³⁹

All men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). For this reason, after the fall of sin, God made covenants of salvation to redeem believers from the penalty of sin. The covenant was fulfilled by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28). Jesus Christ is the husband to the "new men" or the church or believers who are called to live according to His law (Ephesians 4:17-32).⁴⁰ His law is no longer written on stone tablets or in books, but in their mind and written on every believer's heart (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Believers' bodies become the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). They are known as children of God, knows God intimately (1 John 3:1), crying out to

³⁶ Lee Roy. Martin, *Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Reader*, ed. Lee Roy Martin, Digital. (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Chapter 1 page 1. Chapter 2 pages 11-12

³⁷ Jefri Hina and Remi Katu, "Hermeneutika Teologi Pentakosta," *Jurnal Teologi Amreta Volume 1, No. 2 April 2018* 1, no. 2 (2018): 7-10.

³⁸ Archer, *Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community*.

³⁹ Fredy Simanjuntak et al., "Konsep Dosa Menurut Pandangan Paulus," *Real Didache* 3, no. 2 (2018): 17-28.

⁴⁰ Hendi and Tiopan Aruan, "Konsep Manusia Baru Di Dalam Kristus Berdasarkan Surat Efesus 4:17-32," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 4, no. 1 (2020): 113-130.

Him as "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6), and shall reign with Him in days to come (Revelation 20:6).

CONCLUSION

A hermeneutical-theological study of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 from a Pentecostal Systematic perspective concludes that understanding it need to includes interpretive framework that integrates the biblical text, the activity of the Holy Spirit, the experience of faith, and the discernment of the church community in the process of comprehending God's revelation, and considering the spiritual dimension, pneumatology experience within biblical cosmology while still maintaining the boundaries of responsible textual interpretation. Such approach allows recognition of the reality of the spiritual realm portrayed in the Scripture without falling into speculative interpretations outside the biblical canon.

This study further demonstrates that the central narrative of the Genesis 6 is not about the biological origin of the Nephilim but rather the pattern of sin or rebellion against God's law which resulted in corruption and the judgment. Pentecostal theology both pneumatologically and soteriologically view that redemption for salvation is needed and become the central theme of God's covenant (testament). It is fulfilled in the New Testament era by Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit enables believers to live righteously. Therefore, the title "sons of God" (*bene ha'elohim*) is given to "new men" or born-again Spirit led men and women crowned with glory and honour of God.

Pentecostal faith sees the inseparable interaction between theology in its attempt to know God with the experience of faith through intimate life with Him through Holy Spirit. The canonical Bible (TB-LAI) should not merely be viewed as a text to be interpreted, but as the living Word that guides Pentecostals believers in responding to theological challenges without depending on apocryphal writings. This study, however, has certain limitations, since it primarily adopts a Protestant canonical approach and does not comprehensively examine intertestamental Jewish traditions, the Septuagint, or the literature of Second Temple Judaism. Therefore, future research could further explore comparative studies between the Pentecostal perspective and the Orthodox and Catholic traditions, as well as modern historical-critical approaches to the concepts of the Nephilim and *bene ha'elohim* within the broader context of the ancient Near Eastern worldview.

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