"If Angels Can't Marry, Then How Could 'The Sons of God' Father Giants?"

Hi Michael, I read your answer to <u>"Is the Genesis Story of</u> <u>'The Sons of God' True?</u>" and have a question about it. Mark 12:25 tells us that angels cannot marry. So I'm confused as to how the sons of God could have married women who then "bore giants"?

Mark 12:25 is possibly the passage most often cited against the view that the "sons of God" in Gen. 6 refers to fallen angels. And, of course, this view may be correct.

It's difficult to know with certainty what the passage in Gen. 6 means. However, when one considers how the phrase "sons of God" gets used elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g. Job 1-2; etc.), it's clear that it's often used to refer to angels. Also, New Testament passages like Jude 6-7 and 2 Peter 2:4f, seem to lend support to this interpretation.

One of the Bible.org folks addressing this issue at http://bible.org/question/who-are-%E2%80%9Csons-god%E2%80%9D-g enesis-61-8 wrote this about the "marriage" issue:

"I heartily agree with Bob Deffinbaugh's arguments and presentation of this passage in his commentary, Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs which is on our web site in the Bible Studies / Old Testament / Books / Genesis section. I believe those who reject this view do so through exegetical gymnastics because of their own refusal to believe this could happen. They often refer to Christ's statement about angels not marrying, but this is talking about God's normal plan for them. They were created as a host and were not to propagate like mankind and fill the earth. This in no way says that under Satan's orders and power they could not leave their own (idios, unique, peculiar, distinct, proper) domain (arche, rule, sphere of rule, influence) and abandon their own proper abode (oike,te,rion, habitation, dwelling place) (Jude 6)."

Since angels have the ability to assume human form, and since fallen angels are said to sometimes "possess" human beings, it seems to me possible that the "Sons of God" in Gen. 6 were angels. But, of course, I don't know this for sure. And I certainly might be wrong.

If you're interested in exploring this issue further, please see some of the discussions on bible.org <u>here</u>.

Hope this helps.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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The Christmas Story: Does It Still Matter?

Christmas often means time with family, hectic shopping, parties, cards and gifts. But what about the first Christmas? Why is the original story—the baby in a manger, shepherds, wise men, angels—important, if at all? The answer may surprise you.

What does Christmas mean to you? Times with family and friends? Perhaps carols, cards, television specials. Maybe hectic shopping, parties, and eating too much.

All these and more are part of North American Christmas. But what about the first Christmas? Why is the original story—the baby in a manger, shepherds, wise men, angels—important, if at all?

May I invite you to consider eight reasons why the original Christmas story matters, even to you? You may not agree with all of them, but perhaps they will stimulate your thinking and maybe even kindle some feelings that resonate with that famous story.

First, the Christmas story is important because it is. . .

A Story that Has Endured

For two millennia, people have told of the child in a Bethlehem manger; of angels who announced his birth to shepherds; of learned men who traveled a great distance to view him. <u>{1}</u>

That a story persists for many years does not prove its truthfulness. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy survive in the popular imagination. But a twenty-century tenure at least merits our consideration. What deep human longings does the Christmas story portray? Why has it connected so profoundly with millions of people? Is the story factual? Curiosity prompts further investigation.

Second, the Christmas story is also . . .

A Story of Hope and Survival

Jesus' society knew great pain and oppression. Rome ruled. Corrupt tax collectors burdened the people. Some religious leaders even sanctioned physical beating of Jewish citizens participating in compulsory religious duties.<u>{2</u>}

Joseph and his pregnant wife Mary traveled a long distance to Bethlehem to register for a census but could not obtain proper

lodging. Mary bore her baby and laid him in a manger, a feeding trough for animals. Eventually, King Herod sought to kill the baby. Warned of impending risk, Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, then returned home after Herod's death.

Imagine how Mary felt. Traveling while pregnant would be challenging. Fleeing to another nation lest some king slay your son would not be pleasant. Yet she, Joseph, and Jesus survived the ordeal.

In the midst of social and cultural challenges, the Christmas story offers hope and encouragement toward survival, hope of new life linked to something—someone—greater than oneself. One of Jesus' followers said Jesus' "name . . . [would] be the hope of all the world."{3}

So, the Christmas story is important because it has endured and because it speaks of hope and survival.

Reason number three: the Christmas story is . . .

A Story of *Peace* and *Goodwill*

Christmas carolers sing of "peace on earth." Greeting cards extol peace, families desire it, and the news reminds us of its fleeting nature.

I encountered ten-year-old Matt from Nebraska in a southern California restaurant men's room one afternoon. Alone and forlorn looking, he stood outside the lone stall.

"Could I ask a favor?" inquired the sandy haired youth. "The door to this stall has no lock. Would you watch and be sure that no one comes in on me?" "Sure," I replied, happy to guard his privacy. Matt noted, "In a lot of nice restaurants the stall doors don't have locks." "I know," I agreed. "You'd think they would."

After a pause, his high-pitched voice said, "You know what I

wish? I wish there could be peace in all the earth and no more arguments or fighting so no one would have to die except by heart attacks." "That would be great," I agreed. "How do you think that could happen?" Matt didn't know.

"It seems that the Prince of Peace could help," I suggested. "Do you know who that is?" He didn't. "Well, at Christmas, we talk a lot about Jesus as the Prince of Peace," I explained.

"Oh, I see," conceded Matt. "I don't know about those things because I don't go to church. Do you know what it's like to be the only boy in your town who doesn't go to church? I do."

"Well, I'm a church member," I replied, "but really the most important thing is knowing Jesus Christ as your personal friend. When I was eighteen, some friends explained to me that He died and rose again for me and that I could begin a relationship with Him. It made a big difference and gave me a real peace inside. He can also bring peace between people."

By now, Matt was out washing his hands as his father stuck his head in the door to hurry him along. I gave him a small booklet that explained more. "Thanks," smiled Matt as he walked out to join his family for lunch.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman in his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence* tells of boarding a New York City bus to find a driver whose friendly greeting and positive disposition spread contagious warmth among the initially cold and indifferent passengers. Goleman envisioned a "virus of good feeling" spreading through the city from this "urban peacemaker" whose good will had softened hearts. <u>{4}</u>

The Christmas angel announced to some shepherds, "'Don't be afraid! . . . I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David!"<u>{5}</u> A crowd of angels then appeared praising God and proclaiming peace among people of good will.<u>{6}</u> The Christmas story brings a message of peace that can soothe anxious hearts and calm interpersonal strife.

Reason number four: the Christmas story is . . .

A Story of *Family*

Christmas is a time for family gatherings. This interaction can bring great joy or great stress. Estrangement or ill will from past conflicts can explode.

Joseph and Mary had their share of family challenges. Consider their circumstances. The historical accounts indicate that Joseph's fiancée became pregnant though she was a virgin. Mary believed an angel told her she was pregnant by God. Now, how would you feel if your fiancé/fiancée exhibited apparent evidence of sexual activity with someone else during your engagement? Suppose your intended said that God had sanctioned the whole thing. Would your trust and self-esteem take a nosedive? Would you cancel the wedding?

Joseph, described as "a just man, decided to break the engagement quietly, so as not to disgrace . . [Mary] publicly."{7} But an angel appeared to him in a dream, explaining that the child was conceived in her by God, and told him to "name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."{8} Joseph followed instructions and cared for his family. His continuing commitment to Mary and Jesus played a significant part in the boy's birth and early childhood. With God's help, the family overcame major obstacles. And so can your family.

Fifth, the story is Christmas is also . . .

A story of *Humility*

When kings, presidents, and other rulers appear in public, great pomp often ensues. From a biblical perspective, God came

first not as a ruling king but as a servant, a baby born in humble circumstances. His becoming human helps humans identify with Him.

Imagine that you and your child are walking in a field and encounter an ant pile with hundreds of ants scurrying about. In the distance, you see a construction bulldozer approaching. Suppose your child asks how to warn the ants of impending danger. You discuss various possibilities: shouting, holding up signs, etc. But the best solution would be if somehow your child could become an ant and warn them personally. Some ants might not believe the danger. But some might believe and take steps to ensure their safety.

Paul, an early follower of Jesus, wrote of the humility Jesus displayed by becoming human:

Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven. <u>{9}</u>

The Christmas story speaks of family and humility. But is it true? $\{10\}$

Reason number six why the Christmas story matters: it is . . .

A Story that Was Foretold

Jesus' followers noted numerous clues to his identity, prophecies written many years before His birth.<u>{11}</u>

Isaiah, writing around 700 BC, foretold that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. He wrote, "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." {14} The name "Immanuel" means "God is with us." Biblical accounts claim Jesus' mother was a virgin when she bore Him. {15}

Additional prophecies concern the Messiah's lineage, betrayal, suffering, execution, and resurrection. Peter Stoner, a California mathematician, once calculated the probability of just eight of the 300 prophecies Jesus fulfilled coming true in one person due to chance alone. Using estimates that both he and classes of college students considered reasonable and conservative, Stoner concluded there was one chance in 10¹⁷ that those eight were fulfilled by fluke.

He says 10^{17} silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Mark one coin with red fingernail polish. Stir the whole batch thoroughly. What chance would a blindfolded person have of picking the marked coin on the first try? One in 10^{17} , the same chance that just eight of the 300 prophecies "just happened" to come true in this man, Jesus.{16}

In a similar vein, consider reason number seven why the original Christmas story matters. It is . . .

A Story that Has Substantial Support

Can we trust the biblical accounts of the Christmas story? Three important points:

• Eyewitness Testimony. The Gospels-presentations of Jesus' life-claim to be, or bear evidence of containing, eyewitness accounts. In a courtroom, eyewitness testimony is among the most reliable evidence.

• *Early Date*. Dr. William F. Albright, one of the world's leading archaeologists, dated every book of the New Testament

(NT) before about AD $80.\{17\}$ There is no known record of NT factual authenticity ever being successfully challenged by a contemporary.

• Manuscript Evidence. Over 24,000 early manuscript copies of portions of the NT exist today. Concerning manuscript attestation, Sir Frederic Kenyon, director and principle librarian of the British Museum, concluded, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."<u>{18}</u>

The Christmas story is notable for its enduring messages of hope, peace, goodwill, family and humility. It was foretold by prophets and has substantial manuscript support. But there is another reason for considering the story of Jesus' birth, perhaps the most important.

Reason number eight: the Christmas story is . . .

A Story of Love

Jesus' followers taught that His conception and birth were part of a divine plan to bring us genuine peace, inner freedom, and self-respect. They believed the biblical God wants us to enjoy friendship with Him, and meaning and purpose. Alas, our own self-centeredness separates us from Him. Left to our own, we would spend both time and eternity in this spiritually unplugged state.

Jesus came to help plug us into God. Mary's baby was born to die, paying the penalty for our self-centeredness, which the biblical documents call "sin." If I had a traffic fine I could not pay, you could offer to pay it for me. When the adult Jesus died on the cross, He carried the penalty due all our sins then rose from the dead to give new life.

Jesus explained, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."<u>{19}</u> God can become your friend if you believe in Him, that is, if you trust Him to forgive you. He will never let you down.

Perhaps you are becoming aware of the importance of the Christmas story in your own life. Might you like to receive Jesus' free gift of forgiveness and place your faith in Him? You can celebrate this Christmas knowing that you are a member of His family. Perhaps you'd like to talk to Him right now. You might want to tell Him something like this:

Jesus Christ, thanks for loving me, for dying for my sins and rising again. Please apply your death as the means of my forgiveness. I accept your pardon. Come and live in me and help me to become your close friend.

If you made that decision to place your trust in Jesus, He has entered your life, forgiven you and given you eternal life. I encourage you to tell another of His followers about your decision and ask them to help you grow in faith. Call this radio station or visit the Web site probe.org to learn more. Read the Bible to discover more about God. Begin with the Gospel of John, the fourth book in the New Testament, which is one of the easier ones to understand. Tell God what is on your heart, and tell others about the discovery you've made so they can know Him too.

Christmas is meant to celebrate peace and joy. Amidst the busyness of shopping, parties, presents, and fun, remember that the Prince of Peace came to spread peace and joy to all who believe in Him.

Notes

 Details of the Christmas story are in Luke 1-2 and Matthew 1:18-2:23.
 Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 printing of the 1883 original),

i:372. 3. Matthew 12:21 NLT. 4. Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), ix-x. 5. Luke 2:10-11 NLT. 6. Luke 2:13-14 NASB. 7. Matthew 1:19 NLT. 8. Matthew 1:21 NLT. 9. Philippians 2:6-9 NLT. evidence for 10. For more Jesus, on see www.WhoIsJesus-Really.com and www.probe.org. 11. For a summary of prophecies Jesus fulfilled, see Josh McDowell, Evidence that Demands a Verdict (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), 141-177. 12. Micah 5:2. 13. Matthew 2:1 NASB. 14. Isaiah 7:14 NIV. 15. Matthew 1:18, 22-25; Luke 1:27, 34. 16. Peter W. Stoner, Science Speaks (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 99-112. 17. McDowell, op. cit., 62-63. 18. Frederic G. Kenyon, The Bible and Archaeology (New York: Harper & Row, 1940), 288; in McDowell, op. cit., 41. McDowell develops these points in pp. 39-41 ff. 19. John 3:16 NLT. Adapted from Rusty Wright, "Christmas: More than a Story?" Advance magazine, December 2004, pp. 12-15. Copyright © 2004 Rusty Wright. Used by permission.

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"On What Authority Do You Call New Age Thought Demonic?"

On what authority do you call New Age thought demonic? You have a closed mind and are only allowing yourself to grow within the confines of your narrowness.

I call New Age thought demonic on the authority of God's word. Whenever philosophies and religions differ from what God has revealed to us as truth, particularly when they directly contradict what He says, then either the Bible is lying or the philosophies are lying. They can't both be right. And since there is an evil spirit who desperately hates God and whose native tongue is lying, I'm going to agree with God instead of the lying spirit.

You are so right-there truly is a narrowness to my perspective. Truth is narrow, but untruth is wide and popular. I've experienced both, and I choose the narrow truth. One leads to life and peace; the other leads to death. It's been my experience that those who disrespect the Bible have never seriously examined its reliability and truthfulness, but have instead relied on the hearsay evidence of those who want it not to be true and so they easily dismiss it.

By the way, if I'm wrong then I've lost nothing. If I'm right, then you've lost everything. There really is an ultimate truth that cost God greatly to communicate it fully to us.

I pray you'll see the truth one day.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

"Who Are the Angels Mentioned in the Bible?"

You mentioned that there are only a few Angels mentioned in the Bible, and I was wondering if you could help me in relation to them. Would you give me a list of the Angels' names mentioned in the bible, and books or web sites where I can learn about them.

Just two holy angels, Michael and Gabriel, are mentioned in the Bible. Here are the references:

Michael-Daniel 10:13, 10:21, 11:1, 12:1; Jude 1:9, Rev. 12:7.

Gabriel-Daniel 8:16-18; Luke 1:19, 1:26, 1:28.

Two unholy angels are named: Apollyon, the angel of the abyss in Revelation 9:11 (the Hebrew term is Abaddon), and Satan, who is an evil, fallen angel.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

"What Makes the Bible a

Reliable Text on Angels?"

You cite the bible as a source of insight into angels. What makes the bible a better source than any other fiction book that has been written by anyone at anytime? Say I wrote a book about angels because I wanted to get people to believe in something they have never seen or felt or touched or smelled or tasted. If I aged it 2 or 3 thousand years and there were people like you around, would they believe it? What if I gave it a prolific name like The Word, or Holy Text, or The Greatest Truest Book Ever Written, does it then become more plausible? What are your thoughts?

Hi ____,

My thoughts are that the Bible gives more than "insight" about angels; it gives actual revelation—information from "outside the box," so to speak.

You can choose to call the Bible a book of fiction, but that would only be because you haven't considered the evidence that shows it's not. For instance, fulfilled prophecy alone is a staggering evidence that it was divinely inspired, for who else could write history in advance other than the God who is outside of time?

I invite you to try and debunk the truth and validity of the Bible. Many others have, and they have become its most convinced defenders. If it truly can be debunked, then it's not worth believing in. But if it's true, and I completely believe it is because of the evidence, then it's worth paying attention to.

I have a suspicion you have an opinion of the Bible that is not based on anything more than a contempt for God and possibly for the people who believe in the Bible. (And allow me to concede, regretfully, that a lot of religious people say and do things that make God wince because they misrepresent Him so egregiously, and it has a negative impact on others who are watching-people like you? I think God grieves over this.)

You might consider shoring up your reasons. Our website is full of resources that provide good evidence that Christianity, and the Bible, are both true. If you don't care to check anything out, then at least I would hope you would be honest enough to admit that your unbelief is based on a refusal to investigate and not because there are good reasons for it.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

"Are Militant Angels Good, Bad or Ugly?"

Dear Sue,

Just recently we have been looking at some old photos of when we first moved into our old house and there was a sign out the front that said "BEWARE MILITANT ANGELS GUARD THIS PROPERTY." And I was just wondering what this meant. Are these good, bad or ugly angels? Please email back even if you don't come up with anything.

Boy, the people who had the house before you had quite a sense of humor! There are no such things as militant guardian angels, since militants are people who are angry and rebellious. The demons who fell from heaven were militant against God, but they're into destruction, not protection. And the holy angels who protect us are submissive, not militant. I think the sign is in the same category as the humorous signs I've seen that say "This property protected by an attack cat," and they mean a household kitten.

At any rate, your e-mail made me smile, and I appreciate it. Let me encourage you that it's cool and you have nothing to worry about.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

"Are Angels Male or Female?"

I've read your article <u>"Angels: The Good, the Bad and the</u> <u>Ugly,"</u> and I have a doubt about the angel story that describes an angel taking care of a child and her mother, but the angel appeared to be a hospital nurse.

I mean, is an angel a he or a she? Or can they be either man or woman?

Angels are not sexual beings; the Lord said they do not marry (Mark 12:25), and sexuality and gender would seem to be an element of humanity, not angel beings. So angels can take on human appearances of both males and females. It's like taking on a role in a play, complete with costume.

That being said, all biblical references to angels use the masculine pronoun "he." That doesn't mean they can't appear as female, but it's good to know the baseline from scripture.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

"I Think One of My Students Plagiarized Your Angel Article!"

I am an English teacher checking research papers and I have a wonderful one on angels. It talks about Sue Bohlin dropping her baby boy and him almost hitting the wall. It goes on to say angels are non-bodily creatures in which their response to God's love did not need time nor reflection to grow and mature.

Trouble is, I don't think this girl has ever used the word "nor" or "non-bodily"... I really don't think she wrote it. Does anything here sound familiar? It also talks about Myra and the ministry of Teen Challenge in Philadelphia...it quotes Shakespeare and Isaac Watts.

I imagine you are busy, but I would like this girl to write her own paper, not use someone else's works. I appreciate your time! []

Response #1: Boy, what an interesting e-mail! [] Your student produced a paper with some interesting concepts that are new and intriguing to me, as well as some anecdotes that I did indeed write. Check out my article on angels <u>here</u>.

Now maybe I'll do an AltaVista search to find the other source article that talks about the "non-bodily" (huh?) creatures. . . <smile>

So let me know how this plays out, will you?

Sue (another teacher)
Response #2:
As soon as I sent my other e-mail, I found the web page your
student lifted from:

http://geocities.com/Heartland/Pointe/4290/angels.html

Oh, they think we are so dumb and they are so crafty!!

Sue

You should have seen the look on this girl when I told her I had e-mailed the author of her paper!!! You should see the paranoid look on all of these kids when I tell them I caught someone plagiarizing and e-mailed the author!!!

This little girl has to have her paper rewritten by Monday and she will e-mail you an apology then. Thanks for the help. Much of her paper came directly from your "Angels: The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly" (which, by the way, was an interesting paper!)

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP! It made my day!!

"Do Angels Have Free Will?"

Do angels have Free Will like humans, or are they just automatons?

Yes, angels have free will like us. When Satan chose to stop obeying and worshipping God, and vaunted his own pride, that was a free choice, with the consequences that followed. One third of the angels chose to follow him. (See Rev. 12:4)

What sets apart angels from us is that we can be forgiven and

restored, and they can't. To follow God or not was a one-shot deal for angels, as far as we can tell. 1 Peter 1:12 says that angels "long to look into these things" (salvation and grace), which are not available to them.

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin Probe Ministries

"Bad Things Are Happening After I Talked to My Angel"

I'm hoping you can help me. A couple of weeks ago, a friend told me that there was a way to talk to my guardian angel by going into a relaxed, meditative state, and asking "Are you there?"

I didn't believe it would work, but I tried it anyway. Nothing happened, but that night, I was having a strange dream when I was "awakened" by a loud knock at my door. I sat up in my bed and went to ask "who's there?" and nothing would come out of my mouth but a hoarse whisper. I was still dreaming. Then I really woke up and my heart was pounding and then it felt like my bed was slightly trembling. That was on a Tuesday at 12:57am. The following Tuesday, I awoke at the same exact time to tapping on the wall next to my head. Again, it felt as though my bed was trembling. I didn't sleep that night and convinced myself that it was just my heart pounding that caused it. Then it happened 2 more times, once on a tuesday a half an hour earlier, and then on a friday. I tried looking at it logically the last time it happened. I felt the walls, the floor and the only thing that was shaking was my mattress. The heater is on the other side of my room.

My manager told me to stop burning incense in my room and maybe that would help. I stopped burning it for the past week and nothing has happened. I am scared though, especially after reading the web page on angels and demons in disguise. Please write back to me. If you can advise me, I would greatly appreciate it, and maybe be able to sleep with my light off for once.

You must be terrified! I am so sorry to hear about this series of events. From what you write, I conclude that you really are dealing with demons—and they are terrorizing you. This is where you inadvertently opened the door to them:

A couple of weeks ago, a friend told me that there was a way to talk to my guardian angel by going into a relaxed, meditative state, and asking "are you there?" I didn't believe it would work, but I tried it anyway. Nothing happened.

Actually, something DID happen. Your friend gave you very bad, very dangerous advice. The Bible gives us no instruction or allowance for contacting angels; when you opened yourself up to your "angel," it was an unholy angel who answered.

Jesus Christ is the only One who has power enough to make the terrorizing stop. The demons are afraid of Him and afraid of His blood. I suggest you pray a prayer entrusting yourself to Him as God's Son who loved you enough to die (shed His blood) for you. Then, address the demons <u>out loud</u> by telling them they have to leave in Jesus' name. You can also say, "I am protected by the blood of Jesus Christ."

Here's the deal, though. If you haven't trusted Christ to save you, from either your sins or this situation, you have no authority to use Jesus' name and there will be no power behind your words. The words are not magic; the power is in a true relationship with Jesus, where He protects you because you have entrusted yourself to Him.

If you have never trusted Christ as your savior, please read here for a full explanation of what it means: <u>The Most</u> <u>Important Decision of Your Life</u>.

Let me know how you're doing, OK?

Sue Bohlin

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