

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY School of Divinity

Creation, Chaos, Imagers, and the Flood

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Creation, Cosmology, and Genesis

by

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## Introduction

The massive flood that destroyed humanity was a major event in the Bible. Besides its recounting in the Book of Genesis, it was mentioned in several other verses including Isaiah 54:9, Job 22:16, Matthew 24:38, and Luke 17:27 among others.<sup>1</sup> It was also a major event in the mythologies of other Ancient Near East cultures including Sumer, Babylon, and Greece. In all these texts a god or gods determined that it was necessary to eliminate humanity via flood. Unlike the texts of its neighbors, the Genesis account of the Flood stood as a polemic showing the results of evil from both the earthly and heavenly realms and the justice of Yahweh, the God of gods.

The Genesis Flood Story had major implications for Yahweh's creation in the physical universe. He had chosen Earth to be His temple<sup>2</sup> in the cosmos and had chosen mankind to be His imagers upon it (Genesis 1:27). After the Fall and before the Flood a clear split began between those who followed Yahweh and those who were in rebellion. In one path forbidden knowledge given by quasi divine beings was seen as the basis for civilization and its distribution was punished by the gods for various reasons.<sup>3</sup> In the other these same beings were the basis of demons and evil necessitating a major catastrophe to put things right.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted Bible verses are taken from *ESV: Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 78.

<sup>3</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2020), 142.

This paper will show that after two rebellions involving His human and spiritual imagers, the Genesis Flood was necessary to slow the corruption of creation and that after the deluge there were still far reaching implications for humanity and the rest of creation.

## **Chaos and Yahweh's Creation**

### **Water Above and Below**

The beginning of Genesis covered the creation of the heavens and the Earth. These opening events were characterized by a great primordial sea or “the deep”. One of the first creative acts of Yahweh was to split the waters by creating an expanse (Genesis 1:1-7). In the cosmology of the Ancient Near East, there were great seas both above the Earth and below it. A vaulted dome, known as the firmament, rested on the mountaintops and acted as a barrier from the heavenly sea. The other sea which surrounded the land also continued down below it into what was known as the Great Deep.<sup>4</sup> For people living in the Bronze Age this cosmology made sense. There were windows in the firmament that allowed water from the heavenly sea to fall in the form of rain. There were also waters under the earth because one could dig down to create a well.

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<sup>4</sup> G. W. (Geoffrey William) Bromiley and Geoffrey William. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1979), 315.

## Chaos motifs in the Ancient Near East

Throughout the Ancient Near East, water related to chaos. In the creation stories of civilizations such as Sumer and Babylon, great sea beasts were creatures of chaos and had to be defeated by the gods to bring order to the cosmos. For instance, in Mesopotamian mythology the god Marduk had to slay the goddess of the great sea, Tiamat, to bring order to the cosmos and create the earth.<sup>5</sup> In Canaanite literature a similar event takes place when Lotan was defeated by the god Baal.<sup>6</sup> Once again, this connection between the seas and chaos was a natural conclusion in the Bronze Age. While the peoples of the Ancient Near East sailed the Mediterranean and other bodies of water, it was a dangerous occupation that claimed many lives.<sup>7</sup> It was not a domain that was under the control of mankind and it took a concerted effort of man and god to ensure that even the gods of order retained their control over the depths and chaos itself.<sup>8</sup> Even when the gods used water in mythology to wipe out mankind, they were terrified by the fury of the actual event.<sup>9</sup>

## Chaos motifs in the Bible

In contrast, water was continuously shown to be under the control of Yahweh in the Bible. He separated the waters by a verbal command instead of subduing sea monsters (Genesis 1:6-10). He called forth floodwaters to cover the Earth while protecting Noah, his family, and the

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<sup>5</sup> John D. Currid, *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 109-110.

<sup>7</sup> Ina Berg, "Aegean Bronze Age Seascapes – A Case Study in Maritime Movement, Contact and Interaction," *Mediterranean Crossroads*, 2007, pp. 387-415, 399.

<sup>8</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2009), 52.

<sup>9</sup> Tremper Longman and John H. Walton, *The Lost World of the Flood: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 56.

animals aboard the Ark (Genesis 7-8). He parted the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to cross and escape from the pursuing Egyptians (Exodus 14). In the New Testament when a storm terrified the disciples aboard a ship, Christ rebuked the wind and waves with words which caused them to immediately go calm (Mark 4:35-41). In all cases Yahweh is totally sovereign over the waters.

## **The Introduction of Evil into Creation**

### The Nachash

In the Bible, there were two rebellions before the Flood that introduced corruption and sin into Yahweh's creation. Both of these events were found in Genesis and each ultimately involved both the earthly and spiritual imagers of Yahweh. In the Garden of Eden, the Nachash tempted Adam and Eve into breaking Yahweh's commandment against eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Instead of being a literal serpent, the Nachash was one of Yahweh's throne guardians as revealed in the Book of Ezekiel.<sup>10</sup> That book gave the following description of the being that would become known as Satan by the Second Temple Period:

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<sup>10</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2019), 87.

"You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you (Ezekiel 28:12-15).

The Nachash, Adam, and Eve were all free will beings who collectively chose to rebel against the commandments of Yahweh. For the humans, the motivating factor was greed in wanting power. Alternately, the Nachash wanted to destroy humanity by forcing Yahweh to follow through with the promise of death if Adam and Eve ate from the tree.<sup>11</sup> Instead, all three were expelled from Eden with humanity losing access to the Tree of Life and the Nachash becoming the lord of the dead.<sup>12</sup>

#### Apkallu and Nephilim

The second rebellion was also initiated by spiritual and human imagers and was the immediate cause of the Flood in Genesis. Genesis 6 records that:

the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 123.

days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. (Genesis 6:2-4).

While the event was recorded very briefly in Genesis, it was expanded upon greatly in Second Temple literature as well as the myths of the apkallu. The apkallu were legendary creatures with supernatural wisdom. In Mesopotamian religion they were seven in number and were considered cultural heroes before the Flood. They are covered in texts such as the myth of the “Twenty-One Poultrices” where they are servants to the god Enki. Their job was to ensure the correct functioning of the plans of heaven and earth and they taught mankind craftsmanship, omens, medicine, magic, and other wisdom.<sup>13</sup> Both myths and Jewish texts told of the union between spiritual beings and human females as well as the passing of divine knowledge to humanity.

In the case of the Mesopotamians, they felt that they owed their civilization to the knowledge gained from the apkallu. An Uruk cuneiform tablet listed the seven divine apkallu and the kings that they advised. For instance, the apkallu Uanna was advisor to King Aialu and the apkallu Utuabzu was advisor to King Enmeduranki. These kings were also listed on the Sumerian Kings List as ruling before the Flood. After the Flood there were four kings listed once again with apkallu advisors.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2020), 115-117.



However, in contrast to their predecessors these advisors were only partially divine. By the time, the last apkallu was listed, he was only two-thirds divine and one-third human. According to a recovered cylinder, after the Flood the master of the apkallu was the none other than Gilgamesh. He was credited with bringing the pre-flood knowledge back to mankind.<sup>14</sup>

By the time of the Erra Epic of Babylon, the gods had tired of the apkallu and decided to punish both them and humanity severely. The apkallu were banished to Apsu in the underworld and the Flood was created to destroy humanity. However, as stated above their quasi-divine offspring survived and continued to impart divine knowledge to humanity after the Flood as well as being cultural heroes.<sup>15</sup> In another telling of the same concept, in Greek mythology the Titans were given the function of providing the animals and humans with the tools and knowledge they would need to survive. The Titan Prometheus primarily worked with humans. To allow his charges to advance to a civilization, Prometheus stole fire from the realm of the gods and gave it to humanity. Fire allowed humans to have dominion over the animals, create weapons, create agriculture, cities, and even commerce. Eventually things went downhill, and the gods decided to destroy humanity via a flood. Like the imprisoned apkallu, Prometheus was bound to a mountain.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> K. van der. Toorn, Bob. Becking, and Pieter Willem van der. Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible DDD* (Leiden; Brill, 1999), 73.

<sup>15</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2020), 122.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable, The Age of Shilvalry, Legends of Charlemagne*. (New York: Crowell, 1970), Chapter II: Prometheus and Pandora. Kindle. Of further interest in this myth is the story of Pandora who was created to punish mankind and Prometheus for stealing fire from the gods. Like Eve, Pandora ends up releasing misery and sickness on mankind. It contrasts with Genesis, however, as Eve was created to be a partner and blessing to Adam and not a curse.

## The Watchers of 1 Enoch

All these stories had analogs with the Second Temple Period text called 1 Enoch. While it was rejected as part of the Biblical canon, it was widely read during the period and is even referenced in the New Testament letters of Peter and Jude.<sup>17</sup> The work expanded on Genesis 6:1-4, the story of the sons of God and the Nephilim. In 1 Enoch the sons of God, the bene elohim, were known as Watchers. This term referred to high ranking members of Yahweh's heavenly host who were also referenced in the Book of Daniel. When King Nebuchadnezzar is sentenced to live as a beast for a period, the sentence came at the decree of the Watchers (Daniel 4:17).

In 1 Enoch 6-16, the Watchers were very similar to the apkallu as they both passed knowledge to mankind and bred with human women to create hybrid beings. In contrast to the apkallu, the knowledge given by the Watchers was forbidden and corrupted. Some examples of the forbidden knowledge that was transferred included spells, sorcery, alchemy, and astrology. These activities were harmful to Yahweh's order and the way things were supposed to be used in His creation. For example, using plants and herbs to alter consciousness for communing with spirits instead of using them to cure illness. These perversions would be cautioned against by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians as things that would prevent one from inheriting the kingdom of God (Galatians 5: 19-21).

For their crimes, the watchers were bound inside a mountain much as Prometheus was bound to the side of one. They were sentenced to confinement until the time of judgment when they would be thrown into the fiery abyss.<sup>18</sup> Because of the actions of the Watchers and their

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<sup>17</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers & the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2017), 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-30.

offspring, humanity was corrupted to the point that the Flood became a necessary purge. Yahweh gave those living on the earth 120 years and set Noah to building the Ark (Genesis 6:3-22). To Jews living in the Second Temple era, the sin of Adam and Eve paled in comparison to that of the Watchers and the Nephilim.<sup>19</sup>

The leader of the Watchers in 1 Enoch, Azazel, was also mentioned in an odd ceremony in the Book of Leviticus. In Leviticus 16:8 two goats were chosen by Aaron. One was for Yahweh and the other for Azazel. The one for Yahweh was sacrificed as a sin offering. The other was ceremonially laden with the sins of the people and driven off into the wilderness to Azazel (Leviticus 16:8). The goat was returning the sins that in large part were a result of the actions of the rebel sons of God in Genesis 6, back to their source.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that in 1 Enoch the figure of Satan is connected to Azazel. The divine rebel of the Garden of Eden was in some way related to the divine rebels of Genesis 6. In addition, in another Second Temple Period work, the Book of Jubilees, one tenth of the watchers were allowed to stay on earth after the others are imprisoned so that they could be subject to Satan.<sup>21</sup>

### The Clear Polemic

Ultimately, the Bible and Second Period texts showed a clear polemic against the sacred history of the other Ancient Near East civilizations. While they saw the apkallu as divine sages who brought wisdom and humanity to the people, in the Bible and other Jewish texts they were a destructive and corrupting force that necessitated a global cataclysm to allow creation to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>20</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2019), 178.

<sup>21</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2020), 95.

continue. In other ANE texts the apkallu are the benefactors of humanity. In the case of the Titans, the view of a beneficent savior continued all the way into the works of Lord Byron who wrote in his poem Prometheus: “Thy Godlike crime was to be kind / To render with they precepts less / The sum of human wretchedness / And strengthen man with his own mind.”<sup>22</sup>

In Jewish thought the Watchers were trying to destroy humanity and supplant them with their own progeny.<sup>23</sup> In the other texts the apkallu or Titans were at odds with and punished by selfish gods who became frightened by the judgment they created. By contrast in the Bible and the Book of Enoch they are evil and punished at the order of the righteous Yahweh who is in full control of the Flood.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Flood Returns Primordial Chaos to Creation**

### The Flood Account in Genesis

As previously stated, in the Ancient Near East the sea was connected with chaos and the breaking down of order. When Yahweh brought the Flood to the earth, He showed that He had full control of the waters and thus chaos. This was portrayed in other parts of the Old Testament such as in the Book of Job where Leviathan, the personification of a chaos god, was created and tamed by Yahweh (Job 41:1-8). In the Genesis Creation story and the cosmology of the Ancient

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<sup>22</sup> George G. Byron, “Prometheus,” Byron, “Prometheus”, accessed May 3, 2020, <http://knarf.english.upenn.edu/Byron/prom.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers & the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2017), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Halton, *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither: Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 52.

Near East, the initial waters were separated into seas above the firmament and below the Earth, this separation was temporary removed:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights (Genesis 7:11)

For forty days and nights order was rescinded, and the primordial chaos was allowed to destroy most of the life on the earth that was not aboard the Ark. It was a fitting punishment for those involved in the contamination of creation as by rebelling against Yahweh they had become agents of chaos. Instead of the damaging but petty in comparison chaos brought to the earth by human and spiritual imagers, the primal chaos under the control of Yahweh would purge creation so that His plan for humanity could begin anew.

#### Other Accounts of the Flood

The other cultures of the Ancient Near East also had their own recounting of the Flood as was mentioned earlier. The earliest discovery of such texts in modern times occurred at Nineveh in 1872. In total 70 textual witnesses to a great flood were found by archeologists at Nineveh.<sup>25</sup> Examples of Ancient Near East Flood accounts included a Sumerian version where the gods decided to flood the earth without giving a reason. The pious king Ziusudra is warned of the upcoming catastrophe and built a boat that weathered a 7 day and night event. Afterwards Ziusadra was given eternal life by the sun god.<sup>26</sup> In the Babylonian Epic of Atrahasis the Flood

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Halton, *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither: Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

was a judgment on mankind by the gods for being too noisy. Prior to the judgment humanity had been created to do the boring work that had previously been done by lesser gods. One god, Enki, double-crossed the other gods and saved Atrahasis from the deluge.<sup>27</sup>

A third account that was probably sourced from the Epic of Atrahasis, the Epic of Gilgamesh, stated that the gods were terrified and described as panicking in rather vivid descriptions. Ishtar “screamed like a woman in childbirth” and the other gods “cowered like dogs.” Once the flood ended and Utnapishtim made a sacrifice to the gods, they were so famished that they “crowded around the sacrifice like flies.”<sup>28</sup> This account in particular cast the gods in a poor and impotent light. Not only did they cower before the unleashing of chaos on creation, they seem to have forgotten that they depended on humanity for sustenance.<sup>29</sup>

#### The Flood Water Subside

After forty days and nights, the space between the waters was reestablished and months after that the waters retreated enough for there to be land. Just as in the Gilgamesh Epic Noah makes a sacrifice. Unlike the gods in Gilgamesh, Yahweh is not famished and in need of the sacrifice. Noah and his family were given the same mandate as Adam and Eve to “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1). While Noah and his family were not placed in the Garden of Eden, in a way Yahweh’s relationship with His human imagers was reset. Because of this, Noah became a new Adam and may have been whom Paul was referring to in Acts 17 when he stated that “From one man He made all the nations.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>29</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2009), 69.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Barrett, *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 104.

There even was some conversation in the Second Temple Period as to whether Noah was pure human or one of the Nephilim. In the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran (1QapGen), a story conveyed Noah's father Lamech interrogating Noah's mother. He was concerned that Noah was not his son and was instead that his father was a watcher. Noah's mother assured him that Noah was not the son of a watcher and was fully human.<sup>31</sup>

To the Jews living in the Second Temple Period, it was important that the progenitor of nations and thus Israel was not tainted with Watcher blood. Even into the beginning years of Christianity there was fear of angels being tempted into having intercourse with human women. In 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul cautioned women to wear head coverings "because of the angels" (1 Corinthians 11:10). Greco-Roman medical texts of Paul's day stated that a woman's hair was a sexual organ. By covering their heads, women were being modest and not providing a temptation for the angels to repeat the sins of Genesis 6.<sup>32</sup>

## **The Corruption Continued After the Flood**

### Return of the Nephilim

Even with the purging of creation brought by the Genesis Flood, the legacy of the sons of God and the Nephilim would cause issues for Yahweh's people through the ministry of Jesus Christ and beyond. The Sumerian Kings List included apkallu that were partially human after the Flood including the quasi-divine king Gilgamesh. The continued existence of Nephilim after the

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<sup>31</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2020), 140.

<sup>32</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, the Watchers & the Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Crane, MO: Defender Publishing, 2017), 128.

Flood was confirmed in multiple parts of the Old Testament. Genesis 6 stated that the Nephilim were present both before and after the deluge. The wording of Genesis 6 could also be translated as follows: “whenever the sons of God came into the daughters of man and they bore children to them” suggesting that the sin of the Watchers may have continued after the Flood.<sup>33</sup> It could also be argued that the Tower of Babel was built to bring the Watchers back to create more Nephilim. If that was the case, it may also be the reason for the sacred prostitution that was common in the Ancient Near East.<sup>34</sup>

The next time the Nephilim showed up in the Bible occurred at the start of the Conquest. When Moses sent out twelve scouts to survey the Promised Land, they returned terrified with stories of a land full of Nephilim (Numbers 13:32). It should be noted that they refer to the Nephilim as giants which was a common description. However, while some have taken this to literal mythological heights, it could also refer to humans with heights that are present in modern times. The average height of an Israelite was thought to be 5 ½ feet. By that standard, a 6 ½ or 7-foot Nephilim would have been a giant.<sup>35</sup> Their presence in Canaan showed opposition by the enemy to allowing Israel to inherit the land promised to it by Yahweh. The lack of faith by Israel shown in their terror after hearing the scouting report led to them wandering the desert for forty years.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Halton, *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither: Three Views on the Bible's Earliest Chapters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 89.

<sup>35</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2019), 212.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 192.



After the previous generation had died off, the Israelites began the conquest under the leadership of Joshua. The focal point of the conquest became killing off the peoples descended from the giant clans. These were the cities and peoples that Yahweh ordered to be completely destroyed, or dedicated to kherem.<sup>37</sup> Even after the conquest remnants of the giant clans remained in Canaan until the time of King David. Besides the duel with the giant Goliath, David formed a group of his own “mighty men” to finally eliminate the last remnants of the giant clans.<sup>38</sup>

### The Origin of Demons

The Nephilim, whose creation and acts necessitated both the Flood and the Conquest left one final consequence that remained through the time of Christ. According to Second Temple Period texts, when a Nephilim perished its soul became a demon and remained on the earth to plague mankind. This was because of their dual nature being descended from both Watchers and humans. This is why demons were also known as bastard spirits and impure spirits. This origin of demons was explored in 1 Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and several texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>39</sup> This understanding of demons continued into the early Christian period with Church Father Tertullian calling the offspring of fallen angels demon-brood who inflicted diseases upon humans.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 262-263.

<sup>39</sup> Michael S. Heiser, *Demons: What the Bible Really Says about the Powers of Darkness* (S.I.: Lexham Press, 2020), 138-139.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 143.

## **Conclusion**

Yahweh created and then worked with His imagers, both human and spirit. As both of these species were given qualities of Yahweh but not His omniscience and perfect character, their actions led to rebellion and sin entering creation. There were severe consequences for these rebellions including the Flood in Genesis, and the individuals involved in them were sentenced harshly. However, even with the mess caused by His imagers, Yahweh continued to work with His human imagers even to the point of dying on a cross for them. While other civilizations glorified the rebellions and hailed their players as cultural heroes, the Bible and other Jewish texts clearly showed their evil and the tragic consequences of their actions.

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