

What Were They Thinking?

Commentary for February 1, 2023 — God’s Power Openly Manifested For Decades

In this Commentary I give two examples that God or His supernatural servants were openly visible to many thousands (perhaps millions) of people for many centuries and later, visible to Israelites for many decades.

Example 1: Cherubim Were Visible to Everyone Before the Flood

“So He [YHWH] **drove out the man [adam]; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.**”

• **Genesis 3:24**

God Himself forced Adam and Eve to leave the garden of Eden, but they still were free to roam within the “land” of Eden.¹ Humans could still approach God at the altar that was east of the entrance to the garden guarded by cherubim (Genesis 4:3–10). Perhaps a different barrier prevented entry to the garden from other directions. Cain and Abel both sacrificed at the altar in front of the cherubim at the entrance to the garden.

That altar was in the same relationship to the garden in Eden as was the altar to the Tabernacle and later Temples — just outside the eastern entrance of the Holy Place.² The cherubim must have seen Cain attack Abel. They did nothing to stop the murder! (Matthew 23:34–35)³

How long were the cherubim there? When did God’s presence depart from the garden of Eden? We do not know. Were the cherubim there for the entire time until the flood of Noah? If so, that would be a period of some 1700+ years after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden. Were the cherubim continually present and visible from the time of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the garden until the flood of Noah?

Much is not told to us in the biblical narratives of Adam and Eve, and their children.

Did some try to enter the garden?

Did some try to confront or attack the Cherubim? (They had swords for a reason.)

Were the Cherubim stationed at that entrance for some 1,700 years?

Nothing in Scripture negates that possibility. The apostle Paul’s indictment of the guilt of humanity before God in Romans 1:18–32 also applies to the wicked humans before the flood of Noah as much as it applies to those after the flood, to all Israel, to all Gentiles, and to everyone who ever lived since the flood.

¹ Later God drove Cain from Eden into the Land of Nod, east of Eden (Genesis 4:15).

² All legitimate Israelite Temples were in the City of David, in Jerusalem, above the Gihon Spring.

³ See Dr. Martin’s 1977 article, “[The Temple Symbolism in Genesis](#),” and my Commentaries from March 2004, also titled “[The Temple Symbolism in Genesis](#)” and my July 2018, “[Temple Symbolism](#).”

If the cherubim were there until the flood, then every pre-flood human had the opportunity to see visible evidence of YHWH's existence, both as the creator of mankind and creator of supernatural cherubim, who were associated with God's glory (Ezekiel 9:3, 10:4, 8, 19, 11:22) two of which He placed at the entrance to the garden (Genesis 3:24).

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of YHWH" (Genesis 6:8). Only Noah, his wife, 3 sons and their 3 wives listened to the narratives and family histories told by their fathers, mothers, and other long-lived ancestors. Most importantly, they obeyed God's command regarding the construction of the ark.

Everyone alive at the time of the flood had a much closer connection to YHWH's creation of the first human beings, their ancestors Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:8–9, 15–24). We are much farther distant from them. So I ask, when the people disobeyed YHWH time after time for generations before the flood, and had direct evidence of supernatural beings ...

WHAT were these people thinking?

The pre-flood people, all human children from Eve, did not care about God or about His subordinate supernatural beings. In addition, another group of supernatural beings were on earth at that time besides YHWH, Satan, and the cherubim. Perhaps the reason the Cherubim were stationed in front of the garden with spinning or revolving swords was not to keep out human beings, but to keep other beings from entering the garden of Eden.⁴ We cannot know, but their special swords would not be needed to keep humans from entering the garden.

These other supernatural beings were extremely powerful and evil. They were the Sons of God who married (or mated with) human women. These Sons of God were not angels (Hebrews 1:5 specifically says they were not angels). They interacted with human beings but we are not told how they were different from the children of Adam and Eve. Angels can appear similar to men, but often with recognizable differences (Genesis 18:1–15, and Luke 24:13–31). The mating of these Sons of God with **"the daughters of men"** [Hebrew, *adam*, a generic term for "human beings"] in Genesis 6:2, 4. These encounters resulted in individuals called *Nephilim*, who were **"mighty men of renown."**

The Nephilim, Anakim, etc. (given different names by various peoples) were considered by God to be human, in spite of their fathers being supernatural beings who interacted in the physical realm. Strange? Yes. See my June 2013 Commentary, "[Anakim Are from Adam.](#)"

⁴ Read the eight verses of Psalm 82. Written in the time of King David, it describes a meeting of God in the court of heaven. The Sons of God are sentenced to death in Psalm 82:6–7. God pronounced their doom by limiting them to the physical realm, and sentenced them to **"die like men."** Their supernatural power was taken from them. God limited them to the physical realm and subjected them to death by sword, arrow, or some other physical means. See my article "[Spirits Can Die.](#)" The Sons of God certainly will die as Ezekiel 18:4, 20 says: **"The soul that sins, it shall die."** This applies to spirits as well as to human beings.

See my articles, "[Who Are the Nephilim](#)." I also discuss the Nephilim in my articles about the nature of God: "[Elohim and the Son of God Part 1](#)" and "[Elohim and the Son of God Part 2](#)." Most of my biblical insight into this topic was derived by Dr. Ernest Martin's research on the subject. He presents his evidence in Chapter 28, "[Who Are the Sons of God?](#)" in his book [The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#), free online.

Therefore, the pre-flood people had evidence that supernatural beings existed, and they were also created by YHWH. We are told the reason for the flood in the verses immediately following the introduction of the Sons of God in Genesis 6:2–4. Read again what the result was:

"And YHWH saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented YHWH that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And YHWH said,

'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repents me that I have made them.'

• **Genesis 6:5–7**

Nevertheless, the active presence and involvement of spirit beings in the lives of human beings is no excuse for any evils or sins the humans committed. That is between the children of Adam and their Creator.

Example 2: Evidence of God's Presence During the Exodus

A second example of God's long-term care of people and their proximity to the presence of YHWH is also direct evidence of God's care of Israel through the supernatural presence of the pillar of a cloud during the day and the pillar of fire during the night. It was present and in sight of the Israelites **continuously for 40 years!** (See Exodus 13:21–22, 14:24; and Nehemiah 9:12, 19).

"And YHWH went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire,

[Why?] to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

• **Exodus 13:21–22**

Later, **"the glory of YHWH appeared in the cloud"** (Exodus 16:10).

"And YHWH said unto Moses, 'Lo, I come unto you in a thick cloud, [Why?] **that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you for ever' [*olam*, "for the age"]."**

• **Exodus 19:9**

Later in Exodus, Moses wrote of another supernatural act that was viewed by all the people of Israel: **"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of YHWH filled the tabernacle"** (Exodus 40:34). When the cloud lifted and moved, all Israel followed (Exodus 40:35–38). The Egyptians knew about the cloud and fire. They told many others:

“And Moses said unto YHWH,

‘Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for You brought up this people in Your might from among them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land [the land promised to Israel]: for they have heard

- that **You** YHWH are **AMONG** this people,
- that **You** YHWH are seen **face to face** [literally “eye to eye,” at Mt. Sinai], and
- that **Your** cloud stands over them, and
- that **You** go before them, by daytime in a PILLAR of a cloud, and in a PILLAR of fire by night.”

• **Numbers 14:13–14**

During Israel’s 40-year sojourn (that is **14,610** DAYS), the cloud was present during Israel’s wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33–34). Yet the people repeatedly committed gross sins, so wicked, so often, that many Israelites were killed directly by God. These incidents are told in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. That presence was evident to every individual, every minute of every day for 40 years. God’s presence was watching over His people Israel. All they had to do was look in the direction of the Tabernacle and see the cloud that represented YHWH’s presence. Again, I ask, when they disobeyed YHWH time after time in the wilderness and for generations later ...

What were THOSE people thinking?

Some day we will be able to ask them “what were YOU thinking?” when they made decisions **[1]** to obey and be increasingly blessed, or **[2]** to disobey, sin, and suffer God’s wrath as told to God’s people Israel by the prophets. They were warned what was sure to happen.

YHWH commanded Moses to tell Israel about the five-fold sequence of punishments, each more harsh than the one before.⁵ In Leviticus 26:1–13 Moses tells the people of Israel about God’s blessings for obedience to their vow to keep their covenant with YHWH. If the Israelites obeyed God, they would be blessed more and more.

Later in Leviticus 26:14–46 Moses told Israel about the sequence of 5-fold punishments of increasing intensity if His people continued to commit gross sins and not repent of them. The last and fifth punishment was mass death, destruction of their kingdom, and exile to a land near where Abram began his journey of faith, to land God promised to give to Abram’s heirs.

The prophets Isaiah, Micah and Amos each reinforced the 5-fold prophetic punishments that Moses taught. First, the northern Kingdom of Israel suffered God’s judgments that led to exile. Later the southern Kingdom of Judah received the same ultimate punishments from YHWH. Both kingdoms were destroyed. Remnants from both kingdoms were exiled to a harsh foreign land. What were the people of Israel thinking then?

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⁵ Dr. Martin’s article, “[Introduction to Isaiah](#)” gives details about each of the five levels of punishment for Israel’s sins and violations of their Covenant with YHWH.