

of the excavations at Shiloh writes the breakout section on the tabernacle.

There is a ton of archaeological information! This focus on archaeology is hardly surprising, given that Steven Collins is the dig director for the excavations at Tall el-Hammam (Sodom?), and many of the other contributors are seasoned archaeologists, including Randall Price, Philip Sylvia, Gary Byers, and David Graves.

Leen Ritmeyer's drawings reconstructing what ancient buildings and cities looked like are extremely helpful. Ritmeyer is familiar to most in the archaeological community: he is an archaeological architect who has worked for decades with excavations all over Israel and is arguably the world's leading expert on the Temple Mount.

For all of its positives, there are some things that may bother some readers. The maps provide a wealth of information but are blotchy, and the colors seem a little off, including water is a light, pastel purple, rather than blue. Furthermore, inexplicably, there is no general subject index at the back, which makes it challenging to locate information on a specific artifact or place quickly.

The chronology may bother some readers who take the numbers in the book of Genesis as literal base-10 arithmetic values. The editors interpret patriarchal ages in Genesis within their ancient Near Eastern Bronze Age context as numerical formulas attributing honor to significant ancestors. In Breakout 2.04, entitled, "Chronology and the Patriarchal Lifespans," Craig Olsen and Steven Collins explain, "This view recognizes that the base-10 numbering system of the later Iron Age Israel and Judah does not fit the Bronze Age cultural context of Abraham and his immediate Hebrew descendants...the Genesis lifespans cannot, then, be used to construct 'absolute' chronologies" (55). This approach, along with the fact that they adopt a short Israelite sojourn in Egypt (215 years, instead of 430 years, following the LXX instead of the MT), means that the dates given for the lives of various biblical people and events may be different than that with which some readers are familiar. Even if one does not agree, it is helpful to

expand one's perspective and understanding how other biblical scholars who hold to the authority and inspiration of Scripture interpret biblical chronology.

Despite these issues, two words will likely come to mind to those who open THHoBL for the first time: beautiful and illuminating. The book itself is a big, gorgeous resource with carefully-chosen photos and full-color drawings that reconstruct what many places would have looked like in their day. THHoBL sheds light on what the ancient world was like and provides valuable background information on the biblical text. In short, there are many, many things people will benefit from in this 400-page volume. It is written by leading scholars and provides easy-to-read commentary on the entire Bible. It would be an excellent addition to the library of anyone interested in the history and archaeology of the lands of the Bible.

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Doedens, Jaap. *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4*. Leiden: Brill, 2019, xxiv + 369 pages, \$153.00, hardcover.

Jaap Doedens's *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4*, the published version of his Ph.D. dissertation (p. vii), is perhaps the most comprehensive work on this highly controversial passage ever undertaken. The pericope centers around the corruption performed when the sons of God took women for themselves from among the daughters of mankind (Gen 6:2), and it not only begs the question of the identity of the sons of God (Gen 6:2) but also of the fallen ones and the powerful ones (Gen 6:4). His book claims to be an exegetical treatment (p. vii), which in many ways, it is.

His strength in this area, at least within this volume, is the lexical and semantic treatment of words. However, as a self-proclaimed exegete, he should know that exegesis consists of both lexical *and* syntactical elements. His exegetical treatment of the text of Gen 6:1-4 (notably p. 13-76) lacks noticeably in the area of syntactical observations and

evaluation, which is quite disappointing. With a greater syntactical and grammatical focus, Doedens could have drawn out much more from the text and context of this pericope that would have helped him to interpret a number of elements—as well as to identify several individuals—more accurately.

After its introductory chapter (1), the book is divided into chapters on (2) the analysis of Gen 6:1–4, (3) a history of the exegesis of “sons of God,” (4) weighing exegetical solutions, and (5) the functions of Gen 6:1–4. The book’s thesis (p. 3) is to clarify the meaning of the expression “sons of God” in Gen 6:2, 4, and to interpret the whole passage (Gen 6:1–4) within its literary context. Throughout the book, Doedens highlights and evaluates four popular views on the identity of the sons of God (see initially p. 4–6): (1) angels, (2) mighty humans, (3) Sethites, and (4) divine beings (i.e., deities, or gods within the ANE [ancient Near Eastern] pantheon).

Doedens is to be applauded for the manner in which he articulates and represents fairly (for the most part) each of the four views he presents. In many ways—although, sadly, not with every important matter—he delves deeply into the details of the text. His greatest accomplishment with the book probably is his extensive treatment of the views on the topic that have been held by both ancient and modern writers throughout history (p. 77–177). Considering all of the wild theories about the identity of the sons of God in Genesis 6, Doedens is to be commended for his focus on the explanation of the biblical text and the history of its interpretation.

To Doedens’s credit, he correctly ruled out the human-being views (i.e. mighty humans, Sethites) for the identity of the sons of God, and he did so on exegetical grounds. For example, he properly noted that the term *ha adam* (“mankind”) in Gen 6:1 has to be taken as a collective noun referring to humanity as a whole (p. 14), meaning that—due to the need for interpretive consistency—the daughters of mankind in Gen 6:2 must refer to female human beings collectively (p. 26), who physically derived from Adam.

The sons of God thus necessarily refer to individuals outside the human race, whoever they may be. As the author insightfully stated (p. 1), the passage’s offensive nature led to efforts to neutralize the story by explaining the sons of God within the human realm, as a way to clear the narrative of its unwanted super-human (which probably should have been termed “supra-human,” in order to avoid undesired connotations) notions.

To Doedens’s discredit, he incorrectly concluded that the sons of God refer to divine beings (i.e. deities), which in turn sends the final stages of his volume into a tailspin from which it never recovers. Moreover, he connected the notion of these ANE gods of the divine council to mythology that crept into the biblical text (p. 178), ultimately suggesting that Greek mythology that the Mycenaeans spread from Europe to Asia during the second millennium BC is the source of this mythical element (p. 276–277). He thus erected speculation on top of pessimistic conjecture.

Doedens transgressed into the sublime when he suggested that what caused the writing of this mythological pericope that found its way into Genesis is the presence of megalithic structures known as dolmens (i.e., Neolithic tombs consisting of massive, stone columns that support an enormous, table-like plate usually made of flat stone). In his view (p. 291–294), the ancients alleged that fallen giants constructed these dolmens, and the nexus for connecting this theory to Gen 6:1–4 is that supposedly the text states that “giants” were on the earth in those days (Gen 6:4).

Therefore, Doedens chose to favor the Septuagint’s errant reading, which found its way into the Vulgate and was replicated in the KJV/NKJV, translating *nephilim* as “giants.” This faulty reading has led to countless wrong interpretations, the latest of which is that of Doedens. He fell into this trap because he wrongly read back into Gen 6:4 from Num 13:33, the only other place where *nephilim* is found in the Hebrew Bible, that because the Canaanites who were spying out the land viewed the locals as being tall in comparison to themselves, they must have been giants (p. 62;

cf. 1, 2, 23, 56, 75). This flawed hermeneutical leap cannot be taken, not in *either* passage.

Why did Doedens land on the wrong view regarding this important interpretive problem in Gen 6:2? Perhaps the answer is related to his “intent to remain in dialogue with older and newer solutions for this intriguing passage” (p. 294). By his own admission (p. 5), newer research almost unanimously takes the expression “sons of God” to refer to divine beings (i.e., deities/gods). Doedens, a seminary professor, thus may have embraced this position in order to remain in good standing with the larger community of biblical scholarship, which takes many historical narratives throughout the Bible as mythological accounts.

For some unknown reason, Doedens marginalized the evil-angels view by assuming and asserting that the early Israelites would not have envisaged this view, and by suggesting that the view is impossible for several of the OT texts in which a similar expression is present (p. 189–190), especially noting Ps 82:6 (p. 247). However, it has been proven elsewhere (Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* [Bellingham: Lexham, 2015], 27–37) that the *elohim* of Ps 82:6 are not deities at all, but evil angelic beings, especially since Deut 32:17 refers to the *elohim* that the Israelites worshipped as “demons” (which in the Bible are entirely distinct from deities).

Moreover, Psalm 82 features no direct use of the technical term “sons of God” that is found in Genesis (6) and Job (1, 2, 38). Doedens thus would have done well to give more credence to the view that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are evil angelic beings, which view he wrongly described as recounting the origin of demons (p. 288). Proponents of the evil-angels view do not suggest that Gen 6:1–4 recounts the origin of demons, but rather that already-corrupted “sons of God” (i.e. fallen angels = the fallen ones of Gen 6:4) engineered a plot to infiltrate the purely human line of Adam and prevent the promised seed (Gen 3:15) from being born with purely human lineage.

On the whole, Doedens’s book is indispensable for the study of the problem

passage in Genesis 6 that prominently features the sons of God. Thus, it should be on the shelf of anyone who desires to examine this passage more thoroughly for himself/herself. Nonetheless, this volume must be read and treated with caution, knowing that Doedens does not always display the precision of a careful exegete or arrive at the correct position on crucial, interpretive issues within the text. In truth, which brings the present writer no joy to declare, he did not prove his thesis, as he failed to clarify the meaning of the expression “sons of God” in Gen 6:2, 4.

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Longenecker, Bruce W. In *Stone and Story: Early Christianity in the Roman World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2020, x + 292 pages. \$34.99 hardback.

The amazing sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum, destroyed in the violent eruption of Mount Vesuvius on August 24th AD 79, were designated UNESCO World Heritage sites in 1997. Pompeii in antiquity had a population of about ten to twelve thousand, while Herculaneum had only about five thousand. This makes these small cities much smaller than the early centers of Christianity at places like Ephesus (250,000) and Pergamum (200,000). The ruins of Pompeii, first discovered in 1709, was the place where the modern science of archaeology began in the mid-eighteenth century. Excavation has continued at the site since that time, only halted for a period by World War II. By the late twentieth century about two-thirds of the site had been excavated. It might seem that this area has given up all its secrets, but Bruce W. Longenecker provides a new look at the material from this region.

While not a field archaeologist, Longenecker is quite familiar with Pompeii, having authored a scholarly volume focusing on the importance of Pompeii for understanding early Christianity, *The Crosses of Pompeii: Jesus-Devotion in a Vesuvian Town*, Fortress Press, 2016. He edited a scholarly volume, *Early Christianity in*