

## "As in the Days of Noah ..."

*Genesis 6:1-4*

In our sermon series 'One Verse Sermons' this summer, we have mostly looked at familiar verses that we have studied in its original context and had greater understanding on Phil. 4:13, Rom. 8:28, Prov. 3:5-6, Jer. 29:13 and 2 Chron. 7:14 that we weren't aware of because we often remove it from the context. We also looked at the puzzling words of Jesus in John 20:23 to help us understand whether we can forgive other people's sins or not. But then two people (or the same person twice!) wanted to be controversial and wrote down Gen. 6:2-3 wanting to know 'Who are the sons of God?' mentioned here.

When we come to verses that might have 2 or 3 possible interpretations, our best course of action is to present the biblical evidence for that view and compare them and see which makes the most biblical sense. Since the Bible is a unit our understanding of a passage here (like Genesis 6) will have greater implications on how we understand other parts of the Bible. Because Scripture interprets Scripture. Before we jump right in to Genesis 6 we have to understand the context or the setting.

Back in Ch. 3, Adam and Eve disobeyed God bringing sin into the world which results in physical and spiritual death. Now everyone who is born has a sin nature and must choose to serve God or not. When God punished Adam and Eve for their sin, He also gave them hope that a male seed from the woman would one day crush the serpent's head (Satan, who enticed Eve to sin). So when Eve gave birth we read in Gen. 4:1 that she gave birth to Cain *and said "With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man."* But when you read the Hebrew, it actually reads 'I brought forth a man, the Yahweh.' In other words, she believed Gen. 3:15 thinking Cain was the divine seed who would crush Satan's head. But Cain killed Abel, thus demonstrating he could not be 'the one' who would bring hope. So she bore another son and named him Seth and we read in Gen. 4:25-26 Eve said,

*"God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." <sup>26</sup> Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.*

And then we have Seth's genealogy in Ch. 5 which some assume that this is the godly line based on 4:26, that these were people of faith. So when we come to Genesis 6 some people have interpreted the 'sons of God's as referring to

### **View # 1 – the Godly sons from the line of Seth**

So the view that the 'sons of God' refer to the godly sons of Seth would then mean that the daughters of men that they married were ungodly women because according to v.4 the children produced by this union were the Nephilim, legendary figures that were very wicked, so wicked in fact that God felt He had to destroy the world according to the next verse because *'every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil all the time'* (v.5).

In support of this view is the general biblical teaching that a child of God should not marry a person who doesn't believe in God. We see the warnings by God through Moses in the Old Testament that Israelites should not marry those who worship other gods. We see it affirmed in the New Testament in places like 2 Cor. 6 where Paul says not to be unequally yoked. We could also see

how this view could flow out of the context of Ch. 4 ending with Seth's birth and then tracing his genealogy in Ch. 5. That's one popular view. The other popular view is that 'the sons of God' are

## **View # 2 – Fallen Angels**

This view states that the 'sons of God' are actually a reference to the angels that chose to follow Satan, 1/3 of whom rejected God and were cast out of God's presence. These came to earth, appearing as men and had sexual relations with the daughters of men which produced the Nephilim. In support of this view first of all is the phrase 'sons of God'. The phrase 'sons of God' refers to angelic beings in the Bible. In the book of Job we read in Ch. 1:6 and 2:1 that 'the sons of God' along with Satan, who is a created angel, approached God. Most translations leave it as 'sons of God' while some translate it 'angels'. The Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) which was the Bible of Jesus' day, interprets Gen. 6:2 as angels, which reflects how the Jewish teachers and rabbis of the day understood it.

Also, in support of this view is that the term angels in the Bible is a masculine term. There are no feminine angels (sorry artists everywhere!). Here we specifically read that the 'sons of God' saw that the daughters of men were beautiful. If the sons of God are the godly line of Seth, why are only males godly and why are only daughters ungodly? And if the inclination of men's hearts everywhere were wicked, not every descendant of Seth would have been godly because they all had many sons and daughters.

As well, every time an angel appears in the Bible they appear as male. Gabriel, Michael are the only two whose names we know. When the Lord and two angels appeared to Abraham, those two were perceived as men. As were the angels who came to Lot. The angels at the Jesus' tomb also appeared as men as did the two who appeared after Jesus ascended.

Some object to the fallen angel view saying that the New Testament uses 'sons of God' for people. However, when the New Testament uses the term 'son(s) of God' it actually refers to a unique creation by God. Jesus, of course is referred to as the Son of God many times but that implies that He is uniquely belonging to God. When Luke gives the earthly genealogy of Jesus he says 'Adam, son of God'. Adam was not a human product; he was a divine creation. As well, Paul calls believers in Gal. 4:6 God's sons but because they have His divine Spirit in them. Romans 8:23 says the same thing.

Another objection put forth against the angels' view is that angels don't marry based on Jesus' own words in Matt. 22:30. There the Sadducees tried to trick Jesus with the question about the woman who had 7 husbands (the first six who died), the question being who is she married to in heaven. Jesus replied

*<sup>30</sup> At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.*

Jesus was talking about the afterlife in God's presence, not this life. Jesus was talking about in the resurrection where the angels are those who obeyed God rather than those who disobeyed.

After we have exhausted the Bible for our primary sources of evidence, it can also be helpful to look at Jewish commentaries and church historians to see how this was interpreted. When you read these sources you find out that the fallen angel theory was never even challenged until the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Which was the time when interpreting the Bible allegorically became popular and did a lot of damage. Some of which still exists in churches today.

So, there's the two views. We could stop there and just leave it and let you decide but each view has further implications in the chapter as well as for the rest of the Bible. Staying in the context of the chapter,

## **Which View Helps Us Understand What the Nephilim are?**

What does 'Nephilim' mean? While some translate it 'giants', the word literally means the "fallen ones". Early Rabbis understood it to refer to those who fell, fell upon humanity and caused it to fall even more. The word used in the Greek New testament is *gigantes* which we get the word gigantic from. However, that Greek word comes from two words, ge and gennaw. 'Ge' means earth and gennaw means begotten or comes from. So the word actually means earth-born, referring to their heritage not so much their size. Although there still was something unique about them.

These Nephilim were a clear by-product of the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men. If we were talking about believers and unbelievers, why go to the trouble of calling them 'earth-born'? That's pretty obvious. And why would a union between a believer and an unbeliever produce a unique race of warriors (or men of renown, possibly giants)? These were obviously unique creations of powerful individuals who were a threat to society. Because the very next thing we read in Gen. 6:5 is

*<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

So bad that He felt the need to wipe mankind out and start afresh through Noah. So why were these Nephilim the cause of so much wickedness? If these are fallen angels then they must be sent by Satan. Satan knows the plan of God. He knows Scripture. He even used Scripture to try and force Jesus to sin in Matt. 4. When God pronounced judgment on Adam, Eve and Satan He promised Eve

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen. 3:15)*

This is the first prophecy about Jesus, who will be her 'offspring' (literally seed) and He (male) will crush Satan's head. Satan's plan was to thwart the coming of Jesus. Couldn't one of his attempts be to cause wicked angels to take on human form and produce children with human women thus infecting the human race with demonic DNA and making it difficult if not impossible for a pure human seed to come from the line of Eve? Many of us watched the documentary 'Alien Invasion' put out last winter by Creation Ministries. When they interviewed all these people about supposed alien encounters one of the common denominators was some kind of weird sexual experience or attempt of some sort. These 'alien' experts and researchers were of the mind set that these were not extra-terrestrial beings but extra-dimensional beings; i.e. demonic visitations.

This would not only help us understand what the Nephilim are but also

## **Help Us Understand the Flood Better**

God felt the world was totally wicked and that *every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time*

It would make sense that God would need to purify the human race from possible demonic contamination in order to preserve His promise for a seed (sinless at that) to come from a woman alone. And then we have Gen. 6:8

*But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.*

The word blameless means to be free from defect. It was used to describe people who one could not find fault with. It was also used to describe sacrificial animals that were accepted by God. Noah stands out as righteous in his generation and blameless could imply untainted by demonic contamination so that God could reboot the human race and make sure the line of Messiah remained clear for prophecy to be fulfilled. The fallen angel view is not popular because we're uncomfortable with it. But when you weigh the evidence it has a lot of support for it. How did the world get so bad so quickly? And why the need to destroy all people if all they needed was a message of repentance? Noah preached for 120 years as mentioned here and no one repented. There was something terribly wrong.

## **And Which View Helps Us Understand Other Difficult Verses**

The fallen angel view helps us understand these passages:

*<sup>2</sup> Pet. 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; <sup>5</sup> if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;*

And its parallel passage in Jude 6-7,

*<sup>6</sup> And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.<sup>7</sup> In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

There were evil angels who abandoned their proper dwelling, the spiritual realm, came to earth sinning by giving themselves to sexual immorality and perversion and are now locked away in a place called Tartarus (actual word) where they no longer can hurt and infect humans. Remember when Jesus cast out the legion of demons from the Gadarene in Luke 8 and they begged Jesus not to throw them into the abyss?

And how does this view help us understand 1 Pet. 3:18-20,

*<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— <sup>20</sup> to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.*

This now makes sense. If these fallen angels perverted themselves with women, mixing the DNA between humans and Satan, thus causing God to wipe out all humanity except one untainted

family, and locking these disobedient spirits who left their proper domain, then Jesus in-between His resurrection strove triumphantly into their presence to proclaim Gen. 3:15 was fulfilled and they failed.

That's a lot of information and maybe a little unsettling.

## **So What Can We Learn from This?**

*Heb. 2:14* Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—<sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Since the sinless God-man Jesus fulfilled Scripture by dying for our sins and rising from the dead, he broke Satan's power over death. If we have chosen to follow Jesus as our Saviour believing by faith that His death and resurrection are the way into God's presence, we are saved and secured from the evil one. He can't change what God has done for us. His power is now limited. But he's still active and seeks to keep us from trusting God (always his go to plan). So let's be aware of this;

*1 Pet. 5:8* Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

He is not omniscient. It doesn't appear he can work on more than one person at a time. He does have his helpers but he ultimately has no power over us. We who have the Spirit of Jesus have the power to resist his temptations. The unsaved do not and that's why the world is starting to look like Noah's day again.

And Jesus warned us of this very thing in Matt. 24 that prior to His return the world will resemble the days of Noah once again. The days of Noah were marked by an obsession with evil, violence and sexual perversity. We can't be far off. A day is coming when God will cleanse the world itself with fire. Peter warns us and encourages us about that time in 2 Pet. 3:12

*That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. <sup>13</sup> But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. <sup>15</sup> Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.*

This world has many things going for it but a lot more things wrong with it. This isn't our home. Our citizenship is in heaven. Jesus' delay means God wants more people saved.

We have to be more vigilant on personal holiness and in sharing the message of hope. Like the days of Noah people will be doing their normal day to day activities unaware of a terrible judgment coming.

Like Noah we need to be preachers of righteousness in a world of sinfulness. We who have hope need to share our hope with others.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us  
at [oliviet@rideau.net](mailto:oliviet@rideau.net)