

Genesis 6:1-4

Last time we noted Gen 5:1-32, an account of the descendants of Adam through the line of Seth. We ended on verse 32 which describes Noah having three sons. To summarize the chapter we can note two main thoughts:

1. While chapter 4 traces the line of Esau, chapter 5 traces the line of Seth who will be the line of the promise of Gen 3:15.
2. While there is a general progression of evil in Esau's line and in the world at large, there is a thread of righteousness noted in Seth's line. At the end of Chapter four we noted Seth and his son Enosh who called upon the name of the Lord. In chapter five we noted righteous Enoch who walked with God for 300 years. We noted Lamech, the father of Noah, who was looking for deliverance from the curse of Gen 3. And lastly we noted Noah who is called righteous in Gen 6:9. The principle is God will always preserve a righteous remnant through evil and dark times.

We now tackle Gen 6:1-8, one of the more intriguing and controversial passages in God's Word. These verses outline an attack by Satan's forces to corrupt the "seed of the woman" promised in Gen 3:15 (*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^[a] and hers; he will crush^[b] your head, and you will strike his heel.*). These eight verses can be divided into two parts, first the Angelic Inter-marriage in verses 1-4 and second, the Divine Intervention in 5-8.

The Angelic Inter-marriage, vs 1-4

Vs 1a, *When human beings began to increase in number on the earth.*

Some translations have *when men began to multiply on the face of the earth*, The Hebrew word for men here is a generic term meaning mankind. It refers to both men and women. So the NIV interpretation is correct. We could say "when the population of both men and women increased."

Vs 1b, *and daughters were born to them,*

Since both men and women are mentioned in the first phrase the author is now singling out the female line. The verse can therefore be translated, Mankind multiplied and daughters were born to both men and women.

Vs 2a, *that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were ^[a]beautiful;*

The phrase *sons of God* is the Hebrew word bnei ha-Elohim. This term is always a reference to angels, both good and bad. It is used in Job 1:6 and 2:1 where Satan is noted to be among the "*sons of God*" (Job 1:6, *now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them*). It is also used in Job 38:7 where the sons of God are present at the creation of the world. The phrase is also translated as the *sons of the mighty*, as noted in Ps 29:1 and Ps 89:6. It is also translated as *sons of the most high* in Ps 82:6. The bottom line is it is a reference to angels.

The *daughters of men*, refer to the female offspring of the human beings in the verse 1. Note the sons of God—angelic beings—saw that the daughters of men—women, were *beautiful*. Some translations have *fair*. This is not beauty in a Platonic sense, rather the idea is the *daughters of men* were seen to be

sexually appealing and desirable. This is interesting. Mt 22:30 (*for when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven*) states that in heaven, angels are both single and sexless, so how is it that these angels have sexual desire? The answer is two-fold. First, scripture only speaks of angels in the male gender. There are no female angels as far as we know. Since angels are listed in the male gender one can imagine the potential for sexual desire. Second, the angels mentioned in Mt 22:30, are in heaven where there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. Jesus was not speaking of angels in general but only of those in heaven. But the angels described in Gen 6 have left heaven and have chosen to follow Satan in his rebellion. Jesus made clear that in heaven men and women will not marry or be given in marriage. But on earth, men and women do marry and this can be true of these fallen angels as well. They are fallen and we can imply they are somehow subject to the same lustful desires we men experience.

Vs 2b, *and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.*

And they is a reference to these angelic beings. Heb 13:2 says we are to be hospitable to strangers for in so doing we show hospitality to angels without knowing it. Therefore angels can assume human form. So there are two possible ways in which these angels could marry. Either they take human form, or they could inhabit or possess existing men. We are not clearly told in scripture which route they took however we have a clue from verse 4. Since angels can't replicate, taking the form of a human still wouldn't allow them to reproduce (this is an educated assumption) However if they possess a man, they would be able to have offspring. In verse 4 we see their offspring to be men. They are special men and we will talk about this. But this would seem to indicate that these fallen angels may have possessed men in order to join themselves to the daughters of men.

The word *took* is used either for taking a wife for one's self or securing a bride for another. It also can mean taking for sexual gratification apart from marriage (see Gen 34:2). The implication here is these angels took women both in marriage and some they just took, i.e. they used them for sexual gratification.

There is an interesting parallel between this verse and Gen 3:6. In Gen 3:6 Eve saw the fruit was good to eat and so she took. The three words, saw, good, took, revealed Eve was outside the bounds of God's design and here in verse 2, the same three words are used of the fallen angels; they saw the daughters of men were beautiful or good, and so they took. Just as Eve was outside God's boundary so are these angels.

Now the big question is why would these angels do this? Why pursue and take the daughters of men? Is it just lust? That seems a rather simple answer. But there is something larger going on. God's declaration to Satan in Gen 3:15 was that a seed from the woman would someday crush his head. This seed, or offspring, would be the result of a natural male-female relationship. Angels do not procreate or replicate their kind, however on earth they can assume human form or possess a man to produce something that is human yet abnormally conceived (i.e. by a demon). Though the offspring of this union produced men, scripture says they were abnormal. Verse 4 says they were mighty, men of renown –which is better translated as men of notoriety. Numbers 13 describes Anak as their descendants and noted they were giants (see also 2 Sam 21:15-22). Perhaps the demons had a way of altering the DNA of these offspring

and corrupting it. Satan sees an opportunity to corrupt the seed of the woman. So he now unleashes some of his fallen comrades upon the daughters of men in a plot to corrupt the offspring of women so the promised seed of Gen 3:15 could not be born.

There is also the question of why the daughters of men would take demonic husbands. In general, this is a cultural indicator of the corruptness of mankind at this time. Mankind was so corrupt as to entertain the idea of marrying demonically possessed men. I wonder if these women knew whom they were marrying.? As a woman if you had the choice to join yourself to a supernatural creature or a man which would you choose? The answer is embedded in Gen 3:6. Satan offered Eve the opportunity to not die (if you eat *—you will not die*) and to be *like God*. I wonder if this was not the approach of these demonic men. Their line was marry me—never die and be like God!

In verse 3 we have the pronouncement of God's judgment.

Vs 3a, *Then the Lord said,*

This is the same phrase used to introduce the Judgements of Gen 3:14-19.

Vs 3b, *"My Spirit will not contend with^[a] humans forever, for they are mortal^[b];*

In 3b, God again introduces the idea of the trinity by saying *My Spirit*. The Spirit was introduced to us in Gen 1:2 and again was implied in Gen 1:26 when God said *Let us make mankind in our image*, and in Gen 3:22 when God said *The man has now become like one of us*.

The word *contend* is also translated as strive and is the Hebrew word yadon. It only appears here in scripture. It is from the Hebrew word din, which means to judge, plead, or rule. The word is translated as strive (KJV, NKJV), contend (NIV), abide (ESV), and remain (CSB). Scholars believe it has two meanings. Either the idea of staying, in the sense of remaining or abiding with someone, or the idea of arguing and contending with someone. This later meaning is the most appropriate here. We know by verse 5, that in Noah's day *every inclination of the human heart was only evil all the time*, hence moral chaos was the norm. So God says, I am constantly contending and coming against the sin of mankind.

I will not let this go on *forever*. God is tired of the status quo. He will not continue to argue, strive, or contend with mankind in the manner that has unfolded.

And why is man so bad? Because *they are mortal*. in other words they are mortal because they are fallen. This an awkward way of saying man is sinful.

Vs 3c, *their days will be a hundred and twenty years."*

This verse has a two-fold interpretation and it depends on your view of the word *their*. The first interpretation views *their* as a reference to each man living. Because of God's contention and striving, God will now limit each man's lifespan to 120 years. Instead of the seven to nine hundred year spans of Noah's ancestors, God will not strive or argue with any man over that long a lifespan. In other word's He won't tolerate evil choices that continue on and on for one person for hundreds of years. The other interpretation views *their* as a pleural "you all." God will not tolerate the collective evil that is now afoot and so God says in 120 years I will bring a flood to end it all. In this view the 120 years is prophetic. It

says the flood will come, but you have 120 years to repent and turn yourselves around. Peter alludes to this interpretation in 1 P 3:20, *when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built*. Peter also notes in 2 P 3:9, *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*.

Vs 4a, The Nephilim were on the earth

The key to understanding this verse is the word *Nephilim*. The KJV and NKJV translates the word as giants. The NLT as giant Nephilites, while the NIV and ASV use the word Nephilim. The word appears twice in scripture; here in Gen 6:4 and again in Num 13:33. It can be translated fallen ones (or those who cause others to fall), and can also be translated as a large man as in Num 13:33, *We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.*" The Jewish scholars who wrote the Septuagint were trying to find the best Greek word for Nephilim and chose *gigantes* which in Latin means titan and when translated into English means giant. So there are two meanings, fallen ones and giant. So there is a significant controversy among scholars as to the word's meaning. In Gen 6:4 it is best to emphasize the word as the name of the product of fallen angels intermarrying with human women. In other words, Nephilim is the categorical name for those who were the offspring of this unnatural union. The interpretation of the word as giant is best thought of as a reference to their physical appearance.

Vs 4b, in those days—and also afterward

Note Moses gives a time reference as to their existence. He says *in those days -and also afterwards*. Again there are two ways in which this time sequence is viewed. The first way to interpret the verse is to see *afterwards*, as after *the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them, Nephilim were on the earth in those days*. What days were these? Those days when these fallen angels intermarried, which this interpretation says lasted until the flood.

The second way is to view *afterwards* as referring to after the flood. This would explain Num 13:33 (*We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.*") which documents the existence of the Nephilim's descendants -the Anakites--after the flood. In other words after the flood the process of these fallen angels taking human women as their wives continued which produced individuals of which Anak was a descendant. This would explain the giants Joshua faced in Josh 11:21-22 and Goliath in David's time (see 1 Sam 17 and 2 Sam 21).

Here is another argument for why this process continued after the flood. In Jude 1:6-7 (NASB) we read the following, *And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after ^[a]strange flesh, are exhibited as an ^[h]example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.*

Jude discusses the sure judgement of false prophets. In verses 6-7 Jude uses two OT examples of judgement to show that the false prophets of his day would also be judged. The first example is the angels of Gen 6:1-4. Note they left their *own domain*. Angels were designed for the heavenly realm, not the earthly one. They *abandoned their proper abode*. But this is not all they did for in verse 7 Jude notes they *indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh*. *Strange flesh* means flesh that wasn't theirs. In other words they sexually went after women. Jude then states that at some point God imprisoned them to prevent them from continuing to intermarry.

Jude then cites Sodom and Gomorrah. He says *since in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh*. *As these* is in the masculine plural just as *angels* is in the masculine plural. The city titles *Sodom and Gomorrah* and the word *cities* are all feminine, so the *as these* refers to the *angels* in the first phrase. The phrase *strange flesh* again does not refer to the same flesh (i.e. homosexuality or human relations) rather it is a reference to interspecies, or non-human flesh. So the sentence can be paraphrased as follows; just as the fallen angels who left their first estate and pursued human sexual relations, so too did Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them indulge in gross immorality and went after non-human or angelic relations (strange flesh). To be complete there are also some scholars who claim that *strange flesh* is a reference to homosexuality. So in this case the verse can be paraphrased as, just as the fallen angels who left their first estate and pursued human sexual relationships so too did Sodom and Gomorrah and cities around them indulge in gross immorality and went after the strange flesh of homosexual relationships.

2 P 4:2-6 (NASB) gives another reference to Gen 6:4. Again Peter, like Jude, is talking about the judgement of false prophets. *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;*

Peter, like Jude uses both the example of these fallen angels and Sodom and Gomorrah to condemn those who were ungodly. Though not as specific as Jude, Peter still links the two examples together.

Vs 4c, *when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.*

Vs 4c describes the offspring of these abnormal unions. Note they are described as men, but they are special men. Note there are two phrases which describe them. The first is *heroes of old*, also translated *mighty men of old*. The idea here is these were physically strong men and of military might. This is why some have translated the phrase into English as *heroes of old*. Secondly, they are *men of renown*. They are known. They have notoriety. They are different. I suppose it is like seeing a 6-10 basketball player—they are unusual and stand out. Some have argued these men became the basis for Greek mythology. I have no idea if this is true. But it does emphasize the fact that this was a class of men who were clearly different than everybody else. And as I mentioned, were these demonic fathers able to alter their DNA? We will never know till eternity.

So let's attempt a summary,

1. This ante-diluvial period is categorized by moral chaos and wickedness.
2. Into this time, Fallen angels either took human form or possessed men and took for themselves human wives.
3. This action was out of the set boundary God had ordained for men and angels, even fallen ones.
4. This angelic intermarriage was a Satanic attempt to somehow corrupt the seed of Eve so the Messiah could not be born.
5. Nephilim is the categorical name for the offspring of these fallen angels and these human women.
6. These creatures were men, yet physically larger and stronger than your average man.
7. These Nephilim, were physically strong and militarily gifted (as they were large).
8. They were well known, men of notoriety.
9. These fallen angels, responsible for pursuing the strange flesh of women, were ultimately confined to a part of Sheol called Tartarus. There is some debate as to whether this confining event occurred pre or post flood. Sheol means the realm of the dead. It is the abode of all OT peoples when they die. The Bible speaks of various places within it. For humans there are two terms used; torments for those who are unbelievers and Paradise for those who are of faith. For angelic beings two terms are also used; the Abyss which is a general term for the place where some fallen angels are confined (see Lk 8, Rev 9:1-3, Rev 11:7--and also where Satan will be --see Rev 20:1-3) and Tartarus, which is a specific part of the Abyss mentioned in 2 P 2:4-5, in which these specific angels are imprisoned.