

SESSION 41: MIXING WHAT SHOULDN'T BE MIXED, PART TWO

Genesis 6:1-4

September 8, 2024

PREFACE

In our last session we sorted out the meaning of “sons of God” (v2) and “the Nephilim” (v4) at the beginning of Chapter Six. In this session we will now place these in their proper context. In short, the conclusion I offered last week was that “sons of God” speaks of those in the righteous line of Seth, and “the Nephilim” speaks of either the unrighteous tyrants—“mighty men... men of renown”—or their offspring, or both.

Now, although I pointed out that the majority of scholars agree with this interpretation—not all, but more—you are free to disagree and stick with fallen angels mating with human women and supernatural giants roaming the earth. That, however, will not be part of our interpretation of vv1-4, where, along with the verses that follow this opening passage as a run-up to the Deluge, everything in the text points to this drama being played out on earth between and against *humans*. For example, in vv1-7, “men” or “man” is used 10 times, with no mention of angels, fallen or otherwise. ❏

And, of course, there is that pesky statement by Jesus Himself that “For when [believers] rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). Angels are created, immortal beings who do not marry or reproduce—fallen or not. Period.

Read Genesis 6:1-4.

v1

Now it happened...

And it came to pass...

Now it came about... ❏

It is fascinating that there is almost a lackadaisical tone to how the author opens his account of the great Flood. It is almost as if Moses has gathered his grandchildren around his feet to tell them a bedtime story: “Once upon a time...” But, in truth, it is to be a dramatic, *cataclysmic* story—grounded in geological fact—and one the details of which are decidedly *not* for young ears.

when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

Since Cain, at least, has a wife (4:17), we know that this verse is not announcing that all of a sudden female children began being born.

The ESV and NIVs leave this phrase untranslated.

The author is setting the scene. The story is set some time in the future and the humanity that began in the garden in Eden has now multiplied to the extent that it cannot be contained in a small space, but must spread out over the earth in search of land for crops and grazing. It is strongly implied that the line from Cain and the line from his brother Seth have heretofore gone their separate ways, staying relatively separate from each other. This story will describe how that has now changed—with tragic consequences. Moses includes the phrase, “and daughters were born to them,” not to announce something new, but to set the scene for what follows.

v2

[Now it happened...] that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were good in appearance; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

On the surface we read this and might think, *What’s wrong with that? A man spies an attractive woman and wants to marry her. Where’s the harm?* But Moses embeds a subtle clue that this represents a move in the wrong direction.

Read Genesis 3:6.

See how that critical moment in the Fall is repeated here?

Chapter Three	Chapter Six
Then the woman saw	the sons of God saw
that the tree was good for food	that the daughters of men were good in appearance
so she took from its fruit and ate	and they took wives for themselves

The first instance resulted in the corruption of man and this earth; the second will result in a remaking of the earth and the annihilation of all mankind but the family of Noah.

Sufficient time has passed since the beginning generations from Seth, as recounted in Chapter Five, for the two generational lines—righteous and unrighteous—to intermingle. And what happens because of this is as timeless as Eden.

the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were good in appearance

It is the timeless way of the world: women show, and men look. But more pertinent to the story, is that here the wrong men are looking at the wrong women. The author makes the point, drawing a distinction between the more righteous “sons of God” and “the daughters of men.”

Albert Barnes: The daughters of the stirring Cainites, distinguished by the graces of nature, the embellishments of art, and the charms of music and song [see Genesis 4:19-22], even though destitute of the loftier qualities of likemindedness with God, would attract attention and prompt to unholy alliances... The sons of God [i.e., the Sethites], therefore, are those who are on the Lord’s side, who approach him with duly significant offerings, who call upon him by his proper name, and who walk with God in their daily conversation.

There is a tenacious *persistence* to sin; that is the unfortunate legacy of the Fall. In the Flood, for example, the Cainites will be extinguished from the face of the earth. Yet even through the “righteous” line of Noah, sin and corruption will survive to repopulate throughout all the earth. ➡

In this we recognize that the word “righteous,” when applied to man, is a *relative* term. The Sethites, when compared to the Cainites, were righteous; when compared to Yahweh God, the Sethites were steeped in sin. ➡

The men of the Sethites looked upon the women of the Cainites and liked what they saw. That is, their “lust of the eyes” overpowered their allegiance to the ways of Yahweh.

Read 1 John 2:15-17.

These men were not interested in the women’s character, their beliefs, their morality, but were driven by superficial, worldly characteristics.

v3

Then Yahweh said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he indeed is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be 120 years.”

Sin will not be permanently removed until death and hell are finally consigned to the lake of fire at the end of the Eschaton, at the second death (Revelation 20:13-15).

The good news: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

There are two predominate interpretations of this phrase “his days shall be 120 years,” but just as with “sons of God” in v1, one position is far and away the majority interpretation—and that, in my opinion, is the one that makes the more sense. But let’s begin with the beginning of the verse.

Then Yahweh said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he indeed is flesh...”

“To ‘strive’ (*dîyn*) is to keep down, rule, judge, or strive with a man by moral force” (Barnes). Our versions choose different words to translate this verb—the NASB and LSB go with the KJVs and its “strive,” while the ESV makes it “abide,” and the NIVs make it “contend”—but they all are in general agreement in referring to the work of God’s Spirit in the lives of men and women.

Remember, even though He is seldom mentioned, ever since the very beginning—v1:2—the Holy Spirit has been actively involved on earth. Here it refers to the Spirit as a governor, as a controlling influence in humans.

And once again we are reminded that these early days of the Creation epoch have much in common with the Last Days epoch—the Eschaton—only in reverse. Here we are reminded of the common grace of the Holy Spirit, tempering the natural bent of human flesh even today. In our study of the Last Things we saw what happened on earth once that influence of the Spirit was removed from earth, for a while, at the Rapture of the church. The result? The seven-year Tribulation. And much the same thing is going to occur in Genesis when God removes the governing influence of His Spirit.

K&D: Men, says God, have proved themselves by their erring and straying to be flesh, i.e., given up to the flesh, and incapable of being ruled by the Spirit of God and led back to the divine goal of their life.

Yahweh is saying, in essence, *OK this isn’t working, because man listens more to the influence of his own flesh than the influence of My Spirit. So I am going to remove my Spirit to let the flesh run riot.*

As the prophet Hosea writes, “Ephraim is joined to idols; Let him alone.” There comes a point where God’s patience runs out and he lets man wallow in his sin and corruption.

“...nevertheless his days shall be 120 years.”

A few commentators say this refers to the dwindling life-span of humans after the much longer ones experienced by the earlier patriarchs. But this is difficult to substantiate, since there followed, post-Flood, a number of individuals that lived well in excess of 120 years. 📌

The position of a majority of commentators is that this represents a respite—a grace period, as it were—during which Yahweh would hold back His judgment upon mankind. In His gracious longsuffering, He gave humanity time to mend its ways and return to Him. Alas, the record shows that it didn't.

Genesis 11:11 (Shem),
13 (Arpachsad),
15 (Shelah),
17 (Eber),
19 (Peleg),
21 (Reu),
23 (Serug),
25 (Nahor);
25:7 (Abraham);
35:28 (Isaac);
47:9 (Jacob).

God tells us two things, two time marks:

- In Genesis 7:6 and 11 His word states that Noah was 600 years old when the flood began.
- Genesis 6:3, explicitly quoting Yahweh, says, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever because he indeed is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be 120 years.”

So we can conclude from this that Noah was 480 years old when this death knell for mankind was pronounced. In the interim, while he was building the ark, the NT tells us that Noah was “a preacher [herald] of righteousness” to the condemned (2 Peter 2:5). This makes Genesis 6:1-8 essentially a parenthetical passage inserted between 5:32 and 6:9, and not necessarily following the chronology of the narrative. Note that v6:1 does not begin, “*Then* it happened...,” but “*Now* it happened...,” and even the more nebulous, “When men began to increase...”; in other words, it is not following a strict timeline.

v4

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

Here is more evidence that these verses are set apart from a strict timeline. Verse 4 backs up a bit to inform the reader that “mighty men who were of old, men of renown” had been and were still around when the Sethites began intermarrying with the Cainite women.

We covered the essentials of v4 in our previous session. This verse, with v2, represents Yahweh's breaking point; here was the evidence that this generation of men were incorrigible, and beyond hope. Even so, He would grant them 120 years to repent and prove otherwise.

CONCLUSION

Consider these four verses—as well as the preliminary Chapters Four and Five, and even all the way back to Chapter One—from God's point of view.

- He creates the first man and woman perfect and sinless, and places them in a paradise.
- They rebel against Him, so He casts them out of the paradise.
- Man's now fallen state is manifest in their first son murdering their second.
- Cain is made a refugee and begins an unrighteous line that is relatively separate from others.
- In His grace, God gives Eve another, more righteous son. beginning again a righteous line through Seth, one relatively separate from Cain's line.
- But now the righteous line becomes corrupted by the women in the unrighteous line.

Yahweh God keeps giving man a second chance—a chance to go in the proper direction—but every time He does, man reverts back to evil ways. Is it any surprise that He would conclude what He does in vv6-7?

And Yahweh regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And Yahweh said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I regret that I have made them."

Yet, even as sin persists in man, so does God's grace persist:

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh. (Genesis 6:8)

God always maintains a remnant.

SESSION 41

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Genesis 6:1-4

Angels?

"For when [believers] rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25).

Angels are created, immortal beings who do not marry or reproduce—fallen or not. Period.

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Individuals who lived in excess of 120 years:

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