

A Study of the Book of Genesis

Only Evil Continually

Genesis is full of theology which is found in the life stories of the numerous great and sinful men and woman who fill its pages. There are a cast of characters in Genesis 6 that set the stage for the most cataclysmic event the world has ever seen. Who are they? And what sort of lifestyle did they have that God would want to destroy the planet?

Who are the Sons of God?

There are many theological opinions on who these might be, but the possibilities can be distilled down to two main groups:

1). Human Beings

This is supported by the Targums and other Rabbinic traditions. Sons of God in the Hebrew is "bene ha'elohim". This phrase says nothing about angels. If Moses meant angels, then he would have written 'angels', like he does in other places in the Pentateuch (each time referring to actual angels and not son's of God or human beings).

God says He sorry He made "man" and that He would blot out "man" (Genesis 6:6-7). He didn't say He was sorry He made "angels" and that He would blot out "angels".

Verse 6:12 says, "all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth". We must ask if "all flesh" includes the fallen angels?

2). Fallen Angels (Demons)

This view is supported by historian Flavius Josephus, Philo of Alexandria (Hellenistic Jewish Philosopher who interpreted the OT allegorically), the Apocryphal books of 1 Enoch and Jubilees, the Septuigint, the Genesis Apocryphon (document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls), manuscript Codex of Alexandrinus, also early Christian fathers Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose.

Note that liberal scholars who reject the historicity of the Bible in many parts often view this passage as mythical, which is a common approach by many people of all ages. The view that these accounts are myths, or allegorical, often interprets sons of God as angelic beings.

However, the best support for this view is from the Bible itself. Peter brings clarity to this issue when he wrote the following verses in his New Testament book: *"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly"* (2 Peter 2:4-5).

Who are the Daughters of Men?

One school of thought is that the daughters of men were from the line of Cain where wickedness was prevalent. Whether they were mating with humans or demons, it seems their offspring were the result of mixing the holy and the profane; consequently plunging humanity into deeper depravity.

Who are the Nephilim?

These beings are not the result of the union of the sons of God and daughters of men. A careful reading says that they were already on the earth in that day, and also afterward the sons of God and daughters of men bore children.

The Hebrew word is translated, "fallers" as in falling upon an enemy; rebels, apostates, attackers, tyrants, and bullies. Verses 6:11 and 6:13 would seem to support this with the use of the word violence. We see the use of the word Nephilim only one other time in scripture: Numbers 13:33. If God destroyed all flesh (except those who found safety in the ark) then the Nephilim would have been destroyed. How, then, do they re-appear after the flood? It makes most sense to see the term Nephilim as being a universally known moniker for a certain kind of people. These people were known as those who bully and attack.

Wickedness

The main point to see here is that mankind was falling deeper and deeper in to sin and running farther and farther away from God. Genesis 6:5 could not be more clear on the condition of the world and the heart of man. Wickedness (malice) of man was great. Every intent (imagination) of the thoughts. Only evil. Continually!

The word 'intent' (or 'imagination') is the word for 'forming' or 'framing'. As if to say, "I am meditating and forming evil thoughts in my mind". Evil is the same word for 'wickedness'. And continually is the word 'yom', which means 'day' (or in this case 'daily'). We could paraphrase this verse then to say, "Every single day, man was forming evil thoughts in his mind, planning how to carry out great wickedness". When we add verse 11 into the mix: "the earth was corrupt and filled with violence", we are get a robust flavor for the spiritual climate of the day. Corruption means decay, rottenness, spoilage and perversity. Violence includes cruelty, injustice, oppression, damage and brutality. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for violence is: "hamas".

God Was Sorry He Made Man

If God is immutable, doesn't 'being sorry' imply He feels like he made a mistake? Have His original plans been thwarted? There are two main ways that we can interpret this difficult verse:

- 1). Literally. If we take this literally, it's as if things just didn't turn out like God had hoped. Did He make a mistake in His initial creation and needs to start from scratch? Taking this passage literally would paint God to be not as sovereign and not as immutable as He claims to be.

2). Application of literary devices. Writers of scripture often used language tools for our understanding. Since we are limited in our understanding of the infinite God, it is impossible for us to comprehend God. The Bible tells us this: His greatness is unsearchable (Isaiah 40:28; Psalm 145:3) and His understanding is beyond measure (Psalm 147:5).

God is not visible and God is not human. He is not like us (Isaiah 40:18)! Therefore, when describing Him the Bible uses anthropomorphic and anthropopathic language. These are literary and teaching devices used to teach us about the nature of God who is incomprehensible.

Anthropomorphic Language

This is the attributing of human characteristics to God. For instance:

- *"Seek His face continually..."* - Psalm 105:4
- *"I will uphold you with my righteous right hand..."* - Isaiah 41:10
- *"On account of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm..."* - 2 Chronicles 6:32
- *"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere..."* - Proverbs 15:3

God is invisible. He's not like us! He has no physical face, He doesn't have a hand or an arm, or eyes. But for our understanding, the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture to describe Him this way.

Anthropopathism

This consists of attributing human feelings and emotions to God. For instance:

"So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people". - Exodus 32:14 (NASB).

"I regret that I have made Saul king". - 1 Samuel 15:11 (NASB).

"God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it". - Jonah 3:10

When God is "indignant" (Psalm 7:11), is it different than when we're indignant?

Is God's "anger" (Deuteronomy 31:17) the same as human anger?

What about His "love" (John 3:16)? Would it be different than how we love?

Is God's grief and sorrow (Genesis 6:6) just like our grief and sorrow??? Hardly!

God does not actually feel these emotions as we feel them. Instead these terms are used of God to help us understand His response. The Scripture is using these human terms in expressing God's displeasure at the sin of the people. John Calvin says that "the Spirit accommodates himself to our capacity... otherwise it could not otherwise be known how great is God's hatred and detestation of sin".

Genesis 6:6, highlights the fact that God is so different than us! So far above our understanding. On such a higher plain. So indescribable. This is what it means that He is HOLY. There is no one like Him! *"There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."* 1 Samuel 2:2 (NIV).