

Genesis

The Sons of God, The Nephilim, & God's Regret
6.4.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 6:1-8

SERMON NOTES:

"It's complicated." Have you ever said that to someone when faced with trying to describe some circumstance or relationship? Usually what we mean by "it's complicated" is that there are layers of complexity required to understand a situation that a simple surface glance or explanation doesn't cover.

As we approach Genesis 6 today, "it's complicated" is an apt description. We enter a chapter with several difficult teachings and doctrines. This is one of the most difficult chapters in the Bible and creates arguments and debates over the interpretations that spring from it. But I have the absolute correct interpretation today, so you need not worry.

1. Sons of God (vs 1-3) -- 1 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. 3 Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."

There are debates over who the "sons of God" are in Genesis 6. Two predominant options:

1. Sons of God are the godly line of Seth marrying the line of Cain.
2. Angelic beings marrying with humans.

I believe the second option is the most biblical interpretation. There are only 5x in the Old Testament that the phrase "sons of God" or "son of God" is used. Here in Genesis 6, Job 1:6, Job 2:1, Job 38:7, and Daniel 3:25. In each of the 4 instances outside of our text today, it is always describing an angelic being.

Who are these angelic beings, sons of God, attractive to the daughters of men? They are fallen angels. How do we know? Let's look at some texts.

1 Peter 3:18-20 -- 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

2 Peter 2:4-6 -- 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly

Jude 6-7 -- 6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Notice in these texts and their contexts, it is sexual deviancy and sin that leads God to act in decisive judgment. This disordered sexuality of both Genesis 6 and Genesis 19 brings God's swift judgment.

II. The Nephilim (vs 4) -- The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

It never fails that people love to ask questions about Genesis 6 and the Nephilim. Often they can't even tell you who the authors of the New Testament are, though that's clear, but want to know who these mysterious Nephilim are.

There are two options:

1. They are offspring of the fallen angels and humans.
2. They were men of honor

I do not believe they were offspring of the angels and humans? Verse 4 doesn't read as if they are. It reads the opposite. They were on earth during that time and after that time. Not the byproduct of it. In fact, it reads as if the Nephilim are distinct from the children of the angels and men. The Nephilim, not the children of angels and men, were the mighty men of old, men of renown. Now listen, there are some who believe they are the offspring. That's okay. This isn't an interpretation that causes anyone to lose sleep tonight. Differences of opinion shouldn't lead to division or scrappy Facebook arguments. What's interesting is that Moses doesn't give us a big explanation of who they are. Why? Because the first readers of the text probably knew who they were. Most scholars believe Moses is addressing the mythical heroes of other ancient stories (like Gilgamesh) and telling his readers that those individuals have nothing to do with this story. Check this out. The interpretation of reading Genesis 6 as the Nephilim are offspring of angels and men became something that made its way into the book of Enoch in 300 BC (before Christ). This is exactly what Paul is addressing in his letter to Timothy when he tells them not to argue over endless genealogies and foolish myths. Enoch has a long genealogy of angels that leads all the way to Satan. The goal was to blame all sin on Satan and demons. Paul warns Timothy not to let people do that. Humans are guilty of sin. Human rebellion is the root issue.

Regardless of which view you take, the outcome remains the same: sin has become so bad and wickedness so rampant, that God is going to bring judgment.

III. God's Regret (vs 5-7) -- 5 *The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."*

This idea of God having regret or repenting is found here and in 1 Samuel 15 where God regrets making Saul king. God saw the wickedness of man on the earth and regretted that he made man on the earth. It grieved Him. What did? The sinfulness of man and evil committed. The natural question this raises is: how can a sovereign God regret something He willed to happen? Did He lack knowledge beforehand? No. Would He do it differently if He had the chance? No, because that would imply He lacks knowledge of what would take place from the beginning. So what do we do with this?

First, this is anthropomorphic language that describes God with human terms for the purpose of our understanding. The purpose here is not Moses' attempt to tie us up in a theological knot, but to express God's great grief as the wickedness of man. He is so holy, holy, holy, that this sinfulness on the earth is abominable to Him.

Second, we need to understand that God is capable of a complex emotional life far beyond our capacity. Walk with me through this thought experiment...right now in the world there are terrible injustices taking place as we speak, and there are incredible acts of kindness and goodness happening too. Both at the same time. Right now there are people sinning and people obeying. Sin and injustice angers God. He hates it. Kindness and obedience delight Him. He is both angered and delighted at the same time right now. He's not one or the other. At any moment, millions of people are praying to God personally with their specific needs and dispositions. Some come with tears and pain, others are bursting with laughter and joy. How can God sympathize with each one of them individually as a Father when some are weeping and some are rejoicing? God has an infinitely more complex emotional life than any of us. But He is absolutely capable of both.

So God brings forth a world that He knows is going to rebel and sin, but He still has a regret and grief for what it is. We can appreciate this on a smaller level. You ground your teenager for blatant disobedience and they run away from home. You would be remorseful that they ran away (saddened) and yet you would stand by your actions. You would still ground them because it was the right thing to do. So in that instance you brought about something you would be remorseful over. This is a small example of our capacity to do the same. God may be capable of looking back on the very act of bringing something about and lamenting that act in one regard, while affirming it as best in another regard.

IV. God's Grace (vs 8) -- *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*

The last point in our passage today while being the most clear in understanding may be the most hard to believe. Noah finds favor in the eyes of the LORD. God shows grace to Noah. This isn't because Noah is perfect or sinless. We'll quickly see after the Flood how imperfect Noah is with that whole drunk and naked episode (spoiler alert). But God chose to save a people from Himself out of the lot of wicked sinners.

Friends, this is the gospel. If you are in Christ today, it is because you have found favor in the eyes of the LORD. He chose to save you and make into a people for Himself out of the lot of wicked sinners. It wasn't because we were without sin, but because of His

goodness and kindness in lavishing us with grace. Whether you realize it or not, this is tough teaching as well. Why? Because nobody here deserves or earns God's grace. It is given freely by Him. He chooses to give grace. We don't merit it or constrain God to give it. He does it out of His own good pleasure.

How relevant is this story today? Jesus actually referenced this story in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:37-39 -- 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

The coming of Christ back to the world will be the equivalent of the Flood's judgment. It will be swift and decisive. People will be eating and drinking and marrying, but in an instant it will come to an end. Our world is filled with sin and rebellion against God Almighty. People are still perverting sexuality. Men's hearts are still filled with evil continuously. Our only hope to escape this judgment is the same route as Noah: grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 -- 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. It is only by the grace of God that we can find forgiveness and rescue from the judgment coming to the world.

Titus 3:5 -- 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Praise be to a God who saves undeserving sinners and rescues us from His righteous wrath. If you are in Christ today, give thanks for His grace to you. If you are not, or don't know if you are, call out for His grace and He is faithful and just to forgive you when you look to Jesus.

REVIEW:

- ❖ Who are the sons of God mentioned in verse 2?
- ❖ Who are the Nephilim?
- ❖ Did the regret and grief that the Lord felt mean he was not all-knowing because he was learning something he didn't know beforehand?

REFLECT:

- ❖ Why did Noah find favor in the eyes of the Lord?

RESPOND:

- ❖ Do you really believe that your salvation is a complete gift from the grace of God or do you feel that somehow you have to earn it?
- ❖ How does this play out in your life?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Genesis 6:8 - *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Ephesians 2:8-9 -- *8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. It is only by the grace of God that we can find forgiveness and rescue from the judgment coming to the world.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Directory of Worship Ministry Assistant - **Ashley Horvath**
- ❖ Ministries - **Journey Worship Co.**
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Eastern Yiddish-speaking Jew in Israel
- ❖ **Population in country:** 188,000
- ❖ **Global population:** 785,600
- ❖ **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
- ❖ **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- ❖ **Primary Religion:** Ethnic Religions
- ❖ **Primary Language:** Yiddish, Eastern
- ❖ **Summary:** Yiddish, derived from Medieval High German, is a common language among northern European Jews. In the nineteenth century, many Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews immigrated to the United States. Many settled on the east and west coasts of the United States. In the twentieth century, many more came, having survived the Holocaust. Over the years, Yiddish gave way to English, and the number of Yiddish speakers declined, as did much of its vibrant literature and drama. Yiddish words became embedded into New York English. More recently, it persists and is growing among Hasidic, Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who use it at home and school. It also persists as a cultural marker among nominal, cultural Jews but to a much lesser degree.
- ❖ **Prayer Focus:** Pray that the non-Jewish church would repent of anti-semitism. Pray that Messianic believers would be Jesus' ambassadors to this community. Pray that God would prepare the Yiddish-speaking Jews to be open to a gospel witness and that there would be a massive movement to their loving Messiah in the 2020s.