

**Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church**  
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## **DHW**

### **Bible Study Class**

## **BOOK OF GENESIS**

### **Lesson 5**

### **Genesis 6**

#### ***INTRODUCTION***

This chapter strikes a sad note in the history of the human race. Since the Fall, two lines of the descendants of Adam were traced: the godly line through Seth and the ungodly line through Cain. Sons and daughters were born and the population of the earth increased greatly partly due to the longevity of man. But man's spiritual condition instead of becoming better and turning to God by calling upon Him, they became more violent, wicked and evil. God decided to destroy all the inhabitants of the earth including the animals. This could be seen as an act of mercy because if man were allowed to carry on, what kind of world would it be with increasing deterioration of the spiritual condition of man. Nevertheless in the midst of this decadent spiritual condition of the people, one man and his family found grace in the eyes of God, namely, Noah. God kept Noah and his family secure and specifically instructed him on what to do before the impending global catastrophe that God had decided to bring upon the earth.

There is much we can learn in this chapter about our sinful nature, God's holiness and grace, and Noah's example, a man who found grace in the sight of God. The following suggested outline helps in our study:

- 1) God decrees the length of man's life on earth (Genesis 6:1-7).
- 2) God decides to destroy man from the face of the earth because of his wickedness (Genesis 6:8-13).
- 3) God reveals to Noah how he and his family can be saved (Genesis 6:14-22).

#### ***STUDY THE WORD***

#### **God Decrees the Length of Man's Life**

**The repeated phrase *he begat sons and daughters*** in chapter 5 explains the opening statement of chapter 6: *And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth. The population of the earth had greatly increased.*

The LORD was displeased with the way man was living. *The sons of God saw that the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose (v.2).*

Who were these *sons of God*? Three views are held: (1) the sons of God were angels, (2) the sons of God were dynastic kings and rulers, (3) the sons of God were the godly descendants of Seth.

The identification that the *sons of God* were angels rests on the Scriptural support that the expression is

used as a reference to angels.<sup>1</sup> This reasoning assumes that the angels took on human form. This idea has Scriptural support. These were angels, ever appeared in human form, with the appearance of the LORD (a “theophany”- God appeared in human form in the Old Testament).<sup>2</sup> A variation of this view is that the sons of God were fallen angels who possessed and controlled human beings.<sup>3</sup>

The major argument against this view is that angels do not procreate. The New Testament teaches that angels do not engage in marital relationships.<sup>4</sup> Assuming that they were angels, then the offspring of such a union would be half angels and half humankind. The phrase *after its kind* in Genesis 1 would not permit such a breed, for angels and humankind are two different kinds of bodies. Even if angels were to marry humans, their children would be half-angels and half humans. And if angels were the guilty ones, why punish all

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<sup>1</sup> Examples: Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. For more details of the argument see Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, pages 262-263.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 18:2 And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

<sup>3</sup> Henry Morris, The Genesis Record, 169. For his full argument, refer to pages 165-169.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

mankind? Such a view has a mythological element.

The *sons of God* were dynastic kings and rulers. This second view explains that the phrase, *sons of God*, refers to dynastic rulers in the line of Cain. The main support for this view is that the word, *judges*, sometimes refers to *gods* (Heb. *Elohim*).<sup>5</sup> Another reason is that kings in ancient Near Eastern literature were referred to as sons of deities, so this term might have been used in Genesis 6.<sup>6</sup>

The major objection against this view is that while ancient Near East literature does sometimes address a king as a “son of god,” there is no evidence that kings are collectively called *sons of God*. Moreover, Scripture has no reference that kings are deities or sons of deities.

The *sons of God* were the descendants of Seth. This third view interprets the *sons of God* to be referring to the godly line of Sethites and the daughters were the ungodly Cainites. The major support for this understanding is in its context. Chapter 4 and 5 relate the ungodly line of Cain (4:17-24) and the godly line of Seth (4:25-5:32). It is not far fetched that the expression, *the sons of God*, which is the first time being used here, refers to the godly line of Seth. This is a basic rule of interpretation: the presupposition that the development of

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<sup>5</sup> Exodus 21:6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.

<sup>6</sup>John Davis, Paradise to Prison, 113.

the flow of thoughts in Scriptures is sensible, logical and natural, and the usage of simple grammatical rules.<sup>7</sup>

**The sin of the descendants of Seth** was that their choosing of wives was based more on their *fair* appearance. Nothing else mattered. They *took wives of all which they chose*. This indicates that they did not even consider the spiritual status of the women. And in all probability they indulged in polygamy for Lamech had already practised this (4:19)

**Two names of God** are used by the writer here. In verse 3 it is the name **LORD** (JEHOVAH), which is the covenant name of God. It is used in Scripture to describe God's relationship to His people. In verse 5, *God* (Hebrew, *Elohim*) is used. Often this term is used in reference to God's dealings with mankind in general. The name projects God's sovereignty and holiness. He is the ultimate Arbiter and Judge of all His creation.

**It grieved the heart of the LORD** to see the sons of God falling away and living in sin. Man had sunk so low to the level of *flesh* (Hebrew, *basar*), to be devoid of any spiritual and godly characteristics. And so the LORD decided that His Spirit would not always continue to instruct and reprove so as to correct and check their strong inclination towards evil (v.3).<sup>8</sup> And so the LORD decreed men to a grace

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<sup>7</sup> H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 257.

<sup>8</sup> Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 255.

period of one hundred and twenty years.<sup>9</sup>

The giants (Hebrew, *nephilim*) were men of great physical stature. They do not refer to the offspring of the marriage between the sons of God and daughters of men. The text does not in any way indicate this. On the contrary, the text shows that these giants were already there before the sons of God. The twelve Israelite spies who scouted the land of Canaan found the sons of Anak who were giants in the land (Numbers 13:33).<sup>10</sup> The children of the unequally yoked marriages became men of reputation, who were not *giants*. Whether their name was famous or not, the text does not tell.

The spiritual degradation of the inhabitants of the earth is detailed. Their wickedness was great, every imagination of their thoughts was only evil continually (v.5). Observe the four words which describe the depths of their spiritual depravity: *great, every, only, and continually*. His mind, heart, and will were perverted. The total spiritual depravity of man is clearly evident. And Scripture records that *it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart* (v.6).

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<sup>9</sup> Some understand this as God putting a limit to man's lifespan as 120 years. It is improbable because many of the postdiluvian patriarchs live longer. Compare Jonah 4:5 in which God's judgment on Nineveh was delayed for forty days.

<sup>10</sup> Numbers 13:33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. The same Hebrew word for "giants" was used "*nephilim*."

**What does it mean that *it repented the LORD*?** Did God make a mistake in creating man? The answer is definitely no. God never makes a mistake for He never acts unreasonably or unintentionally. The passage tells us what God saw (v.5), how He felt (v.6), and what He intended to do (v.7). God was angry with man's deliberate and continual violations of the way in which He would like man to live on earth. Is God like man that he regrets or repents of what he has done? Scripture reveals that God is not like us.<sup>11</sup> We should readily accept that in this aspect of God - repenting or regretting - man will never have the capacity and experience to describe God's feelings here. The expression can be understood as an "anthropomorphic figure of speech," because there is no word that can fully describe God's feelings here.<sup>12</sup> The expression would be an understandable description of God's reaction to man's sin. In fact the expression "it grieved him at his heart" in Hebrew is even stronger than *it grieved him into his heart* (v.6).

### **God Decides to Destroy Man**

God decided that He would destroy man whom He had created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air (7). The verb

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<sup>11</sup> Numbers 23:19. God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

1 Samuel 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent.

<sup>12</sup> Aadlers, Genesis, 158.

*destroy* in Hebrew is *machah*, which means, "to wipe out by water." It tells how God would destroy all mankind and the animals.<sup>13</sup> The destruction would be universal. The text does not intimate a localised area.

Yet in God's decision to destroy all the inhabitants and the animals on earth, one man and his family *found grace in the eyes of the LORD* (v.8). Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Noah is described as *just and perfect and walked with God* (v.9). These words describe his relationship with God and man. He lived a life that was above reproach. His perfection did not mean that he lived a life that was sinless, but rather one, which was blameless. His relationship with God was reflected in the words that he *walked with God*. This expression was also used of Enoch, his ancestor. The divine commentary on Noah is that *by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house* (Hebrew 11:7). It was Noah's faith, trust and belief in the LORD that saved him and his family. In his time he was surrounded by people who did not care about God, and who lived in accordance with what was right in their own eyes. Noah recognised God and trusted and obeyed Him rather than man. It was grace that saved him for he put his faith and trust in the LORD!

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<sup>13</sup> Whether the animals were also affected and become evil and contributed to the condition is impossible to tell. "Beasts and other creatures, which were originally created for man's sake, may well perish if a purpose salutary to man is served" (Leupold, 262).

In contrast to destroying *all flesh*, the LORD expressed His intention of making a covenant with Noah (v.18). The actual *cutting* or establishing the covenant would take place after the Flood. The Hebraic text is very specific in that it expresses that Noah was the one chosen to receive this covenant.<sup>14</sup> He was privileged. God's grace and mercy is evident once more. Before God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, He clothed them. Before Cain was exiled, He set a protective mark on him. Before He destroyed *all flesh*, he announced His covenant with Noah. This is the first time the word "covenant" is used in Genesis.

### **God Shows and Saves Noah & Family**

Before telling Noah the manner in which the earth would be destroyed, God told him to build an ark. God gave the dimensions of the ark, which he commanded him to build. This writer takes one cubit to be 18 inches. So the length of the ark was 300 cubits, that is, 450 feet; its width was 50 cubits, that is, 75 feet; and its height was 30 cubits, that is 45 feet. Does the proportion of the dimensions measure up to the requirements in shipbuilding so that the vessel will float and be functional? It is not astonishing to discover that the relative measurements of the dimensions of the ark are compatible with modern shipbuilding! For example, the battleship of *New Mexico*, which was in service in World War II, was built 624 feet long, 106\_ feet wide,

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<sup>14</sup> This is expressed through the use of "with thee" (*ittak*) which is repeated (v.18).

and 29\_ feet high. Comparing the length and width measurements, the battleship has practically the same ratio as the ark!<sup>15</sup> It means that the seaworthiness of the ark is without question.<sup>16</sup> The ark did not look ridiculous or awkward. It was functional and it served its purpose. It could withstand the strong upheaval and turbulence of the deluge. There would be a window which was a cubit high (18 inches) and which ran right round the top of the ark. Then there was only one door into the ark. It had three storeys in the inside.

God also instructed him to bring with him two of *every living thing of flesh*. The purpose was to keep them alive with him. They would be male and female. How could Noah get all of them to go into the ark? The words in verse 20 show that these animals would come to him. Noah did not have to chase and round them up! He should bring all food for himself, his family and all the animals.

It was a mammoth task for one family. Whether he had other people to help him to build the ark, it is not given. But the truth was that Noah was specially chosen by the grace of God, and God's Word came to him, and he obeyed. He did it!

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<sup>15</sup> V. McGee, *Thru the Bible*, vol. I:39.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, vol. 1, 173. It is reported that a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutchman, Peter Janssen built an ark, which was two-fifths of the size of the Genesis ark to demonstrate its seaworthiness.

### *PRACTICAL VALUE*

As His children, we ought to recognise the nature and character of the LORD our God. He has revealed to us at least in this chapter that He is Sovereign, and that He is also Holy and righteous. He hates sin and sin is not doing His creature any good. God's purpose for man, like you and me, is to live and glorify Him by loving and obeying Him. Nothing incurs His wrath more than to sin against Him. We learn that man cannot measure God's nature in terms of our own standard of righteousness, justice, and whatever, for our standard of right and wrong, of good and bad do not measure to His. We see that given the chance to be good and better, man becomes even more wicked and evil. God will judge and He will judge severely.

Yet we also learn that God is equally loving and merciful. Noah lived in obedience to the ways of God and perfect in his community. Yet he and his family were not sinless. God extended His grace upon him and his family, and had mercy on them. He intimated that He would save him and his family from total destruction. God reveals to sinful men that they can be saved by faith and trust in the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, His only Beloved and Begotten Son, on the Cross. If men would humble himself, repent and believe sincerely in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be delivered from the wrath at the end of the age. Just like the people, who lived during the time of Noah, when all men were destroyed except Noah and his family, so too will all men be destroyed when

God's final judgment as prophesied will take place. All those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.

In the light of this revelation of God's nature and character, how should we live in this world? We should continually love, obey and trust God for that is the duty of men whom He created.

We should serve Him to fulfil His eternal plan and purpose according to Scripture.

GOD BLESS US.