

I Will Blot Out Man... But Noah...

Genesis 6:1-8

Noah's Flood is one of the most well-known stories in all of Scripture. The building of the ark and the animals coming in two by two are in the top 10 of children's story book Bibles. But with familiarity can come lethargy. In our hearts, we believe we know all there is to know.

Today, we will look at the cause of the Flood. Because of man's evil thoughts and actions, God declares that He will blot out man from the face of the earth.

In our passage today, God gives us a very brief explanation of the evil of man. How we understand this explanation can greatly affect whether we will identify with the people who lived before the Flood. The question we must ask ourselves is, "How much are our own hearts resemble those who lived before the Flood?" Ask yourself, "Do I see in me the same attitudes that lived in those people?" Could God say over me, "I am sorry that I have made him. And I will blot him out from the face of the earth?" "Or am I better than those with whom God felt this way?"

John Owen wrote, "The seed of every sin is in every heart." That sounds profound, but it is very difficult to believe. Most of us look at the terrible sins of others with a certain disdain, as if what they have committed, we could never commit ourselves.

But in the Bible, God has gone to great lengths to convince us that due to the corruption that we have received from Adam, we are all slaves to sin, and, apart from grace, slaves to every sort of sin. Genesis 6:1-8 is the conclusion of Chapter 5:1-6:8.

Chapter 5 begins with Adam and follows a line of his descendants that we would call "godly." Cain has killed Abel. But God has given Adam and Eve another son named Seth. From Seth, we see that some of his descendants walked with God. Enoch being the most prominent. Are we not then to conclude that even though the scales are tilted in the direction of evil, some men have overcome this tendency and have distinguished themselves as good? Are we to comfort ourselves that as long as we do not become "as bad" as Cain or his descendants, that we are not in danger of God's judgment?

We see in Genesis 6 that the fallen image of man has overcome the original image of God. Man originally reflected the character of God. But now, man reflects the character of man: fallen and evil. It is true that in some sense, we all still bear the image of God. That will become clear in Genesis 9.

But in order to understand our passage today, we must grasp that to rightly be called a “son of God”, one must “in some measure” reflect the character of God. It is not by accident that when Luke gives us the genealogy of Jesus Christ, he takes it all the way back to Adam. And then he gives a description of Adam. What does he say of him?

Luke 3:38 ³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Adam reflected the righteous character of God, and so was called “the son of God.” It should have happened that all of Adam’s children should have also been “sons of God.”

And so, it is not shocking that some of Adam’s children still are called “sons of God.” But what becomes of these “sons of God”? Do we find these godly people locked in a battle against the ungodly majority? Do we find them gradually being killed off by the sons of the evil one, as Cain killed Abel? What happens to those who are of the godly line, who were the “sons of God”?

Read Genesis 6:1-8.

This entire passage hinges on who are the “sons of God”.

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.

There are multiple ways to explain this passage, but for the sake of simplicity, I am going to narrow them down to two.

The first view is what I would call the “super-natural view”. In this view, sons of God are intended to describe “fallen angels”, super-natural beings. The terrible evil in this view is that fallen angels lust after human women. Rather than remaining in the spiritual realm, these angels leave their proper place and take on the form of humans. They then take any human wife that they choose. As a result of this demonic corruption of humanity, God chooses to destroy all humanity in a worldwide Flood.

Although this is not the view that I hold, it has been the view accepted by many solid Christian teachers throughout history. And there is much evidence for this view.

What is the rationale for understanding “sons of God” as angels?

1. The Greek translation of the OT (LXX) translates this Hebrew phrase “angels of God”.

The LXX was written in the 2nd C. BC. This was a common translation that was used by Jesus and the early church. This does not mean it is always correct, but it certainly favors the “super-natural being view”.

2. The Hebrew grammar seems to point us to “angels”.

There are only 4 uses of this phrase in the entire OT.

~yhiq'a/h'(-ynEb.

Two of them are here in Genesis 6. The other two are in the first two chapters of the book of Job. It is commonly accepted, that when Job uses this phrase, he is referring to angels.

Job 1:6-7 ⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

Since there are no other uses of the phrase in Scripture, the angel view is strong.

3. This is the view of the book of I Enoch.

I Enoch is not authoritative. It was written during the period between the ending of the OT and the beginning of the NT. But, it was a respected and well-known book during the time of Christ and the Early Church.

I Enoch 6

“And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: “Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.”

I Enoch is certainly referring to Genesis 6. And it is clear that I Enoch interprets sons of God as angels.

4. There are verses in the NT books of Jude and 2nd Peter that allude to I Enoch.

And in these passages, there seems to be some association between “angels not staying within their own position of authority” and the “judgment of the Flood”.

Jude 1:6-7 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.

2 Peter 2:4-5 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;

Knowing that these NT books are familiar with the angelic interpretation and do not refute it as wrong is weighty evidence that the “super-natural view” has some merit.

5. This was the dominant view of the Early Church.

Until the time of Augustine, the super-natural view is the one that was most accepted. Augustine and the medieval theologians and the theologians of the

Reformation reject the angelic view. But we must acknowledge that many in the Early Church embraced it.

The “super-natural view” then understands “daughters of man” to refer to all women.

³ Then the LORD said,

"My Spirit shall not abide in man forever,
for he is flesh:
his days shall be 120 years."

Verse 3 makes clear that the ungodly unions of the “sons of God” to the “daughters of man” are what moves God to bring the judgment of the Flood. God declares that He will not tolerate such evil forever. He is going to put a stop to the evil that is occurring in the world.

Many today think that God is indifferent to the evil of the world. If you meet someone who thinks this way, take them to this passage. Let them know that God indeed hates all evil, and His hatred of evil, will move him to put an end to it. God states that “man is flesh”. This can only mean that man does not possess within himself what it takes to live. Man is not divine. All that keeps man alive is the “breath of God”. And God declares that He will indeed remove his breath from man.

There are two possible ways to understand the 120 years. Both have merit.

1. God is lowering the life-span of humanity from here on out.

It is obvious that although there are some notable exceptions, the lifespan of men is drastically reduced after the Flood. This view is attractive because we see that by limiting the amount of time that people can live, he is limiting the amount of evil that they can commit. Apart from grace, people go from bad to worse. Shortening their lifespan, limits evil in the world.

2. God is giving man some estimation as to the timing of the Flood.

The time between Noah receiving this Word from the Lord and the coming of the Flood is approximately 100 years. This certainly fits the context well and helps us to see the mercy of God. The time that it will take Noah to build the ark is certainly an ongoing

sermon to the ungodly that they ought to prepare for God's wrath. Of course, they ignore God's mercy. One of the big picture lessons of the worldwide flood, is that it declares to us that God will not tolerate evil forever. A Day of Judgment on all men is coming.

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.

How does the "super-natural view" understand the Nephilim? The Nephilim are the hybrid offspring of angels and women. These offspring were especially large and strong. Think of the heroes of Greek Mythology and you are on the right track. Only in Greek Mythology, these heroes are usually better than the gods. Nephilim is nothing more than a transliteration of the Hebrew. Translated into English, the word means "fallen ones".

There is only one other use of this word in Scripture:
It is used to refer to those living in the Promised Land at the time of Moses. The spies reported that they had seen the Nephilim. And that they were large and powerful.
(Numbers 13)

But the use of the word Nephilim in Numbers must only be one of association rather than one of direct genetic descent. Even if the Nephilim were some hybrid form of being between angels and humans, they were all destroyed during the Flood. That was the point of the Flood. And according to the super-natural view, these demons were then cast into prison. Therefore, they could no longer do what they did before the Flood.

Those who existed at the time of the Israelites going into the Promised Land may have born a resemblance to those who existed before the flood, but they could not be precisely the same people.

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 was sorry 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."

There is no question that there is a direct connection between the actions occurring in vv. 1-4, and God's decision to blot out man from the face of the land. In the super-natural view, the reason why mankind becomes so evil is that demons are genetically corrupting the human DNA. Man must be destroyed because he is no longer man.

This is the spark that caused me to eventually abandon the "super-natural view." Although I do agree that Satan and his demons are at work, deceiving and influencing. I do not believe it is the genetic intermixing of demons with humanity that makes man evil and therefore damnable.

At its most basic level, we are to connect the judgment of men in Noah's Day with our own judgment on the Final Day. But you and I are not the offspring of demons and women. I believe that the "super-natural view" lends to a distancing of ourselves from the evils that were occurring before the flood. We tell ourselves that "those people" were truly evil. We, on the other hand, are not that bad. We are NOT the same as those Nephilim.

The attitudes and temptations of those who lived before the Flood were very much like the attitudes that live in our hearts today, and very much like the temptations that we face.

We are very much like the people before the Flood. We reflect fallen Adam more than we reflect God.

Genesis 5:1-3 This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

Verse 1 could read, “This is what happened to Adam”

Adam, when he was created, was created in the likeness of God. At that time, Adam and Eve lived under God’s wonderful blessing. But there is a decided change in verse 3. Adam lived 130 years, and then he fathered a son, only this son was now made “in his own likeness, after his image.”

Had the Fall not occurred, this would not have been a problem. Being made in the image of Adam, would have been the same as being made in the image of God. But with the Fall, they are not the same.

And this is where we come to the second view. I will call this view the “natural view”. If you read the commentaries, they will call this view something like “the sons of Seth” or “the godly line”... something like that. I like “the natural view” because it makes the contrast clear with the “super-natural view”.

It is the natural view because there is nothing “other-worldly” that must insert itself into the picture.

Ever since the Fall, man’s nature is bent towards evil. He does not really need any help becoming evil. Satan may fuel the fire, but the fire is one of man’s own doing.

Let’s look at how this “natural view” understands this passage. The “sons of God” are men who in some measure continue to reflect the image of God. They tend to come from Seth. But genetic ancestry is not really the point. If it were then we would have had a different sort of genealogy in chapter 5. What we have there is a thread. This means that the majority of the descendants of Seth are NOT of the godly line. There is only this thread. I would argue that this thread only exists because God has made a promise to bring a Savior from the seed of the woman. Otherwise, there would not be a godly line

at all. In a twist of irony, in a passage that speaks of some who are “sons of God”, the point is that they are not really “sons of God.”

What happens to these supposed “sons of God”? They see what is good... and they take any they chose. The text says that, “the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.”

It is best to take the phrase “daughters of man” as referring to women who more reflect the fallen image of Adam than they reflect the original image of God.

The language of verse 2 is eerily similar to the language of Eve’s eating the forbidden fruit.

Genesis 3:6 ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

In the garden, it was the woman who saw that the forbidden fruit was good.

Guess what Hebrew word is translated “attractive” in Genesis 6?

It is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 3. “Tov”, which means “good”.

Just as the woman looked at the fruit and saw that it was good, so now the sons of God look at ladies who are not godly in character and see them as good.

Rather than submit themselves to the will of God and wait upon God to provide “daughters of God” with whom to marry, they take as wives, any that they wanted.

These “sons of God” are really proving that they are NOT “sons of God”. They are acting more in line with Adam’s fallen nature than God’s holy nature. The “sons of God” trust in their own wisdom rather than submit to the wisdom of God.

We have come to the very crux of the matter, so I need to try to flesh this out. We will begin with the issue of marriage, and then we will widen the scope.

If you grew up in the Church, or came to know Jesus at an early age, one of your big choices will be, “Who will I choose to marry?” Now, young people, God gives you a lot of leeway here. He only really gives you one rule. He says that you need to be equally yoked. At a basic level, that means that you need to marry someone who has the same basic faith in God that you have. Other than this one stipulation, you have a great amount of freedom to choose who you want to marry.

And even though the text focuses on the men, in our day, it really goes both ways. We could say, “the daughters of God” see that the “sons of man” are good, therefore they choose whomever they want.

You see, God continues to set up a test for us, just like He did in the garden for Adam and Eve. He could order the world such that the most beautiful, the most intelligent, the most gifted, the most interesting people in the world are also the most godly. And this does happen. The Bible tells us that Sarah was a truly beautiful woman. There is nothing wrong with being beautiful, or smart, or gifted, or interesting. And there is nothing wrong with desiring these things in a future spouse.

But more important than any of these things is that your spouse has a common faith in Jesus Christ. All of these other considerations are secondary. Nothing is more important than that they possess a common faith.

But due to sin, what do we do? We put having a common faith somewhere down on the list. We choose what we think is good, rather than what God says is good.

Now let me widen the scope. The choosing of a godly spouse is a nice concrete way to make the point. But choosing the things of the world over the pursuit of God is what the Bible calls idolatry. And John Calvin was right in saying that in the heart of every man is an idol factory.

It is not by accident that it is the ungodly line of Cain that produces the best music, the best wealth, the best jewels and the strongest tools and weapons. It is not by accident that even in unholy marriages, strong and mighty offspring are produced. Jesus is very clear. We are to seek first the kingdom of God.

But how often do we look at the good things of this world and “seek them first”? Discerning when you have made an idol of something in the world is not easy. We must live in this world. So much of our lives must include working to increase our lot in life. At what point do we go from living in this world to living for this world?

At the heart of bearing the image of fallen Adam is living “for this world”. At the heart of bearing the image of God is “seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness.”

We should be able to relate to those who lived before the Flood. How often do we, like them, live out our lives seeking to do anything that we so choose?

The heart of true godliness is to love God with all of your heart. The pleasures of the world have been designed for us by a good God, but we are not to place those desires above our love of Jesus Christ.

If I give Robin a gift for her birthday, I want her to enjoy the gift. But I do not want her to love that gift more than she loves me. I do not want her to look at the gift, see its goodness, and forget me, any more than God wants us to forget Him as the source of all goodness.

The people who lived before the flood are not some race of villains who bear no likeness to us. They are very much like us. Do not comfort yourself that God could not be angry with you like He was angry with them. A hybrid race of demons and men fits too nicely into our tendency to see evil as “out there” rather than “in here”.

The truth of Genesis 6 is that apart from grace, there is no one who is good. We have met the enemy and he is us. The godly line has been whittled down to one: Noah. It would have been reduced to zero, but God made a promise to bring a redeemer through the seed of the woman. It is the grace of God that preserves one man.

You know the rest of the story. Noah will show himself to be fallen as well. And we all know that the Flood did nothing to fix the evil within the hearts of Noah’s offspring. This brings us to the Gospel. Ultimately, there is only one true son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is more than one way to understand that Jesus is the “son of God”. Sometimes Scripture means, by this phrase, that Jesus is “divine”. He is the eternal Son of God co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. But sometimes Scripture means that Jesus, as a human being, perfectly reflected the character of God. He was a true son of God in his perfectly reflecting the image of God, as Adam should have done.

It is in Jesus’ role as the Messiah, as the promised seed of the woman, that he is called “the Son of God.” There is only one true Son of God. Only Jesus perfectly reflects the image of God.

And it is only through our union to Jesus Christ, that the image of God is renewed in us. As believers in Jesus Christ, we...

Colossians 3:10 ¹⁰ ... have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Sanctification is nothing less than Christ forming us into his image, the image of God. This is not merely a possibility. It is a certainty. We will bear the image of the man from heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:49 ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

It is not by accident that the final kingdom of God is called “the revealing of the sons of God.”

Romans 8:19 ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

No man is a true son of God except by grace alone and received by faith alone. And this brings us back to Noah.

You don't get the story of Noah correctly, if you think that Noah was saved because he was good.

Our passage in Genesis ends with a very simple statement.

8 But
 Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

The next section will talk about the character of Noah.

But this section ends with a very abrupt statement: Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

“found favor” - לָחַם ((hen)

Grace: (LXX = charis); approval; favor

God looks upon Noah with grace. Noah, like Enoch and Abel before him, was not trusting in his own righteousness. He was looking to the promise of God. If the seed of every sin is in every heart, then that sin lived in Noah too. He was not different because of his own goodness. Noah too was a product of God's grace. He would be different. He would love God. But these are the fruits of God's grace working in him.

If we can identify in ourselves the likeness of fallen Adam, in Jesus Christ, we can also identify the beginnings of grace working in us to make us a true son of God. In fact, there is no human way to be “sons of God.”

It is when we look at Noah, that we are to see God's “supernatural grace.” Brothers and sisters, strive your whole life to reflect God. But remember that the only source of true godliness is God, in the form of Jesus Christ, living in you by faith alone. Grace alone. To the glory of God alone.