

ALL HUMANITY CORRUPTED (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 6:1-4

In chapter 5 we were told repeatedly that godly men had other sons and daughters. Genesis 6:1 says that they were fruitful and multiplied, so that perhaps by Noah's day millions of people covered the globe—yet only one man is pleasing to God. The \$64,000 question that begs to be answered is, “What happened to all the godly descendants?” Let's ask the question this way: If you were Satan, and your nefarious desire was to corrupt all of humanity, what strategy would you implement? This passage tells us.

We must begin by admitting that this text is very difficult to interpret, because of the specific phrase “the sons of God” found in Genesis 6:2, 4. So before we can understand and accurately apply this section of Scripture, we need to ascertain who “the sons of God” are.

Good Christians hold to different views, but there are basically two: “The sons of God” refer to fallen angels, or the phrase refers to the godly descendants of Seth. In the first view, angels marry and have intercourse with women, and the children of this union are the Nephilim or giants, which is what Nephilim means. In the second view, the godly descendants of Seth intermarry with the ungodly, but attractive descendants of Cain, and the offspring of this union are ungodly and corrupt. I hold to the latter view, but let's consider the different arguments involved in the debate.

Those who hold to the first view point out that the Hebrew term translated “the sons of God” is only found five times in the OT, and it always refers to angels. Two of the five are here in Genesis (6:2, 4), and the other three are all in Job (1:6, 2:1, 38:7). In Job 1:6 and 2:1, Satan is distinct from “the sons of God.” And in Job 38:7 all “the sons of God” praise God when they watch His work at creation. These angels are worshippers. The assumption of course is that the angels in Genesis 6 are fallen, since elect angels would not engage in such perversity. The problem, however, is that “the sons of God” is a positive term and wouldn't be fitting for fallen angels.

Moreover, while the exact Hebrew phrase “the sons of God” is found only five times, other equivalent terms are found. In Deuteronomy 14:1, we have “the sons of the LORD” to describe the Israelites, who are “holy to the LORD” (vs. 2). Hosea 1:10 refers to God's people as “sons of the living God.” These similar terms all describe those who belong to God (including humans) in a positive way, which would exclude fallen angels, demons.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the first view is found in the words of Jesus Himself. When asked about marriage in heaven, He responded, “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:29-30). You might be wondering how those who embrace the angel view get around this plain statement by Jesus. Henry M. Morris said, “When Jesus said the angels *in heaven* do not marry, this does not necessarily mean that those who have been cast *out of heaven* were incapable of doing so” (James M. Boice, *Genesis*, p. 310). Such hair-splitting seems to be a way of avoiding the obvious to me.

Further evidence against the view that “the sons of God” is a reference to fallen angels is related to the previous point: human beings and angels have different natures. It's a simple yet profound reality that man is made of flesh and blood, while the angels (those *in heaven*, as well as those cast *out of heaven*) are non-material spirit beings. Speaking of angels, the writer of Hebrews says, “Are they not all ministering *spirits* sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation” (1:14, italics added). If one would want to continue with Henry Morris' line of thought and say that there is a distinction between elect and evil angels, Ephesians would refute the idea: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (6:12).

If one is still unconvinced, then perhaps Hebrews 2:14-16 will help: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.” This text explains the necessity for the incarnation, and at the same time it shows us the difference between the nature of men and angels. It's true that angels can take on the appearance of men, but that isn't their real nature.

By Wayne Christensen/Fox Lake Community Church/ See “Permissions” for reproduction authorization

ALL HUMANITY CORRUPTED (2)

A Meditation on Genesis 6:1-4

I also reject the interpretation of the first view that says the Nephilim (or giants) were the product of angels copulating with humans. For example, James M. Boice writes, “Since we have no information about the results of an angel/human union, except what is found here... It is enough to say that it is conceivable that this could happen... What would be more natural than that this union would produce the ‘mighty men’ of antiquity? Since this verse specifically refers to the ‘heroes of old,’ what would be more probable than that this is the origin of those stories of half-human-half-divine figures present in virtually all ancient mythologies? The stories of Homer and other writers would be embellished, of course, but they probably reflect memories of these ancient outstanding figures of the pre-flood period” (Ibid). With all due respect, this is ridiculous.

Let’s read verse 4 carefully: “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” (Italics added). This verse merely says that the Nephilim were on the earth *when* the sons of God came in to the daughters of man. Boice goes to say, “If Satan had succeeded, Jesus could not have been born and the race as a whole—including Adam and Seth and Enoch and all the rest—would have been lost. But by destroying the contaminated race and saving uncontaminated Noah and his immediate uncontaminated family and by binding the demons who participated in this great sin in Hades until the final judgment, God made the salvation to be achieved by Christ both sure and possible” (Ibid., p. 311). But the Nephilim were not completely cut off. Reference to the Nephilim is found not once, but twice in the Bible. When the Israelites sent spies into the Promised Land, guess who they saw there? “And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them” (Num. 13:33). If the Nephilim refers to half-human-half-divine creatures, then they return after the flood, which presupposes that angel/human unions continued. Now we’re left wondering if these unions have ever stopped.

Many who cling to the first view do so not because of what Genesis says, but because of what Jude says. “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—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality pursued unnatural desires” (vv. 6-7a). These are the verses Boice quotes to support his view. However, if we back up a little and read the verses in context (that which comes before and after) we get a different interpretation. “Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe” (vs. 5). Then Jude gives another example of judgment in verse 6, namely the angels, followed by yet another example in verse 7, Sodom and Gomorrah. Then Jude concludes by saying that all these were different illustrations that “serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire” (vs. 7b). Therefore, the parallel of the angels with the immorality of those in Sodom and Gomorrah is not between sexual sin, but between judgment upon various sins that all result in eternal fire.

Finally, when we read Genesis 6:5-7, we see that God’s anger is raging against man, and not against the angels. God is going to judge man in the flood, which will have zero effect upon the angels. This is an argument from silence, but if God was mad at the demons for their perverse behavior we might expect God to address them, as He did Satan after the fall. But God’s anger is squarely aimed at man: “The LORD saw that the wickedness of *man* was great in the earth...the LORD was sorry that he had made *man* on the earth...So the LORD said, ‘I will blot out *man*...’” (vv. 5-7). Not a single word is said about the fallen angels, who are supposedly responsible for this whole ordeal.

If the first view is correct, then I guess the application is, “Don’t intermarry with demons.” If the second view is correct, then the application is, “Don’t intermarry with the ungodly.” This application would fit not only chapter 6, but the tenor of the whole Bible. God continually warns His people about the dangers of intermarriage. “You shall not intermarry with them...for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly” (Deut. 7:3-4). Intermarriage is how all humanity was corrupted.

By Wayne Christensen/Fox Lake Community Church/ See “Permissions” for reproduction authorization

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you do not make more than 1,000 physical copies. For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be explicitly approved by Fox Lake Community Church.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:

By Wayne Christensen/Fox Lake Community Church.

Website: www.foxlakechurch.org Email: wchristensen@foxlakechurch.org 847-587-1331