

Foreword

This chapter has a number of oft-debated items that aren't related to our salvation (see our chapter 1 lesson). In fact, they can be a tantalizing distraction from the message of Scripture. Humans are fascinated with the occult – that is, secret, hidden, mysterious or sometimes forbidden knowledge. We'd rather go to a "haunted house" than church. We'd rather hear scandalous rumors of Enoch instead of the saving truth of Christ.

I want you to read the Bible to learn about God and His promises for you. As such, I could skip over the gray areas in hopes that you don't notice and let your mind and heart wander. However, I also want you to read the Bible to build up your spiritual immune system, so that you aren't corrupted today by the same temptations and false teachings that overtook Eve millennia ago.

So instead of skipping over the parts of the Bible we don't like, let's dig further in. Again, what God left in the Bible, He did for a reason...and this could hardly be called a verse-by-verse study if we ignored the tough stuff.

Read Genesis 6:1-8

Here we go, into the thick of it...

Q (v1-2): Who were "the sons of God" and what exactly were they doing in this passage?

As with previous mysteries, we don't know for sure. There are three primary views and all have their ups and downs. I'll give summaries here:

- 1. Fallen angels were marrying human women. This is what people commonly hear and is the most exciting possibility.**
This view is supported by the fact that the root words for "sons of God" are used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to angels. Also, we fancifully imagine that the progeny of that partially-divine mating would produce the giant (Nephilim) children mentioned in v4.
However, nowhere else in Scripture do we hear about angels behaving like this, or even being capable of mating. In fact, Jesus said in *Mk 12:25* that angels do not marry. Further, there are giants after The Flood as well, which means that this theory is either wrong (since Noah was not an angel) or that angels came back a second time. Further further, why would mankind be punished (in the upcoming Flood) for angels' misbehavior? Further further further, if the angels did come back a second time after The Flood to create more giants, why wasn't there a punishment again?
This theory is fanciful but seems unlikely.
- 2. Faithful men of God were marrying pagan women.**
This is supported by the fact that the root words for "sons of God" are also used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to believers in God/Christ. We know that believers are prohibited/dissuaded from getting into mixed marriages (too many OT references to list/*2 Cor 6:14*, respectively) and we already saw the results from Cain's story and offspring in chapter 4.
Problems (in short) are that there's some shoehorning of root words to fit this idea. Further, why would the marriage of faithful and pagan produce giant children? That is, unless the word for "giant" isn't what we think it is...read on:
- 3. Powerful men marrying multiple women as part of a power grab. This one makes more common sense...at least in the face of my personal opinion, which frequently shaves with Occam's Razor.**

This theory is supported by the fact that the root words for “sons of God” can also also refer to men in authority: kings, judges, nobles etc (*Ps 82:6, Jn 10:34*). As a recent Scriptural example, let’s look back at Lamech at the end of chapter 4. There you had a powerful man who apparently started polygamy and brashly boasted about committing murder and his defiance of God.

This problem with man hasn’t changed. Whether the country each man is in supports multiple marriages or not, men tend to seek relationships with multiple women, increasing wealth and the recognition that goes with these things. We don’t need to look far in politics or the entertainment industries to see modern examples. Nor do we need to see how this behavior devastates families and society as a whole, which would understandably tick God off. But what about the giant kids thing? That doesn’t make sense here either. Correct, keep reading on:

v3 This verse also has a couple of possible interpretations, complicated by the fact that the root word for “strive/contend” is not used elsewhere in Scripture, so scholars aren’t 100% sure of its meaning:

1. God is going to reduce the lifespan of mankind from roughly 900 years to roughly 100, presumably to reduce their ~~carbon~~ sin footprint. This does come to pass, but slowly over progressive generations after The Flood. We’ll discuss this more then.
2. Another possibility is that God was extending a 120-year grace period to mankind before The Flood. Since we don’t know exactly when He made this decision, it doesn’t conflict with the known timeline of The Flood.

v4 People love getting worked up (and distracted) by these giants. The root word is Nephilim, which means “fallen ones” (which encourages fallen angel proponents in v2). It’s only used here and in Numbers 13:33 where it’s referring to literal giants (~10’ tall) in the promised land. Remember that, when people make it out like the Nephilim are on every other page of the OT. This is also likely why many Bible translations forego using the potentially titillating term “giant” and go with the more neutral/literal “Nephilim” since its used too infrequently to confirm exact meaning.

Additional complication comes from the fact that these “giants” are related at the end of the verse to “mighty/renowned/heroic” or “great” men of that day and age. This makes the word apply to both giants and warrior leaders in general (see Nimrod in 10:8). Note that just because someone is a hero of their day and age, doesn’t mean they’re righteous...again, look at our modern politicians and entertainment celebrities : /

All that being said, and the tabloid-bait section of this chapter complete, remember that there are reasonable and non-sensational explanations for many of these long-debated mysteries. Does that mean that unusual things didn’t happen? Does that mean that we can’t talk about the possibilities and even have a little fun theorizing? No. But again, God left that part of the story out for a reason. So, I’d suggest going with the simpler explanations that have some grounding elsewhere in Scripture and don’t potentially lead into occult interest, and then get our focus back on God and...

v5 ...the problem of sin. Genesis (and well, the rest of the Bible) is going to hammer us with the constant reminder that “every intent of the thoughts of man are evil”. Even the great Biblical “heroes/saints” regularly goof up and the Bible does not gloss over those failures.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” -Ro 3:23

Without Christ and His Spirit, we are powerless to overcome our sinful desires.

Q (v6-7): Is God capable of regret? Couldn't The Omniscient One see all of this coming?

He certainly did. And it certainly hurt his heart to see the damage being caused by and to His beloved children and creation. What we have here (and in similar locations such as *Ex 32:14*, *1 Sam 15:11*, *Jer 26:3*) is an anthropomorphism. That is, we are assigning human characteristics to something that's not human...in this case, God - usually to make them more relatable.

The perfect, holy, just and loving God has every right to be pained at our behavior and disappointed at what we could have had if we were obedient. The root word almost indicates a sighing (there's another anthropomorphism, as God has no lungs with which to sigh) and is part of the names of Nehemiah and Nahum.

Further, see *Mal 3:6*, *Sam 1:15:29* and *Heb 13:8* for OT and NT backup that God does not change (i.e., regret).

Read Genesis 6:9-22

Q (v9): Was Noah sinless? The wording makes it sound like that here: "just, perfect, righteous, blameless."

If we've seen anything by even the sixth chapter of the entire Bible, it's that humans are sinful beings. Look back at the comments on v5. The idea here is that Noah stood out from the rest of the world. He faithfully (i.e., with best of intentions) followed the standards set by God. He "walked with God" as Enoch had done.

The root word for "just/blameless" indicates righteousness, or accurately following a standard or example. It may remind you of someone morally upright, or abstinent from drugs, etc being called a "straightedge". See *Gen 15:6*. Our righteousness does not come from our never sinning (that's not possible). It comes only through faith in God through Christ, and then imitating Him. As Christ hadn't been here yet, OT believers were deemed righteous by their faith in God. (Note that faith elicits action. I'm not "faithful" by saying "I believe in God". I'm faithful by putting that proclamation of trust into action and doing what He asks of me, trusting Him through difficult times, etc. See *1 Jn 2:3-6*, *Jm 2:14-26*.)

The root word for "perfect/blameless" indicates completeness. Noah was a man of integrity, missing no qualities that a human should have.

Further, elsewhere in Scripture, we hear of humans being called perfect (e.g., *Job 1:1 & 8*), even by God, while their sin is also acknowledged.

v10 We'll cover Noah's sons in a little more detail in chapter 10. Shem was actually the middle son (*9:22-24*, *10:21*). However, he was listed first due to the author wanting to stress his importance as a forefather of the nation of Israel (and eventually Christ). This practice was discussed in last week's lesson.

Q (v11): How do you think God views mankind and creation today?

I don't include this question as a scare tactic. But there's a sobering reality that humanity is still corrupt, and the earth falls apart around us as part of this. Despite thousands of years of cultural and scientific "progress" since Genesis 6, not much has changed (*Ecc 1:9*). We still need to be reconciled with God before the next judgment. Later reading in the Bible will show that we are nearing or possibly in the end times (*Mt 24:3-14*).

v13 It's likely that, like elsewhere in Scripture, God sent prophets and warnings to the people of the world, but they ignored them/Him.

v14 We don't know what kind of wood was used for building the ark. The original word sounds like "gopher", which is why some translations call it gopherwood. Others say cypress, which is just a best guess. It may be a tree that no longer exists. "Pitch" is simply waterproofing tar.

v15-16 The schematics for the ark are left pretty vague. Maybe Noah was an expert shipwright already (*), maybe Moses left the information out (seems unlikely based upon his thorough documentation of the tabernacle) or God gave Noah more information as he went along. There's a significant amount of information available on the ark (not to mention a [real-world recreation](#) of it) at answersingenesis.org/noahs-ark/ so I'm going to defer a lot of the usual questions to there for now.

In short, the ark was somewhere around 500' long x 80' wide x 50' tall (**). This is about half the width of a football field and 1.5 times as long. These proportions are similar to modern cargo vessels, and in fact, simulations show that it was a very sturdy boat for a worldwide flood with heavy winds. There were three decks of some sort - the root word is actually "nests". Research has shown that all the animals would have fit (remember our discussion of animal "kinds" from chapter 1).

(*) For all we know, Noah didn't live anywhere near the water and this was something entirely new to him and those around him! Imagine the ridicule he'd earn (but also the chances to "call on the name of the Lord").

(**) A cubit was the length of a forearm, from tip of the middle finger to elbow...somewhere around 18" or so. This "standard" of course varied over time, which is why we don't have a precise measurement.

v17 Well, most of the sea life survived (7:22).

v18 Here's the first instance of a covenant in the Bible. It was basically a contract, and in this case, God didn't lay out the fine print until after The Flood was over.

Q (v18): There are multiple types of covenants in the Bible. Can you guess which one this was?

1. Parity: A contract between two equal parties. If you've read the Bible before you might remember David and Solomon's parity covenants with Hiram. Or Abraham and Abimelech.
2. Suzerainty: A contract between a king and his vassals...that is, unequal parties. Typically, it's something about a king offering protection to his people (or offering terms of peace to avoid killing them in a siege!), in return for their obedience etc. Examples would of course be many of God's covenants with His people, or Joshua's covenants with many Canaanite cities in the Promised Land.
3. Promissory: This covenant is entirely one-sided. One party promises to provide something to the other party, for nothing in return. God made one of these with Abraham and his descendants. God also promised the same to David regarding the line of kings to proceed from him.

v19-21 God actually handled bringing the animals into the ark. Noah only had to bring the food.

v22 I love these verses. See also *Gen 12:4a, 22:1, Ex 40:16 and 1 Sam 3:10*. There's nothing secret or metaphorical here. It's just "God commands/calls, servant does/listens." "Yes, Sir. No, Sir. Thank you, Sir."

For the record, I'm not great at this. I like to know the plan ahead of time and sometimes I feel there's other things I should finish first. Except God rarely works that way, does He? He can put us on the spot and if we're lucky, reveals the plan as we go. My job is to respect His authority (and the sacrifice He made for me through Christ) and do what I'm told, trusting that He knows what He's doing, has the situation well in hand and will take care of me throughout and after, despite what things may look like. The trust part gets easier, the more time we spend with Him (*Ro 8:28*).

Does that mean that I can't question Him? No, so long as I'm being respectful, am willing to get started on the request anyway and can accept that He may not give me the answer I want, or when I want it.