

Scripture Reading: Genesis 6:1-8

“1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. 3 And Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." 4 There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. 5 Then God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And Jehovah was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So Jehovah said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. "8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah.”

"The Wickedness of Man"

We come to a much shorter passage this morning, but one that has at times been embroiled in some controversy in almost every verse or even phrase! Now I think much of that controversy comes from looking at those verses or phrases in isolation and not paying enough attention to the context which is always important...

- **‘Context is king’ is a pretty good rule to follow when studying the Bible!**

Our passage ends with a very comforting promise regarding God’s Grace...

- **But it also comes with a serious warning for God’s faithful people that carries right down to our age!**

It brings to an end the section of Genesis that began with the words, ‘This is the book of the generations of Adam’ and in a few weeks we will turn to verse 9 where we read:

‘These are the generations of Noah.’ This is an important part of the broader context because we see three major covenants here in the Book of Beginnings.

- **God makes a covenant with Adam**
- **God makes a covenant with Noah**
- **And God makes a covenant with Abraham.**

All of these are referenced in some way in the New Testament as Old Covenant in contrast with the New Covenant that we have in Jesus who fulfills ALL of these covenants. A major difference to see is how the New Covenant in Jesus ends in life with His resurrection from the dead: It is an eternal covenant having no end! The old covenants ALL end in death. Abraham’s heirs ended up in slavery, the heirs of Noah became rank idolaters and what we are studying this morning is the tragic end of Adam’s heirs in death & destruction.

- **So the focus is on the race of Adam and not angels or giants or the environment!**

As I pointed out over the past few weeks we see two things very clearly in chapters four through six:

We see the faithfulness of God as He protects the line of Christ and pours out His grace upon Noah at the end. We see the sinfulness of man, in Cain as an individual who commits murder, in his heirs who become more hardened in their sin like Lamech and finally, as we will see today, how their sin grows so severe that God must destroy man and all things living save those on the Ark.

So remembering this context let us take a closer look at the text we read together:

“1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”

Verse one comes without too much controversy because it tells us that men multiplied on the earth and that they had daughters. The genealogies of Chapter five that we studied last week made it clear that each of the men in the line of Seth had sons and daughters! We also had references to daughters born in the line of Cain.

- So populating the earth was not a problem because that is what God had commanded men to do!
- God had instituted marriage, so that would not create a problem either.

But we know that something goes terribly wrong as we move on in this text so what is the problem?

We are given the problem, and the source of much of the controversy in verse 2: “that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.” So we must ask, who were the Sons of God, who were the daughters of men and were these marriages a problem? From what follows we know that these marriages were a BIG problem and that helps us understand the right answer to the first two questions.

We must begin with the question about who these “sons of God” are and there have been two major answers given down through history. The first, which was popular in the early Church following some of the Jewish thinking was that these were angels who came down admiring human women.

Now you can find verses that refer to angels as Sons of God: The most famous comes in the beginning of the book of Job where we read at 1:6... “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, and Satan also came among them.” What you can’t find in the Scriptures is any reference to Angels having corporal bodies and in fact Jesus specifically says they do not marry nor are given in marriage. And perhaps the most important point Angels marrying men simply does not fit the context of what is being told here about the history of mankind.

The second and most likely choice is to see these Sons of God as the male descendants of the Godly line of Seth that the entirety of chapter five was devoted too. Such a title for the godly line should not be surprising: Luke tells us that Adam was the son of god and when Seth bore Enosh we are told, “: then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah.”

Psalm 82 says this at verse 6, in what may well be a reference to this very time, “I have said , Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”

We see King David as a son of God in II Samuel 7:13 “He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity , I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.”

Again the very theme that we see here in Genesis six leading up to the flood of judgment and grace upon Noah. And finally we see the corporate application of this term when Moses confronts Pharaoh saying, “Thus says Jehovah: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. 23 So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.”” Exodus 4:22-23

If we accept the meaning of Sons of God as the men of the godly line of Seth it is much easier to determine who were the daughters of men.

This refers NOT to all the daughters of men because then godly marriages would have been a problem...

But rather it refers to the daughters of the ungodly men in the line of Cain. Thus these godly men are participating in a major sin that continues to be a problem for God's covenant people right down to our day.

We will see the disastrous results of these marriages here in the text this morning and the judgment of the flood in the coming weeks and they should come to mind whenever we see God giving His people similar warnings later in the Scriptures.

Such a warning is included in the instructions given to God's people as they enter the promised land at Deuteronomy 7:3 "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.

4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of Jehovah will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly."

- **This period of history and the great flood which follows would certainly have come to their minds as they heard those words!**

Jesus Himself makes reference to this time as He gives the great Olivet discourse just before His death: Matthew 24:38: "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

And it appears that Peter is referring back to this time and the preaching of Jesus to these people by the Holy Spirit: I Peter 3:18 "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water."

And finally we have Paul's warning to the Church in II Corinthians regarding this very issue... 6:14 "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty."

This was God's desire for the godly line of Seth in that day and yet they looked longingly on the daughters of men from the line of Cain and the results were not good...

3 And Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

When we see the problem as one of mixed marriages of the godly and ungodly lines the rest of the controversies seem to fade... Here God is not restricting the length of men's lives, which did not happen until much later... Rather God is telling them, much as He did the City of Nineveh, they have one and fifty years to live!

We will take a much closer look at that period of time in the coming weeks.

Now the writer of Genesis gives us more details about the problems that these marriages have caused:

4 “There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

The word used here for giant is Nephilem which means to bully or be a tyrant as well as just size. These are the kinds of giants that the spies saw in the land of Canaan which was also ripe for God’s judgment. And it is just that type of wickedness that God now see in all the earth...

5 “Then God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

The wickedness of man is now evident for all to see and yet as Paul explains in Romans they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. The reaction of God to this wickedness is quite striking...

6 “And Jehovah was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So Jehovah said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

There are two very difficult things to wrestle with here, and we should not shy away from what God is revealing. We will be talking about God’s destruction in the coming weeks so I won’t focus on that this morning but I do want to consider God’s reaction to the sin of man... The various translations say that God repented of making man, that He sorry He had made man or that it grieved Him. Strong language indeed. It also says God was grieved in His heart or that His heart was pained or broken. Again very strong language. So what do we do with this language? I think we have to be willing to let it be as strong as it appears because this is where we see Jesus in our passage this morning!

Let me explain what I mean...

Most of the commentators, including great men like John Calvin seem to downplay what is being said arguing that God cannot repent or be sorry and that He would not have pain in His heart the sense we would understand that concept. They argue that God is simply using human terms to convey His divine actions. While that is true in one sense because God is not a creature like us and thus must speak so we can understand... I would argue that He is very clearly using terms and concepts here that we could understand quite easily.

I think sometimes that we put God so securely in our systematic boxes where we clearly define His attributes that we forget that He is the Triune Personal God who in some ways is as difficult to understand or explain as the loving relationship in a marriage.

We love, and have a heart that can be broken, and get angry at sin because we are made in God’s image!

- We can make plans, carrying out plans and even change plans because we are made in God’s image.

Now we can do none of those things perfectly nor eternally but that does not mean they are not real concepts that apply to God as well.

For example the most shocking one is usually the fact that God repented or was sorry about a certain action...

- We know that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and that God does not change!

And yet here we have God saying, OK, man’s wickedness deserves to be judged so I am going to destroy the very ones that I created in My Image!

And this is not an isolated example: Consider this from I Samuel 15:11 where Jehovah says ““I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments.” And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to Jehovah all night.”

Now in that case the prayers of Samuel did not prevail but remember that there was a similar case with Moses where his prayers did prevail...

Exodus 32: “9 And Jehovah said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation." 11 Then Moses pleaded with Jehovah his God, and said: "Lord, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.' " 14 So Jehovah relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.”

Now to be clear, God is not capricious and the actions of men cannot change the eternal decrees of God, but we see clearly in these passages that the actions of men can change the course of human history...

They can do so in some very negative ways and it grieves God to see them do so...

These actions can even limit the actions of God in history: In Psalm 78 we read about the rebellion of God's people, “40 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert! 41 Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel.”

Or this from the Gospel According to Matthew in chapter 13:

“57 So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." 58

Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

And finally as Jesus is entering Jerusalem to be the sacrifice for sin He lamented, with a broken heart, “"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

Now I know that I will get a dozen questions at lunch about how this relates to God's eternal decrees and His sovereign control of all things...

- But I think it is important that we see that God really does relate in history to those created in His image, for good or ill and that our God is big enough to not be threatened by such interaction.
- AND as I mentioned this is very important because it here where we see Jesus in our lesson today.

By taking a hard look at the full fury and anger of God in these passages it gives us a much better understanding of that BIG word we have tried to teach to the children...

- Propitiation.

What is propitiation?

- That's right the satisfaction of God's wrath!

As we shall see in the coming weeks this real wrath that God is expressing here will be propitiated by the destruction of these men and even animals that were given to serve them in the great flood.

God could have justly wiped out the entire Creation at this point because of the sin of man and started over if He wanted to and yet in our text we come to verse 8: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah.”

- **God was angry!**
- **And God would act!**

But He would not forget His promise to Adam and Eve: The Messiah would come and when He did come He would propitiate the full wrath of God against man's sin on the cross!

Yes, Noah found grace and those of us who have turned to Jesus have as well...

- **BUT Grace is not cheap!**

Our ability to receive God's Grace meant Jesus struggling in the Garden asking the Father to remove the burden He was about to bear!

It meant Jesus taking on Himself the wrath of God that is pictured here in the Book of beginnings with the Great flood, but in reality cannot be fully imagined by any of us!

And it means God the Father having to pour that wrath out on His beloved Son and hearing Him cry, WHY have you forsaken me!

- **That would have surely grieved the heart of God!**

So I will leave us with two quick applications this morning:

Young people or those looking to be married, please think on these things if you are ever tempted to consider marrying outside of the Covenant.

And to you and all the rest of us, please think on these things whenever you read where the Apostle Paul pleads with us to NOT to grieve the Spirit!

- **And as a bonus, never take God's grace for granted when you are receiving God's benediction!**