May Jesus be your rock and foundation.

*Is not your fear of God your confidence,
And the integrity of your ways your hope?*

 Job 4:6

These verses are a quote from Job’s mistaken friend, Eliphaz. The mistake is that he is making this accusation against Job and Job is not guilty of it. However, even though it is, in this case, mistakenly applied; we ought to consider whether these verses apply to us.

What is the problem here in these verses? Look where the confidence is: it is in your own fear. Look where the hope is: it is in the integrity of your ways. Salvation comes from God alone through Jesus Christ and that salvation is a gift and is sustained by God Himself. Our works, our integrity, our reverence for God have nothing to do with our salvation.

Now the result of God’s gift of salvation ought to be good works, integrity, and reverence for God; but these things are the evidence of our salvation, not the cause of it.

Job was unhappy and did not understand his suffering, but through it all his unwavering confidence and hope was in salvation from God. That must also be our confidence and hope, the salvation from God that we know is in Jesus Christ.

In Christ’s love

John

 6-5-22

Genesis 6:1-4 (2)

Last week we began our study of these first four verses of chapter 6 and acknowledged that these are very difficult verses. They are difficult because they are strange to us and because their meaning is not spelled out directly for us elsewhere in Scripture. It does appear that other Scriptures refer to them but we have to hunt for them and figure them out.

The debate goes on about what these verses mean exactly, but we can at least narrow it down to a couple options that make the most sense. The “*daughters of men*” are women. They are the women who descended from all the lines from Adam and Eve. Or it is possible that they are strictly from the line of Cain.

Identifying the “*sons of God*” presents more of a problem. There are two reasonable options: they are men from the line of Seth or they are angels. Keep in mind that the primary reason for these verses is to show the increasing depravity of mankind. Whatever is happening here is not good and is an abomination to God. We know what is coming from the heightening corruption of the human-race: the flood. Don’t let the curiosities here sidetrack you from realizing the seriousness of sin and that God will judge.

Briefly, if the sons of God are men from the line of Seth, then it shows that even though they tended to worship God, they let themselves be attracted to beauty of the women rather than seeking godly character. This union would have led the men away from God. It is a stern warning for us today that a Christian should marry a Christian. The Bible warns us against being unevenly yoked and has many examples of godly men being led astray by ungodly women; and how difficult life can be for a godly woman who is married to an ungodly man.

The case is made for the sons of God being angels in two ways. First, in the Old Testament, every other place that phrase is used, it definitely means angels. Secondly, there are several New Testament verses that refer to angels during the time of Noah who are now kept in darkness awaiting judgement. It is said that they left their proper dwelling place which is heaven. Further, they are compared to what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah; which involved going after strange flesh.

Once more, the Bible makes it clear that God created sexual intimacy to be between a man and a woman. Anything else is not tolerated by Him.

Today we can look more at verse 4 which involves some people about whom we know very little. “*The Nephilim were on the earth in those days*.” Some Bible translations have the word “giant” instead of “Nephilim”.

At this point, let me diverge a little to give some background about a writing called “The Book of Enoch.” It is named after the Enoch in the line of Seth who did not die, but was taken up by God, and there are actually several writings that are collectively attributed to Enoch. As you know, the book of Enoch is not in the Bible and that is because it is not divinely inspired. It was written in the 2nd or 3rd century BC, and so, was definitely not written by the man in Genesis named Enoch. It is a Jewish writing that was widely read, but it is not Scripture. There is a quote from it in the book of Jude, and that quote only, becomes divine Scripture in the book of Jude.

The book of Enoch is actually dangerously heretical and is very popular today among those who want to sensationalize end time prophecy. I bring all this up because you will probably hear about it and need to know that it is false; and it will help us to understand a few things. For one thing, the book of Enoch calls the Nephilim “giants”. This is how some of our English translations ended up using the word “giant” instead of “Nephilim”. However, the giants in Enoch can be over 300 feet tall.

Now the word “Nephilim”, which actually means “fallen ones”, only shows up one other place in our Bible; it’s in Numbers 13:33, “*There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.*” This is where Moses sent the twelve spies into the Promised Land to scout things out. Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people but the other ten did all they could to discourage the people from believing God and entering the land. They brought up the Nephilim and indicated that they were very large. Keep in mind that these ten were exaggerating everything bad about the land they had just seen.

We don’t know if the Nephilim were what we would call giants or not. But they were certainly strong and probably bigger than most. The real problem with Genesis 6:4 is determining where they came from. Were they simply people who had the genetics that made them more physically powerful than normal men? Or were the Nephilim the offspring of a union between angels and women?

Verse 4 reads, “*The Nephilim were 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*.” As we read through these verses in Genesis 6, it’s easy to take this sentence to mean that the Nephilim were the offspring of the union between the sons of God and the daughters of men. If we believe that the sons of God were angels, then it is easy to believe that their children would somehow be “superhuman”. This is the interpretation taken by many today.

On the other hand, if we look closely at how the sentence is worded, we can see something different. It begins, “*The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward.*” What this wording is doing is simply using the cohabitation of angels and women as a reference point in time. The Nephilim were on the earth at the same time as the sons of God were marrying women, and they were also there afterward. Looked at this way, the Nephilim are a separate issue from the ungodly union.

Additionally, verse 3 makes a separation between the verses where the sons of God are the main subject and the Nephilim are the main subject. Verses 1 and 2 speak of an ungodly cohabitation. Verse 3 lets us know that God has had enough. Then verse 4 lets us know that things were even worse. The indication is that these Nephilim, who were men of renown, would have been godless men who depended on themselves and did things to advance their own names.

Although the Bible is very much about faith, we are not called to shut off our brains. The word of God calls us to think and dwell on these words of God. Think about these four verses in relation to the rest of the Bible and draw your own conclusion about whether the sons of God were angels or men, and whether the Nephilim were angelic offspring or just people who were genetically disposed to great strength. Don’t just pick the one you like, see which one makes sense to you from God’s word. Then be gracious to any who hold a different opinion.

But what can we take away from these verses and what is the primary reason for them being in the word of God? They are letting us know about sin, its effect on the world, and God’s response to it. And in the midst of these things is the tiny glimmer of hope: God’s mercy.

Up to this point in Genesis, we see God’s good creation and how it is marred by sin. The sin keeps escalating from simple disobedience to envy to murder. This is followed by polygamy, more murder, and pride. Violence has become normal. Sexual immorality has gone to the point of seeking strange flesh and the strong do as they please to make names for themselves.

Creation is no longer operating as God originally established; death has come into the world.

Early on, God had mercifully given Cain warning that sin was after him and that he must overcome it. Cain didn’t heed that warning and he had to bear the punishment for his sin. This was a stark warning for all that God wasn’t going to tolerate sin, even outside of the Garden of Eden. Any who heard of what happened to Cain would have known better. Obviously, few paid attention.

In verse 3 of chapter 6 we learn some things about God. It reads, ‘*Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”*’ We learn that although God is patient and merciful, there is a limit. Once He reaches His limit, He will act in righteous judgement against those who sin against Him.

We see that God’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit, God Himself, is striving with His creation. God is holy and His creation needs to be holy; it needs to act in ways pleasing to Him. His Holy Spirit works with us, in particular through our conscience. Our conscience can be a guide to us, especially if we desire to follow God. God has given us a knowledge of right and wrong.

Consider also what tree Adam and Eve ate from: *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. We know the difference between good and evil. The Holy Spirit works with us, through the general revelation of the goodness of God in creation, to the special revelation of God given to us through the Bible. God does not wish for any to perish, and so, He strives with us and gives us opportunity to repent.

But we are bent on evil. God said that mankind is simply flesh, simply creation, and He doesn’t have to put up with us. In numbering the days of mankind, He foreshadowed the destruction of creation. This destruction came to pass with the flood.

But here we also have the glimmer of hope from our unbelievably merciful God. “*[H]is days shall be one hundred and twenty years.*” Now, some will take this to mean that the human lifespan will only be 120 years as opposed to the long lives we see recorded in Genesis 5. However, there are several in the Bible who exceeded that span and it is phenomenally rare to have anyone come close to that now.

What God is saying is that there will be 120 years until the destruction He is going to bring about. This gives Noah 120 years to build the ark and collect the animals; and it also gives people time to believe Noah and repent. Although God had had enough, He was willing to wait a little longer for repentance, and because He knew that He was going to save a remnant.

Mankind has chosen to sin against God. The Bible lets us know that satan tempted Eve, and it’s possible that angels left heaven to live with women. These are sinful acts by angelic creatures for which they will be punished. In spite of their temptation, people are responsible for what they do. This is another problem with the book of Enoch that I mentioned earlier. The book gives a long list or genealogy of angels, including satan, and blames them for all the sinfulness in the world. This relieves us of our responsibility. And, of course, this is false.

The horrible sinfulness of the early history of Genesis continues today. If angels were marrying women, those angels are all now in pits awaiting judgement; so that doesn’t take place anymore. Yes, we have demons tempting us, just as satan tempted Eve. But just like Eve, we have no excuse. All our sin is our own. And until we confess that truth, and faithfully accept the gift of salvation from Jesus Christ, we will bear the judgement of those sins.

Prayer

Holy Lord God, we who are Your creation have rebelled against You. Our sins stand between us and You. They keep us from Your holy presence and from communing with You. You gave us free will, and we have used it to try to be our own gods; to try to determine our own destiny. We have chosen self-interest over Your will and desire.

We now praise You for Your great mercy and for the salvation You offer in Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He alone was able to pay the price that we owe; He alone was able to satisfy Your justice on our behalf. You offer us a way to come before You, restored in fellowship, no longer terrified by Your wrath. You provided Your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and provide us with faith, that we might understand our sin and turn to You for salvation.

Holy Spirit, I ask that You work among this congregation; for those who have already come to Christ, awaken a sense of the gravity of sin in our lives, so that we do not take for granted the wonderous gift of salvation. If there are any who have not truly turned to Christ in repentance, I ask that He would give strong conviction of sin so that they might turn and be saved.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen