May the God of Israel keep watch over you.

*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.*

 1 Corinthians 1:26

Each and every one of us has a ministry given to us by God. Before beginning that ministry, there always seems to be a time of God ordained preparation. During that preparation time, we learn a few things. One of the most important things for us to learn is our own inability.

When we first truly come face to face with the knowledge of how unqualified we are, it can cause us to despair. As we read God’s word, we learn how mighty He is; we also learn how like the foolish characters in the Bible we are. We are not wise, we are not strong, we really don’t have any kind of high standing.

But here is the next thing we must learn and humbly accept. Nothing we successfully do for God is in our strength or by our own abilities. It is God working through us. God doesn’t need us – he chooses to work through us. So, ultimately, it is God who is accomplishing everything.

This is freeing and refreshing for us, to know that we must simply be willing servants, and God will work. When something has been accomplished, we can worship God and give Him all the glory. We can thank Him for using us. Praise God for this reminder from Paul. We are weak; He is strong.

In Christ’s love

John

 5-29-22

Genesis 6:1-4

Let’s quickly recap where we are in the book of Genesis. God has created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. The first people God created were Adam and Eve. These two rebelled against God by disobeying Him; sin came into the world. In the midst of their judgement comes the wonderous and merciful promise by God in chapter 3 verse 15, where God promises that a seed from the woman will crush the head of the serpent. Thus, God begins His plan of redemption.

Next, we saw the terrible effects of sin when Cain, in a fit of jealously, killed his brother, Abel. A genealogy of the line of Cain is given. In this line we see the common grace given by God by which even those who reject Him are given abilities to create good things that will benefit mankind. We also see how sin continues to multiply.

God blessed Adam and Eve with another child named Seth, who was the establishment of the godly line. This line included Enoch, who found favor with God and didn’t die, but was taken up by God. This is in contrast to the other members of this line whose account all ended with, “*and he died*”. This genealogy concluded with Noah who had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

We know what’s coming; the story of Noah and the Ark; the story of God’s judgement poured out on the inhabitants of the earth. But right before that, we have a few introductory verses describing things taking place leading up to the flood.

The four verses we are looking at today are very difficult verses. Although the wording is fairly plain, we still need to figure out what in the world they are talking about. There are different views on these verses, even among conservative, evangelical Christians. These verses can be discussed for hours without solving the disagreements. Furthermore, we have different English translations of the Bible. The wording will be different depending on the interpretations of those who are doing the translating. That’s why it’s good to have several different translations when you are studying the Bible.

What this means for us is that there is no reason to break Christian fellowship with any we disagree with regarding interpretation of these verses. Interpretation of these verses in not a salvation issue. However, these verses are in Scripture; they are the words of God; they are true; we need to consider them as best we can and at least learn what lessons they have for us.

Verse 6:1 says, “*Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them*.” As we read in the genealogy of Seth, each of the people mentioned had “*other sons and daughters*” besides the ones specifically mentioned. Although the line of Cain in chapter 4 didn’t mention other children, it goes without saying that there were. We are also specifically told that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters, so there were more than the lines of Cain and Seth. Add to that the very long lifespans of people at that time and you can see that the population would grow very quickly.

Verse 1 reports a large population growth but brings our attention to daughters. It also sets the stage for verse 2. It tells us what was going on prior to verse 2. “*Now it came about, when*.” So, it was when the population grew large and there were lots of women, “*that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose*.”

The daughters of men were obviously women and the sons of God took notice of them because they were beautiful, they were attractive, they were good-looking. Because they were so attractive, the sons of God picked out whomever they wanted and married them. That much is clear. The question becomes: Who are these ‘sons of God’?

Realistically, there are only two possibilities: they are either men or angels.

The argument for saying the sons of God are men is referring to the godly line of Seth. Remember that the term ‘godly line’ just means that this is the genealogical line that produced Jesus. As we read through the Bible, we can see that there are plenty of members in this line that are far from being godly. Using the godly line of Seth logic, the sons of God are those in the line of Seth, who intermarried with women who were from the line of Cain. These were simply daughters of men because the line of Cain had turned from God.

This also follows the flow of Genesis so far in pointing out the continuing depravity of mankind. The men of Seth are simply looking on the outside, looking at the beauty of the women, rather than considering her relationship with God. Outward appearance, is not the best way to choose a mate. Additionally, in the New Testament, Christians are called sons of God; and, of course, we are all people.

For the sons of God to be human men just seems to make more sense to us because it is natural. Besides, there is no other mention of this type of human/angel interaction in the Bible. These are good arguments for the sons of God to be men in the line of Seth.

As I go through the arguments for them being angels, I will occasionally mention some of the counter-arguments from the line of Seth point of view.

One of the most straightforward of the evidences that the sons of God were angels comes from the rest of the Old Testament. Every other occurrence of that exact phrase definitely means angels. Other than the two occurrences here in verses 2 and 4, it comes up three times in the book of Job. In Job 1:6 and 2:1 it says, “*the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*.” In the context of these chapters, there is no question that the sons of God are angels. It shows up again in Job 38:7, when God tells of the angel’s reaction over His creation; “*And all the sons of God shouted for joy*”.

The only other place it shows up is in Daniel 3:25. The difference here is that it is in Aramaic, not in Hebrew like the other places. It comes about when king Nebuchadnezzar has thrown the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace. Looking in he saw a fourth person in the flames and said, “*Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods*!” This fourth person was at least an angel and possibly a preincarnate appearance of Jesus Himself.

Using Scripture to interpret Scripture is always a good idea. However, the argument against using this as evidence that the sons of God are angels is that the only other Hebrew occurrences of the phrase are in Job and Job is very different from the books of Moses. The use in Daniel is in Aramaic and uttered by a pagan king. Still, all of Scripture is authored by the Holy Spirit.

There is more evidence for the sons of God being angels in the New Testament. We need to look at and compare several texts. You may want to take note of them and study them more fully at your leasure.

First is 1 Peter 3:18-22, I’ll just read part of these verses. *[Jesus] having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark.*

We talked several Sundays ago about where Jesus’ soul or spirit went during the three days His body was in the grave. He went to the place of the dead to collect the souls of the faithful Old Testament saints, but as we see here, He also made proclamation to spirits who were disobedient during the days of Noah. The reference to spirits in prison could mean the souls of sinful people. More likely though, it refers to those sons of God who were angels that married women.

We can build on this with other verses. Take 2 Peter 2:1-10. These passages talk about God’s judgement on the ungodly, the false teachers, and the sexually perverse. God is able to reserve them for judgement as He is able to save those who are faithful to Him. Again, just a few verses starting with verse 4. *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men.*

Peter gives two examples here of God being able to save while executing His judgement. The second example is saving Lot while He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The first example is saving Noah while storing away rebellious angels. What angels? What angels were included in the account of Noah? It would appear that the only explanation would be the sons of God.

Finally, lets look a Jude 6-7 and hopefully tie these three passages together with each other and with the sons of God in Genesis 6. *And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.*

The book of Jude tends to closely parallel the book of 2 Peter. Who were these angels that did not keep their own domain and abandoned their proper abode? The fallen angels that we consider demons didn’t leave their domain, they were kicked out. Satan is called the prince of the power of the air; Jesus said demons wonder in arid places. Neither are they bound in darkness. They are restrained by God, but they are not contained in prison. If this parallels the account in 2 Peter, these are angels from the time of Noah; these are the sons of God.

Again these angels are compared with what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. What was the sin of the cities around Sodom? It was homosexuality. It was gross sexual immorality and it was going after strange flesh. What does it mean by strange flesh? Strange flesh is any flesh or body that we are not to engage in sexual relations with. God established right in the beginning that sex was to be between a man and a woman; specifically, husband and wife.

If indeed the sons of God in Genesis 6 were angels, we can now see the big problem: angels were having sex with women which was going after strange flesh. It was an unnatural union. I mentioned earlier that it was easier for us to imagine that the sons of God were men because that was more natural. If they were angels, then it was unnatural and against the way God had established creation.

As you can imagine, there is still more to this man or angel discussion. Hopefully, I’ve given you a start and something to chew on. One of the main things to remember is to not get hung up with the details of these verses in Genesis, which we will be coming back to next week, Lord willing. Look closely at the verses, but frequently step back to look at the big picture.

Regardless of whether the sons of God were angels or men, what can we learn from this? For one thing, this is a stark warning to avoid mixed marriages. By ‘mixed’ I mean Christian and non-Christian. The Bible is full of warnings against this. Deuteronomy 22:10 “*You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.*” 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 “*Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?*”

If you are a Christian and you are considering a relationship with an unbeliever, consider those words used to describe him or her: lawlessness, darkness, Belial. The unbeliever may be nice and loving and hard-working and dedicated; but they have no firm foundation on which these qualities stand. The Christian has the firm foundation of Jesus Christ; we maintain these qualities because they are pleasing to Jesus and we have the Holy Spirit enabling us to maintain them. There are many Christians who are broken-hearted in marriage because they ignored these warnings.

Or the Christians enters the marriage thinking the unbeliever will change. This doesn’t work. Compromise will have to take place and ultimately the Christian will be the one to do so to keep the marriage together. Consider what happened at Peor as the Israelites were preparing to enter the Promised Land. The Midianite women came to the Israelite men. It was the men who turned to worship the idols of Midian, not the women who turned to worship the God of Israel.

Again, just scratching the surface. But these ancient words about even more ancient times have important purpose and meaning for us, even today. And that is because they are breathed out by God.

Prayer

 Gracious and all-powerful Lord, we are blessed by Your word. Sometimes it is beyond our understanding, by but the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, we can learn wonderous things. Your word points us to our desperate need for redemption and then shows us how we can receive that redemption through Jesus Christ. Your word tells us the things that are pleasing to You. In living to please You, our life on earth is better, but more importantly, we bring You glory.

Merciful God, we are constantly tempted by the world and by satan, and our flesh cannot bear it. But You promise to always provide us a way of escape. Give us eyes to see that way; give us wisdom to recognize it; and give us strength to use the escape You provide for us.

Lord Jesus, we especially need Your guidance in relationships. May our most important relationship be with You. In keeping You first, we will not participate in anything that would jeopardize our connection with You. Then help us to look past the surface. We cannot judge the heart as You can, but by Your wise guidance, we can find our Christian brothers and sisters with whom we can establish fellowship.

We thank You in Jesus’ name

Amen