

## Noah and the Promise of the Rainbow Genesis 6:1-14

### Introduction

The story of Noah and the flood is not for little children. The story of the flood is horrific, frightening, and tragic. The flood is the justifiable holocaust of an entire generation with the exception of one solitary family. Had any of the children that day survived the flood and been asked to draw on paper what they had experienced, I do not believe you would have seen anything close to what we see in our churches today like the image below:



Instead, what you would have seen is something like the pictures some of the children who survived the tsunami of 2004 that killed over 200,000 people drew to illustrate their experience:



After Cain murdered Abel and was driven away from his family to be a wanderer with his wife, we are told that the hearts of his descendants grew increasingly evil. Cain's great, great, great grandson Lamech was much more violent than Cain and became known for twisting the institution of marriage by taking two wives instead of one (see Gen. 4:24-24).

After Seth was born, we learn that people began to call upon the name of the God of Adam and Eve (4:26). Through Seth, another bloodline was started to counter the bloodline of Cain. Cain's line represents evil, while Seth's line represents the line through which the promised Deliverer

would come. Cain's line grew to be both secular and violent, while Seth's line represented godliness in a world when calling upon the name of the Lord was rare and unpopular.

### **The Wickedness on the Earth Became Great**

Through Seth, God would fulfill the promise made to Adam and Eve, but there were dark powers that would seek and strive to keep the Descendant of Eve from ever being born! It is to that part of the story we now turn our attention:

**Now it came about, when mankind began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain with man forever, because he is also flesh; nevertheless his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of mankind, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. (Gen. 6:1-4)**

Three groups of people are named in Genesis 6:1-4. There are the sons of God, the daughters of mankind, and the Nephilim. There are also three main views that have served to explain who these three sets of people were, I will share the three ways theologians throughout the ages have understood who these people are in Genesis and then I will offer a fourth possible way of understanding these verses:

1. The "sons of God" represent the line of Seth, and the "daughters of men" represent the line of Cain. The intermingling of Seth's descendants with Cain's line blurred the distinction between those devoted to God and those who had turned away. This union led to a moral collapse that hastened humanity's corruption and ultimately brought about God's judgment through the flood.
2. One widely held perspective is that the "sons of God" (a phrase frequently referring to angels)<sup>1</sup> were fallen angels who took on human appearance and engaged in relationships with human women, referred to as the daughters of men. According to this interpretation, these unions resulted in the birth of the Nephilim—figures described as formidable, possibly giant warriors who were both feared and renowned. This view has been prominent throughout Jewish and Christian tradition.
3. Another interpretation suggests that the "sons of God" were regional kings who were exalted as divine figures by the people they governed. Much like Lamech, these rulers acted with unchecked authority, taking as many wives from among the "daughters of men" (ordinary women) as they desired, often practicing extensive polygamy. The offspring of these unions became influential princes, celebrated as "mighty men of old, men of renown."

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<sup>1</sup> The term "sons of God" refers to angels in several Old Testament passages, specifically in Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, and Psalms 29:1 and 89:6.

I used to hold to the first view, but have since rejected it, and I have always struggled with the second view for the simple fact that angels are spiritual beings (Heb. 1:14) who do not share our DNA and therefore make it impossible to impregnate human women. However, I do believe that fallen angels (sons of God) possessed the “sons of god” (regional rulers/kings) who took the daughters of men as wives for themselves. The reason why I believe this is because of what Jude and Peter wrote about concerning Genesis 6:1-4.<sup>2</sup>

According to Jude and Peter, what happened in Genesis 6 was a demonic overstepping so severe that they were judged immediately before the rest of the demons who will eventually be cast into the lake of fire. Let me share with you where I land on what is happening in Genesis 6:1-4 that seems to best fit the context and progression of sin from Cain to the flooding of the earth.

Here is the way I see it: By the time we get to Genesis 6, the culture of humankind has grown exceedingly promiscuous and violent. Cain killed Abel. Lamech killed a man and a child and took two wives for himself, and then one generation later we are introduced to the “sons of god” taking the “daughters of men” to have children known as the Nephilim. There was little regard for the sanctity of life and God’s design for sex within the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman. When we come to Genesis 6, we are told, **“The LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually”** (v. 5).

In light of what we know about the religious practices of the ancient East and that fallen angels are capable of demonic possession of humans (see Mark 5:1-20), It is possible that the sons of God (fallen angels) possessed regional kings who were so wicked that they welcomed the possession of demons they may have worshiped as gods (see Deut. 32:15-17; 1 Cor. 10:20). It is possible that the regional kings, while under the influence of those fallen angels, took on a harem of women (the daughters of men). The regional kings of Genesis 6 opened themselves up to being demonized, and that fallen angles used their bodies to further pervert the sanctity of marriage as an institution created and sanctioned by God.

We will certainly see this when we get to the book of Revelation in January, but for now what you should know is that the institution of marriage was always designed to function as a portrait of Christ’s relationship to the Church; the apostle Paul goes as far as to state the original design of the institution of marriage in Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-25, **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”** This

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<sup>2</sup> **Jude 6–7.** “And angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place, *these* He has kept in eternal restraints under darkness for the judgment of the great day, <sup>7</sup> just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these *angels* indulged in sexual perversion and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

**2 Peter 2:4.** “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, held for judgment...”

mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph. 5:31–33). It was because of the violence against the image of God and the perversion of the sanctity of marriage that we are told in the following verses:

**Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. So the Lord was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then the Lord said, “I will wipe out mankind whom I have created from the face of the land; mankind, and animals as well, and crawling things, and the birds of the sky. For I am sorry that I have made them.” (Gen. 6:5-7).**

### **God’s Infinite Goodness Overcomes the Deepest Wickedness**

It was only because the wickedness of Noah’s generation was so great, pervasive, and unrelenting that He chose to flood the earth. Yet, even in the midst of great evil and wickedness, God chose to spare a man and his family to start over, and he did it through Noah’s family (v. 8). So, God instructed Noah, **“The end of humanity has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of people; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch” (Gen. 6:13-14).**

Only Noah, his family, and two of every animal according to their kind were spared, as God intended to begin anew through them (notice that God specified "kind," not "species"). To Noah, God declared, **“But I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. Of every living creature of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female” (vv. 18-19).** So, Noah and his family entered the ark, and then the floodwaters came, resulting in the destruction of thousands under the judgment of a holy God.

Although God could have rightly destroyed every living creature, He chose to spare Noah and his family. Through Noah, his family, and a chosen group of animals, protected in an ark made from wood, God demonstrated mercy. God then assured Noah with a promise: **“Now behold, I Myself am establishing My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you.... I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be eliminated by the waters of a flood, nor shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth” (vv. 8-9, 11).** What would be the sign of the covenant made with Noah? Here is what God said: **“This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations; I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall serve as a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth” (Gen. 9:12-13).**

The rainbow stands as a powerful reminder—to us and to God—that He has set aside His warrior’s bow, placing it in the sky as a sign of peace. The flood cleansed the blood stained soil of the earth caused by the wickedness of humanity and washed away the rampant perversion that

became a part of the culture. God's promise to Adam and Eve that a deliverer would come—the hope they saw in Seth and his descendants—was kept through Noah, who remained righteous in a corrupt world. God overcame human wickedness with the flood, but in His goodness, He also provided a way for the coming of Christ.

Not long after Noah and his family were saved from the judgment of God, we are reminded that no flood can remedy the problem of the human heart. In Genesis 9:20-29, we learn that Noah got drunk and passed out naked and his son Ham looked upon his father's nakedness in a way that was shameful and disrespectful. Ham was cursed to become a servant of the descendants of his older brothers, while Shem would carry on the bloodline that would eventually lead to the birth of Jesus Christ.

The sins of Adam, Cain, Lamech, Noah, and Ham are our struggles too. We all have a heart problem that only Christ can fix. The trees provided the gopher wood that saved Noah and his family from the flood of God's wrath, and yet it was also a tree—the cross—where Jesus, the descendant of Adam, Seth, Noah, and Shem, was nailed to bear the curse we deserved. Although Noah was considered righteous in God's sight, he still struggled with the same sin-problem that plagued every generation before him. In contrast, Jesus was perfectly righteous, as Scripture declares: **“For Christ also suffered for sins once for all time, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God...”** (1 Peter 3:18a).

## Conclusion

Please listen closely to what I am about to share. The rainbow, given by God as a sign of His covenant with Noah, was never meant to be used as a justification to redefine, distort, or undermine the institution of marriage or the sacredness of sex within the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. God did not create the sun to shine and its light to form the beautiful arc of colors in the sky through rain, so that anyone might feel free to alter the biological nature with which they were created and choose an identity apart from His design.

The rainbow is a powerful reminder that God takes all sin seriously—including heterosexual sins such as sex before marriage and any form of sexual relations with anyone other than your spouse. It calls us to recognize that God's standard for purity and faithfulness within marriage apply to everyone and serves as a visible sign of both His justice and His mercy.<sup>3</sup>

The rainbow serves as a vivid reminder of God's undeserved mercy, highlighting the justice that, by all rights, should fall upon us. When we see a rainbow stretched across the sky, it's not a testament to our worthiness and rights, but instead displays God's compassion that permits us to behold it. We must understand that, according to God's perfect justice, we deserve not only death but eternal separation from Him. Yet, by His mercy alone, we are given the blessing of another

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<sup>3</sup> “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.” (Heb. 13:4)

day—not so we can pursue our own desires, but so we may be drawn to the cross where God’s Son was slaughtered for our sins.

Ultimately, it is only through the cross of Christ that we can be saved from God’s just wrath. Jesus alone is qualified and able to bear the judgment our sins deserve, offering us true hope and redemption. The tree that Christ was cursed upon in our place is not permission to run to our sin, but the demand to run from our sin to the One who bore all of it, for our salvation from the floods of God’s wrath that we each deserve. Man