

WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?  
Part 4: Conclusion

By

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**Introduction**

In Part 3 of this series we gave a summary of the background of our text, and we provided a brief exposition of verses 1 through 6 of Genesis 6. Briefly, what we should have gained from the study so far is the notion that history is unfolding according to God’s plan. The sons of God have defected from the pure worship of God, and God has pronounced judgment upon the land. Although man was created in the image of God, he also is flesh. Even the sons of God are flesh. God has promised to remove His Spirit, and He has set the limit of His patience.

Now you might ask why we are spending so much time on these few verses. This is the fourth installment. I think Warren Gage has said it best: “. . . first . . . the flood of Noah establishes the fundamental paradigm of biblical judgment recurring in the destructions of Sodom, Egypt, Canaan, Jerusalem (both the first and second temples), and the present cosmos. This pattern of judgment is reducible to three elements: the ‘days of Noah,’ the ‘flood’ of judgment, and the deliverance of the remnant from wrath. Second . . . the catastrophic judgments, modeled after the flood narrative of Genesis 6-7, are with respect to Jerusalem preceded by historical records synthetically parallel to Genesis 1-5.”<sup>1</sup>

	<b>Flood of Noah</b>		
	<b>Days of Noah</b>	<b>Flood Judgment</b>	<b>Remnant</b>
<b>Sodom/Gomorrah</b>	<b>Days of Lot Luke 17:26-30</b>	<b>Fire as Rain Gen. 19:24</b>	<b>Deliverance of Lot 2 Pet 2:5-8</b>
<b>Exodus</b>	<b>Moses in an Ark Ex. 2:3</b>	<b>Mighty Waters Ex. 15:10</b>	<b>Door of Safety Ex. 12:21-23</b>
<b>Canaan</b>	<b>Nephilim in the Land Num. 13:33</b>	<b>Every living Thing Josh 6:21</b>	<b>Deliverance of Rahab Josh 6:23-24</b>
<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>Days of Noah/Sodom Isa. 1:9; 5:12</b>	<b>Assyrian Flood Isa. 8:7-8; 17:12-13</b>	<b>Door of Safety Isa. 26:20</b>
<b>Present World</b>	<b>Days of Noah Matt. 24:37-39</b>	<b>End with a Flood Dan. 9:26-27</b>	<b>Israel will be saved Rom. 9:29</b>

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<sup>1</sup>Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Carpenter Books, 1984), 63.

### ***Sodom/Gomorrah***

In Luke 17 Jesus connects the days of Noah with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah:

And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed (Lk. 17:26-30).<sup>2</sup>

Gen. 19:24 describes the brimstone and fire coming down from heaven as rain. In referring to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Peter uses the rescue of Lot as an example of God's ability to rescue the righteous. Like Noah who found favor in God's sight, Gen. 19:19 points out that Lot found grace in God's sight that resulted in the deliverance of his household.

### ***Exodus***

As Noah was delivered from the flood in an ark, so Moses rides above the destruction in an ark covered with pitch. As the mighty waters prevailed in the flood to destroy the wickedness of mankind, so the mighty waters of prevailed to destroy Pharaoh and his army. Ex. 12:21-23 records that Israel sought safety from the destroyer behind the doors. So in Gen. 7:16 Noah and his family sought safety behind the door of the ark. In 1 Pet. 3:20-21 Peter connects the flood of Noah with baptism, as Paul in 1 Cor. 10:2 declared that Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. As God had made the dry ground appear in creation, so the dry ground appears as a sign to Noah of the abating flood. So also God divides the waters of the sea and makes the dry ground appear upon which the people of God are rescued.

### ***Canaan***

The days of Noah and the days of Joshua are connected by the reference to the Nephilim in the land. As God divided the waters of the flood to cause the ark to rest on the mountain, so God divided the waters of the Jordan to bring Israel into the land to give them rest in the mountain of His inheritance. As God had declared that he would destroy every living thing from the earth in the flood, so God charges Joshua to destroy every living thing in the land. As Lot was delivered from the condemnation of the wicked Sodom, so Rahab is delivered from the condemnation of the wicked Jericho.

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<sup>2</sup>*New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update.*

### *Jerusalem*

The days of Israel before the invasion of the Assyrians is characterized in Isaiah 5 as a people who are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage with no concern for the ways of God. So God promised to bring the flood of the Assyrian army that would rise even up to the neck. Isa. 54:9 specifically connects the days of Israel with the days of Noah. In Isa. 1:9-10 the destruction of Israel is characterized as the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Nevertheless a remnant would be saved. Isa. 26:20 declares that they should seek refuge behind the door of Babylon to which God is taking them as an ark to preserve them above the flood waters to return to the land in a second Exodus.

### *Present World*

In Matthew 24 Jesus characterized the end times as the Day of Noah: “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah” (Matt. 24:37). Daniel declares that the end will be a flood. The abomination of desolation will be a sign to the faithful remnant to flee to the mountains as did Lot in order to escape the judgment of fire. And Paul declares that all of Israel will be saved.

The flood narrative is paradigmatic of biblical judgment. But, as we pointed out when we considered the structure of this material, the focal point is the reference in verse 6 that God was grieved in His heart the He had made man on the earth. The material preceding verse 6 and following from verse 6 present the conditions that lead up to the judgment, and the nature of that judgment.

Our consideration of verses 1 - 3 have presented the defection of the sons of God from the pure worship of God, and that God will remove His spirit from mankind. Verse 4 begins cataloging the degeneration that will lead to the judgment of the flood.

4 הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בְּאֶרֶץ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וְגַם אַחֲרֵי-כֵן אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל-בָּנוֹת  
הָאָדָם וַיִּלְדוּ לָהֶם הַמָּה הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מְעוֹלָם אָנָשִׁי הַשָּׁמַיִם:

- 4 The Nephilim were in the land in those days, and also after this, when the sons of God came into the daughters of the man, and they brought forth to them. They *were* the warriors who *were* from ages, men of renown.

Verse 4 declares that the Nephilim were in the land in those days and also after these days. Many translations have the word “giants” as a translation of this word. The term “Nephilim” simply means “fallen ones.” It occurs only twice in the OT. We may be able to identify the Nephilim by asking the question, “Why does the author include the parenthetical note, ‘and also after this’”? It creates a problem in the text because the Flood account indicates that every human being on the face of the ground, except the eight souls in the ark, were destroyed. So, if everyone was destroyed, how can there be any relationship between the Nephilim before the flood and the Nephilim after the flood. One thing is obvious from the comment. Moses wants the reader to connect these two groups in some way. The only other time this noun occurs in the OT is Num. 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.” The Nephilim after the flood, referred to in Num. 13:33, are certainly not angelic beings of any kind, nor is there any indication in Numbers that they are the

offspring of angels or demons and human females. They are giant sized humans who live in the land and who serve as a terror to the spies. Moses is saying something like this: “Just like there are fallen ones in the land in our time, so there were fallen ones in the land then too.” And if Moses’ connection is of any value, it at least serves to connect these two groups by way of their similarities. The Nephilim after the flood in the land of Canaan were giants and enemies of the people of God. They were apparently warriors who had a terrible reputation. Additionally, they inhabited Hebron, which was the highest city in Israel. I think we can conclude from the few statements in Genesis 6 and its connection with the Nephilim after the flood that perhaps the Nephilim of Genesis 6 were also giant sized humans who, as the text states, were warriors of great reputation. In fact, 6:4 says, “They *were* the warriors who *were* from ages, men of renown.” The picture we get from Numbers indicates that perhaps the pre-flood Nephilim were also warriors who opposed the people of God, or at least the works of God. This is also reminiscent of Lamech. In his poem in Genesis 4, Lamech boasts of killing a man, possibly two, and he declares that he does not need God’s protection. In this poem Lamech is depicted as a man who makes a name for himself by violence. Notice another interesting connection. The expression “men of renown” is actually, “men of the name.” These were men who made a name for themselves. This will become important in the Babel story where mankind gathers on the plains of Shinar in order to “make a name for themselves” (Gen. 11:4). And what were these men doing? Opposing the commands of God and setting themselves up to be gods. God had commanded Adam and Eve to have dominion over the beasts of the field, but these men exercised dominion over other men. There is a strong connection between the Nephilim and Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord. The primary region of his kingdom was Babel, which is Babylon (Gen. 10:10).

The expression “men of the name” is an idiom indicating men who make a name for themselves. This connects up with the post-diluvian society who said, “let us make a name for ourselves.” It is important that this passage, Gen. 6:1-10 is set off by the reference to the sons of Noah in 5:32 and again in 6:10. The first son of Noah is Shem. In Hebrew, the name “Shem” is the word שֵׁם. So, Shem’s name is pronounced ‘shame.’ The Hebrew word “name” is in fact the word שֵׁם, pronounced ‘shame.’ Shem’s name means name. The violent Nephilim are men of the name, but Noah, whose name means rest, is in the line of those who call upon the name of the Lord and has a son named “name,” who becomes the ancestor of Abram, who calls upon the name of the Lord. Notice also that in the covenant that God established with Abram in Gen. 12:2, God says, “I will make you name great” [תִּשְׁמַעְךָ הַלְּבָבִים]. One way God would make the Abram’s name great would be to give him the land. But, for Abram to gain the land, it would have to be taken away by force from the inhabitants.

As we pointed out, Num. 13:33 is the only other place in the OT where the word “Nephilim” is used. Num. 13:33 identifies the sons of Anak as the Nephilim, and Num. 13:22 points out that the sons of Anak dwelt in Hebron. The first time we meet Hebron is in Gen. 13:18. The text says, “So Abram moved his tents and went to live by the oaks of Mamre in Hebron, and he built an altar to the Lord there.” This notice happens after the conflict between Lot’s herdsmen and Abram’s herdsmen. Lot looks to the plains toward Sodom and Gomorrah and dwells there. Immediately after Lot departs, the Lord speaks to Abram and says, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that

if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. Arise, walk around the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you” (Gen. 13:14-17).

What is really interesting is that the very next chapter, Genesis 14, records the victory of Abram over the four kings who defeated the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and took Lot captive. According to the testimony of Melchizedek, king of Salem, God delivered Abram’s enemies into his hand. In chapter 12 God promised to make Abram’s name great. In the latter part of chapter 12 Abram is driven out of the land and sojourns in Egypt. Notice that Pharaoh saw the beauty of Abram’s wife and took her. But God brings plagues upon Pharaoh and verse 23 says, “Pharaoh gave his men orders about Abram, so they sent him out, along with his wife and all his possession.” In chapter 13 God promised to give all the land to Abram and his descendants. In chapter 14 God gives Abram victory over his enemies, and in chapter 15 God establishes the covenant with Abram. What does God say? God told Abram that his descendants would be as many as the stars of the sky, and that He would give to Abram this land to possess. He also told him that his descendants would dwell as strangers in a foreign country, just as Abram had done back in chapter 12, that God would execute judgment upon that nation, just as God had done upon Pharaoh in chapter 12, and that afterwards Abram’s people would come out with many possessions, just as was recorded in chapter 12 of Abram. Gen. 15:16 states, “In the fourth generation your descendants will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet been reached.” In the following verses God establishes the covenant with Abram promising to give this land to his descendants. How would they take the land from the inhabitants? By war, just as Abram had done against the four kings, and God would give Abram’s descendants victory over their enemies. The reputation of the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt was so great that the Rahab says, “I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard [it], our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” God had made Israel’s name great by defeating their enemies.

By contrast, the Nephilim were mighty men, warriors, giant men who made a name for themselves. Next to them, we are as grasshoppers. How can the people of God withstand the power of these mighty men? By calling upon the name of the Lord, and walking around with Him. God destroyed the Nephilim of Noah’s day with the flood, and He destroyed the Nephilim of Joshua’s day with the invasion of God’s army, another flood. The Nephilim of Numbers and Joshua were living where? in Hebron, the very place where Abram went to live after God had promised to give his descendants the land. God will give His people victory over the enemy. How will He do this? Perhaps this is hinted at by the appearance of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who comes out to meet Abram after Abram had defeated his enemies. Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, comes out to meet Abram, and he brings with him bread and wine. Although the king of Sodom offered to give Abram all his possessions, Abram would not take a thing, “That way you can never say, ‘It is I who made Abram rich.’” Unlike the sons of God who saw the daughters of the man and took them, Abram would not be enticed by the riches of this world. He looked for a city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Abram believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. How can we escape the coming flood? How can we have victory over the enemy in whose eyes we

are but grasshoppers? By calling upon the name of the Lord, by walking around with Him, and by trusting Him. The world was destroyed because of the wickedness of men. Noah was saved because he found favor in God's sight. This was a message to Israel about how they were going to have victory over the enemy that dwelt in the land that God had promised to give them. God would bring a flood, the cleansing flood, that would defeat the enemy for us, and we celebrate this victory with bread and wine. This sounds to me like a plan, and this kind of plan does not square with the notion that God doesn't know the future.

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל־יַיְצֵר מִחֻשְׁבֹת לִבּוֹ רַק רַע כָּל־הַיּוֹם:

5 And saw the Lord that great evil of the man in the land, and every purpose of the thoughts of his heart only evil all the day.

In the first chapter of Genesis, the expression “and God saw . . .” occurs 7 times. A similar expression does not occur again until this verse, “and the Lord saw . . .” Whereas in Genesis 1, God saw that it was good, now God sees the great evil in the land. What was the great evil of the man in the land? Twice in this context the word “violence” appears; in 6:11 and 6:13. Also, there seems to be a connection of this context with the descendants of Cain and especially Lamech. Both Cain and Lamech were murderers, and Lamech took two wives. God had commanded the man to be fruitful and multiply and fill the land. Contrary to this, the man was hunting and killing others.

The term “purpose” comes from the root **צַר**. The verb form of this root occurs three times in the preceding narrative; in 2:7, 8, and 19. In each case it has to do with God forming. In verses 7 and 8 it refers to God forming the man from the dust of the ground. In verse 19 it refers to the fact that God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky. God had formed man and beast and given them life. Now man forms evil and death on man and beast.

The “devising of the heart” is an echo of Cain's action in killing Abel. Cain devised his plan to do away with his brother. The devising of the heart, coupled with the reference to violence in 11 and 13 seem to indicate that the corruption was murder. Man devised to kill one another, so God would kill them. The punishment fits the crime. This also explains the institution of capital punishment after the flood, Gen. 9:6.

וַיִּנְחַם יְהוָה כִּי־עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים לִבּוֹ:

6 And the Lord was sorry that He made the man in the land, and He was grieved in His heart.

The Hebrew term translated “was sorry” is from the verb **נחם**. The interesting thing about this verb is that it occurs only one other time before this verse, in Gen. 5:29. Let me read from verse 28: “Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us comfort [**נחם**] from our work and from the toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’” Also, the term used here, **וַיִּתְעַצֵּב**, translated “was grieved,” is from the root **עצב**. This is the same root that is used in Gen. 3:16 and 17, **בְּעִצְבוֹן**, to refer to the “toil” or “labor” that was part of the curse upon the woman and the man. The woman's toil or labor in child bearing would be multiplied. The man's toil or labor would be in providing sustenance. The man and the woman are cursed with grief for rebelling against their

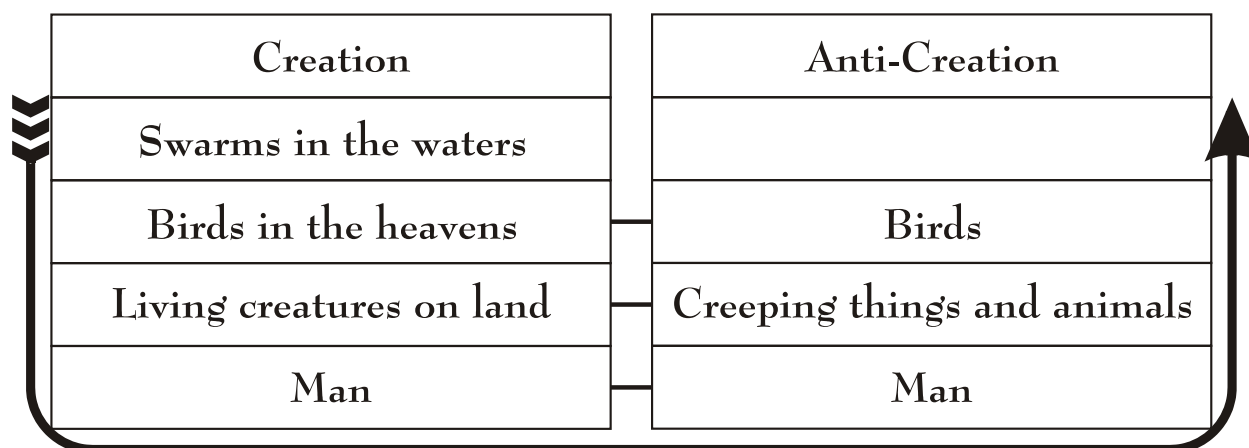
Maker. God is grieved for having made them. In Gen. 5:29, Lamech names his son Noah because he will bring comfort from their toil. Interestingly, Lamech does not name his son “comfort.” Rather, he names him “Noah” which means rest. How will Noah bring comfort from the toil which is a result of the curse? By means of rest. How does one obtain this rest? By walking with God.

It is also interesting that Noah brings rest from the toil of working the cursed ground because, in Gen. 9:3, God says, “Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as [I gave] the green plant.” Prior to this point, man was strictly a vegetarian. He could sustain his earthly life only by working the cursed ground. Now God has given man comfort from the toil of working the ground by allowing man to kill every moving thing for food. In other words, man’s life will be sustained by killing living things. Those things will give their lives in order that man may live.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲמַחֶה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה  
עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נַחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתִם:

- 7 And said the Lord, “I will wipe out the man which I have created from upon the face of the ground, from man unto beast, unto creeping thing, and unto birds of the heavens, for I regret that I made them.”

Why does God condemn the beasts, the creeping things, and the birds along with man? The effects of man’s sin corrupt and the universe. Paul talks about the fact that the whole of creation groans and suffers because of man’s sin. Notice that the delineation of those who will be destroyed is in the reverse order of the creation:



Notice that there is no statement about the destruction of the swarming things in the sea. This, of course, makes sense since seeing that the judgment is in the form of a flood. But, also, there is a greater judgment coming in which God will destroy even the fish of the sea:

“I will completely remove all [things] From the face of the earth,” declares the Lord.  
 “I will remove man and beast;  
 I will remove the birds of the sky

And the fish of the sea,  
 And the ruins along with the wicked;  
 And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord (Zeph. 1:2-3).

One thing that we have tried to point out is that the interconnectedness of the narrative shouts out the foreknowledge of God. There is overwhelming evidence that this has all been planned, and planned down to the minute detail. Such planning and execution demands a comprehensive and certain knowledge of everything actual and possible. But, I think Moses is introducing a point that will be developed throughout the rest of the Bible. It is not simply a matter that God knows everything that is actual and possible, including all of our future free choices. Rather, the point is that God’s knowledge upon which is based His plan, is our only hope. If God does not know everything, past, present, and future, actual and possible, then we have no hope. Isn’t this precisely the speech of God to Job? In chapters 1 and 2 of Job, the reader is given a behind the scenes look at the events that precipitate Job’s suffering. We know that it is not because of any sin of Job that he suffers. So, as the dialogue between Job and his friends develops, the reader gets this feeling of being on the inside: “If they only knew what I know.” As a reader, you are privy to knowledge that gives you a sense of understanding. “I know why Job is suffering, because I saw what happened in the exchange between God and the Satan.”

Then God speaks, and when God speaks, all of a sudden the reader is confronted by the realization, “I don’t understand any better than Job!!.”

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,  
 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel  
 By words without knowledge?  
 3 "Now gird up your loins like a man,  
 And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!  
 4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
 Tell [Me], if you have understanding,

Remember the characterization of mankind in this very passage: “every plan of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil every day.” Left to our own devices, we are destined for eternal separation from God. Listen to the words of Peter spoken at Pentecost: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this [Man], delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put [Him] to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power” (Acts 2:22-24). It is not simply true that God knows the future. God’s foreknowledge is our only hope. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. ““Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,’ declares the Lord God, ‘rather than that he should turn from his ways and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die””

(Ezek. 18:23-24). When open theists deny that God knows future contingent events, they are not simply making an interesting albeit aberrant theological point. They are robbing us of hope. I rather trust in God, Who knows when I sit down and when I rise up; Who understands my thought long before I have it. Who has measured my path and my lying down, Who is intimately acquainted with all my ways. All the days that were formed for me were written in His book before there were any of them. Because God knows all things, He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.