
Corruption: The Spread of Sin

Genesis 5:1-6:8

Introduction

Moses had a problem. He is supposed to be leading the people of God out of Egypt to the promised land. But the people he is leading are so immersed in the culture of their day, that he must give them their identity and their history. Genesis is that history and identity. While it functions to inform the people of God, to launch the strands of redemptive history, it also serves to debunk the myths of his day. It should not surprise us that those same myths are reemerging today.

Here are some of the myths, ancient and modern, that Genesis answers. These core underlying myths were expressed in the ancient religions and in some of modern science, so-called.

Matter has always existed.

There is no reality behind and beyond the universe, the universe is ultimate reality.

The earth/cosmos is very ancient.

There are many gods, beings, intelligences in the universe and many equally true belief systems.

We have already seen the powerful argument of Genesis against these myths. Genesis 5-6 will speak to others. We are leaving a post-modern age and entering a neo-pagan or neo-mysticism age with the loss of a coherent, rational world view.

For Example, a popular movie of several years ago has enjoyed a modest run as a series on television. The movie and the series are called *Stargate*. The premise is simply that the ancient myths and stories of the gods and humans come from a time when the great alien races that inhabit the universe visited earth. A particularly nasty and evil race have been making war across the universe attempting to assert dominance, using humans, as well as other civilizations as their slaves. The ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman gods were simply the names of powerful aliens and races who were at war with one another. Makes a great Sci-fi flick if you are into that sort of thing until you read Genesis 6.

I am sure many of you will be surprised to learn that there are serious studies at several major universities through the world who are proposing new sciences, sociologies and psychologies based on and guided by the ancient mystic religions. While not yet mainstream, it will not be long. The alternative medicines with their mysticism and occultism are already mainstream in nursing and in some medical practices. We are now in the world of first century Christianity. Pragmatic technologies existing alongside the most irrational of mythologies.

With the polemic as a sub-purpose, there is a central common theme in these two chapters. Moses is very concerned to show the preservation and the purity of the line of the promised one, the coming Redeemer, the Messiah.

Chronology – The Establishment of the Redeemer’s Line (5:1-32)

This section can be challenging. It is easy to want to overlook the chronology just to hit the three high points. But I want to us to think carefully about the chronology as well as focusing on the three people commented on by our author.

Its History

Why does Moses include chronologies? More to the point, why is the formula followed? There is a definite, *born, lived so long until begat, lived so long after begat, died* rhythm. First, he is establishing the line to Abraham which will eventually be picked up and extended to Christ. While this may not seem important to us, that Jesus is the son of Adam, the son of Abraham and the son of David all establish his credentials. The gospel writers will come back to the chronologies and use them to prove the identity of Jesus.

Second, Moses is showing that the earth is not very, very old. Many scholars scoff at the idea that the years from Adam to Abraham can be calculated. They argue that these numbers are unreliable because they are symbolical or there are generations between the father and son. Yet, it is quite easy to calculate the years here. You simply add up the ages at which the father begat a son. It seems to me that there is no reason to record the years if they were not reliable. I believe they are. Therefore, there are 1656 or 1657 years from the creation of Adam to the Flood. The creation was around 4000 BC and the flood occurred 2344 or 2343 BC.

So this history is important. This redemptive history establishes the credentials for our Redeemer. This history that Moses and all the writers give is selected for how it brings us to Jesus. It may not do it directly in that it points directly to Christ. But in all sorts of multifaceted ways, redemptive history is about Christ.

Its Highlights

In the wearying repetition of birth and death, three important people are highlighted.

Adam – The Transmission of Humanity (v.1-5)

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. ³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.

Adam is made in the image of God. He receives his essence and person from God directly. He is designed and made by God. Seth is begotten in the image of Adam. So Adam transmits to Seth the image of God he receives from God. We also know from the Bible, that he also transmits his sinfulness.

One other point is being made here. The true lineage of the coming Redeemer is through Seth. There were many, many families on the earth all of whom came from Adam and Eve. But out of all those families, Seth was to be the start of the line to

the coming one. No one else may make that claim. No one outside of the line of Seth can be the promised one.

Enoch – The Example of Holiness (v.21-24)

⁶ When Seth had lived 105 years, he fathered Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived after he fathered Enosh 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸ Thus all the days of Seth were 912 years, and he died.

⁹ When Enosh had lived 90 years, he fathered Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived after he fathered Kenan 815 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹ Thus all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died.

¹² When Kenan had lived 70 years, he fathered Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived after he fathered Mahalalel 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Thus all the days of Kenan were 910 years, and he died.

¹⁵ When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he fathered Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived after he fathered Jared 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ Thus all the days of Mahalalel were 895 years, and he died.

¹⁸ When Jared had lived 162 years, he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived after he fathered Enoch 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Thus all the days of Jared were 962 years, and he died.

²¹ **When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. ²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.**

Here we find a man who trusted God, who had faith in God. How do we know that? Because Enoch is said to have walked with God. Hebrews 11 tells us that whenever in the Old Testament we find what faith produces, we should see faith. Enoch walked with God by faith, by trusting in God.

Enoch was taken up into heaven by God. Enoch is the first man not to die. He escapes the curse and the judgment on sin. Here is hope. Those who trust and walk with God have the hope of escaping the world of sin. That world is left by faith. God took him up and so he is translated or even better, raised up to heaven.

Noah – The Expectation of Hope (v.25-32)

²⁵ When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he fathered Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived after he fathered Lamech 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷ Thus all the days of Methuselah were 969 years, and he died.

²⁸ When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son ²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.” ³⁰ Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹ Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died.

³² After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Lamech expresses the wearying care due to the burden of the curse. The work is hard and burdensome. The curse in all its aspects brings difficulty and death. Here is a longing for change, a desire for relief. The word translated *relief* here is *rest*. The word for *rest* here sounds like the Hebrew word Noah. The daily round of labor in fallenness spurs a desire for the relief of rest. Now don't miss in the practical sweat of Lamech's brow and the irony of Noah's name, the line of thought. We image bearers may walk with God but we will long for the rest, the Sabbath, that comes only from God.

But there was a hope for comfort in the son. The irony here is unmistakable. Noah may bring rest and relief out of the ground. But it will not come as expected!

The lesson in this chapter is that we live in a fallen world, full of death and dying. The curse is terrible.

Corruption – The Attack on the Redeemer's Line (6:1-5)

Now I have chosen to take all this together. The unifying theme is the Redeemer's line. In chapter 5 it is established and in chapter 6 it is attacked. Satan seeks to destroy the redemptive plan of God. He began with the murderous destruction of Abel. Now, as the human race proliferates, he attempts to destroy by corrupting it.

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. ³Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." ⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

⁵The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Its Pollution (v.1-4)

First, he attempts to pollute the human race through the contamination of the Seed Line. I am going to take a moment to talk about what is going on here, partially because it is difficult and partially because I believe it has bearing on what is going on today.

There are three common views on the identity of the sons of God and the daughters of men. One view says that the sons of God are the descendants of Seth and the daughters of men are the descendants of Cain. The intermarrying then destroys the purity of the line of Seth. This is usually argued as though the context of chapter 5 makes it necessary or desirable. The problem is why would only the men in Seth's line want to marry outside their family line? Why isn't Moses just plain about it? Why use this obtuse way of speaking?

The second view is that the sons of God here are mighty kings or rulers of the past, so intelligent and so powerful, that they achieved god-like status. These human "supermen" defile sanctity of marriage with adultery and fornication. Again, it is hard to see why the terms here. Further, why would this produce a special kind of offspring who are heroes yet loathsome.

The view I take is that this is an attempt to pollute the purity of the human race by the intermarriage of fallen angels and human women. Now, I know this sounds fantastic and almost surreal, but let's think about it for a moment.

In a cluster of texts in Job, angels are referred to as sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Job is interesting because he is probably a contemporary of Abraham and may have known Noah.

Angels always appear as young males. Never ever in the Bible is an angel female. They are always presented with masculine traits, pronouns and are called by masculine names. We know that God manifests a being physically according to its essential nature.

Angels are not married nor given in marriage (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25). But that does not mean they are sexless. In the face of this text here, we should at least be open to the possibility that angels are not only male in their persons but also in their bodies. It is also possible that these fallen angels inhabit male human bodies for sex. However, it is hard to see how that would produce the offspring they do.

This union produced a class of beings called the Nephilim. They occur here, and as is mentioned, later on afterward. They are also in Canaan and are part of the bad report the spies gave at Kadesh-Barnea. The literature on this is staggering. The word simply means mighty ones, ones who fall upon. What is being conveyed here has come down to us through history as the demi-gods of the ancient (and modern) mythologies. Notice that the text says that this union brought them forth. They may be the half-breed offspring of the union of fallen angels and human women.

Jude 2:6-7 seems to be referring to Genesis 6. It describes the vile fallen angels who left their first - and the word is either habitation or station or domain. They are like the homosexuals of Sodom and Gomorrah who practice perverse immorality and go after strange flesh. That, I believe, is a reference to the story of the angelic visitation of Lot in Sodom when the men of Sodom wanted Lot to turn over the angels to them for sex. The comparison here makes sense if Genesis 6 is talking about the same sort of wicked polluting union.

This union takes place, at least after the Flood, in the pagan temples where sacred prostitution is practiced. While not common here, in the ancient world, sex with a priest or priestess was considered a sacred union with the gods conveying blessing, particularly, fertility on the home and fields. Israel is being warned against the pagan fertility practices that will be common among the Canaanites. Israel's history shows her sad vulnerability to the enticements of the Astarte, the groves and idols where she committed adultery against her husband-king, Yahweh.

Its Pervasiveness (v.5)

The line is also attacked by the pervasive spread of sin and depravity. Look carefully at this charge. Man's wickedness was great in its variety and inventiveness. There were not only lots of sin, but the most incredible diversity and ingenuity applied to create new and exciting expressions of rebellion against God.

The next sentence is stunning. Look at the description: every motive of every thought was only evil all the time. Men's hearts were oriented in their thoughts and desires toward only evil at every moment. Depravity unrestrained. Depravity imagining evil with not only the actual thoughts, but the direction and desire of every thought. I take this indictment literally. It is almost as though the ingenuity and inventiveness of man was given free reign. Instead of applying their great intelligence and imagination to creative expressions of worship, obedience and godly dominion over creation, it was applied to the most appalling depravities. Think of it this way: imagine how wicked that world had become that God not only had to wipe out all humanity, but also almost every trace of the civilizations of that day.

Condemnation - the Preservation of the Redeemer's Line (v.6-8)

⁶ And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Its Sorrow (v.6)

Notice God's response. He is sorry, grieved and angry. What He has made has now become polluted and poisoned. Here we find the godly response to sin. There is grief over the marred purpose and folly of sin. There is anger over the rejection and rebellion against God. Here is the heart of God over sinners and sin: mingled grief and wrath.

Now this raises a very important question: Was God unable to anticipate this so that He changes what He is doing? There is a growing heresy led by men like Greg Boyd and John Sanders that teaches that God could not know ahead that this would be the actual course of man before the Flood. God is moving along the "Now" just as we are. He cannot know the actual future decisions of "free-will" beings, only their potential decisions. This text is often cited as proof of their ideas. This is heresy. This is pagan.

I will not take the time to answer this view in great detail. Only let me say that the Bible clearly teaches that God knows all that is, was, can be and will be, not merely as an act of knowing but as a result of willing. In other words, God, had decided and decreed that this depravity leading to destruction would take place. The Bible also teaches that God is actively interacting with man along the trajectory of His decrees. He is joyful and grieved as He is actually engaged with and responding to that which He has determined to bring about. While this is difficult, it is exactly what the Bible portrays. Absolute full knowledge in conjunction with absolute full sovereignty and a real, living interaction that produces decisions and emotions in time.

So, you need to have some clear confessional truths (doctrine) in your heart. Please be patient while I simply assert these without attempting to prove them. We have discussed these at length in a series several years ago in which we engaged and exposed Open Theism for the heresy it is.

God wills sin to take place in such a way that it does take place and God is not responsible for the sin, the one sinning is.

God is above and over all things, separate from and not dependent on anything and is actively involved and engaged with events and people in time.

God can interact with His creation in a real and living way and remain immutable and unchangeable in His essence, that is, His person, character, purity and purposes.

The Bible holds up for us to marvel at the sorrow of God over sin. Yes, He is angry over sin. But sin also grieves Him and brings sorrow. Yahweh grieves for His adulterous wife. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit is grieved over our sin, particularly the sins of our speech. Does your Christlikeness include sorrow over the sad state of sin?

Its Sentence (v.7)

God has indicted man in his sin. Now God passes the sentence. All humanity will die. So will a lot of the rest of the created order. God will blot them out under the waters He has stored up from creation. Such utter destruction shows the utter extent of sin. Here is not internal contradiction in God. He is just. God's justice encompasses a great sorrow over sin and a great wrath against it. This is no stoic, uninvolved, dispassionate meting out of massive punishment. This is the infinite, eternal, holy, sovereign creator-ruler of the universe, spurned by His creatures, spiraling downward into unspeakable wickedness whose great heart breaks and whose mighty justice moves mercifully and mightily.

Just a note here as well. Romans tells us that the created order suffers under the curse and strains forward for the day of release. That suffering was not of its own account. It is because of Adam's sin and the succeeding sinfulness of man. Here is that same suffering and that same delivering. In all the suffering of the creatures both great and small, there is a reminder that we are its ultimate cause. We sinned - they suffer. We will be glorified - they will be freed!

Its Savior (v.8)

Then this wonderful phrase in the midst of universal sin and ultimate destruction, "Noah found favor in God's sight." This phrase occurs 27 times in the Old Testament and 2 times in the New (once as a quote from the Old). It means that God delighted in, enjoyed, looked upon with a smile of joy. What a thing to experience the smile of God. In the midst of such darkness, here is not just a glimmer of light. Here is a thousand faceted million candle power light.

Now we must not think that the favor God found, the delight He had, in Noah is something Noah caused on his own. What characterized this favor according to Hebrews 11 is the kind of faith that produced reverent fear and diligent obedience. What was gone from all around Noah was respect for God. God delighted in Noah's faith, reverence and obedience. Do you long for the smile of God? Believe in Him and bow to Him. He will find favor in a reverent faith and fear that diligently obeys.

So God willed it. God is grieved over it. He purposes and plans to destroy all humanity. And He purposes and plans to deliver a remnant. And it was a sad and sorry day in which to live. In the last 500 years before the great Flood, it appears that only Noah and his family are left. They are a godly remnant in the midst of appalling depravity.

Reflect and Respond

Let me conclude by summarizing and applying some lessons here.

Notice the importance in the Bible and in redemptive history of lineage. The chronologies of the Bible are very important to its story line. Now, we do not make a silly application like, "God thinks your family line is important so we ought to try to discover and preserve our family lineages." The lesson here is that the lineage of Christ, our Redeemer is very important in His humanity.

We are not so distant from this kind of polytheistic and pluralistic world. The polemic of Genesis against the gods and goddesses of their day will be important for us as the west sinks ever more into paganism, mysticism and the occult.

Against the polytheism of our day, we need to assert that there is only one God, the God of the Bible. This may sound arrogant. But it is truth.

Against the pluralism of our day, we need to assert that there is absolute truth. We are not dealing with various, equal interpretations of reality. We are dealing with the God who created and is over all reality.

We are warned that the very same pollution that existed in Genesis 6 and in Canaan in the days of the conquest may well be on the rise in these last days. It is beginning in the imagination and in fantasies. At present, concourse with the spirit world sexually is largely the stuff of movies, TV and dark corners of the internet and our nation. But it may become as accepted as homosexuality and other perversions are.

A pattern is established in this account that is a dominant theme through the Bible. This repeated theme is simply: simultaneous destruction and deliverance. While wrath falls, God preserves His people. Egypt is destroyed in the very Red Sea Israel passes through. Jerusalem is destroyed and God has preserved a remnant in exile. Jesus is destroyed, crushed on the cross; so, sin is defeated and we are delivered.

And God will bring the fulfillment in Christ of the new Adam, the righteous Enoch and the delivering Noah. The Lord Jesus is the new Adam whose realm of obedience is entered by faith. The Lord Jesus is the righteous Enoch who walked with God by faith and was taken up into heaven, death having no claim on Him. The Lord Jesus is the delivering Noah whose ark of salvation shields us and saves us from the certain and sure wrath of God.

When fallenness is terrible, when sinfulness is terrible, when the wrath of God is terrible, marvel at our Redeemer.

Who makes us new men in His image;

Who causes us to walk with God and will take us to be with Him;

Who makes an ark of safety to deliver his sons and daughters from sin and wrath.