

First Things – Genesis
Genesis 6:1-8
“The Bad Old Days”

1. **WHAT GOD SAW IN THOSE DAYS**
 - A. The degree of wickedness among men
 - B. The depth of wickedness within men
2. **WHAT GOD SAID IN THOSE DAYS**
 - A. The work that would cease
 - B. The wrath that would come
3. **WHAT GOD SHOWED IN THOSE DAYS**
 - A. He showed sovereign grace
 - B. He showed saving grace

1. Time has a way of gilding the past. Generally, people look back on bygone days as if they were the better days.

2. The older we get, the less we like the present, and the more we wish we could recover the past. However, the reality is that the good old days were not always as good as we often remember them.

3. I read an article this week entitled, “These Are the Good Old Days (Really)”. In the article, the author pointed out various advancements in economics, technology, and medicine that make this a better time to live, at least practically speaking, than say a hundred years ago.

4. The author pointed out that no country in the world today has a higher infant mortality rate than the wealthiest countries in Europe did in the early 1900’s. In the 20th century, Smallpox claimed at least 300 million lives. It has claimed none in this century.

5. It is estimated that some 920 million people will live in poverty by 2015, but that is only half as many as lived in poverty just 20 years ago.ⁱ

6. In Genesis chapter 6, we find a passage that vividly reveals how the past was not always so good. In fact, the history that the Word of God records for us here could be better described as “the bad old days”.

7. Genesis 6:5 is a sobering description of the moral climate of that day. It says, *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*

8. Unfortunately, these bad old days are not gone forever. In Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus said, *“But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in*

marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

9. With that in mind, we recognize that the bad old days of Genesis 6 offer some important lessons for those of us living in these last days before the return of Christ.

10. Looking at this passage of Scripture I want us to see some things about God and His relationship to the wicked world in those days, and consider what it says to us about God in these days. Notice first of all:

I. WHAT GOD SAW IN THOSE DAYS

1. It had not been too very long since God had looked down upon His newly created earth, and in Genesis 1:31 it says, *"God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."*

2. Now, as we read Genesis 6, God looks down upon the earth and sees something very different. Again, verse 5 says, *"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*

3. In those days the earth was as filled with wickedness as the hearts of the men who lived in it. With that being said, I can't help but wonder what God must see as He looks down upon the men of this day?

4. Consider what God saw in those days. First of all, we are told that He saw:

A. The degree of wickedness among men

1. Verse 5 says that God saw that the wickedness of man was great. The word translated "great" in that verse can mean many, or much, or even an abundance of something.

2. What was going on among men that constituted so much wickedness? The opening verses of the chapter seem to indicate at least *part* of what was going on.

3. Verses 1 and 2 says, *"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."*

4. Admittedly, this is one of the most debated passages in the Bible. There are basically two different interpretations of what is being described here.

5. One interpretation, is that the "sons of God" here refers to fallen angels from heaven. That is, demons, who entered into relations with the women of earth.
6. Another interpretation, and the one I tend accept, is that the "sons of God" refers to the descendents of godly Seth, who motivated by lust, entered into mixed and multiple marriages with the sinful and godless daughters of Cain's descendents.
7. Either way, the result was a generation of men who were physically powerful; that is they were strong in the flesh. That is what is indicated in verse 4. It says, "*There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.*"
8. The wording of that verse describes men of strength who used their power to become tyrants. They were brutal men, who conquered those around them.
9. However we interpret these verses, the end is still the same. The stronger and mightier men became, the more wicked they became as well.
10. We live in a day where men are wealthier, healthier, and more educated than ever before, and yet, for all of our advancement, the degree of depravity around us only increases.
11. Notice not only that God saw the degree of wickedness among men, but we are also told that God saw:

B. The depth of wickedness within men

1. Look again at verse 5. It says that God saw in man, "*...that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*"
2. Literally, every plan and purpose in the hearts and minds of men was only evil every day of their life. The men of that day were not only wicked in their actions, but in their intentions as well.
3. The depravity in that society was a direct result of the depravity in the souls of men. They had become completely wicked, through and through, and God saw it all.
4. If nothing else, what God saw in that day ought to remind us of what God stills sees in this day. He sees the sin of our hands and the sin in our hearts as well.
5. Proverbs 5:21 says, "*For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.*" Proverbs 15:3 adds that, "*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*"

6. Nothing in your heart and life is ever hidden from the eyes of the Lord to whom all things are open and visible.

7. Recently, with increased security measures at airports and the like, there is a lot of talk about the violation of privacy. People are increasingly uncomfortable with the prying eyes of their government.

8. While I understand those concerns, we need to be mindful that we have no rights of privacy before our Creator. He sees all things clearly, and discerns even the thoughts of your heart.

9. Genesis 6 describes for us *what God saw in those days*. Consider with me further:

II. WHAT GOD SAID IN THOSE DAYS

1. Twice in this section of verses we are told of something that God said to the people of the world at that time.

2. In spite of the wholesale wickedness of that day, the God of heaven, who “so loved the world”, still sought to reveal Himself to humanity.

3. Likewise, in this noisy day of human history, where we are surrounded by so many competing voices, the God of heaven is not silent.

4. As in that day, still today God speaks through His Word to the people He longs to save from their sins. Consider with me what God said in those days, and how it applies to us in these days. First of all, we read that God spoke of:

A. The work that would cease

1. Look with me at verse 3. There we read, *“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”*

2. Notice that word “strive”. In most cases, the word is translated as “judge”. However, the word can mean to plead or to contend.

3. In other words, God was saying that His Spirit would not always plead and contend with men, but that after a period of time, 120 years, God would stop the work of dealing with men.

4. This verse portrays both the longsuffering mercy of God, as well as the eventual judgment of God.

5. The men of that day were totally wicked in both thought and deed, but the Lord through His Holy Spirit was still working and pleading with them.
6. Yet, God promised that a day was coming when all the pleading and wooing would end, and He would have to withdraw that mercy from men.
7. Even today, while men wax worse and worse, the Holy Spirit is still pleading with them to come to Christ and be saved.
8. The mercy and grace of God are still at work in this world, however, there is coming a day when that work will cease, and men will no longer be able to get right with God and obey His voice.
9. Today, you may be putting off repentance, and you may be ignoring the voice of the Spirit of God that calls you to come to Jesus and be saved.
10. However, let me remind you that today is the day of salvation. You are not promised another day to come to Him! You have no assurance that next Sunday God will deal with you again.
11. The Lord God is slow to anger, but He is not without it. He is supernaturally patient, but He is not eternally patient. One day, His work of pleading with men will cease.
12. With that in mind, God said something not only about the work that would cease, but also He spoke of:

B. The wrath that would come

1. Look at verse 6. There we are told, *"And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."*
2. Though God does not change, and He has no need of repentance, the writer uses human language when he says that God "repented", and was grieved by the creatures He had created.
3. Never lose sight of how God feels about sin. It grieves His heart. It not only grieves Him, but eventually, it also moves Him to respond to it.
4. Look at verse 7. It says, *"And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."*

5. The sin of man calls for the judgment of God. He cannot let sin go unpunished. Because He is holy and just, He must respond to sin.
6. He spoke to that day of wickedness and warned the people that a day of wrath was going to come. In that wrath, men would be destroyed because of their sins.
7. Though God will never again destroy the earth by a flood, as He did in the days of Noah, the Bible teaches us that another day of judgment is coming, in which the wrath of God will be poured out again on the wickedness of this world.
8. In Revelation chapter 6, John describes a day when the heavens will be rolled back and the earth will quake to its foundations.
9. Revelation 6:15-17 says, *"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"*
10. Though many people today reject the notion of a God of wrath, the Bible still declares that a day of judgment is coming. Denying it will not make it go away any more than closing your eyes can make the sun disappear.
11. Recently, on *CNN*, reporter Anderson Cooper interviewed Christian actor and apologist Kirk Cameron about the strange phenomenon involving the mysterious death of hundreds of birds in Arkansas.
12. In the interview, Cooper asked Cameron if the dead birds were a sign of the apocalypse. Watching the interview, I got the impression that Cooper was being sarcastic. Thankfully, Cameron did not take the bait, and pointed people back to the Word of God.
13. Whether the world takes it seriously or not, what the Bible says about the final judgment of God is absolutely true. God has spoken in His Word, and He is warned us of the wrath that is come.
14. With that being said, notice a final thing we see in this text. We see not only *what God saw in those days*, and *what God said in those days*, but we see also lastly:

III. WHAT GOD SHOWED IN THOSE DAYS

1. This passage in Genesis is a dark, sad, and ominous passage of Scripture. It records a tragic day in the chronicle of human history.

2. Yet, in the midst of it, there is a ray of hope. Look at verse 8. Ten words stand out among all the doom and damnation. It says, "*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*"

3. Yes, there is a day of judgment coming! Yes, the wrath of God is going to be poured out on sin! Yet, before that comes, God offers His grace!

4. The grace of God to Noah during those days of wickedness reminds us that in person of Jesus Christ, God shows us grace before He sends His wrath.

5. Consider the grace God showed in those days, and what it reveals to us today. Consider firstly that:

A. He showed sovereign grace

1. We read a little later that Noah was a just man, and that he walked with God, however, all of that comes after he found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

2. Understand, Noah did not do anything to earn the favor and mercy of God. Had he earned it, it would not have been grace.

3. No, God in His sovereign and divine will chose to be merciful to Noah, and to show Him grace in the midst of a world headed for destruction.

4. Likewise, if you have received the mercy of God in these days, and your heart has been opened to the truth of Jesus Christ and what He did for you at the cross, it is only because God has shown sovereign grace to you.

5. We are not saved in these wicked days because we are somehow better than the people who are perishing around us. No, we are saved because God shows us grace!

6. R. Kent Hughes says of Noah, "[He] was a wretch like the rest...Left to himself, he would have perished like the rest."ⁱⁱⁱ

7. If today your fears of hell and death have been taken away by the blood of Jesus, you ought to lift your hands toward heaven and sing with John Newton:

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see*

8. In those days, God showed sovereign grace, but consider also that:

B. He showed saving grace

1. As we will see as we move on in this chapter, the grace God showed to Noah became clear when God gave him the instructions to build the ark that would save him from the flood.
2. The grace that Noah found in the eyes of the Lord was grace that pointed him to the only hope of salvation from the judgment that was coming.
3. Likewise, as God gives His grace to men today, He does so by pointing them to Jesus, the only hope for escaping the judgment that is to come.
4. In 1911, Julia Johnston penned the words to the hymn, "Grace Greater Than Our Sin". The second verse says:

*Sin and despair like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss,
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross*

5. Like those bad old days in which Noah lived, today our world plunges head-long toward its deserved destruction. Yet, God still speaks, and shows grace to all who will hear.
6. He offers saving grace through His Son, our Lord Jesus. He endured the flood of God's wrath on the cross, and suffered the death we all deserved.
7. II Peter 3:9 says that the Lord is, "...longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
8. Long before God sends His wrath He has shown His grace in Jesus. We need not perish. We need not die in our sins. In Jesus we can be saved by the grace of God.

1. In 1955, in the last speech of his life, the great British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, said, "I find it poignant...to watch little children playing their merry games, and wonder what would lie before them if God wearied of mankind."ⁱⁱⁱ
2. There is a sense in which Genesis 6 records what happened in the bad old days, when God wearied of mankind. The wickedness of humanity was great, and the judgment of God was necessary.

3. One writer said, "...the whole pre-flood culture began a headlong plunge into depravity so deep that it deserved to die. The account is, frankly, appalling – and sobering."^{iv}
4. As sobering and sad as this account is, it teaches us about our God. It reminds us that He sees all things, and that the sin of our lives is never hidden from Him.
5. It teaches us that God speaks to us, even in our sins, and pleads with us to turn to Him and be saved.
6. Lastly, it points us again to the grace of God, the very grace that is found in Jesus, and that saves us from the wrath that is to come.

ⁱ Hough, Jack, "These Are the Good Old Days (Really)", 12/31/10, *smartmoney.com*, accessed 1/6/11, <http://www.smartmoney.com/investing/stocks/these-are-the-good-old-days-really-1293662724867/>

ⁱⁱ Hughes, R. Kent, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 129

ⁱⁱⁱ Johnson, Paul, *Churchill*, (Viking Penguin, 2009), *Amazon Kindle Edition*

^{iv} Hughes, R. Kent, p. 123