

AGAINST THE FLOW ... (Gen. 6:1-11)

One thing for sure ... life never stays the same. Imagine having lived a few hundred years ago and coming back now. Mobile phones, computers, world travel, cars instead of 'pony and trap', the 'wringer' replaced by the tumble dryer, incredible scientific and medical advances ... It's a different world!

There have also been great differences in the way we think. We can set our minds to achieve just about anything ... And we have changed so much! The family, - the fundamental structure of society, - has 'developed'. Marriage has undergone a restructure, as has basic human sexuality. God, - if you choose to believe there is one, - is also remodelled to suit your tastes and requirements. We are truly living in a rapidly 'progressive' world!

However, when we look at this ancient picture described in Genesis 6, perhaps we are not as up-to-date as we think. The opening words explain how nothing stays the same, ¹ *And it came to pass.* ... and yet at the same time, as Solomon wrote, there is nothing new under the sun (Eccles. 1:9).

You would think by now though, there should be a marked improvement in the behaviour of human civilization. We have all the latest gadgets ... and look at all the lessons we should have learned throughout the millennia, and yet we are suffering from the same old problems. Surely, by now, we should have worked out strategies to combat the chaotic cycle of decline we seem to be presently in.

The world in which Noah lived was full of **COMPLACENCY**. The people lived in a smug sense of contentment had formed around their own values and selfishness and which had led their society into a downward spiral, ⁵ *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.* ⁶ *And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* ⁷ *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.* ... Such sin arose out of many years of turning their backs on God and His standards.

It began in the family home, with a population explosion, **Gen. 6:1** *when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them.* ² *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 *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.* ... Who *were* these people ... the sons of God and the daughters of men?

Let's go back a few chapters ... Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain the eldest and Abel. Abel pleased God (Gen. 4:4), Cain resented him, and so Cain killed Abel. Cain was then cursed by God and expelled (v.11-16) from his family (Adam, Eve, Seth, etc). He went on to establish his society and culture, with no regard for God, ¹⁶ And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. ¹⁷ And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. ¹⁸ And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. ¹⁹ And Lamech took unto him two wives. ... polygamy, the start of the redefinition of marriage ... the family unit attacked, - the basic building block of society.

Seth, on the other hand, remained true to the relationship his brother Abel previously enjoyed with God, **Gen. 4:4** And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering ... for we read, ²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. ²⁶ And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

So, there were two groups, the 'sons of God' who were the descendants of righteous Seth, and 'the daughters of men' who were the descendants of unrighteous Cain. ... As time passed, - ¹ it came to pass, - the old differences between the two became less and the 'sons of God' began to befriend and marry the 'daughters of men'. This resulted in the 'sons of God' being 'seduced away' from the faithfulness of Seth and Abel and to adopt the rather crude lifestyle of 'the daughters of men', espoused by the generations of Cain.

What had happened was ... the descendants of Seth had started to treat the descendants of Cain as their friends. After all, they both shared the same origins, - Adam and Eve. Therefore, it was a natural progression, - their argument went, - to accept that what was good for one was good for the other ... and there is no point in holding on to old divisions and rivalries. ... Forget the past, and let's move on!

Now, it is often a good thing to break down barriers ... but there are some barriers which should remain intact ... and this was one of them! In their **complacency**, the descendants of Seth left themselves wide open to ...

CONSPIRACY Behind it all was the devil's subtle program of trying to draw the up-until-recently faithful descendants of Seth 'into his web' ... as he had managed to do with Adam and Eve in Gen. 3. He used the beautiful and seductive 'daughters of men' to entice the 'sons of God'. Satan's plan was to conspire

against the descendants of Seth by using these young girls with their alluring features and to gradually rob them of the blessings which come from being faithful to God, and to lead them into abandoning Him ... but to do it in a way they would not notice.

... Seth replaced Abel (Gen. 4:25,26), and it was God's intention for Seth's descendants to pursue the ways of righteousness but now Seth's descendants (the sons of God) had joined in league with the descendants of the accursed Cain (the daughters of men). ... This was an association of righteousness with unrighteousness and of light with darkness (II Cor. 6:14) ... and it was contrary to the will and purpose of God, so you couldn't expect anything good to come out of it!

And you find here, - in this conspiracy against the descendants of Abel and Seth, - it begins with *one* godless group (the descendants of Cain, - their 'innocent', beautiful daughters), and then another godless group is introduced ... These were the tribe of tall men, - giants, - who were called the *nephilim* (later referred to as the sons of Anak in Num. 13:33). They contributed to an even greater decline ... and when the sons of God (Abel and Seth's descendants) carried on their cavorting with the daughters of men (Cain's descendants), the *nephilim*, - 'the big boys', - joined in! This was a merry free-for-all with the devil in the driving-seat! In the world's eyes, these tall handsome mighty men of renown were 'the cream of the earth'! They were the people 'to be in with'! They were looked up to and admired ... but not so by God! He looked down and He saw the descendants of Abel, 'the sons of God', carrying on with such evil company, ⁵ 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.

You see, **complacency** bred the opportunity for **conspiracy**. And God, Whose business is to care for His people, was angry, hence, the introduction of **CONDEMNATION** ... While the inhabitants of the world were 'clapping themselves on the back' and awarding themselves their accolades ... God in Heaven had an altogether different approach, ⁶ it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. ⁷ 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.

God repented, does that mean He did something wrong? ... No, because He cannot act in any way contrary to His holy nature, as Habakkuk explains, **Hab. 1:13** Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity. Indeed, Gen. 6:6 tells us what it means, it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and, ... here's the explanation ... *it grieved him at his heart*. ... It broke His

heart, that is what it means. God is holy, and that is how He made our first parents, - in His own image. He intended for their children to be holy also, ... but they sinned and went away from Him, and it broke His heart.

... He is not a God Who sits away in a 'splendid isolation' untouched by it all, but He is intimately involved with His people, even when they stray ... and He was stricken with grief when He saw what these privileged 'sons of God' were up to with the corrupt 'daughters of men'. ... He saw such horrible widespread wickedness, and He could *not* look on as an unconcerned spectator!

It was an increasingly depressing picture in the opening seven verses of this chapter, but then God introduces a 'breath of fresh air'. We have seen **complacency**, and we have seen how the enemy embarked on their **conspiracy** ... and then, God brings the message of **condemnation**. ... And now here is how He connects it all together ... and it is an illustration as to how He will eventually work all things out for His glory ... Remember the four opening words, *it came to pass* ... He introduced Noah, *the heir of the righteousness which is by faith* (Heb. 11:7).

Let's call this part of our study the **COMMENDATION**, **Gen. 6:8** *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.* ... That is like how the master spoke to his servant, **Mt. 25:23** *Well done, good and faithful servant.* What greater privilege than to find *grace in the eyes of the Lord* (v.8)! Noah had no interest in the allurements of the world. There was nothing about them to hold any measure of attraction to God's servant.

Contrary to the ways of that degenerate society, **9** *Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.* God commended him, and God instructed him to build the only means of escape from the impending judgment He would send upon the earth. God gave him a work to do, **22** *Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.* ... And Noah understood, - despite what he saw around him, - God was still in control.

Then, - about 120 years after he had been told to build the ark, - when the rains and the floods came Noah and his family were protected and kept safe by God, even when the mountains were covered (Gen. 7:20) ... **Gen. 7:21** *And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:* **22** *All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.* **23** *And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth* ... **24** *And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.*

But, remember the four words with which our study began ... they appear again, **8:13** And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry ... God did not take them out of the world, but He kept them safe and secure, even during the mighty winds and the roaring waves of tribulation.

Do you get worried about how *anti* society and the world is against the Church and the Gospel? It seems everyone is allowed an opinion, except the Christian. ... Nonetheless, what did Noah do? He kept on being faithful to God, even when it must have felt as if he was on his own. He didn't keep quiet and retreat into a cave, but he witnessed to the people for Peter says he was **II Peter 2:5** a preacher of righteousness. ... He stood up for God in front of such a vile and wretched people. ... The society did not improve, but Noah remained obedient ... and that is what God saw and rewarded. ... God had Noah among those people, not for their salvation, but for their judgment. God was judging them through the preaching of the Gospel, and they had no excuse.

Let's conclude our study. The inhabitants of the earth were **condemned** for their **complacency** and **conspiracy**, ... and they faced **condemnation** through the Flood ... And when *it came*, there was no escape from God's wrath! But for Noah, the storms and winds not only *came*, but they *came to pass*!

When you think you are going **against the flow**, the lesson is to keep trusting in the Lord, and not to take your eyes off Him or give up on believing His ways are always best. He has a purpose in all He allows around us ... and no matter what it is, remember those four words in Noah's experience, and their specific meaning for the child of God, *it came to pass*.

Some through the waters, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,
In the night season and all the day long.

Though sorrows befall us and evils oppose,
God leads His dear children along;
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,
God leads His dear children along.