



A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 5: A History of Heresy, Part 2

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A. REVIEW: LAST WEEK'S LESSON.

A. In last week's lesson, "A History of Heresy, Part 1," we dove deeper into the text of **Genesis 6:1-4**

1. As part of that process, we examined the term "Nephilim" which shows up in that passage. It is rendered as "giants" in some English translations
2. We concluded that the text makes it clear the Nephilim were hybrid entities, part human and part angelic, which is a complete violation of God's order of things.
3. We reviewed some of the other parts of God's Word which discusses these 'Nephilim,' and we saw how consistently they imposed, force, and evil.
4. We probed a bit deeper into certain Biblical passages which describes these Nephilim as massive, extremely tall and strong.

B. We then did a "fly-by" on some historical records that affirm these giants were also present around the globe, even after The Great Flood.

1. We looked at some of the records of this in our own country, and even in our own state of Colorado.
2. We compared the Biblical record of these giants – these 'Nephilim' – with the myths and legends of ancient cultures. Everything lined up. It's all consistent.

C. We then shifted gears a bit and examined quite closely what the Bible meant when it said Noah was found to be "perfect in his generations"

1. We saw how this was an assessment of his physical wholesomeness, his genetic integrity, but NOT a claim about his spiritual status.
2. We compared the Hebrew term describing Noah with the same Hebrew term used to describe a sacrificial goat or lamb without physical blemish
3. It became rather clear that the Bible in **Genesis Ch. 6** was painting a picture of a pre-flood world that had become entirely and physically corrupted when compared against its condition in the original creation.

D. These things, and other points we discussed, led us to the only conclusion that can be made when properly interpreting God's Word:

1. Satan had mounted a massive attack against the human genome to corrupt it and to prevent the arrival of the Messiah who would ultimately crush and destroy him
2. God sent the global flood to keep the Messianic promise. He found in Noah a man who was genetically untainted as were his wife and sons which became the means for God to reboot humanity.

3. The Great Flood, when viewed properly, was a means to preserve God's plan of salvation. It was God's countermove against Satan who was trying to derail the Bible's first prophecy found in **Genesis 3:15**

NOTE: That brings us to today's lesson.

- Today, we will glance at the pervasive heresy known as the Sons of Seth Theory.
- Unfortunately, this is what is taught by most pastors today. I've heard it from the pulpit, and perhaps you have as well.
- It is a theory that is taught in many seminaries today, and as we have also seen, it is a heresy that often shows up in the uninspired commentary notes of your Bible.
- I said early on in this class series that I would not spend as much time on errant doctrines as I would on the proper doctrines.
- But this is one we need to "smoke out of its hole." As I have shared several times in the past several weeks, if we don't properly glean from **Genesis 3:15** and **Genesis 6:1-4** the information that is there, then ALL the remaining prophecies in the Bible run the risk being misunderstood.

B. WHAT THE APOSTLES AND EARLY CHURCH FATHERS BELIEVED. *Gen. 6:1-4*?

NOTE: These were men who walked and worked alongside Jesus. These are men who studied under those who knew Jesus personally. These were men who were disciplined by the ones God used to write the books of the New Testament.

- A. Even a casual assessment shows the apostles interpreted **Genesis 6:1-4** literally, exactly as we have done here in this class.
 1. Passages like **2 Peter 2:4-7** and **Jude 1:6-7** make it clear the earliest Christian leaders from the very start of Church History believed that fallen angels engaged in illicit sexual relations with human women who then gave birth to hybrid "Nephilim" giants.
 2. Furthermore, early church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Rome, Lactantius, and Ambrose were proponents of these specific views in their own writings. Some of these men were disciplined by the apostles.
- B. The historical record is clear enough to make the claim that a straightforward reading and interpretation of **Genesis 6:1-4** was the official position of the early church up through the fourth century. This position is even recorded in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8 – an early record of the Christian church's views and doctrines.

C. DESPITE THE IMPERATIVE TO ALWAYS EMBRACE A LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WORD, HERESY CREEPT IN AND TOOK ROOT.

- A. In dispute to a responsible assessment of **Genesis 6:1-4**, an alternative theory yes, a 'heresy', began which has been propagated for most of church history.
1. It continues to be advanced now with notably strong support for it found in the various Reformed denominations, in Catholicism, and in the leadership of those institutions.
 2. This theory springs from a rejection of those disciplines that humbly seek out and conform to Biblical truth (as heresies always do).
 3. This heresy is called the "sons of Seth" theory, though it is also known by other names, including the "sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain" theory. I will refer to it as the 'sons of Seth' theory in this class.
- B. The premise of this errant theory rests entirely on the claim that the "sons of God" in **Genesis 6:1-4** were ordinary men from the "godly line of Seth," and the "daughters of men" were ordinary women from the "ungodly line of Cain."
1. In other words, the first gender group was a righteous one. The second gender group was an unrighteous one.
 - a. There was a specific group of males that were very good boys, and there was a specific group of women that were very bad girls.
 - b. It's already sounding very sexist and unlikely.
 2. The 'sons of Seth' assumption is these two different gender groups were alike in their physical nature, but very different in their spiritual nature. This theory argues that the joining of these two genetically homogenous groups of

This about that. It makes zero sense!

That's like saying Sally Jones is a God-fearing young lady and she marries Mike Smith who doesn't believe in God.

- They have a baby which breaks all the birth weight records at the local hospital.
- The event makes the evening news, and Coleman Tents volunteers to design some enormous custom diapers.
- The kid grows up to be the height of a house and the weight of a bus, and he's so misbehaved he makes Attila the Hun look like a choirboy.
- God's grinding His teeth because He can't stand it. He decides to abandon His unchangeable nature (**Cf. Hebrews. 13:8**), and in a spasm of imperfect rage - He exterminates the whole family.
- I know - it makes no sense, even in a make-believe tale. It also makes us wince if we try to paint God this way.
- So why do some people insist this is the position of the inspired Holy Scriptures?

humans produced offspring of such evil character and unnatural physical proportions that God was compelled to wipe the slate clean.

3. I've noted in my own research that various scholars who support this "sons of Seth" theory also declare that they adhere to the full Hebrew interpretation of *b'nai Elohim*. This is inconsistent.
4. That's just ridiculous! They cannot have it both ways since these two positions are saying two very different things.
 - a. It's like traveling north while arguing you're headed south. That's being delusional.
 - b. It's like saying men can get pregnant. It's abandoning ALL logic and common sense.
 - c. Unfortunately, this senseless and double-minded posture appears far too frequently within Christian circles - - especially now.
 - d. Since the 'sons of Seth' theory emerges from an absence of common sense and a presence of arrogance, I believe it disqualifies the credibility of anyone who believes it.
 - e. While it is already self-evident that I do not hold this "sons of Seth" theory in high regard, I understand others may disagree with my stance.
 - f. I will share why I do not subscribe to it and why I feel it's illogical to do so.

D. WHERE DID THE "SONS OF SETH" THEORY COME FROM?

- A. Most records agree that the first official denial that the *b'nai Elohim* of **Genesis 6:1-4**, or the 'sons of God' in our English translations were fallen angels - - came from St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD).
- B. There is some evidence that suggests Sextus Julius Africanus (200–275 AD) had considered this same position before Augustine's time.
 1. However, it was Augustine who formalized this 'sons of Seth' theory and publicly launched it roughly 75 years after The First Council of Nicaea (325 AD).
 2. Augustine was influential, and not always in a good way, much like Tim Keller, Rick Warren, or John Piper are today.
 3. Consequently, many church leaders who followed Augustine fell into step with his point of view. Augustine allegorized the Bible; he claimed it meant something other than what it said.
 4. It's reasonable to assume the church leaders who followed Augustine were persuaded by Augustine's influence and legacy. Human nature was then as it is now.
 5. As I said, many pastors today mimic the irresponsible methods and beliefs of prominent emergent or reformed church leaders they admire; the situation's no different now.

6. Because Augustine did much to allegorize the content of the Bible, others in his wake did the same thing.
7. He was not the first to treat the Scriptures this way, but he was the one to mainstream this approach.
8. Where certain passages had previously been handled with a straightforward reading and understanding, Augustine touted non-literal interpretations instead. It's no surprise to me that he supported and advanced the errant "sons of Seth" theory.

E. IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT TO INTERPRET SCRIPTURE CORRECTLY!

- A. There are great perils when we abandon responsible Biblical interpretation and when we subordinate the counsel of God's Word to man's preferences.
 1. There are always consequences to doing this.
 2. Every time we depart from God's truth, adversity, depravity, and confusion enters.

- B. A sobering illustration of this specific danger is also lifted from Augustine's life and I want to take a brief scenic tour on the side here to address this matter.
 - a. Augustine was also a passionate promoter of Replacement Theology, a profane departure from sound doctrine that flies in the face of the clear Biblical message.
 - b. The irony of Replacement Theology is it has indeed replaced true Biblical Theology.
 - a. The central conviction of Replacement Theology is God has replaced Israel with the church. In other words, He was compelled to move to "Plan B."
 - b. This heresy contends that God has abandoned His unilateral, irrevocable, and unconditional promises to the Jewish nation, which by virtue of God's character is not even possible.
 - c. It further argues that these same promises will now see fulfillment within the church instead.
 - c. Augustine, besides being a promoter of the 'sons of Seth' heresy, upheld these fallacies of Replacement Theology by "spiritualizing" key passages of Scripture.
 - a. He insisted the true intentions of certain passages were veiled.
 - b. He felt the text meant something other than what it was saying. For example: "Israel" means "the church."
 - c. This departure from common sense and responsible Biblical interpretation permitted Augustine to support whatever alternate explanation his biases preferred.
 - d. Replacement Theology became the official position of the church during Augustine's time.
 - e. His publications on the issue, including his books "The City of God", and his corrosive "Tract Against the Jews," aided this development to no small degree.

- C. As I said, Augustine influenced other Christian leaders after him.
 - d. That included some pretty prominent leaders, including even Martin Luther and John Calvin. They unfortunately cultivated and published anti-Semitic attitudes.
 - a. And because these two men contributed much to the Reformed movement of today, we still find similar anti-Jewish biases in prominent Reformed leaders of our time, like John Piper.
 - e. The situation is much worse than what we see on the surface. Hitler even claimed he'd found personal inspiration in the anti-semitic views of Martin Luther.
 - a. The bottom line is, history underscores the dangers of reading into God's Word what's not there in the first place.
 - b. Replacement Theology provides a sobering reality check to the present "sons of Seth" discussion.
 - c. To suggest it's not a bad thing to spiritualize "this passage or that one" as many proponents of the "sons of Seth" theory admit they're doing, is to display arrogance within the very act of consciously altering Biblical intent.
 - f. There are always consequences to distorting the meaning of Scripture and the results are predictable:
 - a. Where truth is suppressed deception is elevated - and where deception is elevated, division and destruction follow.
 - b. While few such choices to suppress truth go so far as to endorse the horrors of a holocaust, as many German churches did in Hitler's time, most of these choices simply expose the immaturity of the individuals who make them.
 - c. We must consider **2 Timothy 2:15**, where the distinction of being "approved" is measured by the accuracy with which one studies and declares the Scriptures.
 - d. A decision to refute the divine intentions of God's Word shows a lack of good judgment, and in turn suggests one is "not approved."
- D. That was the "scenic tour" that illustrates some important points. However, let's get back to the problems with the 'sons of Seth' theory:
 - 1. Remember that take on D. L Cooper's quote? He said, "If the plain sense of Scripture makes good sense, seek no other sense lest it result in nonsense."
 - a. He's accurate, and with respect to the "sons of Seth" theory, the application of his quote is on full display.
 - b. Let's look at a few obvious problems with the 'sons of Seth' theory....
 - 2. This theory's adherents believe the "sons of God," were good people: upright, virtuous, holy, and pure.

- a. The folks who subscribe to the ‘sons of Seth’ theory believe that these ‘sons of God’ had some sort of amended or elevated constitution which kept them from experiencing the effects of universal depravity (**Cf. Romans 3:23; 5:12**).
 - They conclude this from **Genesis 4:25-26**, where Seth first appears along with the statement, “*At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.*”
 - Basically, these folks think Seth got everything back onto a spiritual track.
 - This is a wobbly assumption since **Chapters 5 and 6 of Genesis** indicate the contrary.
 - The genealogical record from Adam to Noah, which includes Seth and his descendants, is a detailed account which features the effects of sin.
 - As the result of sin’s curse, people continued to die, and over time, corruption increased. It’s the same dynamics we see today.
 - b. AT NO POINT - does any Bible make the case that Seth’s descendants were recipients of God’s unusual favor, or that they were quarantined from the effects of sin.
 - This shouldn’t be hard for us to understand and accept. **Romans 5:12** reminds us that sin entered the world through Adam, and everyone since has inherited the scourge of death because “all have sinned.” That includes Seth and his lineage.
 - So Seth and his lineage were nothing special from the standpoint of sin.
3. Moreover, the word “began” which we saw in **Genesis 4:26** comes from the Hebrew word “châlal.”
 - a. “Châlal” can also mean “to profane, defile, pollute, or desecrate,” and some translations go with this definition.
 - b. I think it’s a matter of rigid personal agenda to insist that “châlal” means “begin” when the context which follows **Genesis 4:25-26** suggests that “profane” or “defile” is the better fit.
 - c. I think it is far more accurate to see humanity's relationship with God suffering the consequences of sin and eroding, rather than they suddenly began worshiping Him in some unusual and special way.
 4. And just as they regard the situation with the good guys, the “sons of Seth” advocates argue that the “daughters of men” also had a nature that was exceptionally marked.
 - a. But in this case, they feel this second group was inclined in the opposite direction – the girls were bad.

- Again, their assumption here is that the condition of these “daughters of men” was somehow distinguished as being uniquely depraved, something much worse than mankind’s baseline sin nature.
 - Again, Romans makes the case that we are all sinful and depraved the same way.
 - But the supporters of the “sons of Seth” heresy construct this “good guys and bad girls” position by spiritualizing the facts.
 - Remember, that would be insisting something’s there in the Biblical text when it’s really not.
 - The assumption of the “sons of Seth” proponents is that the “daughters of men” was a special group which was genetically confined to having sprung from the “ungodly lineage of Cain.”
 - Given Cain’s distinction as the first murderer in human history, it justifies their view to regard him and his offspring with a keen distaste.
- b. John Calvin, through choices to engage in irresponsible spiritualization, just like the choices he demonstrated with Replacement Theology, makes these sorts of assumptions clear.
- In his commentary, he writes on this very issue, *“The principle is to be kept in memory, that the world was then as if divided into two parts; because the family of Seth cherished the pure and lawful worship of God, from which the rest had fallen. It was, therefore, base ingratitude in the posterity of Seth, to mingle themselves with the children of Cain, and with other profane races; because they voluntarily deprived themselves of the inestimable grace of God.”*
 - This erroneously forces the rational mind to ask, “Where in Scripture does it say anything like that?”
 - The answer is, nowhere. No text, no passage, no verse in the Bible identifies Seth’s lineage as being special or extra-dimensional in moral clarity and character.
5. However, just for the sake of argument, let’s run down Calvin’s train of thought for a moment.
- c. John Calvin says, “The family of Seth cherished the pure and lawful worship of God.” They were, supposedly, all about doing what was right!
- Well, if they did do that as Calvin says they did, then why did they make such a horrible and evil decision as he insists they made?
 - Why did they marry women who were considered bad girls who he claims were uniquely depraved and wicked because they descended from Cain? It doesn’t add up.
- d. Furthermore, if “sons of God” is really a reference to men who descended from Seth, then why doesn’t the Bible state it that way?

- Why doesn't the Bible call them "sons of Seth" rather than "sons of God" (*b'nai Elohim*) which is clearly a reference to angels?
- After all, Seth is plainly introduced in the story as a human baby just two chapters prior, and his lineage is outlined in very human parameters from that point onwards.
- Moreover, Augustine and Calvin made the claim, as others have done, that the Bible designates the "daughters of men" as coming from the family tree of Cain.
- Where do we see that the Bible even remotely suggests that? We don't! It's not there.

E. Augustine and Calvin - and others like them - have not supported their "sons of Seth" view with any responsible treatment of the Biblical text. Let's assess their choices through the protocols of proper Biblical interpretation:

1. First, they have not validated their view by filtering it through the original Biblical meaning.
 - a. They've completely ignored what is meant by the Hebrew terms and phrases.
2. Second, they have not affirmed their choice by questioning whether it's in harmony with other passages on the same subject.
 - a. In fact, in their commentaries, they avoid evaluating their conclusions with other passages that would call their choices into question.
3. Thirdly, they haven't substantiated their position by evaluating its compliance with the development of the context.
 - a. The development of the context makes it clear their conclusions hold no water.
 - b. Their choices steer clear of the enduring proofs of Scripture.
 - c. Their choices are instead marinated with presumption, pride, and prejudice.
 - d. They want to believe their position is true – and they will chafe and foam at great length to try to support their presumptions
 - e. They are only showing themselves to be foolish – the same way some pastors, teachers, Christian leaders, and seminaries are doing today.

F. I will wrap up here, but I want to state that I have thought long and hard about all of this.

1. The posture of Augustine, Calvin and others like them seems to reside somewhere between ignorance and arrogance.
 - a. It's probably more the latter, arrogance, as evidenced again by Calvin's commentary in which he further states, *"That ancient figment, concerning the intercourse of angels with women, is abundantly refuted by its own absurdity; and it is surprising that learned men*

should formerly have been fascinated by ravings so gross and prodigious.”

- b. I have to shake my head at this. Really? Is he serious here?
 - Was Calvin so blinded by his own biases that he failed to see that every supernatural event of the Scriptures conforms at one level or another to being “...abundantly refuted by its own absurdity?” Apparently so.
 - Let me put John Calvin’s biases another way: John Calvin approached God’s Word like it was a buffet.
 - He found something there that God had placed there, but Calvin didn’t like it.
 - He thought the idea of fallen angels having sexual relations with human women was ridiculous.
 - Rather than humbly submitting himself to the inerrant and inspired Word of God, Calvin, like Augustine and so many others, soothed his own intolerances by choosing to believe, “It means something other than what it is actually saying.”
 - As Calvin had already done elsewhere, he spiritualized the text so he could disregard the plain truth that was staring him in the face.

2. This underscores a massive problem in the church today.

- a. When one claims the Bible does not mean what it says, they sacrifice what is most **important** to believe in order to protect what they most **want** to believe.
- b. As I stated earlier, there is always an agenda behind any refusal to accept the inspired truths of Scripture.