

Genesis 6

This chapter introduces God's punishment on sin at the worldwide level. Four chapters are dedicated to the sin and the cure (chapter 6), the flood itself (chapter 7), the debarkation from the ark (chapter 8), and the renewing of God's command to mankind, through Noah, to be fruitful and multiply (chapter 9). Abel's blood cried out to God from the earth (4:10). Wickedness and violence was praised by Lamech (4:23-24). Now, they fill the earth. The universal destruction caused by the flood will serve as an archetype for the universal destruction to be caused by fire when the Son of Man returns (2 Peter 3:5-12).

TRANSLATION - 6:1-4:

1 It happened that the man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them. **2** Then the sons of God saw the daughters of man that beautiful they [were] and they took to themselves wives from all whom they chose. **3** Then Jehovah said, "My Spirit will not plead with man indefinitely since he [is] flesh and his days will be one hundred and twenty years." **4** The nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came to the daughters of men and they knew them. These [were] the warriors which from of old [were] men of reputation.

WORDS:

"Multiply" is the verb used in God's command in 1:28. "Beautiful" (ver 2) is the feminine form of the word "good." "Spirit" is the word used of God's Spirit in 1:2. "Plead" (ver 3) is found only here in biblical literature, one single time, a concept called in Latin *hapax legomenon*. That makes it challenging to understand what the word means. "Knew" (ver 4) is used, again, in a sexual sense, as we have seen before. The word "indefinitely" (ver. 3, '*olam*') is the same word as "from of old" (ver. 4), which is often translated "eternal." "Reputation" (ver. 4) is literally, "name."

GRAMMAR:

"Began" (ver 1) is a *hiphil*.

COMMENTS:

God had wanted mankind to multiply (1:26-28) and here, he is doing so. The "sons of God" saw the "daughters of men," that they were "beautiful" (the Hebrew word is "good;" cf. its use in chapter 1!). So, the men married the women, whom they chose.

There are three views on who the "sons of God" are:

1. Some type of heavenly beings, generally suggested to be angels. The expression seems to refer to angels in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Psalm 82:6; 89:6; Dan. 3:25.

2. A few have thought the phrase refers to royalty or dynastic rulers, primarily Jews from the second century A. D. "Gods," in the sense of "divine," seems to be used in Psalm 82:1, 6-7; Exo. 21:6; 22:8-9, 28. This interpretation was perhaps under the influence of Christian theology relative to the nature of beings in the spirit world. Kings are called "sons of God" in passages like 2 Sam. 7:14 and Psalm 2:7. In this case, you would have aristocrats marrying lower class people.

3. Many years after the establishment of Christianity, Christians began viewing the phrase as a reference to the descendants of Seth. In that view, the "daughters of men" would refer to the family of Cain. In which case, we have good people marrying into the lineage of bad people.

We cannot accept option #1, although it is the primary view of the Jews in the period between the OT and the NT and the primary view of scholars today. Marriages between gods and men are a well-known component of pagan literature. Yet, Jesus clearly says that angels do not marry in Matt. 22:29-30. Additionally, beings in the spirit world do not have flesh and blood (Luke 24:39) so there is no reason to believe that angels could engage in the sexual

relationship. Plus, the flood was to punish mankind, not angelic beings. We would also reject this idea because angels are not in the context nor anywhere near the context. In fact, Moses had a word for angels (*malak*), which he uses (17x in Gen., 15x translated “angel”) and could have used it here, if he had wanted to do so. Finally, Coffman makes a keen observation. “Holy angels would not have induced men to sin; and the fallen angels, in a million years, would never have been designated by the Holy Spirit as ‘the sons of God!’”¹

We draw your attention back to the nature of our literal translation of 5:32, that Noah is referred to, by the Hebrew idiom, as a “son of five hundred years...” Then, a few verses later, we have men referred to as “sons of God...” Just as the idiom refers to Noah having the quality of *being* five hundred years old, this line of Seth has the *quality* of being followers of God, or godly people. To contrast their nature with the nature of Cain’s line, the opposite of “sons” is “daughters” and the opposite of “God” is “men.” So, the “sons of God” refers to Seth’s godly descendants while the “daughters of men” refers to Cain’s descendants. That seems the most likely understanding in the context of Genesis 5 & 6, the book of Genesis as a work for Moses’ audience, and in the context of biblical theology. Chapter 5 had focused on the lineage of Seth, from father to son; the emphasis was on the “sons.” But 6:1 tells us that man *also* had daughters. Jesus said that men and women were marrying and being given in marriage when the flood came (Matt. 24:38-39).

Finally, there is absolutely no reason to assume that Peter (1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:4) or Jude (ver. 6) is referring to *this* event when they speak of the “fall” of angels. That is poor hermeneutics. Additionally, it is not clear at all that the expression “sons of God” in Psalm 82:6; 89:6; Dan. 3:25 are referring to angels.

We reject option #2 on the simple basis that it is foreign to the context of Genesis 6 and, really, the whole book. Nowhere else in biblical teaching is it sinful for royalty to marry lower class people. This brings us back to the line of Seth marrying the line of Cain.

God’s Spirit was involved in the creation (1:3) of the world. At this point, God has decided that the Spirit will withdraw from man. The Holy Spirit will withdraw from others later in biblical history (1 Sam. 16:14). When this happens, either of two things will result: 1) Man’s lifespan will be limited to 120 years; 2) Mankind will have 120 years to listen to the Spirit through inspired spokesman and repent of their sins before the worldwide catastrophe overtakes it. It does not seem accurate to take option #1 since many men live past 120 years throughout the book of Genesis. The latter option seems to fit the evidence more accurately.

Relative to the *nephilim*, a word which is only found elsewhere in Numbers 13:33, the LXX translates the word *gigantes*, a word used to describe the mix of gods and man. Without further knowledge of the word *nephilim*, it is better to leave it untranslated and acknowledge we do not know much of anything about them. For other passages on the idea of “giants” in biblical times, see Deut. 2:20-21; 3:11². Since Moses is writing for the generation who experienced the events recorded in Numbers 13, it seems best to understand Moses to be using “*nephilim*” in a generic sense, telling Israel that those type of people existed before the flood, were destroyed by God *in* the flood, and so there was no reason for his generation to be afraid of them. Of course, that generation of Israel did not trust Genesis 6, did not listen to Moses, rebelled against God and paid the price (Num. 13 & 14).

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - It is always better to choose a spouse based on whom God would choose for us, rather than simply on the basis of exterior appearance.

Contemporaries of Moses’ day - God, through Moses, will require the “sons of God” (Israel) to marry fellow believers (Deut. 7:1-6). Again, they will not learn from Genesis 6:1-4 nor listen to Moses, and will pay the penalty.

¹ Coffman, 99.

² Og had a 14’ long bed.

Later Hebrew writers - Solomon will marry many foreign women who will lead his heart away from God and so we have another “son of God” who marries “daughters of men” and suffers the consequences (1 Kings 11:1-10).

NT writers - Unfortunately, the “sons” (or “daughters”) of God are *still* marrying the “daughters” (or “sons”) of men and being led away from God. Too many Christians are ignoring the lesson to be learned from Genesis 6:1-4. While the NT teaches that angels “fell” from God’s grace (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4), there is no reason to believe either writer is referring to *this* event.

TRANSLATION - 6:5-8:

5 Then Jehovah saw that great [was the] evil of man on the earth and every thought of the plans of his heart [were] only evil all the day. **6** Then Jehovah grieved that He made man on the earth and it pained His heart. **7** So Jehovah said, “Let me wipe out man whom I created from on the face of the land: from man to the wild animal, to the creeping thing, and to the bird of the heavens, because I am grieved that I made them.” **8** But Noah found grace in the eyes of Jehovah.

WORDS:

“Evil” (ver 5; *r’*) is used 312x but does not always mean “evil” in the moral or spiritual sense. It can mean something of little worth or a calamity. “Thought” (ver 5) comes from the same word family as “formed” (Gen. 2:7-8). “Heart” (ver 5) is a literal translation although we would associate “thoughts” with the mind, rather than the heart. Yet, it is true that emotions are often a part of our decisions. The word is used 252x spelled *lb* but 854x spelled *lbb*. “Grieved” (ver 6) is the same word used of Lamech’s thoughts regarding Noah (5:29). It is unfortunate that older versions translate the word “repent” since the Bible clearly teaches that God does not have to modify His behavior based on external circumstances (cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29). He does, however, change His mind relative to *plans* He would fulfill relative to man, dependent on man’s repentance. “Wild animal” from verses 7 and 20 is *behema*. “Grace” (ver 8) is used 69x and means “grace, favor, or charm.” It gives us the woman’s name, *Hannah* or *Anna* (*Ana*).

GRAMMAR:

“Grieved” (ver 6, 7) is a *niphal* while “pained” is a *hithpael*. “Let me wipe out” is cohortative. In 1 Peter 3:20-21, Peter uses the flood as a metaphor for immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins, a concept pictured as being “washed” or having sins “wiped out” by the blood of Christ (Eph. 5:26-27; Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16).

COMMENTS:

The emphasis in this passage is the evil of man. It was so bad that his thoughts were entirely evil. It grieved God and pained God in His heart that He had made man. We do not believe God being “grieved” conveys any sense of surprise or regret that He had made man, as if He had made a mistake. It is entirely possible to be “all-knowing” and still feel intense emotions. Think of your favorite movie, which you may have seen dozens of times, but yet you still laugh or cry at particular points. God knew man would sin against Him and He would have to punish mankind, just as He knew He would punish His Son on the cross, and still feel intense sorrow over the punishment.

Lamech had expressed hope that Noah would bring “rest.” He did, but not as Lamech could have imagined. Noah brought rest in the sense that he lived an obedient life before God, received the instructions to build the ark, built it, and saved the world from the destructive waters of the flood.

The “earth” is used eight times in verses 5-13. Additionally, the word translated “every” or “all” (*kol*) is used 63 times in the flood account, chapters 6 (14x), 7 (23x), 8 (14x), and 9 (21x). We do not know how much clearer Moses could have been to tell us the flood was worldwide.

Consider these verses: 6:7, 12-13; 7:4, 19, 21-23; 8:21; 9:11, 15. It astounds us that anyone who would take either the Bible or science seriously can not see evidence of a worldwide watery cataclysm everywhere (apologeticspress.org).

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - After the flood, God will evaluate mankind in the very same words He does here in 6:5 (8:21).

Contemporaries of Moses' day - The Law continued the view that sin polluted the land (Lev. 18:24-28).

TRANSLATION - 6:9-12:

9 These [are] the generations of Noah. Noah [was] a righteous man, complete he was in his generation. With God Noah walked. **10** And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japhet. **11** The earth was corrupt before the face of God and the earth was filled [with] violence. **12** Then God saw the earth and behold it was corrupted because all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.

WORDS:

“Generations” (ver. 9a) is different from “generation” (ver. 9b). The first word is the one used in 2:4; 5:1; 6:9, etc. which indicates natural divisions in the text or history of Genesis. “Righteous” (ver. 9; 206x) means “righteous, just, or innocent.” It refers to a person living up to God’s expectations, as much as humanly possible. As such, it can be translated “godly.” “Complete” (ver. 9; 91x) means “blameless, complete, finished, or perfect.” It is frequently used to refer to animals for sacrifice which were perfect specimens (Lev. 21:21-22). “Fathered” (ver. 10) translates the verb used earlier for the women, “conceived,” which is not an appropriate English word to use with men! “Violence” (ver. 11; 60x) means “violence or wrong.” Notice that “earth” is mentioned five times in verses 11-13 while “corrupted” is found five times. The verb (to “corrupt”) is used 152x. It means to “spoil or ruin.”

GRAMMAR:

“Walked” (ver. 9) is a *hitpael*, denoting a lifestyle. Since “with God” is thrown to the beginning of the clause, it emphasizes Noah’s relationship with God: “with God walked Noah.” “Corrupt” (ver. 11, 12a) is a *niphal*. “Corrupted” (ver. 12b) is a different form, a *hiphil*, reflexive.

COMMENTS:

The word “righteous” in 6:9 is the first occurrence of this key biblical word in the text of God’s Word. So important is the word that it runs throughout the OT and the NT. The last occurrence is in Revelation 22:11 (twice). This is also the first time “complete” is found in the Bible. God describes Noah as “righteous” in 7:1. To be “righteous” is to live up to God’s expectations, as much as humanly possible. In the same way, “complete” means faithfulness to God’s requirements. The word “complete” will later be used for perfect specimens used in sacrifices. Noah walked with God, just as Enoch had done (5:22-24). It is possible to “walk with God” in the midst of a sinful, wicked, perverted, violent generation of people!

Man had been commanded to “fill” the earth (1:22, 28); they did, with violence! The earth was corrupt; God saw it, and “behold,” it was corrupt. Back in 1:31, God had seen everything He had made and said it was very “good.” Now, He sees it as corrupt. All flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - We have seen that Enoch preached to his generation (Jude 14) and Noah preached to his generation (2 Peter 2:5). Man should have humbled himself, repented at God’s messengers, and been saved from destruction. But, in the middle of the

millions (?) of people, it was too easy to ignore the threat of destruction and continue living as if there was no God.

Contemporaries of Moses' day - Noah would not be mentioned in the Law, outside of Genesis, nor is the flood mentioned. But, Israel should learn their lesson about the importance of responding to God's call for faithful obedience.

Later Hebrew writers - Noah and his three sons are mentioned in the genealogy of Israel found in 1 Chronicles 1:4. Job is described frequently as being "complete" (cf. Job 1:1, 8; 2:3, 9; 9:21-22; 12:4; 27:5; 31:6).

NT Writers - As with the others in Seth's line, Noah's family, specifically Seth, is found in Jesus' line (Luke 3:38).

TRANSLATION - 6:13-22:

13 So God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come to My face, because the earth is filled [with] violence because of them and behold they are corrupting the earth.

14 Make for yourself an ark of trees of gopher; cubicles you will make [in] the ark and you will cover it inside and outside with pitch. **15** And this [is] what you will make it: three hundred cubits the length of the ark, fifty cubits its breadth, and thirty cubits its height. **16** A window you will make for the ark and to a cubit you will finish it upwards and a door for the ark on its side. You will put lower, second, and third [levels] you will make it.

17 Then I, myself, behold am bringing the flood of waters on the earth to destroy all flesh which [is] on it, the spirit of life from under the heavens, all which [is] on the earth will perish. **18** And I will establish my covenant with you and you will come to the ark, you and your sons and your wife and your sons wives with you. **19** And from all life from all flesh two from all you will bring to the ark, to preserve with you male and female they will be. **20** From the bird after their kind and from the wild animal after their kind and from every creeping thing on the earth after their kind, two from all will come to you to be preserved. **21** Even you, take for yourself from all food which will be eaten and you will store for yourself and it will be for you and for them for food."

22 And Noah did according to all which God commanded him. Thus he did.

WORDS:

"Ark" (ver. 14) is only used one other time besides this context: Exodus 2:3. It is an Egyptian loanword, a subtle defense of Moses' authorship, since he grew up in Egypt and was educated in all their ways (Acts 7:22). "Gopher" (ver. 14) is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew word. It is not found elsewhere so scholars don't know what type of wood it was. Most guess it was cypress. "Cubicles" (13x) is usually translated "nest." It suggests small compartments inside the ark.

"Cover" and "pitch" (ver. 14) are from the same word family, to "cover." The verb will later be translated to "atone," or "cover sins" (102x). We doubt there is a theological connection between its use here and its use in the Law. "Cubit" (ver. 15) is a frequent measurement in the OT (249x). In standard measurement, it is usually identified as 18". In metric units, 45 cm. "Window" (ver. 16) is a different word from, but likely the same object as, "window" from 8:6. This word might refer to the roof in some way or a skylight. But clearly, the "window" from 8:6 is a typical window. Here is the only place this word is used in the OT (a *hapax legomenon*).

This word for "flood" is found only here in the context of Noah's flood and later, in Psalm 29:10. Apparently, it was a term that was uniquely suited for this catastrophic event. The word "destroy" (ver. 17) was translated as "corrupt" in 6:11-13. There, we translated it with moral and spiritual overtones. Here, it carries its more literal meaning. Observe "spirit" here refers to the breath of life within God's animated creation. "Perish" (ver. 17) is used 24x. The verb translated "establish" (*qm*) has a broad semantic range, being used 627x. It can mean "to rise, stand, or establish." "Covenant" (ver. 18) can mean a "pact, contract, commitment,

pledge, promise, or, if between nations, a treaty.” It is also an important biblical concept (287x). It is used 27x in Genesis with eight occurrences being in chapters six-nine, regarding Noah. On “wild animal,” see “Words” at verse 7. “Command” is a key biblical term (496x).

GRAMMAR:

“Corrupting” (ver.13) is a participle. “Make” (ver. 14) is an imperative. “Finish” (ver. 16) is *piel*. “Bringing” (ver. 17) is a *hiphil* participle. “I will establish” (ver. 18) is a *hiphil* and not the normal word used with covenants. “You will bring” (ver. 19) is *hiphil*. “Even you” (ver. 21) is emphatic. “Take” (ver. 21) is imperative. “Will be eaten” is a *niphal*. “Commanded” (ver. 22) is a *piel*.

COMMENTS:

Verse 13 emphasizes again how the earth had corrupted itself before the eyes of God, immersed in sin. Sin requires punishment from a holy God who cannot look with approval on sin (Habakkuk 1:13). God commands Noah to build an ark, a very large rectangular box, in order to escape the destruction God is bringing on the earth. We do not know what type of wood “gopher” was; most guess it was cypress. It would be buoyant in water. “Pitch” was bitumen, which was waterproof. The “cubicles” were probably smaller rooms inside the ark to separate animals, as well as, rooms for the humans, food, and perhaps waste products.

A cubit is the length from the elbow to the tip of the tallest finger, 18” or 45 cm. The size of the ark (450’ L x 45’ H x 75’ W) would give an area around 95,700 square feet. By contrast, an American football field is 360’ L by 160’ W, or 57,600 square feet. Remember, the ark had three levels! Soccer fields (FIFA) can be different dimensions but the largest are 131 yards (120m) L by 100 yards (90m) W, which is 10,800 square meters. The cargo capacity would be over 15,000 tons. We have not commented on ANE parallels to the flood and Noah’s ark; the parallels are found all over the world, more than the other biblical parallels. Yet, they all show evidence of human embellishment. For example, the boat built by Utnapishtim in the Babylonian epic, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, was a perfect cube, completely unworthy of sea voyage in any form! Noah’s ark was very large, but a rectangular box. It was not designed to move as much as it was designed to float, to keep Noah, his family, and the animals safe.

The window seems to be an opening around the entire ark, one cubit below the roof, although the text is not entirely clear. There is one door, which God Himself, in His time, will close (Gen. 7:16). Verse 17 begins with the emphatic pronoun, “I, myself,” showing that God is behind the flood from beginning to end. It is His form of punishment and discipline for a world that has corrupted itself. God is the one Who gave life (2:7; the word here is “breath” of life, not “Spirit”), but now He is extinguishing life (“spirit;” 6:17).

God’s covenant is to save the world through Noah’s obedience in building the ark and fulfilling God’s other commands. The implication is that Noah *must* obey in order to be a party to the covenant. The fact that God saves Noah, his sons, and their wives is emphasized throughout the text (cf. 7:7, 13; 8:16, 18). This shows the grace of God relative to Noah but also to mankind in general. He does not destroy all of mankind. Eight souls were saved, by God’s choice, in the ark. The number of animals is only given in general terms here. As Moses did with chapters 1 and 2, he will give the general terms in chapter 6 and then get more specific in chapter 7. Enough food for the humans and the animals were taken on the ark with all the animals, which God selected to be saved, being brought apparently by God’s providence.

It is interesting that Noah does not speak at all in chapters 6-9. God speaks. Through these chapters, we have noted ten references to God speaking, most of the time to Noah. Noah obeys. We also do not have to assume that Noah and his three sons (or their wives) were the sole workers on the ark. Other family members or friends, or even hired people, could have helped them build the ark, even if they did not believe the message of the preacher.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Verse 22 emphasizes the obedience Noah offered to God. God commanded; Noah obeyed. Noah's sons and daughters-in-law also obeyed. Noah's wife obeyed. Eight souls, in the midst of perhaps millions, obeyed and were saved.

Contemporaries of Moses' day - The Israelites built the tabernacle to God's specifications in terms reminiscent of Noah's obedience (Exo. 39:42). Moses surely led Israel to obey God in all that He commanded as they built it (Exo. 39:32, 40:16) and other times (Num. 1:54; 2:34; 9:5).

Later Hebrew writers - Psalm 29:10 is the only use of the Hebrew word translated "flood" in the rest of the Scriptures. "Covenant" is certainly a key word through the rest of the OT. Both Isaiah (54:9) and Ezekiel (14:14, 20) will refer to Noah as a historical person.

NT writers - The flood of Noah is used as an illustration of sudden, but certain destruction by Jesus (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27). Noah built the ark, obeyed, by faith (Heb. 11:7). Peter will refer to Noah several times. The salvation of Noah through the ark is a picture of salvation from sins through the waters of baptism (1 Peter 3:20-21). Noah was a "herald" of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Finally, in 2 Peter 3:5-6, Peter uses the universal, complete, and certain destruction of the world through the flood to assure us that God will destroy the world, in its entirety, one day, completely and for sure.