



## Genesis - Chapter Six

### I. Genesis 1:1-11:26 - Primeval History (continues)

#### I.c Genesis 5:1-6:8 - Adam's Descendants (continues/concludes)

##### Summary of Chapter Six

The first part of the chapter describes how humankind degenerated to the point where God actually regretted creating them in the first place. He decided that it was time to wipe out all people, along with all other land animals and creatures that fly, in order to eradicate evil from the earth. However, one man, Noah, found favour in God's sight; thus there was hope for the world.

God gives Noah specific instructions with regard to the design of the ark and that he will provide two of each kind of animal and bird to fill it. Noah for his part is to ensure sufficient food for his family and the livestock.

#### 1.c.ii. Genesis 6:1-8 - The Wickedness of Humankind

The very specific list of descendants in Chapter Five is immediately followed by this short passage that explains why God sent a flood to punish the whole of humanity. However, this passage concludes by recognising that, in contrast to everyone else, Noah finds favour in God's eyes.

<sup>1</sup> When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose.

##### Genesis 6:1-2

People began to multiply. Population growth would have been rapid given the long life spans of individuals; therefore, new births were not replacing deaths but adding to the population. The motif of multiplying is first introduced by God in

1:28, where it is presented in a very positive light and viewed as necessary to fulfil God's plans for the earth. The present passage, however, reveals that this God-mandated task leads to increasing wickedness on the earth as the population expands. This problem is exacerbated by the coming together of the sons of God and the daughters of the people. The identity of both groups is uncertain, and various solutions have been advocated, although none has gained universal support. Various scholars have proposed that the sons of God are:

1. Fallen angels, as confirmed in: <<*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them*>> (Job 1:6 ESV); some, however, suggest that this contradicts: <<*For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven*>> (Mark 12:25), although the reference in Mark is to angels in heaven. Further support for fallen angels is found in: <<*For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgement; and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he saved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood on a world of the ungodly*>> (2 Peter 2:4-5), and: <<*Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgement of the great day*>> (Jude 5-6).
2. Tyrannical human judges or kings in the ungodly line of Cain's Lamech, who were possibly demon-possessed.
3. Followers of God among the male descendants of Seth, i.e. the godly line of Seth, but who married the ungodly daughters of Cain. God never approved of mismatched marriages: <<*When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you – the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you – and when the LORD your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly*>> (Deuteronomy 7:1-4), supported by the words of Paul: <<*Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what*

*partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness?>> (2 Corinthians 6:14).*

Although it would be difficult to determine which of these three views may be correct, it is clear that the kind of relationship described here involved some form of grievous sexual perversion, wherein the sons of God saw and with impunity took any women that they wanted, i.e. the daughters of people. The sequence here, saw - fair - took, parallels the sequence of the fall in 3:6 'saw - good - took.' In both cases, something good in God's creation is used in disobedience and sinful rebellion against God, with tragic consequences. Only Noah stands apart from this sin. Refer to the comments made on 1 Peter 3:19.

Although none of these proposals make it clear why this action alone made mankind so corrupt that God wanted to destroy all that he created, what is clear from this account is that it is not what God intended. In the same way it would seem that he intended separation between church and state, just as he did between the righteous and the unrighteous, and between good and evil.

<sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, 'My spirit shall not abide in mortals for ever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred and twenty years.'

### Genesis 6:3

My spirit shall not abide in mortals for ever, for they are flesh. This phrase is often translated as 'My spirit shall not always strive with man.' The meaning of this much-contested clause is really settled by the main purpose and context of the verse, which is the divine determination to shorten human life: *<<If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and all mortals return to dust>>* (Job 34:14-15). Whether, then, God's spirit be the animating breath (2:7) whereby human life is sustained, or the spiritual part of man, his conscience and moral sense in opposition to his flesh, the struggle henceforth is not to be indefinitely prolonged. In the first case, the struggle spoken of is that between the elements of life and death in the body; in the second, it refers to the moral probation to which man is subject: *<<Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want>>* (Galatians 5:16-17).

God announces that because of the immoral nature of people, their days shall be one hundred and twenty years. There are two possible interpretations of this number of years: either the lives of human beings would no longer exceed one hundred and twenty years, or the coming of the flood was anticipated in one hundred and twenty years time. While the latter interpretation is simpler, the former interpretation is appealing, and would be true as a generalisation even

though some of those who lived after the flood, e.g. Abraham and most of his ancestors, enjoyed lives in excess of one hundred and twenty years.

<sup>4</sup> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

#### Genesis 6:4

Nephilim. The meaning of this term is uncertain. It occurs elsewhere in the OT only in Numbers 13:33, where it denotes a group living in Canaan. If both passages refer to the same people, then the Israelite spies: <<*There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them*>> (Numbers 13:33), were expressing their fears of the Canaanites by likening them to the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

Although in Hebrew Nepilim means ‘fallen ones,’ the earliest Greek translators rendered it *gigantes* or giants. This idea may have been mistakenly deduced from Numbers 13:33; one must be cautious about reading it back into the present passage. The Nephilim were mighty men or warriors and, as such, may well have contributed to the violence that filled the earth (v.13).

<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

#### Genesis 6:5

The wickedness of humankind was great in the earth. This verse concisely describes the universal intensity and pervasiveness of human wickedness, as well as the judgement that it will inevitably invoke: <<*But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death*>> (Genesis 38:7), <<*But they did not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their wickedness and make no offerings to other gods*>> (Jeremiah 44:5), <<*But if you warn the wicked, and they do not turn from their wickedness, or from their wicked way, they shall die for their iniquity; but you will have saved your life*>> (Ezekiel 3:19). Worse than the outward sinful actions of humankind was the fact that God could see that the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually; for God judges the heart: <<*But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart’*>> (1 Samuel 16:7).

<sup>6</sup> And the LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, ‘I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created – people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’

### Genesis 6:6-7

The LORD was sorry, it grieved him to his heart. The Hebrew verb rendered sorry or regretted, Hebrew *nakham*, is sometimes translated ‘repent,’ and sometimes as ‘feel sorrow’ or ‘be grieved.’ God is grieved over his creation, which he at first saw as very good (1:31) but which is now filled with sin. He did not make humans to be evil; he created them for good but with freewill to choose their own course of action. God would later feel this way over making Saul the king over his people: <<*Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel*>> (1 Samuel 15:35).

The destruction of people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air suggests that this will be a reversal of God’s creative work. The resulting flood reflects this, for the dry land is submerged under water, subsequently to reappear, as in Genesis 1:9.

I will blot out from the earth. On the extent of the flood, refer to the comments made on v.17. There will be similar judgement to come on the final Day of the Lord: <<*I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth, says the LORD*>> (Zephaniah 1:2).

<sup>8</sup> But Noah found favour in the sight of the LORD.

### Genesis 6:8

Noah is distinguished from the rest of humanity. He never earned favour or grace from God but found it in him. Apart from Noah, the only other people in the OT who is described as finding favour in the sight of the LORD is Moses in Exodus 33:17, possibly Abraham, as indicated by: <<*He said, ‘My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant’*>> (Genesis 18:3), and King David: <<*And it was there until the time of David, who found favour with God and asked that he might find a dwelling-place for the house of Jacob*>> (Acts 7:45b-46). Placed on a par with Moses, Noah is rescued from the looming annihilation. The mother of Jesus was one from the NT who was similarly honoured: <<*The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God’*>> (Luke 1:30)

## I.d Genesis 6:9-9:29 - Noah's Descendants and the Flood

A flood story, included in the Epic of Gilgamesh, has been found in the Mesopotamian literature. It has many similarities to the biblical account of the flood. A certain man named Utnapishtim built an ark, loaded it with animals, and survived a torrential rain. The relationship of the two accounts, if any, is uncertain, although the appearance of a flood story in Mesopotamia gives some support and confirmation to the historicity of the biblical event. That is, the existence of such stories elsewhere indicates that the Bible indeed preserves the memory of a momentous event, as does the Mesopotamian account. There are also key differences between the biblical and Mesopotamian stories, particularly in regard to what motivated God or the gods to bring the flood.

Centred on Noah and his descendants, this section of Genesis is dominated by the account of the flood that brings about a renewal of the earth, which has similarities to 1:1-2:3. While the land is cleansed of the defilement caused by human wrongdoing and a new start is made possible by God, the people's nature has not been transformed, as the final short episode in 9:20-28 reveals. The inclination of the human heart is still toward evil.

This long section recounts how Noah and his immediate family are rescued from the flood. By echoing Chapter One, the whole process is presented as the undoing of creation and then the 're-creation' of the earth as it emerges from the flood. However, after the flood not everything returns to a pristine condition. Human nature is not renewed and sin remains in the world.

### 1.d.i Genesis 6:9-22 - Noah Pleases God

This section introduces Noah and the instructions that God gave to him so that humankind, as well as all animal and bird types would survive the flood that God would bring upon the earth. God provides the details for the construction of the ark that would be their means of surviving this cataclysmic event.

<sup>9</sup> These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. <sup>10</sup> And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

### Genesis 6:9-10

These are the descendants of Noah. A new heading introduces this section of Genesis. Noah's personal righteousness explains why he is warned about the forthcoming deluge. The Hebrew term for blameless conveys the sense of being perfect, or without evident flaw, although not necessarily sinless. There are many calls in the OT for people to live a blameless life and an indication of the rewards for doing so; for example: <<*You must be blameless before the LORD your God*>> (Deuteronomy 18:13 NIV), <<*There was once a man in the land of Uz whose*

*name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil>> (Job 1:1), <<Mark the blameless, and behold the upright, for there is posterity for the peaceable>> (Psalm 37:37), and: <<he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly>> (Proverbs 2:7).*

**Walked with God.** Like Noah, Abraham is later required by God to walk before him and be blameless (17:1). The positive attributes listed here are rarely ascribed to human beings in the OT. Refer to the comments made on 5:22-24.

<sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup> And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth.

### **Genesis 6:11-12**

In contrast to Noah, **the earth was corrupt in God's sight.** These verses confirm what has already been indicated in vv.1-7. Here, however, particular emphasis is given to the **violence** that **fills the earth.** The mention of corruption here may lie behind Paul's 'bondage to decay' or corruption in Romans 8:21: the creation suffers as mankind corrupts its way, and as God punishes that corruption.

**Originally delegated to govern the earth on God's behalf, humans have aggressively and viciously asserted their rule over others, including both people and other living creatures.**

**The ancient Near Eastern epics of Gilgamesh and Atrahasis also tell of a flood sent to punish human beings. In those stories, however, it is merely the disruptive noise of humanity that leads to their destruction. Genesis emphasises that God destroys the people he has created because of their immoral behaviour.**

<sup>13</sup> And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. <sup>14</sup> Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. <sup>15</sup> This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. <sup>16</sup> Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. <sup>17</sup> For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.

## Genesis 6:13-17

And God said to Noah. God told all of this to Noah with the intention of saving Noah and his family. In the midst of such corruption and judgement, there is also grace. Instead of wiping out the entire race, God preserved a remnant.

Make yourself an ark. This was specifically Noah's project to ensure that the human race would not be destroyed completely in the flood. Noah was no subcontractor; he was instructed to accept by faith what God was doing well ahead of any sign of the devastating flood to come.

I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Some may wonder if this is too harsh a judgement, or if it shows God to be cruel and unloving. However, since the fall in Genesis Chapter Three, every human being has a death sentence. The timing and method of that death is completely in the hands of God: *<<And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess>> (Deuteronomy 28:63), <<Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his descendants for ever>> (2 Kings 8:19), <<After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this, shall we break your commandments again and intermarry with the peoples who practise these abominations? Would you not be angry with us until you destroy us without remnant or survivor?>> (Ezra 9:13-14), and: <<Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I am determined to bring disaster on you, to bring all Judah to an end>> (Jeremiah 44:11).*

In a long speech, God gives Noah directions for the construction of an ark that will be sufficiently large to house his family and a wide variety of other living creatures.

In modern measurements, the ark would have been around 450 feet or 140m long, 75 feet or 23m wide, and 45 feet or 14m high, yielding a displacement of about 43,000 tons, i.e. about 39 million kg. The inside capacity would have been 1.4 million cubic feet or 39,644 cubic metres, with an approximate total deck area of 95,700 square feet or 8,891 square metres.

As a comparison to more modern shipping that would be equivalent in displacement to a WWII US Midway class aircraft carrier, the French Charles de Gaulle carrier or the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov.

Is there any evidence that such a ship ever existed?

- In 275BC Berosus, a Babylonian historian wrote: ‘But of this ship that grounded in Armenia some part still remains in the mountains ... and some get pitch from the ship by scraping it off.’
- Around AD75 Josephus said the locals collected relics from the ark and showed them off to his very day. He also said all the ancient historians he knew of wrote about the ark.
- In AD180 Theophilus of Antioch wrote: ‘the remains [of the ark] are to this day to be seen ... in the mountains.’
- An elderly Armenian man living in the USA said that as a boy, he visited the ark with his father and three atheistic scientists in 1856. Their goal was to disprove the ark’s existence, but they found it and became so enraged they tried to destroy it, but could not because it was too big and had petrified. In 1918 one of the atheistic scientists (an Englishman) admitted on his deathbed the whole story was true.
- In 1876 a distinguished British statesman and author, Viscount James Bryce, climbed Ararat and reported finding a four-foot long piece of hand-tooled timber at an altitude of more than 13,000 feet or 4,300m.
- Six Turkish soldiers claimed to see the ark in 1916.
- In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a Russian aviator named Vladimire Rokovitsky claimed the discovery of Noah’s ark. He was stationed in southern Russia near the Turkish border and Mount Ararat. As he tested a plane he and his co-pilot flew over Ararat and discovered on the edge of a glacier what he described as a boat the size of a battleship. He said it was partially submerged in a lake, and he could see there was an opening for a door nearly 20 feet (7 meters) square, but the door was missing. Rokovitsky told his commanding officer and an expedition was dispatched to find the ark and photograph it. The report was forwarded to the Czar, who was soon overthrown and the photos and the report perished.
- In 1936 a young British archæologist named Hardwicke Knight hiked across Ararat and discovered interlocking hand-tooled timbers at a height of 14,000 feet (4,600 meters).
- During World War II two pilots saw and photographed something they believed was the ark on Mount Ararat.

There have been many more recent attempts to find and document the ark, but they have been hindered by politics and surrounded in controversy.

Cover it inside and out with pitch. This would form an excellent seal to keep the vessel watertight for the entire year that it was to be at sea. There is no mention of the installation of pumps on the ship or Noah calling on his sons to man them during the storms they would later faced.

Put the door of the ark in its side. There was only one way into the ark just as there is only one way into eternal salvation: <<*For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it*>> (Matthew 7:14).

Everything that is on the earth shall die. Although God intends the flood to destroy every person and his remarks have a strong universal emphasis, this in itself does not necessarily mean that the flood had to cover the whole earth. Since the geographical perspective of ancient people was more limited than that of contemporary readers, it is possible that the flood, while universal from their viewpoint, did not cover the entire globe. Indeed, Genesis implies that prior to the Tower of Babel incident (11:1-9), people had not yet spread throughout the earth. Many interpreters, therefore, argue that a huge regional flood may have been all that was necessary for God to destroy all human beings. The expression <<*all the earth*>> (7:3) and <<*the whole earth*>> (8:9), does not exclude such a possibility: later <<*all the world*>> came to Joseph to buy grain (41:57), clearly referring to the eastern Mediterranean seaboard. In support of the view that the flood covered all the earth, other interpreters point out that the text says that <<*all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered*>> (7:19), and that the water was 'fifteen cubits' above the tops of the mountains. If <<*the mountains of Ararat*>> (8:4) refers to the range that includes present-day Mount Ararat in Turkey, elevation 16,854 feet or 5,137m, the amount of water necessary to cover it would be at least 16,854 feet above the current sea level.

<sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

<sup>19</sup> And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. <sup>20</sup> Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. <sup>21</sup> Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them.' <sup>22</sup> Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

### Genesis 6:18-22

God indicates that he will establish a covenant with Noah: <<*I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them;*

*and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me*>> (Jeremiah 32:40), and: <<*Yes, thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant*>> (Ezekiel 16:59-60); refer also to the comments made on 9:9-11 and 9:12-17.

You shall come into the ark. In 7:1 Noah is commanded to 'go into the ark' but here, the use of the word come, seems to indicate that God would be in the ark ahead of him. It is reminiscent of the offer of Jesus: <<*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest*>> (Matthew 11:28).

By taking into the ark two of every living thing, including birds, animals, and creeping things, Noah displays the caring oversight that people were expected to have for other living creatures.

In later times the Law of Moses would discriminate between clean and unclean animals that the people of God could eat or even touch. In the ark there was no such discrimination for God reaches out to clean and unclean alike. There is one Gospel for all as Peter would also find out: <<*But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.'* The voice said to him again, a second time, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane'>> (Acts 10:14-15).

They shall be male and female. All the living creatures were to be taken as breeding pairs in order to ensure the continuity of the species. God clearly never intended that he should have to recreate any kind of life following the flood.

Take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up. All living creatures were still vegetarian at that time but they would have eaten a variety of food from the vegetation and the fruits. Also, there had to be sufficient food to last them the year that the water lay upon the earth and then for the vegetation to recover after the waters had receded.

Although one may ponder how some of the fruit especially, but other crops too, lasted so long without perishing. It should be remembered that God allowed manna, which mostly only lasted for one day, to be preserved in the Ark of the Covenant for generations. He was also able to multiply food to feed a multitude from very little, so it should not be surprising that he was able to sustain these people and all the animals in this way.

Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. This final statement shows how God expected all of his people to act. Sadly, starting with Adam and Eve, far too many have not done so throughout history.