

Genesis Six

The Coming of Nephilim

1 And it happened when mankind¹ began to increase on the earth,² and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of Elohim³ saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, and took for themselves wives from any whom they chose.

3 And Yahweh said, My Spirit shall not contend with mankind forever, for he is certainly flesh; but his days will be a hundred and twenty years. ⁴In those days⁴ nephilim⁵ were on the earth, and also after, thus when the sons of Elohim had come in to the daughters of men, and they had borne children to them. They were the strong men, who long ago were men of renown.⁶

The Cause of the Flood

5 And Yahweh saw how great the evil of Man was on the earth, and every intention of the thoughts of his heart⁷ was only evil constantly. ⁶And Yahweh was sorry⁸ that he had made man on the earth, and it caused pain⁹ in his heart. ⁷And Yahweh said, I will wipe man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, from man to cattle, to crawling things, and the birds of the heavens; for I am sorry that I have made them. ⁸But Noah found favor¹⁰ in the eyes of Yahweh.

The Tol'dot of Noah

9 These are the generations¹¹ of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, innocent in his time. Noah journeyed with Elohim. ¹⁰And Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹And the earth was corrupt in the presence of Elohim, and the earth was full of violence. ¹²And Elohim saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, because all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth.

The Instructions for the Ark

13 And Elohim said to Noah, The end of all flesh¹² is coming in my presence, for the earth is full of violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make for yourself an ark of gopher¹³ wood. You will make rooms in the ark, and you will cover it inside and outside with pitch.¹⁴ ¹⁵And this is how you make it: The length of the ark will be three hundred cubits¹⁵,

and its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶A you will make a roof¹⁶ for the ark; and you will finish it a cubit¹⁷ from the top¹⁸. And you will put a door for the ark in its side. You will make it with a lower second, and third story. ¹⁷For behold, I Myself will bring waters of a flood on the earth,¹⁹ to destroy every creature under the heavens that has the breath of life in it. Everything on the earth will perish.²⁰ ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you,²¹ and you will go into the ark, you and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹And of every living thing of all flesh, you will bring two of every kind²² into the ark, to keep alive with you; they will be male and female. ²⁰From the bird according to its kind, and From the livestock according to its kind, of every crawling thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind will come to you, to keep them alive. ²¹And take of all food²³ to be eaten, and collect it to be food for you and for them. ²²And Noah did all that Elohim commanded him, thus²⁴ he did.

End Notes

- 1 Not the plural *men*, as often translated. The word is the articular singular *ha'adam*, best translated *mankind*. Some translate it *human*, though such a translation is problematical since it has no etymological relationship to the word English word *man*.
- 2 Because of the long life span before the flood, the earth had a huge and growing population very early.
- 3 The most common interpretive error here is that these *sons of Elohim* (בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים) were the line of Seth (Keil & Delitzsch, for instance). Another less common error is that these *sons of Elohim* dynastic rulers (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, for instance), a highly improbable interpretation.

Interestingly, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* hedges on this issue, indicating that fallen angels may have indwelt men to produce children. But we know that spirit beings can take human form, not a phantom or non-physical individual, but one who is subject to earthly conditions.

The correct interpretation is clearly that which is presented in 2 Peter 2:4-8 and Jude 6-7, both of which refer back to Genesis 6, and make it clear that angels are in view here. The idea that angels cannot bear children, taken from Matthew 29-30, and its parallel passages in Mark and Luke, is easily refuted, as the Lord specifically identifies the angels who do not marry as those *in heaven*. The angels in Jude have left their own dwelling place. See my note on the nephilim below.

- 4 בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם (*bayamim hahe*) is a regular Hebrew saying, meaning *at that time*. Another phrase, בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה (*bayamim hahemah*), carries an identical meaning. (*Hahemah* appears to be a variant spelling of *hahe*, both meaning *those*.) The two phrases occur a total of 38 times in the Hebrew Bible. See my paper, “A Listing of the Phrase *in those days* (הָהֵם בַּיָּמִים and בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה) in the Hebrew Bible.”
- 5 The idea that the nephilim are “giants,” reflects the Septuagint translation γίγαντες, and some relate the idea to the non-canonical book of Enoch.

For the idea that they were over-sized see Numbers 13:33, where they are associated with the children of Anak. See my translation and discussion of that verse. Anak means “long necked” and evidently refers to their height.

From Genesis 6, however, it’s clear that the nephilim are not strictly human, and that they were very large seems likely.

According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT) by Harris, Archer, and Waltke *nephilim* is from an unknown root, though it possibly means something along the line of *warriors*. They give no reason for their supposition.

However, others disagree and relate *nephilim* to the trilateral root נָפַל, *to fall*. If so, *nephilim* means “fallen ones,” a likely designation for children of angels who had abandoned their own dwelling-place (ἀπολιπόντας [*having left behind, deserted*] τὸ ἴδιον [their own] οἰκητήριον [habitation, dwelling-place], Jude 6).

This is a much better understanding of the *nephilim* than given in TWOT. They were “fallen ones,” the offspring of angels and human women.

This was a Satanic attempt to corrupt the human line, and so to make God’s program of deliverance through the perfect human, Jesus of Nazareth, impossible. As a result, God eliminated the corrupted human race, and saved eight individuals who were not so corrupted.

- 6 Literally, *men of the name* (אֲנָשֵׁי הַשֵּׁם), meaning their names were still remembered at the time of writing.
- 7 The cultural use of the word heart, in both Hebrew and Greek, is primarily mental. The heart was viewed as the seat of thoughts (מַחְשָׁבַת), rather than the modern idea of the seat of emotions.
- 8 Sometimes translated grieved, the word is an anthropomorphism, the ascribing to God human emotions. However, God’s sorrow is not like man’s, in that it is a determined consideration, not a volatile, capricious emotion.
- 9 God’s pain (יָתֵעֵצָב), a hithpael form of עָצַב) was not primarily emotional, but a considered view. The word, like *sorrow*, is an anthropopathism, that is, that is, the attributing to God a human condition of mental anguish.
- 10 The word *favor* (חֵן) is not precisely identical to the New Testament word, *grace* (χάρις), though it is often misused to attempt such an identity. For a discussion of the New Testament word *grace*, see my work on the Christian Life entitled *Grace and the Enemies of the Believer*.

End Notes

- 11 See the discussion of *tol^edot* at Genesis 2:4.
- 12 The word *flesh* is clearly not limited to human beings. The NIV translation of *people* is a serious error.
- 13 The word translated *ark*, *tebat* (תֵּבַת), occurs in only two passages: here in Genesis 6-8, referring to this boat, and again in Exodus 2:3 and 5, referring to the boat of reeds in which Moses was placed a baby. It is possibly a loan word from the Egyptian language, with which Moses would have been aware. The word for *ark* in the phrase *ark of the covenant* is a different word, *'arōn* (אֲרוֹן), the word for a box or chest.

The word *gopher* (גֹּפֶר) does not refer to the animal, but to a kind of tree, perhaps the cypress. It is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew word from an unknown root. This word occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible.
- 14 Lit. *you will cover it with covering*. The traditional translation of *pitch* for both the verb and the noun comes from the idea that Noah use bitumen (An asphalt native to Asia Minor and other places in the Near East used in waterproofing and as mortar. It is a hydrocarbon related to coal and oil.) to cover the wood inside and out. This was probably for waterproofing. It also tells us, more or less, the color of the boat.
- 15 A cubit is considered to be 18 imperial inches. That would make the ark 450 feet long, its width 75 feet, and its height 45 feet. See BDB under *Cubit*. These dimensions are similar to a modern ocean liner. According to Unger in *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pg. 60, the displacement was 43,300 tons.

Other ancient cultures also spoke of a boat during the flood, some of which are quite ludicrous. A cuneiform description exists which says the ark was a six storied cube some 260 feet tall with a mast and pilot on top. The Greeks, according to Berossus, believed the ark was 3000 feet long and 1200 feet wide. (Berossus, who was a Chaldean priest of Bel in Babylon, wrote in Greek during the 3rd century BC. Religious historians such as Eusebius of Caesarea and Josephus quoted him. His work, which survives only in fragmentary citations, presented information about the origins of Babylon.)
- 16 The Hebrew root translated *roof* (צֹהַר) usually means *noon time*, the middle of the day when the sun is at its peak. It is used here of the top of the ark, the *roof*, though by analogy to daylight it is sometimes translated *light*.
- 17 It appears that the finishing left 18 inches above the wall around the ark.
- 18 Literally, *from above* (מִלְּמַעְלָה).
- 19 Many ancient cultures had flood stories. The Sumerian King List is divided into pre-flood and post-flood sections.
- 20 The view that the flood was only local cannot stand if one understands Scripture in a normal fashion.
- 21 This appears to be a prediction of the future covenant (בְּרִית) presented in Genesis 9.
- 22 This is a preliminary requirement of the animals taken aboard the Ark. A further categorization takes place in Genesis 7 dealing with the bringing aboard of clean animals. See the note on Genesis 7:7.
- 23 The specifics of the food are not given. However, it is likely that God is referring to vegetable matter, though the amount is not clear. Perhaps Noah received instructions on the amount that are not included in the inspired text.
- 24 The word כֵּן (*cen*) can mean either *thus*, or *so*. In modern Hebrew it is the word for *yes*.