

## THE WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD

(Gen. 6:1-22)

1. *Universal Degeneracy* (Gen. 6:1-8).

*"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, 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 that they chose. 3 And Jehovah said, My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years. 4 The Nephilim were 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 were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.*

*"5 And Jehovah 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 Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them. 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah."*

(1) V. 1. The word *adamah* is used here, translated "ground": it occurs also in vv. 7 and 20, and in ch. 7, vv. 4, 8. It is thus distinguished from *erets*, which occurs repeatedly throughout Genesis and in the story of the Flood in particular, and may be rendered either "earth" or "land." (Incidentally space is lacking here for any elaborate discussion of the problems of the documentary (critical) analysis of the Genesis account of the Flood or those of the actual extent of the Flood as a historical event. For an exhaustive refutation of the former, the

student is again advised to study Green (UBG) and Allis (FBM); and for equally thoroughgoing treatments of the latter, the various works recently published by Rehwinkel, Morris and Whitcomb, Archer, Unger, Ramm, et al: for a listing of these books, see Bibliographical material on the introductory pages of this textbook. C.C.C.).

(2) V. 2. The "sons of God" and the "daughters of men." One theory is that marriage alliances were formed by supernatural beings with mortal women, and that from these unnatural unions there arose "a race of heroes or demigods who must have figured largely in Hebrew folklore. It is implied, though not expressly said, that the existence of such beings, intermediate between the divine and the human, introduced an element of disorder into the Creation which had to be checked by the special interposition of Yahweh" (Skinner, ICCG, 139). (See Hesiod's account, in his *Works and Days*, of the ages of man: first, the golden race; then in the order named, the silver, the brazen, the *demigods*, and finally the iron race. Cf. also the myth of the Titans, that of the Cyclopes, and the accounts of the quasi-divine personages of the Heroic Age, etc.). Green (UBG, 53): "The sons of God are not angels nor demigods, whose intermarriage with the daughters of men brought forth a race of monsters or superhuman beings. This purely mythological conceit was foisted upon the passage in certain apocryphal books like the book of Enoch; also by Philo and Josephus, who were misled by the analogy of ancient heathen fables. But it was repelled by the great body of Jewish and Christian interpreters from the earliest periods, though it has been taken up again by a number of modern scholars. It is assumed by them that a transgression of angels is here spoken of, though the existence of angels has not been before mentioned nor in any way referred to in the previous part of Genesis. This view has no sanction whatever in Scripture. Jude, vs. 6, 7, and 2 Pet. 2:4 have been tortured into sustaining it;

but they contain no reference to this passage whatever. And there is no analogy anywhere in the Bible for the adoption by the sacred writers of mythological notions in general, or for the idea in particular of the intermarriage of angels and men." The JB (21,n) summarizes: "The author uses a popular story of a race of giants, in Hebr. *Nephilim*, the Titans of Eastern legend, born of the union between gods and mortals. The author does not present this episode as a myth nor, on the other hand, does he deliver judgment on its actual occurrence; he records the anecdote of a race of supermen simply to serve as an example of the increasing human malice that is to provoke the Deluge. Later Judaism and almost all the earliest ecclesiastical writers identify the 'sons of God' with the fallen angels; but from the 4th century onward, as the ideas of angelic natures become less material, the Fathers commonly take the 'sons of God' to be Seth's descendants and the 'daughters of men' those of Cain." That these phrases have reference to intermarriage of either demigods or angels with mortal women is absurd. As Green puts it (p. 54): "Sexual relations are nowhere in Scripture attributed to superior beings. There is no suggestion that angels are married or are given in marriage; indeed the contrary is expressly declared (Matt. 22:30). Male and female deities have no place in the Bible, except as a heathen notion which is uniformly reprobated. The Hebrew language does not even possess a word for 'goddess.' The whole conception of sexual life, as connected with God or angels, is absolutely foreign to Hebrew thought, and for that reason cannot be supposed to be countenanced here." The JB comment that from the 4th century on, the ideas of angelic nature became less material in the writings of the Fathers, seems to ignore completely these facts of the Scriptures themselves. There are, of course, poetic references to angels as "sons of God" in Job (1:6, 2:1, 38:7) and in Psalms (29:1, 89:6). The phrase occurs also in

Dan. 3:25; here, however, the term has nothing to do with the use of it in Genesis, as it is the language of Nebuchadnezzar and hence represents a genuine heathen conception (or it could be an identification on the king's part, unwittingly of course, or a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Eternal Logos: cf. Mic. 5:2). On the contrary, the phrase, "sons of God," is a common designation of the chosen people, the worshipers of the living and true God, throughout the Old Testament (cf. Exo. 4:22; Deut. 14:1, 32:5, 6, 18, 19; Hos. 1:10, 11:1; Isa. 43:6, 45:11; Jer. 31:20, cf. 2 Cor. 6:18), whereas worshipers of false gods are spoken of as sons and daughters of those gods (e.g., Num. 21:29, Mal. 2:11). "It is in entire accord with this Biblical usage that the pious race, who adhered to the true worship of God, are called the sons of God in contrast with the descendants of Cain, who had gone out from the presence of Jehovah, and abandoned the seat of his worship entirely" (Green, 55). Note also the correspondence between this interpretation and the numerous passages throughout the Pentateuch in which intermarriage of Israelites with Canaanites is viewed with deep concern, if not actually forbidden, lest the former should be seduced into idolatry, or into the gross moral corruptions of the Cult of Fertility, as a consequence. (E.g., in Genesis 24:3-4, 27:46, 28:1-2, 26:34, 35; 28:6-8, ch. 34). Obviously any kind of warning against intermarriage with angels does not occur in Scripture, because it would have been meaningless.

Green's conclusions are irrefutable (UBG, 56): "This explanation of how it came to pass that the pious portion of the race were infected with the universal degeneracy is not only appropriate in the connection, but is necessary to account for the universality of the following judgment, which is repeatedly and largely insisted upon. This is an integral and essential part of the narrative, the omission of which would leave an unfilled chasm. The primal

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source of human corruption had been germinally shown in the fall (ch. 3); the degeneracy of the Cainites had been traced (ch. 4). Nothing but good, however, had thus far been said of the race of Seth (4:26, 5:22, 24, 29). That this pious race were themselves involved in the degeneracy which had overtaken the rest of mankind, is here stated for the first time. But this is necessary to explain why the whole race of man, with the exception of a single family, should be doomed to destruction." Again (56, 57): "The explanation now given is further confirmed by v. 3, where sentence is passed for the offence described in the preceding verse. In what the offence consisted, if the sons of God were angels, is not very obvious. It is not illicit intercourse which is described: the terms used denote lawful marriage. But if it was wrong for the angels to marry women, the angels surely were the chief offenders; and yet no penalty is denounced upon angels. The divine sentence falls exclusively upon man. There is such an obvious incongruity in this that Budde insists that ver. 3 is an interpolation and does not belong in this connection, but has been transferred from the account of the fall of our first parents. The incongruity that is alleged, however, does not show the verse to be an interpolation, but simply that the mythological sense which has been given to the passage is false." Finally, "it is objected that 'the daughters of men' must have the same universal sense in ver. 2 as in ver. 1; and that the contrast of 'the sons of God' with 'the daughters of men' shows that different orders of being are here referred to. But this contrast works precisely the other way. It has already been shown that in Scripture language the sons of God are his chosen people—the Godfearing race. In contrast with them 'the daughters of men' are necessarily limited to the rest of mankind, the ungodly mass" (*ibid.*, p. 58). *We conclude, therefore, without fear of successful contradiction, that what is pictured here is the intermingling of the*

*pious Sethites with the profane Cainites; moreover, that the phrase, "the sons of God," has special reference in this passage to the Messianic Line, which in the fifth chapter has been traced from Adam, through Seth, to Noah.*

(3) V. 3. (a) "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever" (cf. John 16:7-8). "My Spirit," that is, Ruach Elohim, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. "Shall not strive with man," *i.e.*, He will put no coercion on the volitions of men, and, after giving ample warning, instruction, and invitation, "He will, as a just judgment, on the unbelieving and impenitent, withdraw his Spirit and let them alone" (Murphy, MG, 197). Even Divine grace has its limits. God bore long and patiently with the iniquity of the antediluvian world, but the time came, as it always does in such cases, when longsuffering love had to give way to strict justice (Gal. 6:7-8). In our Dispensation, God's love will follow man to his grave, but in all justice it cannot follow him farther (cf. Psa. 89:14; Rev. 20:13; Luke 13:3, 16:19-31; Ezek. 18:23; Isa. 55:7; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is not just a glorified bell-hop who will be satisfied with our puny tips, nor is He a cosmic plumber whom we can call in for repairs and then dismiss nonchalantly. Not even Divine Love can go so far as to put a premium on sin! (b) "For that he also is flesh," *i.e.*, in view of the fact that the natural man is corporeal as well as spiritual (Gen. 2:7) and that now, since the fall, "the flesh has gained the upper hand, and the spirit is in the bondage of corruption." (c) "Yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years." This statement "if spoken of the generation then living, would mean that they should not survive that limit; if of successive generations of men, that this should henceforth be the term of human life. The former is demanded by the context. The latter is preferred by critics whose uniform usage is to interpret at variance with the context if possible. It is here absolutely without support. There is no suggestion

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anywhere that the duration of human life was ever fixed at one hundred and twenty years. It is contradicted by all that is recorded of the ages of subsequent patriarchs from Noah to Jacob. This verse, then, explicitly points to a catastrophe, in which that whole generation should be involved, and which should take place in one hundred and twenty years" (Green, p. 60). God's Spirit has always striven with man, even from the beginning when He tried to bring the first sinners to the point of repentance and confession. *But even Divine grace has its limits*, and, when the wickedness of man became so great that the earth was literally *filled* with violence, God of necessity said, "I will destroy" (cf. Ezek. 21:27, Acts 17:26). But even then He sent Noah to warn the antediluvians of "things not seen as yet" (Heb. 11:7), and granted a reprieve of one hundred and twenty years to give them opportunity for repentance and reformation and so to demonstrate to future generations that the judgment to come upon them was just. This is a demonstration of the limits to which the love of God will go, to pardon and to restore one of His rebellious creatures. If a human soul is bound to go to perdition, he must do so in the very face of the ineffable manifestations of His longsuffering grace (John 3:16-17, 1:17; Rom. 3:24, 5:20; Eph. 2:8; Tit. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:12; 2 Pet. 3:18).

(d) T. Lewis summarizes (CDHCG, 285): One "has no right to say that 'the contrast of spirit and flesh in the moral understanding, as in the Epistles of Paul, does not occur in the Old Testament,' unless it can be shown that this is not a clear case of it." Again, *in re* v. 3: "When *ruach* is thus regarded as the spiritual, or rational, in man, in distinction from the carnal, the sentence becomes a *prediction*, instead of a declaration of judgment—a sorrowful prediction, we may say, if we keep in view the predominant aspect or feeling of the passage. The spirit, the reason, that which is most divine in man, *will* not always

rule in him. It has, as yet, maintained a feeble power, and interposed a feeble resistance, but it is in danger of being wholly overpowered. It will not hold out forever; it will not always maintain its supremacy. And then the reason given suits exactly with such a prediction: he is becoming flesh, wholly carnal or animal. If allowed to continue he will become utterly dehumanized, or that worst of all creatures, *an animal with a reason*, but wholly fleshly in its ends and exercises, or with a reason which is but the servant of the flesh, making him worse than the most ferocious wild beast—a very demon—a brutal nature with a fiend's subtlety only employed to gratify such brutality. Man has the supernatural, and this makes the awful peril of his state. By losing it, or rather by its becoming degraded to be a servant instead of a lord, he falls wholly into nature, where he cannot remain stationary, like the animal who does not 'leave the habitation to which God first appointed him.' The higher being, thus utterly fallen, must sink into the demonic, where evil becomes his god, if not, as Milton says, his good. . . . The whole aspect of the passage gives the impression of something like an apprehension that a great change was coming over the race—something so awful, so irreparable, if not speedily remedied, that it would be better that it should be blotted out of earthly existence, all but a remnant in whom the spiritual, or the divine in man might yet be preserved." Again: "On these deeper aspects of humanity, consult that most profound psychologist, John Bunyan, in his *Holy War*, or his *History of the Town of Mansoul*, its revolt from King Shaddai, its surrender to Diabolus, and its recovery by Prince Immanuel. Bunyan was Bible-taught in these matters, and that is the reason why his knowledge of man goes so far beyond that of Locke, or Kant, or Cousin." Cf. also Aristotle (*Politics*, I, 3, 30): "For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed



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injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and virtue, which he may use for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony." Are not the foregoing descriptions of man's lurking bestiality supported today by the front page stories in every newspaper throughout the entire world? (Cf. Matt. 24:37-39, Luke 7:26-27).

(4) V. 4. (a) The Nephilim—who were they? The LXX translates it "giants"; other old Greek versions, "violent men." The word occurs again only once—in Num. 13:33. The notion that the Nephilim of this passage in Numbers were lineal descendants of those of Genesis 6 is simply an unproved assumption of the destructive critics, obviously for the purpose of casting doubt on the authenticity of the text and perhaps of the entire narrative of the Flood. The "giants" of Numbers were Canaanites, evidently men "of great stature and powerful frame," whose size so excited the imagination of the "spies" sent out by Moses (Caleb and Joshua excepted) that their report was a gross exaggeration of the facts. (Cf. also 1 Sam. 17:4-10, 21:9, 22:10). How could the Nephilim reported by the spies have been descendants of those of antediluvian times if there had occurred in the meantime a catastrophe which had swept away all mankind except Noah and his family? Green (UBG, 57-58) holds that v. 4 indicates that the Nephilim did not spring from the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men, because, "the statement is that 'the Nephilim were in the earth' prior to these intermarriages, and also after these intermarriages had taken place." Again: "The idea that the Nephilim were a superhuman race sprung from the union of angels with the daughters of men is completely nullified by the explicit declaration that the Nephilim existed before such marriages took place as well as after.

No new species of creatures can be intended, therefore, whose origin is traced to the intermarriage of different orders of beings." With this last statement we can agree. But we see no particular reason from the reading of the Scripture text, for arguing that the Nephilim existed *before and after* the intermingling of the sons of God with the daughters of men.

(b) A question of some import arises at this point, namely, Were the Nephilim of a pre-Adamic breed? Certainly this is not to be regarded as an impossibility. Cf. Archer (SOTI, 188-189): "To revert to the problem of the Pithecanthropus, the Swanscombe man, the Neanderthal and all the rest (possibly even the Cro-Magnon man, who is apparently to be classed as *Homo sapiens*, but whose remains seem to date back at least to 20,000 B.C.), it seems best to regard these races as all prior to Adam's time, and not involved in the Adamic covenant. We must leave the question open, in view of the cultural remains, whether these pre-Adamite creatures had souls (or, to use the trichotomic terminology, spirits). But the implication of Genesis 1:26 is that God was creating a qualitatively different being when He made Adam (for note that the word rendered 'man' in Gen. 1:26, 27 is the Hebrew '*Adam*'), a being who was uniquely fashioned in the image of God. Only Adam and his descendants were infused with the breath of God and a spiritual nature corresponding to God Himself. Romans 5:12-21 demands that all mankind subsequent to Adam's time, at least, must have been literally descended from him, since he entered into covenant relationship with God as the representative of the entire race of man. This indicates that there could have been no true genetic relationship between Adam (the first man created in the image of God) and the pre-Adamic races. However close the skeletal structure of the Cro-Magnon man (for example) may have been to *Homo sapiens*, this factor is scarcely relevant to the principal

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question of whether these cave men possessed a truly human soul or personality. They may have been exterminated by God for reasons unknown prior to the creation of the original parent of the present human race. Adam, then, was the first man created in the spiritual image of God, according to Genesis 1:26, 27, and there is no evidence from science to disprove it." As Archer points out, the French scientist, Lecomte du Nouy, in his remarkable volume, *Human Destiny*, explains evolution as a response to the Divine Will. Man arises, he insists, from within the evolutionary process; and at a certain moment, perhaps in connection with the Cro-Magnon age, man became truly man by a mutation—a mutation in which God breathed into him "free will," and a capacity to choose between good and evil, i.e. a conscience. (Cf. Archer, *ibid.*, 188, n.).

(c) However, it seems to me that Lange comes nearer to the solution of this problem (CDHCG, 286). In discussing the phrases, "mighty men that were of old, men of renown," he writes: "A designation, not merely of offspring from the mismarriages, but referring also to the Nephilim who are earlier introduced, as it appears from the appended clause. The author reports things from his own standpoint, and so the expression, 'they were *of old*, men of renown,' affirms their previous existence down to that time. Cain was the first. But now there are added to the Cainites and the Cainitic degenerate offspring of these sensual mesalliances. It was true, then, as it has been in all other periods of the world's history, the men of violent deeds were the men of renown, very much the same whether *famous* or *infamous*." Cornfeld contributes to the clarification of the problem as follows (AtD, 25): "We may perhaps link the Nephilim of Genesis with the 'mighty men that were of old,' these semi-legendary heroes of prehistory whose memory and deeds are recorded in the ancient annals of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and other lands of

antiquity. These were the founders of the first dynasties, lawgivers and the like. The word Nephilim (in Arabic—nabil) means princes. So the Nephilim need not be interpreted as a race of 'giants,' but 'great men.' In this Hebrew tradition the crisis described here was held as proof that these semi-divine and arrogant Nephilim were more bent on evil than good. . . . In the opinion of G. Ernest Wright the tradition of early 'giants on the earth' may coincide with the beginning of the Dynastic Ages from 3000 B.C.E. (the Early Bronze Age) and the succession of kings who established the first great empires. Great personalities who stood head and shoulders above their fellows began to emerge. Illustrations of the time may be held to explain the fame of such 'giants.'"

(d) *How did God's Spirit strive with the antediluvians?* How, according to Scripture does God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, uniformly strive with rebellious man? How, or by what means, does the Spirit convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8)? Through the instrumentality of the Word, of course, spoken or written: faith comes from reading or hearing the Divine Word (Rom. 10:14-17). Experience thus confirms Scripture: where there is no preaching, no hearing, no reading of the Word, no contact with the Word, there is no faith, no conversion, no Church. The entire evangelistic and missionary enterprise of the Church of Christ is predicated on this fact (Acts 28:23-28). The Spirit and the Word "go together" (Isa. 59:21). The Spirit and the Word (Logos) acted together in the Creation (Gen. 1:2, 3, etc.). The Spirit sustains and preserves the whole Creation by the power of the Word (Heb. 1:1-4, 2 Pet. 3:5-7). The Spirit has, in all ages, wrought miracles by the instrumentality of the Word (Num. 20:7-13; Josh. 10:12-13; John 1:1-14; Matt. 14:19-20, 8:3, 8; John 4:50; Matt. 8:32, Mark. 1:25, 1:22, 27; Luke 7:14; John 11:43; Acts 3:6, 9:34,

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9:40; Heb. 4:12; Luke 16:29-31; Rom. 10:6-8). The Spirit strove with men through the Word proclaimed by holy men of old (2 Pet. 1:21, 1 Pet. 1:10-12, Heb. 1:1, Neh. 9:30); through the teaching of Christ who possessed the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34, 6:63, 8:31-32, 17:17; Matt. 7:24-27; Heb. 1:2; Matt. 12:28, cf. Exo. 8:19, Luke 11:20—the “finger of God” is, in Scripture a metaphor of power exercised by the Spirit of God); through the Word proclaimed and recorded by the Spirit-guided Apostles (John 14:26, 15:26-27, 16:7-15; Acts 1:8, 10:36-43; 1 Cor. 2:6-16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 14:37, etc.). The Seed of the Kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11); it is the incorruptible seed, because spiritual life is in it and is generated through it (1 Pet. 1:23); hence, the Gospel is—not just *a* power, nor *one* of the powers—but *the* power of God unto salvation to every one that believes (Rom. 1:16-17). *How, then, did the Spirit strive with men in antediluvian times?* Through Noah, of course, who was God’s preacher of righteousness to the people of his day (2 Pet. 2:5). How did Noah come to know of the doom about to descend on mankind? He knew it by faith, that is, God forewarned him of the impending catastrophe and he believed God (Heb. 11:7). For one hundred and twenty years Noah proclaimed the inevitability of Divine judgment; for one hundred and twenty years, Christ, through Noah, warned the masses of the antediluvian world who by this time had, by their own wicked works, incarcerated themselves in the prison-house of sin (Isa. 42:6-8, 61:1-3; Luke 4:17-19; 1 Pet. 3:18-22), that unless they repented, they should all likewise perish (cf. Luke 13:3). But all in vain! The only thanks he got was scorn, ridicule, and perhaps even violence. (I am reminded of the oldtime preacher’s sermon subject, “What Happened to the Carpenters who Helped Noah Build the Ark?” What *did* happen to them? The pit of

the abyss, of course!) The Spirit of God is still striving with ungodly men, calling them to repentance and redemption. But He will not always do so: the time will come when the line between Divine mercy and justice will surely be drawn. The Spirit has ceased striving with His Old Covenant people and they are today suffering the consequences of their rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus (Matt. 23:37-39, 27:25; Luke 21:20-24). The time will come, and indeed may not be too far off (cf. Matt. 24:35-39, 24:29-31), when God's Spirit will quit striving with all humanity (Matt. 25:31-46); then cometh judgment (Heb. 9:27, Acts 17:30-31, Matt. 12:41-42, Rom. 2:1-11), in which all mankind shall be judged, each according to his own works (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11:15; Gal. 6-7; Heb. 10:26-27; Rev. 20:11-14, 22:10-15).

(5) *Vv. 5-8.* (a) *God's "repentance."* Note the JB rendering (67-69): "Yahweh saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that the thoughts in his heart fashioned nothing but wickedness all day long. Yahweh regretted having made man on the earth, and his heart grieved. 'I will rid the earth's face of man, my own creation,' Yahweh said, 'and of animals also, reptiles too, and the birds of heaven; for I regret having made them.' But Noah found favour with Yahweh." The JB annotator, who follows the critical theory in general, including the Documentary Hypothesis, comments as follows: "There are several Babylonian stories of the Flood which are in some respects remarkably similar to the biblical narrative. This last does not derive from them but draws upon the same source, namely upon the memory of one or more disastrous floods in the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris which tradition had enlarged to the dimensions of a world-wide catastrophe. But there is this fundamental difference: the author has used this tradition as a vehicle for teaching eternal truths—that God is just and merciful, that man is perverse, that God saves his faithful ones

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(cf. Heb. 11:7). The Flood is a divine judgment which foreshadows that of the latter days (Lk. 17:26f; Matt. 24:37f), just as Noah's salvation prefigures the saving waters of baptism, (1P 3:20-21)." (p. 23, n.). Again: "This 'regret' of God is a human way of expressing the fact that tolerance of sin is incompatible with his sanctity (1 S 15:29 warns us that the phrase is not to be taken too literally); but in a far greater number of passages it means that God's anger is appeased and his threat withdrawn, see Jer. 26:3." Cornfeld writes in similar vein (AtD, 26): "There is an architectural unity in the spirit of the traditions related to the ten generations preceding Noah. The writers sketch the gradual deterioration of man and an increase in sin and violence which parallels his increase in knowledge and skill. As he gains in power, man turns against his Creator and corrupts the earth through violence. There is an implied warning against the insidious dangers of man following his own designs without heeding his responsibility before God, to whom he is answerable. God is described as experiencing human feelings of grief that he had ever created man, and he decided to punish the world. Some steps were taken to curb this upsurge of man to semi-divinity, such as the reduction of man's hitherto phenomenally long life-span to 'one hundred and twenty years.' As violence did not abate, drastic punishment was called for. This is obviously an etiological tale meant to explain the proverbial span which one Jew still wishes another." (See *supra*: this 120-year life-span theory does not harmonize with Scripture as a whole. Abraham lived to be 175 (Gen. 25:7); cf. also Psa. 90:10 and similar O.T. passages. The theory is wholly at variance with relevant New Testament teaching. The 120 years were obviously years of Divine grace extended to the antediluvian people for the purpose of giving them opportunity to repent and reform their lives.)

Murphy states the problem involved here, with great clarity (MG, 182): "Repentance ascribed to the Lord seems to imply wavering or change of purpose in the Eternal Self-Existent. . . . In sooth, every act here recorded—the observation, the resolve, the exception—seems equally with the repentance to jar with the unchangeableness of God. To go to the root of the matter, every act of the divine will, of creative power, or of interference with the order of nature, seems at variance with inflexibility of purpose. But, in the first place, man has a finite mind and a limited sphere of observation, and therefore is not able to conceive or express thoughts or acts exactly as they are in God, but only as they are in himself. Secondly, God is a spirit, and therefore has the attributes of personality, freedom and holiness; and the passage before us is designed to set forth these in all the reality of their action, and thereby to distinguish the freedom of the eternal mind from the fatalism of inert matter. Hence, thirdly, these statements represent real processes of the Divine Spirit, analogous at least to those of the human. And, lastly, to verify this representation, it is not necessary that we should be able to comprehend or construe to ourselves in all its practical detail that sublime harmony which subsists between the liberty and the immutability of God. That change of state which is essential to will, liberty, and activity, may be, for aught we know, and from what we know must be, in profound unison with the eternity of the divine purpose." Green (UBG, 63): "'Human feelings attributed to God' (6:6, 8). Elohim is the general term for God, and describes him as the creator of the world and its universal governor, while Jehovah is his personal name, and that by which he has made himself known as the God of a gracious revelation. Hence divine acts of condescension to men and of self-manifestation are more naturally associated with the name Jehovah; whence



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it follows that anthropopathies and anthropomorphisms occur chiefly in Jehovah sections. But there is no inconsistency between the ideas which these are intended to suggest and the most spiritual and exalted notions of the Most High. The loftiest conceptions of God are, throughout the Scriptures, freely combined with anthropomorphic representations. His infinite condescension is no prejudice to his supreme exaltation. These are not different ideas of God separately entertained by different writers, but different aspects of the divine Being which enter alike into every true conception of Him." (Cf. 1 Sam. 15:29, 35; Amos 5:8, 7:3, 5:21; Gen. 8:21; Lev. 1:13, 26:31; esp. Jer. 18:5-10). (An *anthropomorphic* passage is one in which God is represented as thinking and acting as human being would think and act; an *anthropopathic* statement is one in which God is represented as experiencing the feelings such as a human being would experience.)

Lange summarizes the problem before us with complete clarity, as follows (CDHCG, 287): "A peculiarly strong anthropopathic expression, which, however, presents the truth that God, in consistency with his immutability, assumes a changed position in respect to changed man (Psa. 18:27), and that, as against the impenitent man who identifies himself with the sin, he must assume the appearance of hating the sinner in the sin, even as he hates the sin in the sinner. But that Jehovah, notwithstanding, did not begin to hate man, is shown in the touching anthropomorphism that follows, '*and it grieved him in his heart.*' The first kind of language is explained in the flood, the second in the revelation of Peter, 1 Pet. 3:19, 20, and 4:6. Against the corruption of man, though extending to the depths of his heart, there is placed in contrast God's deep '*grieving in his heart.*' But the repentance of God does not take away his unchangeableness and his counsel, but rightly establishes them, so neither does God's grieving de-

tract from his immutability in blessedness, but shows, rather, God's deep feeling of the distance between the blessedness to which man was appointed and his painful perdition. Delitzsch does indeed maintain it, as most real or actual truth, that God feels repentance, and he does not equate this position with the doctrine of God's unchangeableness, unless it be with the mere remark that the pain and purpose of the divine wrath are only moments in an everlasting plan of redemption, which cannot become outward in its efficacy without a movement in the Godhead. And yet movement is not change." Repentance, in Scripture, is a *turning* expressed in terms of will (Matt. 12:39-41; Jon. 3:8; Acts 26:17-18; Isa. 1:16-17; Heb. 6:1). Repentance, insofar as man is concerned, is a turning expressed in terms of will leading to a reformation of life, as clearly portrayed in the Narrative of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:7, 18-24). With God also, repentance is a "turning" expressed in terms of attitude, disposition, will; a turning occasioned by the kind of response that is in harmony with changing attitudes in man, but in terms of the immutable norms of Divine justice and mercy. (This is illustrated most clearly, perhaps in Jer. 18:5-10). (Cf. Exo. 13:17-18, 32:1-14; Psa. 110:4, Heb. 7:21; Jer. 4:28: in many Scriptures, God's repentance indicates simply a change of purpose, without strong anthropopathic overtones.)

2. *Noah: Man of Faith* (Gen. 6:9-12).

9 *These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begat three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."*

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(1) Noah was a righteous man, that is, it was his disposition to do the will of God in all things (cf. Matt. 3:15, John 4:34). Noah was "perfect"—not sinless, of course, but committed to moral integrity in his dealings with God. ("The just is the right in law, the perfect is the tested in holiness," Murphy). "In his generations": probably not the offspring of a promiscuous union of the godly with the ungodly, as were many of his contemporaries. Noah "walked with God," as did Enoch (see *supra*). Hence, Noah "found favor in the eyes of Jehovah." (Note the A.V.—"grace"; grace is commonly defined as *unmerited favor*: the favor in Noah's case, however, was a recognition of his righteousness.) Noah was a man of faith: given the Divine plans and specifications for the ark, he obeyed in every detail and built it just as God had told him to build it. *Had he not done so, as we shall see later, he would have destroyed its typical (hence, testimonial) significance.* (Cf. Moses and the Tabernacle: Exo. 25:8-9, also chs. 39, 40). Faith manifests itself in implicit obedience: hence it is said that "thus did Noah: according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (v. 22); and so by faith "he prepared an ark to the saving of his house," etc. (Heb. 11:7). Moreover, having "been warned of God concerning things not seen as yet," that is, the certainty of impending Divine judgment, Noah became Christ's "preacher of righteousness" to the ungodly antediluvian world (2 Pet. 2:5).

### 3. *The Ark*

"13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. 15 And this is how thou shalt make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the

*height of it thirty cubits. 16 A light shalt thou make to the ark, and to a cubit shalt thou finish it upward; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. 17 And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; every thing that is in the earth shall die."*

(1) *Ark*, from Hebrew word for "chest" or "box." Made of *gopher wood* (resinous trees, probably cypress, as used in ancient shipbuilding). *Rooms*: literally, "nests," metaphorically descriptive of the chambers of the ark. Caulked with *pitch* (bitumen), typical of Mesopotamian work. Note the *three stories* (v. 16): the text suggests that the chambers (cabins or cells) were arranged according to some definite plan, probably in rows on each side of the ark, with a passageway through the middle (or vice versa), and placed in tiers, one above the other. The vessel was obviously built in the form of a flatboat, designed, not for navigation, but solely for *floating* on the surface of the water. "While the statement in v. 16 can be taken in the traditional sense as describing three stories, it is also possible to understand it to indicate three layers of logs laid cross-wise, a view which would accord well with a construction of wood, reeds, and bitumen" (NBD, *s.v.*)

(2) *The Dimensions of the Ark* are given as 300 x 50 x 30 cubits. The common cubit was about 18 inches in length, the supposed average distance from the point of the elbow to the tip of the middle finger (Deut. 3:11). There was another cubit known, however, which was a handbreadth longer than the common cubit. Petrie, the noted Egyptologist, expresses the view that even the common cubit measured 22½ inches. (See *Fl*, Rehwinkel, 59). (See NBD, under "Weights and Measures").

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According to the lower standard, the ark would have measured 450 feet in length, 75 feet in width, and forty-five feet in height. According to the higher figure (22 to 24 inches, based on the likelihood that man before the Flood was of larger stature than modern man, and that the length from his elbow to the end of his middle finger was even longer than the suggested 22½ inches), the ark would have been six hundred feet in length, one hundred feet in width, and sixty feet in height. By way of comparison, the battleship *Oregon*, 348 feet long and 69 feet wide, was built in the same proportions as to length and width as the ark. The famous *Titanic* was 825 feet long and 93 feet wide with a displacement of 46,000 tons. "Marine experts have estimated that since the ark was built with a flat bottom and there was no waste space on the bow or stern, it being square on both ends and straight up on its side, it would have had a displacement of about 43,000 tons, a displacement nearly equal to that of the ill-fated *Titanic*" (*Fl.*, 60).

(3) *Window* and *Door*, v. 16. "A light shalt thou make to the ark" (note marginal rendering, *roof*). "To a cubit shalt thou finish it upward" (marginal, *from above*). Rotherham: "A place for light shalt thou make for the ark, and to a cubit shalt thou finish it upwards," etc. The new American translation gives it: "You are to make a roof for the ark, finishing it off at the top to the width of a cubit." The Hebrew word here indicates clearly a space for light, or a space by which the light could be admitted into the vessel. "The door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof," etc. Rotherham: "The opening of the ark in the side thereof shalt thou put." Lange thinks that each flat or story had an entrance or door in the side.

(4) Note the construction: v. 17—"And I, behold, I do bring," etc.; an emphatic declaration that the impending judgment was truly a Divine visitation, not simply a natural occurrence.

4. *The Noahic Covenant*

*"18 But I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. 21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. 22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."*

(1) "My covenant," that is, the already well known covenant which I have made with man. "The word *my* points to its original establishment with Adam; my primeval covenant, which I am resolved not to abandon" (Murphy). "Will I establish," that is, despite the fact that Adam failed me, I will maintain and execute my covenant of life with the generic seed of the woman, and in a special sense with the Eternal Seed, the Logos, who from the foundation of the world voluntarily purposes to effect the Plan of Redemption for all who accept the Covering for sin which He shall provide. A covenant in Scripture, in the fullest sense of the term, is a solemn compact (contract), between two parties in which each is bound to perform his part. "Hence, a covenant implies the moral faculty; and wherever the moral faculty exists, there must be a covenant. Consequently, between God and man there was of necessity a covenant from the very beginning, though the name do not appear. At first it was a covenant of works, in regard to man; but now that works have failed, it can only be a covenant of grace to the penitent sinner" (Murphy, MG, 188). The substance of the Noahic covenant was the agreement with respect

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to Noah and his household; the remaining verses simply state the arrangements with regard to the subhuman orders.

The directions with reference to the ark, as given by God to Noah, embraced four particulars: (1) the Divine intention to destroy the human species, (2) the plans and specifications for the ark, (3) the announcement of the impending doom in the form of a catastrophic flood, and (4) the arrangements for the preservation of Noah and the members of his family, and certain specified kinds of animals. Other problems that arise in connection with the Genesis account of the Deluge will be treated here in subsequent sections. It will be noted that the title of this Part is "The World Before the Flood." We have dealt primarily, in this section, with the moral world, the world of man, his duties and privileges; in the following sections we shall deal with the problems also of the physical or geographical world.

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### FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

#### *Does History Make Sense?*

This question is suggested by the Divine declaration, Gen. 6:3, "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever." What has history to say with reference to this pronouncement?

It is interesting to note that the three over-all "philosophies" of history originated with the three great Greek historians.

Herodotus (5th century B.C.) was the first to give us what may rightly be called the *ethical* interpretation: namely, that history is largely the record of the work of the goddess Nemesis, Retributive Justice, who inevitably interferes in human affairs to overthrow inordinate human pride, ambition and insolence. This view is represented today, in broad outline, by the thought of such men as Berdyaev, Sorokin, Schweitzer, and Toynbee. Toynbee's

elaborately-worked-out theory is that of challenge-and-response. According to his view, modern man faces three primary challenges: that of setting up a constitutional system of co-operative world government (politically); that of formulating a workable compromise between free enterprise and socialistic endeavor, including peace in labor-industry relations; and that of putting the secular superstructure back on a religious foundation, that in which the dignity and worth of the person is made the supreme ethical norm. (This last-named, says Toynbee, is the most important of all). His over-all thesis is that our Western culture will survive only if it responds in a positive way to these basic needs or challenges.

Thucydides (c. 471-400 B.C.) emphasized the strictly *secularistic* interpretation of history: namely, that the events of history are brought about by purely secular (chiefly economic) causes. This view is echoed in modern times, first by Machiavelli, and later by Marx and Lenin with their theory of economic determinism and accompanying substitution of expediency for morality.

Polybius (c. 205-c. 125 B.C.) gives us the *fatalistic* view, namely, that all events of history are predetermined by a Sovereign Power, variously named Fate, Fortune, Destiny, etc. He gives us—accurately—the history of the Roman republic; his thesis is that Fortune foreordained that Rome should become the mistress of the world. (Of course, he died, long before the Roman Republic degenerated into the Empire of the Caesars.) Polybius was a Stoic, and this was the Stoic philosophy. This view is represented in our day, in a somewhat different form of course, by Oswald Spengler, in his massive work, *The Decline of the West*. According to Spengler, every culture inevitably passes through its four seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter—the last-named being the period of decay ending in death, the period that should be properly designated



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that of "civilization." Spengler was a pessimist: there is no escape from this remorseless cycle, according to his view.

What does the Bible have to say on this subject? It gives us clearly the *providential* interpretation (rather, revelation), specifically in Jeremiah 18:5-10. This may be stated in brief as follows: (1) God rules His world, both physical and moral, including the march of human events; (b) within the framework of His Providence, however, both individuals and nations are left relatively free to work out their own history and destiny (that is, God rules the world, but He does not rule it by force); (c) nations fall when they ignore and violate the moral law on such a scale that they make themselves vessels fit only for destruction; that is to say, the stability and premanence of the nation (or state) is dependent on the ethical quality of the national life. Nations are seldom destroyed from the outside: rather, they go down from rot on the inside. (d) God will never permit any human tryant to seize sovereignty over the whole earth, for the simple reason that universal sovereignty is Divinely reserved for the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Cf. Phil. 2:7-11, Eph. 1:19-23, 1 Cor. 15:20-28, Rev. 19:11-16). We must never forget that *just as sin was not inevitable in the beginning, so moral progress of any people or state is not inevitable*. Individuals and nations grow in righteousness only as they *will* to do so. In the very nature of the case neither righteousness nor holiness can be forced upon an individual or a people. However, a nation is not destroyed until its destruction has become a moral necessity. This is all stated explicitly in Jer. 18:5-10. (Note the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18:20-33, 19:23-28. Note also the case of Abraham, who himself never owned a foot of the Land which God had promised to him and his seed, except the small plot which he purchased for a burial ground. The fulfilment of the promise was delayed several generations—

to the time of the Conquest under Joshua—simply because in the interim the iniquity of the Canaanites had not reached fullness: cf. Gen. 15:12-16, Lev. 18:24-28).

May we cry out, then, as Americans, in the words of Kipling's "Recessional"—

"The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The Captains and the Kings depart;  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart—  
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

\* \* \* \* \*

### REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PART TWENTY

1. Explain the theory of the origin of the so-called heroes and demigods of prehistoric times.
2. Show why the theory that the "sons of God" originated in the intermarriage of angels and mortal women is unscriptural.
3. List the *poetic* references, in Scripture, to angels as "sons of God."
4. What does the phrase, "sons of God," generally signify in Scripture?
5. Are angels Scripturally represented as having sex distinctions? Cite Scripture for your answer.
6. Explain the sentence, "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever."
7. Explain the clause, "for that he also is flesh."
8. Show why the 120-year period ordained by God could not have indicated the term of individual human life.
9. Explain what this time-period of 120 years obviously meant. How was it a manifestation of Divine grace?

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10. Explain how this passage takes on the character of a prediction.
11. What was Aristotle's estimate of man? How does it agree with the clause, "for that he also is flesh"?
12. Is there any necessary connection between the Nephilim of Numbers 13:33 and those of Gen. 6:4? Explain.
13. Could the Nephilim have been of a pre-Adamic stock? Explain.
14. State Lange's explanation of the Nephilim, and that of Cornfeld also.
15. How has the Spirit of God uniformly striven with men?
16. How, and through whom, did the Spirit of God strive with the ungodly antediluvian people?
17. Explain Heb. 11:7, 2 Pet. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:18-22.
18. Explain the terms "anthropomorphic" and "anthropopathic."
19. Explain what is meant by Yahweh's "repentance" in Gen. 6:6-7.
20. Explain how this is to be reconciled with His immutability.
21. In what sense are we to understand that Noah was "righteous," and that he was "perfect in his generations"?
22. What would have been the consequence if Noah had not complied fully with God's ordinations regarding the ark? What would have been the "testimonial" consequence?
23. Explain the following terms in reference to the ark: "rooms," "gopher wood," "pitch," "three stories," "window," and "door."

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24. State the probable dimensions of the ark as determined by the different meanings of the word "cubit."
25. What was the ark as to its general appearance and design?
26. What is a covenant? Explain what is meant by the Noahic Covenant.
27. List the four particulars included in God's directions with reference to the ark.
28. Distinguish between what is meant by the moral world and the geographical world in the study of the Deluge.
29. State the three over-all "philosophies" of history, and name the early and modern proponents of each.
30. Outline clearly the Biblical revelation of the meaning of history.