

General Comments on Genesis 6

Why the Deluge?

This chapter represents a complete starting over for mankind. People in general have become so wicked the Lord has no choice but to select out the only righteous family and destroy the rest by a catastrophic flood. Prior to this event there apparently was no capital punishment exercised by the Lord (e.g., Cain), and after this event the Lord imposes the law of capital punishment (cf. 9:5-6) for murder. The reason why is obscure in the Genesis account (it is alluded to in the cases of Cain in Gen. 4:8, then Lamech in Gen 4:23, and then the Lord's comments in Gen. 6:5 and Gen. 9:5-6), but in the Moses 8 account it is made plain. Simply put, the people had become generally murderous (cf. Moses 8:18). Their willingness to kill and murder one another and destroy Creation was become so pervasive the Lord was left with no alternative but to hold them responsible and enforce capital punishment upon them via the Flood.

From this point on in history, the methods employed here are repeated in Sodom and Gomorrah, the various wars of extinction waged by the Israelites, as well as in the Book of Mormon populations of the Jaredites and Nephites. In the Book of Mormon cases the details of those accounts are sufficient to illustrate why extinction was necessary, cf. Moroni 9:9-21.

The underlying doctrine is mankind can become so destructive and murderous the Lord is left with no alternative but to annihilate that society and start over again.

Theological Importance

Individual and Corporate Justice Gen. 4 presents a case of individual sin and divine judgement. Chapter 6 presents a case of societal sin and divine judgement. The text conveys the message that God is just and holds people accountable at both the individual and societal levels for their actions. When a society is composed of individuals that are entirely corrupt, that society has to be judged and dealt with accordingly.

Capital Punishment Note the Lord's change in attitude from ch. 4 to ch. 6 when it comes to capital punishment. In 4:10-15 the Lord curses Cain's existence by making him an outcast, but He does not impose the death penalty on Cain. In fact, Cain expresses fear over being killed in retribution for the murder of Abel, and the Lord imposes the mark upon him as protection. Then, four generations later, Lamech commits murder in a similar fashion (cf. 4:23), assuming the protection Cain was granted would be seven times greater for his heinous act. Society ultimately degrades to the point where the people were wicked and

murderous constantly, so the Lord is left with no choice but to destroy human society and spare only Noah and his immediate family. Afterwards, the death penalty is imposed, and from that point on the Lord requires men to avenge blood for blood. The Lord initially did not impose capital punishment, but the corruption stemming from not imposing it jeopardized human society, so the Lord imposed it as a measure of stemming corruption. The underlying doctrinal message is there are humans who will do whatever they can get away with, and without penalties being imposed upon them, society becomes unstable and eventually corrupt.

Morality Independent of Religious Creed Of particular note is that the society judged here is not labeled as "idolatrous" or "heathen" for religious reasons. They are judged and condemned for being morally bankrupt at the societal level. This is not a matter of religious differences, it is because of complete ethical breakdown among all people save a handful.

A New Creation

On the Flood, the Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary (JPS TC) states:

The uncompromisingly moral tenor and didactic purpose of the Genesis Flood story have influenced its literary artistry. Because humanly wrought evil is perceived to be the undoing of God's creativity, numerous elements in the story are artful echoes of the Creation narrative. Thus the divine decision to wipe out the human race employs the same two verbs that are used in the original Creation, but transposed in order to symbolize the reversal of the process (6:7; cf. 1:26-27). The Deluge itself is brought about by the release and virtual reuniting of the two halves of the primordial waters that had been separated in the beginning (7:11; cf. 1:1, 6-7). The classification of animal life in 6:20 and 7:14 corresponds to that in 1:11-12, 21, 24-25. The provisioning of food in 6:21 depends upon 1:29-30. Noah is the first man to be born after the birth of Adam, according to the chronology of 5:28-29, and he becomes a second Adam, the second father of humanity. Both personages beget three sons, one of whom turns out to be degenerate. Noah's ark is the matrix of a new creation, and, like Adam in the Garden of Eden, he lives in harmony with the animals. The role of the wind in sweeping back the flood waters recalls the wind from God in 1:2. The rhythm of nature established in 1:14 is suspended during the Flood and

resumed thereafter, in 8:22. Finally, the wording of the divine blessing in 9:7 repeats that in 1:28, just as the genealogical lists of the Table of Nations in chapter 10 parallel those of 4:17-26 and 5:1-32 that follow the Creation story. In both cases the lineage of the human race is traced back to a common ancestry.

The destruction mankind in general is undoing the purpose of God's Creation. As such, God must retaliate.

The JPS TC also points out that the number seven figures prominently in the text, which also parallels the seven days of Creation. Time periods are measured out in sevens of days, there are seven pairs of clean animals, the verb "s-h", "to make" and "b-w-", "go into" are employed seven times each throughout the story.

Comments on Genesis 6

1 AND it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, 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 which they chose. 3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also [is] flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. 4 There were giants 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 [became] mighty men which [were] of old, men of renown. 5 And GOD 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 the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

v1-7 As people spread over the face of the earth (v. 1) the sons of God abandon God for worldly women (v. 2). The Lord is angered by the general apostasy of man (v. 3) and in an effort to humble them He cuts their life span down to about one tenth of what it formerly was (v. 4). Great wickedness continues to run rampant and the society has become entirely corrupted (v. 5). The corruption is so complete the Lord, terribly upset at what He sees (v. 6), has no choice but to destroy men from off the face of the earth (v. 7).

Compare the present text with that of Moses 8:13-26. The Moses account gives considerably more detail on the events described in the Genesis account.

v2 This is the ever popular "sons of God and daughters of men" passage that is generally interpreted by Judaism and Christianity alike to be a folk mythology about angels copulating with mortal women. There is nothing in the Hebrew requiring such a fanciful reading, as the phrase is "benei ha elohim". There is one prominent dissenter, a Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai vehemently protests the traditional reading and insists the reading should be akin to "the sons of nobles" (Genesis Rabbah 26:8).

Setting the traditional interpretation aside, a number of other passages say very much the same thing, but in a much less ambiguous fashion. All of these indicate the issue at hand is religious men being tempted by worldly women and abandoning their religion to pursue lusts of the flesh, cp. Gen. 24:3, Gen. 38:2, Exod. 34:16, Deut. 7:3-4, Josh. 23:12, Judges 3:16, Hosea 4:11-14, Mal. 2:11. Despite all of this evidence the traditional interpretation remains popular among Jews and Christians alike.

"saw the daughters of men and they were fair", the sons of God were degraded to the point they followed the lusts of their eyes.

v4 "There were giants" the Hebrew term is "nephilim" and is obscure in meaning. The root n-f-l suggests "fallen ones" which by context would be referring to the sons of God who abandoned God for the daughters of men. The Nephilim seeking Noah's life makes more sense in the light of them being deliberately rebellious.

If one reads this as though there really were "giants", following the traditional interpretation, then perhaps King Og (cf. Deut. 3:11) was typical of them and they were about 12 feet tall and 5 feet wide. Either some of these giants survived the flood or it was a matter of genetics as there were "giants" both before and after. As Og is identified as one of the last giants during Moses' time and then Goliath appears somewhat later, that suggests it was matter of genetics. However, neither King Og or Goliath are identified as "nephilim". The only other reference to "nephilim" in the OT appears in the description of the people of Anak, and that account is clearly a gross exaggeration designed to incite fear, cf. Num. 13:33.

v6 "it repented the Lord", in this context "repented" is not a good translation. A better translation would be "The Lord regretted he had made man". Strong's Concordance for the Hebrew in question follows:

05162 nacham {naw-kham'}

a primitive root; TWOT - 1344; v

AV - comfort 57, repent 41, comforter 9, ease 1; 108
 1) to be sorry, console oneself, repent, regret, comfort, be comforted
 1a) (Niphal)
 1a1) to be sorry, be moved to pity, have compassion
 1a2) to be sorry, rue, suffer grief, repent
 1a3) to comfort oneself, be comforted
 1a4) to comfort oneself, ease oneself
 1b) (Piel) to comfort, console
 1c) (Pual) to be comforted, be consoled
 1d) (Hithpael)
 1d1) to be sorry, have compassion
 1d2) to rue, repent of
 1d3) to comfort oneself, be comforted
 1d4) to ease oneself

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. 9 These [are] the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man [and] perfect in his generations, [and] Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. 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 the fashion] which thou shalt make it [of]: The length of the ark [shall be] three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; 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, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein [is] the breath of life, from under heaven; [and] every thing that [is] in the earth shall die. 18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; 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 fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his 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 thou shalt 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.

v8-22 Noah, who was prophesied would restore peace to the earth (cf. 5:29), and his sons are righteous men (v. 8-10). The Lord speaks with Noah and tells him the corruption He has witnessed necessitates Him destroying man from the face of the earth (v. 11-13). The Lord instructs Noah to build an ark (v. 14-16) and to place himself and all his family, and pairs of all the living creatures of the earth on it along with food (v. 17-21). Noah obeys the Lord and does so (v. 22).

v9 The Genesis account indicates Noah was righteous and blameless in his generation, but doesn't indicate why. The Moses account informs us he was instructed to preach repentance and did so. The result was the blood of that generation was not on his hands, we was blameless.

v11 "violence", the Hebrew term can similarly be translated to "lawlessness", or "chaos". Here is the Strong's entry:

02555 chamac {khaw-mawce'}

from 02554; TWOT- 678a; n m

AV - violence 39, violent 7, cruelty 4, wrong 3, false 2, cruel 1, damage 1, injustice 1, oppressor + 0376 1, unrighteous 1; 60

1) violence, wrong, cruelty, injustice

That the earth was filled with violence, cruelty, and injustice shows how bad things had become. It was not a matter of isolated incidents as with Cain's murder of Abel, it had become pervasive among society.

v14-16 While the Lord tells Noah how to construct the ark, he still has to make it himself. This pattern appears again with the brother of Jared and with Nephi.

v14 "gopher wood", the exact nature of this wood is lost in antiquity. Some say it is cedar, some say it is cypress.

v16 "a window", the Hebrew word "tzohar" is a very rare Hebrew word. The word comes from the Hebrew root "tzahar" meaning "to shine."

The LDS Edition KJV has a footnote on Gen. 6:16 that indicates some Rabbinical commentators thought the "window" or "skylight" was in fact some kind of glowing gemstone. But, no references are given. Below are two Rabbinical sources verifying the statement. The first is from a compilation of rabbinical

commentary. The second is by Rashi (i.e., a contraction of "Rabbi Shlomo Yitzak"), an eminent 11th century Jewish commentator.

The Midrash Rabbah explains the passage this way:

XXXI:XI

1. A. "Make a light for the ark" (Gen. 6:16):
 - B. R. Hunia and R. Phineas, T. Hanan and R. Hoshiah did not explain the matter
 - C. R. Abba bar Kahana and R. Levi explained it.
 - D. R. Abba bar Kahanna said, "It was a window."
 - E. R. Levi said, "It was a precious stone."

2. A. R. Phineas in the name of R. Levi: "During the entire twelve months in which Noah was in the ark, he had no need for the light of the sun by day nor for the light of the moon by night."
 - B. "Rather, he had a precious stone, which he suspended. When the stone dimmed, he knew that it was day, and when it glowed brightly, he knew that it was night."

(Genesis Rabbah, The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, A New Translation, Vol. 1, Jacob Neuser., Brown University Judaic Studies 104)

And Rashi writes on the word TZOHAR in Gen. 6:16:

Some say this is a window. Others say it was a precious stone that supplied them with light. (The Metsudah Chumash/Rashi: a New Interlinear Translation, 1991. Davis, Kornfeld and Walzer., KTAV Publishing House, 700 Jefferson St., Hoboken, NJ 07030. Page 69)

Thus, according to the Jewish tradition, Noah's ark was lit by a precious stone called a tzohar which shined with light. Which is similar to the shining stones account from Ether 3:4.

v18 The Lord's primary interest is to covenant with people so as to bring about His plan. With mankind deliberately rebelling against Him and thwarting He plan, He is forced to start over again. The Lord does so with the only righteous family left, those who will covenant with Him.

v22 In sharp contrast to those around him, Noah listens to the Lord and does what He tells him to do. The result is Noah is spared while all others perish. A simple statement indicating listening to the Lord is in our own best interest.

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