

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 9

Chapter 6

Sons of God and Daughters of Men

Genesis 6:1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

In the story of Genesis, the LORD has just presented the genealogy of the ten generations of Seth and the seven generations of Cain that covers the time from their births until the flood. During those years both families grew larger in number just as the LORD commanded Adam when he was created. In the 1650 years that transpired between Adam's creation and the flood, how many people had lived on the earth? We do not know. Any guess would be just that! A guess. In each case, the Scripture reports that each man had other sons and daughters besides the ones named in each line. However, a guess might help at this point to put the number of people who had lived on the earth in perspective. If each man fathered approximately four boys and four girls, the husband and wife unions in Cain's line would have generated approximately 16,384 people in the 1650 years; the husband and wife unions in Seth's line would have generated approximately 1,048,576 people in the same span of time. Why such a difference? Seth's line gave birth to three more generations than Cain's in the same span of time. Even as a guess, this simple example can help us understand that there could have been about a million people on the earth between Adam's creation and the flood; however, we do not know how many of them had died or how many were still alive at the time of the flood.

Even though the camp of Adam and Seth lived in one portion of the land and the camp of Cain lived east of them, both camps grew during the 1650 years and both began to do business with each other. After all, they were all cousins. A godly line of Seth existed down to Noah and the LORD referred to them in this lineage as **“the sons of God.”** Some have mistakenly held that the phrase “sons of God” refers to the angels but that cannot be so; angels cannot reproduce with humans because angels are spiritual beings without the ability to reproduce. In answer to the Sadducees about marriage, Jesus said in Matthew 22:30, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” Today, we think of marriage as a ceremony with guests and a minister in which a bride and groom promise to love each other for the rest of their lives. However, in the Scripture, the word “marriage” or “to marry” means to join together in a sexual union where the two become one in the flesh. As Jesus reported, angels cannot do that. Jesus is the right one to make this comment because He created all the angels on the first day of creation and no other angels have come into being since that time. In this passage, the phrase “sons of God” includes only the male descendants of Seth.

The phrase “**daughters of men**” is a reference to all the female descendants of Cain, also called the Cainites, not to be confused with the Canaanites who will appear in the story after the flood. Here, the “sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful.” In the story of Cain and Abel, the LORD gazed at Abel’s offering but not Cain’s and the Hebrew word *shah* was used. In this passage, the Hebrew word *raah* is used and it does not mean to gaze but to “look at intently.” These sons of God were intrigued by the beauty of the female descendants of Cain and began to marry across the family boundary lines of Seth and Cain. Therefore, within the line of Seth, and perhaps as early as his son Enosh, whose name meant “mortal depravity,” the marriages had begun.

120 Years Remain

Genesis 6:3 **Then the LORD said, " My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."**

In this verse, the LORD revealed the year in which this decision was announced to the line of Seth. Here we learn that the protection of the multitude of people on the earth will come to an end in 120 years. The LORD has had enough of the depravity and He will give the people 120 years prove the intent of their hearts as reported in verse 5.

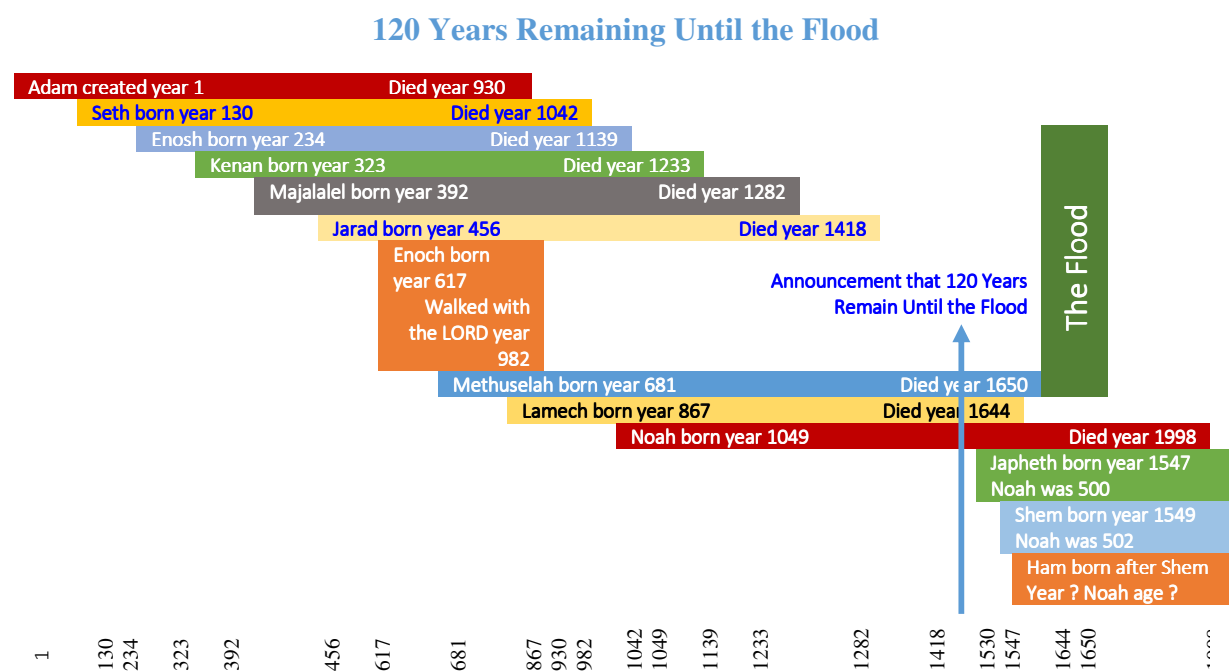


Table 3: The Year the LORD Announced the Coming Flood – 1530 Years after Adams’ Creation

Nephilim

Genesis 6:4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

Who were the “Nephilim”? The passage states that they were the “mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.” “Nephilim” means “he fell.” The Greek Septuagint translates the word as “earth-born.” It is a word used to give a name to the sons of the godly line who intermarried with the daughters of men and began to form alliances between the two family groups and grew in status among all the people. In other words, they “fell” from being part of the godly line of Seth. Among the hundreds of thousands of people on the earth at that time, the names of these men were known by all. They were powerful, they were controlling, they had left their godly roots and become tyrants and thugs. Just to be clear, even the flood did not bring an end to these kinds of people. During the time of Moses in the wilderness, Numbers 13 reports that the Israelites were having to deal with the terrible sons of Anak who were far too strong in number to defeat; they were also called Nephilim.

The trades of the sons of Lamech, which include making tools of bronze and iron, musical instruments and tents for housing, most likely began to filter to Seth’s family because of the intermarrying between the families.

“Nephilim” has often been translated as “giants.” We think of giants such as Goliath who stood 10 ½ feet tall. The Hebrew uses the word *raphah* when speaking of a large human but this passage uses the word *Nephilim* to refer to a highly esteemed person, and in this case, one who was evil rather than one who was godly. They were heroes and mighty conquerors among the people but not conquerors for God’s purpose.

The Nephilim were earth-born rather than godly. At this point, the Scripture delivers the first seed of thought that will develop into a theology of the earthly person versus the saint, the godless versus the godly, the carnal minded versus the heavenly minded, the lost versus the saved. The Nephilim were lost and wicked!

Blot Out Man

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ And the LORD said, " I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

“The LORD was sorry.” Today, we would naturally think that the LORD regretted that he had made man and that perhaps He had changed His mind. But that is not the meaning of the word *nacham* that is translated “sorry” in this passage. *Nacham* means to “console oneself” or to “feel compassion.” The passage also says “He was grieved in His heart.” Here the word “grieved” means “pain.” Therefore, the LORD consoled Himself in the great pain that He felt because of the decisions that humanity had made on earth. The sorrow and grief were not directed toward the LORD; they were directed toward man. The LORD made the decision that it was time to continue His plan and destroy mankind as well as the animals, reptiles and flying creatures. It is a general introductory statement that the LORD will immediately make an exception in the next verses. In His plan, a righteous man and his family will be saved from the coming destruction.

Blameless Noah

Genesis 6:8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹ These are *the records of the generations of Noah*. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Even as the LORD spoke the words that He would blot out man from the face of the earth, He knew of the character of one man and his family who had earned His favor or grace. In other words, of all the people in the world, the LORD wanted to save Noah and his family. Why? To demonstrate His unmerited favor of salvation that He alone can offer to every generation that will follow Noah. Notice that Noah was “righteous ... blameless ... and walked with God.” How did Noah “walk with God”? By living his daily life in a close relationship with Him.

Corrupt Earth

Genesis 6:11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

Once again, the LORD explains the state of depravity on the earth. In verse 5 it was wicked and evil; here it is corrupt and violent. Corrupt means that it had “gone to ruins”; violent means it had begun to “injure others.” It was a frightening and unsafe place to live for all the inhabitants, including Noah and his family.

Initial Instruction to Noah - Build Ark

Genesis 6:13 Then God said to Noah, " The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch.

God informed Noah about His unhappiness with the people of the world and instructed him to make the famous ark from gopher wood which is commonly understood to be cypress wood. The Septuagint translates the words “gopher wood” as “gopher squared timber.” Noah would use the tools of the day to cut the cypress trees and plane them, forming four flat sides. Rooms were constructed, no doubt for stalls for the different animals but also to give rigidity to the structure. The passage uses the word “pitch” for the coating that was applied inside and outside the vessel. “Pitch” is what we understand to be “tar” and it was readily available before and after the flood from tar pits.

Ark Construction Design

Genesis 6:15 **"And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶ "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.**

These verses contain all we know about the outer dimensions of Noah’s Ark. The three story ark had one door on one side and one window. The roof extended one cubit from the walls all around. The American measurements of the ark were about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall. The timbers were planed on each side to marry tightly together. It was basically a box with no curved lines. Think of it as a barge. Even today, the single best design to carry the maximum amount of weight is a flat-bottomed square-cornered barge that transfers the maximum lifting ability to the edge of the structure.

Noah’s Ark According to the LORD’s Design

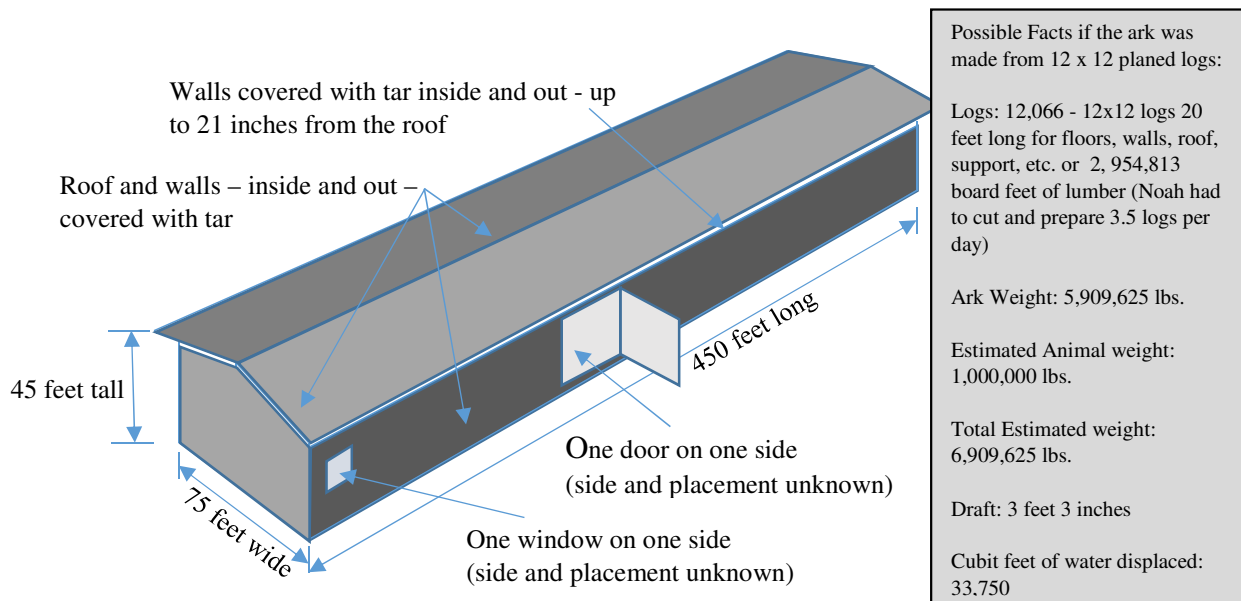


Figure 24: The Ark Built by Noah According to the LORD's Designated Dimensions

Everything that Will Perish

Genesis 6:17 **"And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.**

When the LORD said He would “destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under the heaven,” He did not include Noah and his family in that announcement. Noah was part of the LORD’s plan. Notice that the plant life was not mentioned and would not die in this plan and neither would the fish of the sea. But the LORD was not finished explaining His plan to Noah; not all of the land animals would be destroyed because He would save both a male and female pair of all of them along with Noah and his family.

Covenant with Noah

Genesis 6:18 **"But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.**

We think of a covenant as a pact, treaty or agreement between at least two parties of equal or unequal authority. In this case, the agreement between the LORD and Noah was definitely unequal. The word “covenant” has an interesting meaning in this passage. The Hebrew word means to “purify or cleanse.” In His grace for Noah and his family, the LORD determined that Noah was pure and therefore suitable to escape the coming judgment from the LORD.

Was the LORD being too harsh with the people of the world? No. From the interactions with Adam and Cain in the first five chapters of Genesis, the LORD had given enough instruction to mankind to direct them in righteousness; yet, mankind had turned away from that instruction as a whole. Only Noah remained true to the instruction and was the recipient of the covenant of purity to be saved from the penalty of death that the LORD had determined to be justified for the rest of humanity.

Every Living Thing

Genesis 6:19 **"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. ²⁰ "Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* shall come to you to keep *them* alive.**

In this initial instruction the LORD told Noah to build the ark for him and his family as well as a male and female of every kind of cattle, beast, flying and creeping animal. Noah needed to know the magnitude of what the LORD was asking him to do; he would be responsible for the lives of every animal on board.

Pack Food for the Journey

Genesis 6:21 **"And as for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them."**

Noah's responsibility extended beyond the construction of the ark and the gathering of the animals; he was also charged with gathering the food for them all for the entire journey.

Preparing the Ark

Genesis 6:22 **Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.**

It was time for Noah to begin the task of building the ark. How long did it take Noah to construct the vessel? We do not know. Did Noah have 120 years to build the ark? Possibly.

In Genesis chapter 5, the three sons of Noah are introduced. As discussed in the last lesson, Noah was 500 years old when he became the father of the three boys. As discussed in that lesson, Japheth was the oldest, born 1547 years after the creation of Adam. Shem was born two years later in 1549 and Ham was born sometime after that. In Genesis 7:11, we learn that Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark. Therefore, we must ask the question, "Were the boys born before or after the LORD gave Noah the instruction to build the ark?" The clue to the appropriate answer is found in verses 8 – 10.

Genesis 6:8 **But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ... ¹⁰ And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.**

In context, the LORD found favor with Noah 120 years before the flood; Noah would not become the father of Japheth for another 20 years. Most likely, the LORD instructed Noah to build the ark and he began the project prior to the births of his sons. By the time the ark was finished, Japheth was 100, Shem was 98 and Ham was a little younger.

We do not know what distractions Noah had to deal with during his ark building years. Did he do it all alone? Did he hire help? How many trees could he cut each day? How many trees could he plane each day? How many wooden pegs did he have to carve for the project? Were the pegs square or round? How did he cut the holes for the pegs? How did he join the corners of the timbers? How was the floor supported? How were the inner walls attached to the outer walls? How many rooms were on each of the three levels? How was the roof attached? Were all the timbers basically the same size? Only the LORD knows!