

SESSION 40: THE RIGHTEOUS LINE BEGINS, PART TWO

Genesis 5:28-32

September 1, 2024

PREFACE

In Chapter Four of Genesis—specifically, vv16-24—the author of the Pentateuch, which we take to be Moses, gives us the beginning generations of the line coming forth from the first son of Adam, Cain. This will be an earthy, worldly, at times downright evil line that will be distinct from the more righteous line coming forth from Adam’s third son, Seth.

The beginning generations of Seth’s righteous line is delineated in Chapter Five of Genesis, which includes at least two individuals who are declared to have “walked with God”: Enoch and Noah (6:9). That is, they were particularly righteous men who evidenced an earnest, steadfast relationship with God. This does not mean they were perfect or without sin; it does mean that, like their descendant King David, they had a heart for God and desired to live for Him above all else.

Moses, on the surface at least, is rather pedantically outlining the two family trees, but beyond that he is painting a picture of two diametrically opposed worlds, two worlds that remain firmly in place even today. The first is dedicated to the material; the second, to the spiritual. The first places its hope in this moment and this temporal place; the second places its hope in the future and things above. The first strives to obey and glorify only itself; the second strives to obey and glorify eternal God.

Finally, Moses’ third purpose in itemizing these generations is to lead us to the man Noah, whose biography will occupy more words and pages than all the others combined, and will not close the list begun in Chapter Five until the end of Chapter Nine, when a *new* “generations” is inaugurated in Chapter Ten with the three lines shooting off from Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

But back to Chapter Five, where we are now ready for the third exception in this list of generations which spans 1,656 years from Adam to the Flood.

Read Genesis 5:28-32.

vv28-29

Lamech was born in the 187th year of his father Methuselah—a mere stripling at the time. In Lamech’s 182nd year, his son Noah was born, and the name he gave him harkens back to his forefather, Adam, and the days after Adam rebelled against Yahweh God.

Read Genesis 3:17-19.

Now, almost one thousand years after the Fall, that curse was clearly still in effect, for Lamech voices the enduring work and pain of it, memorializing his hope for respite from it in the name of this son. The Hebrew is *Noach*, which means rest, or resting place.

It is not easy to find fulfillment of Lamech’s prophecy regarding his son—if it even *is* prophetic; perhaps it just reflects the hopes and wishes of a father for his son.

Of all our common versions, only the ESV differs from the rest, with—

...and called his name Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.”

—which seems to be saying that either the relief that Noah will bring, or Noah himself will come “out of the ground.” Not a helpful translation of this verse.

And here is an instance in which I disagree with Leupold. He writes, “[Lamech’s] prophecy...may meet its highest fulfillment in the removal of the curse from the earth, which removal came after the Flood (8:21f).”

Well, no, God did not *remove* the curse of Genesis 3 after the flood; He just said—to Himself only—“I will never *again* curse the ground...” (emphasis added). This earth still groans from the weight and travail of that initial curse (Romans 8:18-22).

So just what is Lamech saying here? Is this a prophecy that will be fulfilled? (If not fulfilled, it’s not a prophecy, but a hope.)

What was in the mind of Noah’s dad when he named him is impossible to say—even *with* the explanation he includes in this verse. After Noah was dead, the ground remained cursed, man still toiled for his daily bread, sin and corruption (if these were included in his thoughts) would return. Perhaps the answer is to look for this prophecy’s fulfillment well into the future from Noah’s time.

Noah would be the instrument through which Yahweh God would secure the righteous line even as he expunged the Cainite line from the earth by means of the Flood. From an earthly point of view, David would not have been born had Noah not built his ark and been kept safe within it while all other people of the earth were destroyed. If David had not been born, the Davidic line would not have been established for the one who would reign on its throne “forever”—namely, the Messiah, Jesus the Son of God. And only in Him would *all* prophecies be fulfilled—including this from the lips of Lamech. Ultimate rest, comfort will come only when Christ reigns upon the earth and sin and evil and Satan and Death have all been thrown into the eternal flames.

vv30-31

The rest of this generational narrative follows the pattern set earlier. Lamech lived to be 777 years of age, and during those years he fathered other sons and daughters.

v32

And Noah was 500 years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Every time I read about Noah and his three sons, my mind immediately returns to early 1982 when Linda and I were vacationing in Africa—first, two and a half weeks in Egypt, then two and a half weeks in Kenya. While we were in Egypt I noticed the name “Misr” on just about everything: buses, buildings, etc. And one day I mentioned to our guide that this “Misr” guy must own just about everything in the country. He laughed and said that that was the *Egyptian* name for Egypt. Turn please to Chapter Ten.

Read Genesis 10:1, 6.

Mizraim is shortened to Mizr or Misr today for what Egyptians call Egypt, but most of the world refers to it as Egypt. Turn the page to Chapter Twelve.

Read Genesis 12:10.

“Egypt” here and following translates the same Hebrew word *Mizraim*. Now, back to Chapter Six. We will just begin our look at this mysterious opening to Chapter Six, returning to it in our next session.

MIXING WHAT SHOULDN'T BE MIXED, PART ONE

Read Genesis 6:1-4.

“SONS OF GOD” AND “NEPHILIM”

Being a fan of Science Fiction and Fantastical stories, I would love for the early verses of Genesis 6 to be describing supernatural beings joining with human women to create a generation of giants. However... Let's clear this up right away.

“Sons of God”

There are a number of interpretations for both of these, but I will cut right to the chase. Leupold in his commentary rightly titles this passage, “The Commingling of the Two Races.” There is a reason that Moses has emphasized the two tracks humanity has followed thus far: the righteous line of Seth, against the worldly line of Cain.

In the episode before us these two lines, previously kept separate, now come together in an unauthorized, sinful manner—with fateful consequences. What is then meant by “sons of God” (*bene ha elohim*)? Let's look at just a couple of examples. Turn please to Psalm 73.

Referring to the righteous followers of God, Asaph writes in v15,
**If I had said, “I will recount thus,”
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.**

The Hebrew translated “children” is, literally, sons (*bene*). In other words, those who call upon the name of the Lord, those who follow the precepts of God, are referred to here as “sons of God.”

The prophet Hosea writes,

**And Yahweh said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not
My people, and I am not your God.”
Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And it will be that in the place
Where it is said to them, “You are not My people,”
It will be said to them,
“You are the sons of the living God.” (Hosea 1:9–10)**

So it is not uncommon in God's word to refer to the righteous, the followers of God, in a familial manner, as sons or children of God. It is true that, as some interpreters insist here, that in a few places in the OT angels are referred to in the same way. For example, Job 1:6 and (probably) 38:7. So we must look beyond the words to the setting to determine our interpretation, and I believe Moses has given us the context in Chapters Four and Five, and in the following Flood narrative: the Cainites vs. the Sethites, sons of the world vs. sons of God.

K&D: The question whether the "sons of Elohim" were celestial or terrestrial sons of God (angels or pious men of the family of Seth) can only be determined from the context, and from the substance of the passage itself, that is to say, from what is related respecting the conduct of the sons of God and its results... the connection of Genesis 6:1-8 with Genesis 4 necessitates the assumption, that such intermarriages (of the Sethite and Cainite families) did take place about the time of the flood.

Leupold summarizes this nicely:

Leupold: Here now is the natural sequence of thought: after the Cainites were observed to be going in one definite direction in their development, and the Sethites, too, were seen to be going in an entirely different direction, and these two streams of mankind were strictly keeping apart because they were so utterly divergent in character, now (ch. 6) the two streams begin, to commingle, and as a result moral distinctions are obliterated and the Sethites, too, become so badly contaminated that the existing world order must be definitely terminated.

"Nephilim"

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days...

Just who are these mysterious "Nephilim"? The succinct answer is that they really were not mysterious at all.

Of our common versions only the KJVs render this word "giants." This stems from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, which translated the original as *gigantes*. While admittedly misleading—we immediately think of abnormal beings of towering height—the word giants is fine if one broadens the definition according to the context.

Closer to our own time we refer to some men or women as “giants of industry”—for example, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Carnegie. More fitting for this context would be military or political giants, such as General Douglas MacArthur, Nimitz, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. All these men were, as v4 states, “mighty men, men of renown.” They stood out in a crowd, they were powerful, they were leaders, they changed things—some times for the better, some times for the worse.

But the word *Nephilim* as used in this context goes further than that; the word “tyrant” (as we interpret that word today) would not be a bad translation, men who were dedicated to conquering others, not just benignly ruling over them, but at times viciously dominating them; think Alexander the Great, Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan. These last three examples come closest to what the word means in our text. That some may have been physically dynamic, even larger or taller than the average man, is just one more aspect of their total presence. ➡

This same interpretation can be applied to the one other instance of the word *Nephilim*, in Numbers 13:33.

On both of these passages—“sons of God” and “Nephilim”—mine is not a minority interpretation; the commentary community is not even split down the middle, as it often is. No, out of all the scholars I typically, or even occasionally reference, *all* but one subscribe to this position. That one who diverges from the rest is, curiously, the most contemporary of them all: David Guzik, who boldly speaks of angels mating with human women and towering giants roaming the earth. ➡

With these two controversial passages now established, in part two in our next session we will approach the text of Chapter Six as we normally do.

It is not clear whether the last sentence in v4—“Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”—speaks of the Nephilim themselves, or their offspring. Nonetheless, I believe it could apply to both.

K&D
Martin Luther
Adam Clarke
J.F.B.
Albert Barnes
John Gill
Matthew Henry
Peter Lange
H. C. Leupold
John Sailhamer
Matthew Poole
Paul Kretzmann

vs.

David Guzik

SESSION 40

The Righteous Line Begins, part two & Mixing What Shouldn't Be Mixed, part one
Genesis 5:28-32; 6:1-4

The Curse Removed by the Flood?

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“Sons of God”: People or Angels?

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“Nephilim”: People or Supernatural Giants?

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