

This chapter describes the wickedness that was on the earth and God's decision to purge it from the earth. However, the LORD shows grace to Noah and his family and provides them a way of escaping the impending judgment He has planned for the earth.

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.

This passage (vs. 1-4) is one of the more controversial in scripture and commentators are predictably divided on the interpretation. The passage describes that as the human population grew that "the sons of God" began noticing the women and taking them as wives. Some commentators believe that the "daughters of men" are the female descendants of Cain and the "sons of God" are the male descendants of Seth, but that view doesn't seem to explain the sudden explosion of wickedness on the earth, why the children fathered by these "sons of God" became such mighty men, or why God saw it necessary to destroy wickedness at that time in such a severe manner as the flood but not since that time.

The interpretation that seems to most closely match the information given in scripture is that the "sons of God" are angelic beings (albeit fallen angels) and they either sired children with human women physically or through demonic possession of men. Every other time the designation "sons of God" is used in the OT outside of this chapter it refers to angelic beings (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7). Peter also seems to support this interpretation when he speaks of Christ preaching to these fallen angels who have been imprisoned for sins grievous enough to be incarcerated while other fallen angels (including Satan) are still allowed to roam free:

1 Peter 3:18-20 *"¹⁸ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: ¹⁹ By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; ²⁰ Which sometime [formerly; at some time in the past] were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."*

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.

The Hebrew word for "strive" can mean "to contend with" or "to plead a cause." The Holy Spirit was at work in men's hearts attempting to draw them to follow the LORD but it was a struggle against their sinful flesh. The LORD here is saying that there would be a time limit of 120 years for men to repent before judgment comes. This will give Noah time to build the ark.

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.

The Hebrew word for "giants" is *nephilim* which comes from a root word meaning "to fall" which may refer to strong men falling on those weaker than themselves, or possibly that they came from fallen angels. This verse seems to state that these *nephilim* became mighty men of reputation ("renown") or legend. It also says the *nephilim* appeared when (or as a result) of the sons of God cohabitating with the daughters of men.

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.

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth" – The influence of these fallen angels had taken its toll on the human race, whether genetically, through example, or both.

"and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" – Mankind had been so corrupted that people were incapable of resisting their sinful nature and their minds were continually filled with evil thoughts.

"And it repented [to be sorry; to regret] the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" – We have to remember that in scripture God is often described in human terms so that we can understand His perspective. God does not have to repent like we do because He never makes a mistake since He can always see the outcome of His actions. Here we see the LORD's heart concerning sin as He would have preferred that man not embrace his sinful nature. He regrets that it has now become necessary to destroy men because of their wickedness. In a passage concerning God's coming judgment of the world **2 Peter 3:9** says *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* God would rather not have to judge men for their sin, but He will.

However, He does not regret creating man because He considers the end result (an eternity with Him) to be worth it. He knew before He created the world that mankind would fall and would need a Savior: **2 Tim. 1:9** *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."*

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.

Man had crossed the line of wickedness without repentance and so the LORD decrees that judgment will fall and will thus destroy mankind from off the face of the earth. It may seem severe that the animal kingdom would suffer the same judgment, but scripture teaches that just as the wicked sometimes benefit from the blessings of the righteous, sometimes the innocent suffer with the wicked. **Matt. 5:45** “*That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*” **Rom. 8:19-22** describe how that the “creature” (creation) currently suffers because of mankind’s sin, but will be liberated when our redemption is complete: “¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, ²¹ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

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.

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” – In the midst of all of the wickedness on the earth, the LORD finds a man who is an exception to the rule. As we will see, Noah was a man who walked with God and thus he found grace in the eyes of the LORD. The LORD would have been just in destroyed humanity completely because we are all sinners and deserving of hell, but instead He showed His grace by preserving a man and his family so that humanity could start over.

“These are the generations [descendants; family line] of Noah” – These verses give an account of who Noah was and lists his children.

“Noah was a just [righteous] man and perfect [complete; whole] in his generations [period of time; dwelling]” – The word used for “generations” here is different than the first one. While the first word describes the people in your family line, this one describes the people around you in time and space. Noah was a righteous man who had not been corrupted by all of the wickedness surrounding him in the day he lived. Can the same be said about us?

“and Noah walked with God” – The reason Noah was a just man who had remained pure from the evils of the world was because he walked with God. The moment we stop walking with God we are in trouble because our sinful human nature will begin to take over.

“And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” – It is from these three sons that the three main branches of humanity’s family tree will descend. The Hebrews eventually descend from Shem, Ham is the father of the nations collectively known as the Canaanites as well as the Egyptians, and Japheth’s descendants became the Europeans.

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.

“The earth also was corrupt [spoiled; ruined; decayed] before God, and the earth was filled with violence” – Notice the word “also.” In addition to the wickedness of men’s evil hearts, even the earth was also in a state of ruin. Just as Abel’s blood cried out to the LORD from the ground where it was spilled (Gen. 4:10), the earth itself had become contaminated by the abundance of violent acts that had been committed in it.

“And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” – God’s examination of the earth revealed that it had become contaminated with the corruption of men’s violent and wicked acts.

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.

“And God said unto Noah” – God speaks to Noah and informs him of the plan to purge the world of the wickedness.

“The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them” – God sees the necessity of destroying mankind as well as animals (“all flesh”) because of the abundance of violence and other wickedness with which mankind has filled the earth.

“and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” – God had decided to destroy the wicked along with the earth, since it was also contaminated by their violence (v. 12). This destruction is not complete (completely wiping mankind and the earth from existence) but is a purging of the violence and wickedness through a flood, giving both the earth and humanity the opportunity to start over.

¹⁴ Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

“Make thee an ark of gopher wood” – We don’t know for sure what “gopher wood” is, but commentators believe it to be either cedar or cypress, which are abundant in the area. Both are weather and insect resistant and cypress in particular is a durable wood.

“rooms shalt thou make in the ark” – Compartments would add to the structural strength of the ark as well as providing a means of separating areas such as living quarters and food storage from the areas where the animals would reside.

“and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch [a cover]” – The ark was to be covered inside and out with a black tar-like substance, which would make the wood of the ark water-proof and water-tight.

Verses 15-22: The LORD continues to instruct Noah on the construction of the ark and explains that He will use a flood to destroy everything that breathes on the earth. The LORD establishes a covenant with Noah, promising to preserve him and his family within the ark, as well as two of each sort of animal. The LORD also advises Noah to gather provisions to feed both his family and the animals while they are on the ark.