

Introduction

Genesis 5 begins with “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” This introductory formula denotes that we have entered a new major segment of Genesis.¹²¹⁴ Since the word “generations” derives from the verb which connotes “fathering offspring,” it connotes a family or clan history.¹²¹⁵ Genealogies in the Ancient Near East suggested continuity and relationship to increase a person’s power and prestige.¹²¹⁶

Moses began this chapter by returning to the sixth day of creation. He wrote, “On the day when God created humanity, in the likeness of God he created him. Male and female, he created them. And he blessed them, and he called their name ‘human’ on the day they were created.” Unlike the animals, which God created in various species and kinds, Moses described people in terms of gender. Therefore, this verse affirms that the Lord created both men and women in his image to rule over creation (Cf. Gen 1:26–28).¹²¹⁷ He also designed us to experience community with each other. This enables us to express all that it means to be fully human, whether we marry or remain single.¹²¹⁸

Moses concluded Adam’s biography by writing, “And it was that the days of Adam after his fathering of Seth [were] 800 years, and he fathered sons and daughters. And so it was that all the days of Adam which he lived [were] 930 years. And he died.” Here we finally see the physical death resulting from the fall. The refrain, “and he died” after the description of even the oldest patriarch points to the universality of the impact of sin upon Adam.¹²¹⁹

Once again, Moses surveyed the era of Gen 4 but from the vantage point of the line of Seth.¹²²⁰ Unlike Cain’s cursed line, which prominently features two murderers, the promised lineage of Seth links the two founders of humanity: Adam and Noah.¹²²¹ Thus, Moses recognized Noah as the legitimate seed who built a godly culture.¹²²²

By limiting the Gen 5 and Gen 11 accounts to ten generations of people of importance or who lived at critical times, Moses presented the flood as the important dividing line of primeval history.¹²²³ These genealogies contain broken lines of descent which include only the most significant ancestors. This enables us to recognize that the periods of time from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham almost certainly differ in length.¹²²⁴

The long lives of the descendants of Seth may depict that they were unusually godly people or that the curse of death gradually took its hold upon humanity.¹²²⁵ By recording precise numbers, this genealogical record conveys that Moses discussed real people.¹²²⁶ While God’s blessing remained upon them in terms of their fruitfulness, Moses reminds us that the effects of sin remained by repeating the refrain, “and he died.”¹²²⁷ We know virtually nothing about the men listed in Gen 5 through v. 20 aside from the meaning of a few of their names.¹²²⁸ They simply form links in the chain between Seth and Noah.

In contrast, Enoch walked in fellowship with God; and God walked in close

¹²¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 121.

¹²¹⁵Schreiner, “תולדות” (*toledot*), *TDOT*, 15:582–8, 582–3.

¹²¹⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 5:1–32.

¹²¹⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 138–9.

¹²¹⁸Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 83

¹²¹⁹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 135.

¹²²⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 189.

¹²²¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 112.

¹²²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 109.

¹²²³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 111.

¹²²⁴Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 10–1.

¹²²⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 282.

¹²²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 134.

¹²²⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 284.

¹²²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 127.

communion with Enoch.¹²²⁹ Both parties experienced mutually satisfying intimate communication.¹²³⁰ Yet, Enoch lived for a relatively short time since “Enoch walked with God, and he [was] not, because God took him.” Precisely because Enoch walked with God, he did not suffer the fate of Adam and his other descendants.¹²³¹ Thus, Enoch found true life among those under the curse of death.¹²³² The greatest honor is not a long life but to be lifted into the presence of God without dying.¹²³³

Seeking Relief

1) Gen 5:28–32: Moses began this section by writing, “And Lamech lived 182 years, and he fathered a son.” This Lamech differed greatly from the one depicted in Gen 4:19, 23–24.¹²³⁴ The one who came from the lineage of Seth desired deliverance from God’s curse upon the ground, instead of seeking revenge (Gen 3:17–19).¹²³⁵

As a result of Adam’s choice to pursue wisdom on his own without depending upon the Lord (Gen 3:1–7),¹²³⁶ human mastery over creation was subjected to frustration (Gen 1:26–28),¹²³⁷ replaced by alienation from our environment (Rom 8:19–22).¹²³⁸ Land blessed by God is well-watered and fertile (Gen 2:8–10; Deut 33:13–16). Under his curse, it becomes dry and unproductive (Deut 28:17–18).¹²³⁹

Since God removed his protection and favor, the ground yielded produce only through hard labor.¹²⁴⁰ No longer a delight, work had become an enemy.¹²⁴¹ Since inedible growth replaced plants needed for food, people constantly toiled to sustain life (Prov 24:30–34).¹²⁴²

For the first time in Gen 5, a father explained his rationale for the name he chose for his son:¹²⁴³ Lamech “called his name Noah, saying, ‘This one shall relieve us from our work and from the painful toil of our hands [arising] from the ground which the Lord has put under a curse.’” Lamech used the same Hebrew word which described what Eve and Adam experienced: “pain” (*itsabon*) (Gen 3:16–17).¹²⁴⁴ Due to Noah’s importance in the book of Genesis, Moses repeatedly related the sound of his name to important theological themes in Gen 6–10.¹²⁴⁵ Noah’s name sounds like the Hebrew word which means “comfort” or “relieve” (*nuah*). However, it does not derive from it.¹²⁴⁶

The desire to receive rest from one’s toil conspicuously appears in Ancient Near

¹²²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 114–5.

¹²³⁰F. J. Helfmeyer, “הַלֵּיכָה and הֵלֵךְ” (*halakh* and *halikhah*) *TDOT* 3:388–403, 394.

¹²³¹Walton, *Genesis*, 279.

¹²³²Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, 118.

¹²³³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 257.

¹²³⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128.

¹²³⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹²³⁶John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 143–4.

¹²³⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

¹²³⁸Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3* (ed. Martin Rüter, Ilse Tödt, and John W. De Gruchy; trans. Douglas Stephen Bax; DBW; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 133–4.

¹²³⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 82.

¹²⁴⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 229.

¹²⁴¹Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Exposition of Genesis 1–3*, 134.

¹²⁴²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 95.

¹²⁴³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 258.

¹²⁴⁴Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עִצְבוֹן” (*itsabon*), *BDB*, 781,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/780/mode/2up>.

¹²⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128.

¹²⁴⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *BDB*, “נוֹחַ” (*nuah*), 628–9,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/628/mode/2up>.

Eastern (ANE) literature.¹²⁴⁷ In Enuma Elish, the boisterous antics of some lesser gods disturbed the rest of Apsu, the chief god. He complained to the water goddess Tiamat, “Their ways are truly loathsome unto me. By day I find no relief, nor repose by night. I will destroy, I will wreck their ways that quiet may be restored. Let us have rest!”¹²⁴⁸

Tiamat reacted to his desire to kill the other gods by rebelling. Consequently, the absence of rest led to primordial conflict before the gods created people.¹²⁴⁹ After the battle, Marduk announced to the other gods that people “shall be charged with the service of the gods that they might be at ease!”¹²⁵⁰ Freed from the menial tasks of managing the earth and providing food for themselves, the gods could rest.¹²⁵¹

Similarly, the Akkadian myth Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess states, “That which is slight he shall raise to abundance, the work of god man shall bear!...Create, then...and let him bear the yoke! The yoke he shall bear...the work of god man shall bear!”¹²⁵² Thus, in ANE thought, people labored so the gods could rest.¹²⁵³

The biblical concept that God intended for humans to participate in his rest is unique in the ANE (Gen 2:1–3; Exod 20:8–11).¹²⁵⁴ It appears that Israel first kept the Sabbath during their time in the wilderness (Exod 16:22–30).¹²⁵⁵ Therefore, Lamech most likely did not observe days of rest from his toil, nor did he conceive the possibility of such a luxury. Perhaps Lamech prophesied that his son Noah would introduce new agricultural practices (Gen 9:20).¹²⁵⁶ On the other hand, his words may reflect his desperate desire for relief from his miserable life of servitude to the ground, as it needed constant care to produce food.¹²⁵⁷

Moses returned to the standard format of this genealogy by writing, “And Lamech, after fathering Noah, lived 595 years. And he fathered [other] sons and daughters.” Just as with the linear genealogies of Cain and Shem (Gen 4:19–22; Gen 11:26), the tenth generation in Seth’s ancestral record names three sons. Moses wrote, “And Noah was 500 years old. And he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.”¹²⁵⁸ Then, the genealogical record of Noah comes to a halt. It shall not resume until after the deluge (Gen 9:28–29). This indicates that Moses inserted the flood narrative here to expand the account of the descendants of Seth.¹²⁵⁹

Read Gen 5:28–32. Why did Lamech name his son Noah? How does the biblical notion of rest differ from the concept in other ANE literature? Do you think that Lamech was prophesying or expressing his desperation? How would you have felt in his place?

¹²⁴⁷Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 5:32.

¹²⁴⁸“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, tablet 1:35–40, 61,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n85/mode/2up.

¹²⁴⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 150.

¹²⁵⁰“The Creation Epic” (Enuma Elish), *ANET*, 6:8, 68,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n93/mode/2up.

¹²⁵¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

¹²⁵²E. A. Speiser, trans., “Creation of Man by the Mother Goddess,” in *ANET*, obv. 1–9, 99,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n123/mode/2up.

¹²⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 53.

¹²⁵⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 143.

¹²⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 36.

¹²⁵⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹²⁵⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 259.

¹²⁵⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 129.

¹²⁵⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 259–60.

Groaning for a Redeemed Body

2) Rom 8:23–25: In the previous verses (Rom 8:18–22), the Apostle Paul expressed that both we and all the sub-human creation desperately yearn for the deliverance which shall come when God fully reveals the glory of his people.¹²⁶⁰ He began v. 23 by writing, “And not only [creation] but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, we also within ourselves are groaning, eagerly awaiting adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” By repeating “we also ourselves” Paul made his statement highly emphatic.¹²⁶¹

First fruits (*aparchē*) consisted of the earliest part of a harvest. Immediately after Passover each year, a priest waved a sheaf of barley before the Lord to dedicate that harvest. Fifty days later, Israelites held a similar ceremony for the first fruits of the wheat harvest (Exod 23:14–19; Lev 23:5–11, 15–21). Seven weeks and one day separated these rites, so people called the second one the Feast of Weeks (Num 18:26). Highlighting the importance of these festivals, God commanded every man in Israel to gather to celebrate them every year (Deut 16:16).¹²⁶²

The Greek name for the Feast of Weeks is Pentecost, a term meaning “fiftieth”.¹²⁶³ Significantly, the Holy Spirit came upon the earliest Christians during the first Pentecost after Jesus’s resurrection (Acts 2:1–4). Therefore, Paul used the term “first fruits” as a metaphor for the Holy Spirit living within God’s people (2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13–14). In an interesting twist, God gifts us with the presence of the Holy Spirit as a pledge of greater things in the future. This first fruit does not signify what we offer to the Lord.¹²⁶⁴ God has already begun his redemptive work within us, which shall finally reach its culmination in the age to come (Rom 8:11–13; Tit 3:5–7).¹²⁶⁵

Paul wrote, “We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, we also within ourselves are groaning.” These utterances connect us with the rest of creation (Rom 8:18–21).¹²⁶⁶ Although we have received the great blessing of salvation, we still experience the sin and death of this fallen world (2 Cor 4:7–12).¹²⁶⁷ As a result, we endure the frustrations of living in the “now and not yet” era of the kingdom of God (Phil 1:21–24).¹²⁶⁸

Our groaning does not occur despite possessing the Spirit but precisely because he dwells within us.¹²⁶⁹ Due to his presence, we experience the anguish of knowing what we are missing (2 Cor 5:1–8). A friend of mine likened this to recognizing that you have great needs and seeing a huge pile of presents bearing your name under the Christmas tree...in November.

In the age to come, God shall display our current status as his vice-regents—the sons and daughters of the Lord—to everyone (Eph 1:5–6).¹²⁷⁰ This concept of sonship closely relates to image-bearing (Gen 5:3). Similarly, Scripture describes the son of God as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15).¹²⁷¹ In the covenant which the Lord made with David, God promised to the king’s descendant, “I shall be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam 7:12–16). Later in Israel’s history, the Lord

¹²⁶⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 518–9.

¹²⁶¹Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:417.

¹²⁶²Richard O. Rigsby, “First Fruits,” *ABD* 2:796–7.

¹²⁶³Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “πεντηκοστή” (*pentēkostē*), *BDAG*, 795.

¹²⁶⁴Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 224.

¹²⁶⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 520.

¹²⁶⁶Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:419.

¹²⁶⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 520.

¹²⁶⁸Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 474.

¹²⁶⁹Moo, *Romans*, 267.

¹²⁷⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:413.

¹²⁷¹Kirk, *Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God*, 142.

applied the designation “my son” not only to the royal messiah, but also to the end-time people of God (Hos 1:10).¹²⁷²

In keeping with Deut 30:6, the author of a second century BC Jewish manuscript wrote: “And after this they will turn to Me in all uprightness and with all [their] heart and with all their] soul, and I shall circumcise the foreskin of their heart and...the heart of their seed, and I shall create in them a holy spirit, and I shall cleanse them...And their souls will cleave to me...and they will fulfill my commandments, and I shall be their Father...And they will all be called children of the living God, and every angel and every spirit will know, yea, they will know that these are my children...and that I love them.”¹²⁷³

This concept of being a son or daughter of God did not originate with the New Testament (NT). The Lord had promised to redeem righteous Jews from their exile in a second exodus, joining them with the gentiles as God’s people (Isa 2:1–4; Zech 8:20–23).¹²⁷⁴ Jewish scholars recognized the term “sons of God” as a distinguishing mark exclusive to faithful members of Israel. Yet, they welcomed and included believing gentiles (Josh 2:1, 8–14; Josh 6:25; Ruth 1:4, 16–18; Ruth 4:13–17).¹²⁷⁵

By applying several Old Testament texts to gentiles (Isa 52:11 and 2 Sam 7:14),¹²⁷⁶ with an overt expansion to include women by adding the word “daughters,” Paul demonstrated that all believers equally comprise the heirs of God (2 Cor 6:16–18; Gal 3:26–29).¹²⁷⁷ Although the Lord has adopted us (Rom 8:14–17),¹²⁷⁸ the full benefit of our new status remains in the future (Rom 8:10–11, 28–30). Sonship can already be ours yet be the object of our hope.¹²⁷⁹

As a result, we long for “the redemption of our bodies” at the time when God makes all things new and we experience put on Jesus’s perfection (1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Cor 15:42–55; Rev 21:5–7; 1 John 3:2–3).¹²⁸⁰ Only then shall we receive complete redemption (Phil 3:20–21).¹²⁸¹ Paul explained that our expectant waiting should not surprise us, writing, “For in hope we were saved.”¹²⁸² The full enjoyment of our salvation lies in the future.¹²⁸³ Employing wordplay, he wrote, “Hope which is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what he sees?” Hope remains a certain prospect which we do not yet possess (Heb 11:1),¹²⁸⁴ and simultaneously, an attitude which we display.¹²⁸⁵

“But if we hope for what we do not see, then patiently (*hypomonē*) we eagerly wait (*apekdechomai*).” For the third time in seven verses, Paul used the term “eagerly wait.”¹²⁸⁶ A rare word outside of the NT, it connotes an “expectation of the end” (1 Cor 1:4–9),¹²⁸⁷ as if

¹²⁷²J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 104.

¹²⁷³Robert Henry Charles, trans., “The Book of Jubilees, or The Little Genesis” (Edinburgh; London: Black, 1902), 1:22–24, <https://archive.org/stream/bookofjubileesor00char#page/6/mode/2up>.

¹²⁷⁴Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, 272.

¹²⁷⁵Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 269–70.

¹²⁷⁶Seifrid, “Romans,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 771.

¹²⁷⁷Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 406.

¹²⁷⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:419.

¹²⁷⁹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 521.

¹²⁸⁰Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 474.

¹²⁸¹Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 225.

¹²⁸²Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 521.

¹²⁸³Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:419–20.

¹²⁸⁴Ryken, Wilhoit, and Reid, eds., “Hope,” *DBI*, 399.

¹²⁸⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 522.

¹²⁸⁶Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 476.

¹²⁸⁷Walter Grundmann, “ἀπεκδέχομαι” (*apekdechomai*), *TDNT*, 2:56.

people attending a parade crane their necks to see what comes next. Since the hope of believers relies upon God—rather than on us—we can endure the intense pressure of the trials of this life (Rom 5:1–5; Heb 12:1–3; James 1:2–4).¹²⁸⁸

a) Read Rom 8:23–25. What does it mean to have the first fruits of the Spirit? Why does having the Holy Spirit within us cause us to groan? What are the implications of our adoption by God? How did Paul use the word hope in two different ways? What does our hope produce in us? How are you like Lamech (Gen 5:28–29)?

Helped in Our Weakness

b) Rom 8:26–27: Paul observed, “And in the same way also the Spirit helps us in our weakness.” Hope enables us to endure suffering. Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit sustains us in our frailty (Rom 8:23–25).¹²⁸⁹ The word which Paul used to depict the helping work of the Spirit (*synantilambanomai*) literally means “to take up with.”¹²⁹⁰ It appears elsewhere in the New Testament (NT) only in Luke 10:40.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the term describes the support which seventy elders gave to Moses as he went about his duties (Exod 18:22; Num 11:16–17).¹²⁹¹ Thus, the word connotes taking on the burden of another to transfer or share its weight (Ps 89:20–21).¹²⁹² This word commonly appeared in Greco-Roman literature, where it describes lending aid to someone.¹²⁹³

For example, Josephus (37–100 AD) employed the term when he wrote, “As for those laws which Moses left concerning our common conversation and intercourse one with another...I propose to myself, with God’s assistance (*synantilambanomai*), to write, after I have finished the work I am now upon.”¹²⁹⁴

Within the NT, the word translated as “weakness” (*astheneia*) usually refers to the totality of the human condition, rather than just a person’s physical state.¹²⁹⁵ Paul applied it earlier in this chapter to convey the insufficiency of the Mosaic law (Rom 8:3). Our frailty in body, mind, and spirit reminds us that we are creatures, rather than the creator.¹²⁹⁶

As an example of our weakness, Paul wrote, “For what it is necessary for us to pray for, we do not know.” The apostle addressed the content of our entreaties, rather than referred to the style of our prayers.¹²⁹⁷ We often cannot ascertain the will of God in order to pray

¹²⁸⁸Moo, *Romans*, 268.

¹²⁸⁹Moo, *Romans*, 268.

¹²⁹⁰Gerhard Delling, “συναντιλαμβάνομαι” (*synantilambanomai*), *TDNT*, 1:376.

¹²⁹¹Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “συναντιλαμβάνομαι” (*synantilambanomai*), *BDAG*, 965.

¹²⁹²Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 522–3.

¹²⁹³Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 476.

¹²⁹⁴Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* (trans. William Whiston; The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus; Auburn and Buffalo, NY: John E. Beardsley, 1895), 4.8.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0146%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston+chapter%3D8%3Awhiston+section%3D4>.

¹²⁹⁵Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

¹²⁹⁶Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 477.

¹²⁹⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

accordingly (Matt 6:10; 2 Cor 12:7–9; Rom 1:9–13).¹²⁹⁸

When we don't know how to pray, "The Spirit itself intercedes on our behalf with wordless groans."¹²⁹⁹ Thus, in a few short verses, Paul linked creation, believers, and the Holy Spirit with one common characteristic: as we wait patiently for the new creation, we groan (Rom 8:22–27).¹³⁰⁰ Despite this literary parallel, the purpose of the Spirit's groaning remains vastly different from ours and from nature's.¹³⁰¹

The word translated as "interceding on our behalf" (*hyperentunchanō*) occurs only here in the NT.¹³⁰² Furthermore, no earlier example occurs in secular Greek.¹³⁰³ Therefore, we cannot tell whether it means that the Spirit helps us by aiding our prayers or by doing the praying for us. However, Paul added another word unique to the NT to describe the Spirit's groaning.¹³⁰⁴ He called it "unexpressed" or "wordless" (*alalētōs*).¹³⁰⁵

While the Holy Spirit can certainly illuminate our minds to understand how to pray, instead the Spirit often works through our weakness by entreating for us.¹³⁰⁶ We experience this whenever we cry out to God in bewilderment.¹³⁰⁷ Although we remain unaware of the Spirit's groans on our behalf, God hears them.¹³⁰⁸ Thus, we have both the Son and the Spirit pleading for us in accordance with God's will before the Father (Heb 7:24–25; Rom 8:31–34).¹³⁰⁹ Even when we ask for things which are not in our best interest, we can trust the Spirit's ministry of intercession to make things right (Rom 8:27).¹³¹⁰

Read Rom 8:26–27. How do these verses provide comfort and hope to you?

Sons of God or Sons of the Gods?

3) Gen 6:1–2: This passage contains numerous parallels to other documents from the Ancient Near East (ANE). As a result, the original audience understood much of the ambiguity we encounter. However, these similarities do not imply that Moses copied from those sources, as stark differences occur.¹³¹¹

The section from Gen 6:1–8 not only recalls the great evil which arose from the line of Cain (Gen 4:17–24), it creates a transition from the genealogy of the godly line of Seth to the account of the flood (Gen 6:9–9:17).¹³¹² In Gen 3, Moses recounted the fall of humanity; in Gen 4, he depicted the fall of the family; and here he demonstrated the fall of society via institutionalized oppression.¹³¹³

Moses employed wordplay to indicate that people obeyed the mandate to "be fruitful

¹²⁹⁸Witherington and Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 225.

¹²⁹⁹Moo, *Romans*, 268. In Greek, the word "Spirit" is neither male nor female but neuter.

¹³⁰⁰Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:420–1.

¹³⁰¹Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 523.

¹³⁰²Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, "ὑπερεντυγχάνω" (*hyperentunchanō*), *BDAG*, 1033.

¹³⁰³Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 478.

¹³⁰⁴Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 524.

¹³⁰⁵Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, "ἀλάλητος" (*alalētōs*), *BDAG*, 41.

¹³⁰⁶Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 477–8. A corollary to this is that we cannot consider the ability to give eloquent prayers a sign of the Spirit's presence in a person.

¹³⁰⁷Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 524.

¹³⁰⁸Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:423–4.

¹³⁰⁹Moo, *Romans*, 269.

¹³¹⁰Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 526.

¹³¹¹Walton, *Genesis*, 294.

¹³¹²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115.

¹³¹³Walton, *Genesis*, 298.

and multiply” (Gen 1:28).¹³¹⁴ The chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land (*adamah*), and daughters were born to them....”

This meshes perfectly with the account of life before the flood in the Atrahasis Epic. It begins by stating, “The land became wide, the peop[le became nu]merous, the land bellowed like wild oxen, the god [Enlil] was disturbed by their uproar.”¹³¹⁵

While in Gen 5 the focus fell upon men, here the emphasis shifts to women and what happened to them.¹³¹⁶ “And the sons of the gods saw the daughters of men, that they [were] beautiful. And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.” “The sons of the gods” can also be translated as “the sons of God” (Ps 29:1; Ps 89:7).¹³¹⁷

This occurs because the generic name of God (*El*) usually appears in the Old Testament (OT) as a plural (*Elohim*) even though it denotes only one God.¹³¹⁸ In reference to the God of Israel, “*Elohim*” appears 2,372 times; the singular “*El*” occurs only fifty-seven times, mostly in the book of Job.¹³¹⁹

Apart from the OT, *Elohim* never refers to only one god in the ANE. Instead, the singular “*El*” commonly designates a deity. In Poems about Baal and Anath, the poet wrote, “Oh, my father Bull *El*! I have no house [like] the gods [*Elohim*].”¹³²⁰

Based upon the Hebrew, we cannot ascertain whether Gen 6:2 refers to the God of Abraham, Noah, and Moses, or to other deities.¹³²¹ This contributes to the difficult task of determining exactly the identity of “the sons of God/the gods.”¹³²² Although this issue has been described as “one of the thorniest in the OT,”¹³²³ their appearance without any explanation indicates that Moses’s first readers knew the answer.¹³²⁴ Hebrew grammar permits three different interpretations.¹³²⁵ We shall explore each in turn.

Descendants of Seth as the Sons of God

b) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: This chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of God/the gods saw the daughters of humanity, that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.”

One option for identifying “the sons of God/the gods” asserts that these men hailed from the godly descendants of Seth (Gen 5), in contrast to the godless men from the line of Cain (Gen 4:17–24).¹³²⁶ Beginning in the third century AD, this comprised the dominant Christian understanding.¹³²⁷ Augustine (354–430) popularized the notion in his great work

¹³¹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³¹⁵E. A. Speiser, trans., “The Atrahasis Epic (Old Babylonian Version),” in *ANET*, tablet 2, col i, lines 1–3, 104. https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n129/mode/2up.

¹³¹⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³¹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³¹⁸Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 399,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/398/mode/2up>.

¹³¹⁹Terence E. Fretheim, “אלהים” (*elohim*), *NIDOTTE* 1:405.

¹³²⁰H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “Poems About Baal and Anath,” in *ANET*, 18–9, 129.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n153/mode/2up.

¹³²¹Helmer Ringgren, “אלהים” (*elohim*), *TDOT* 1:276–84, 276.

¹³²²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³²³Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³²⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 115–6.

¹³²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³²⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

The City of God.¹³²⁸ Other proponents of this view included Luther and Calvin.¹³²⁹

Corporate sonship of the nation of Israel does appear in several Old Testament texts, lending credence to this concept (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1).¹³³⁰ If correct, the sin consisted of marriages between godly men and ungodly women.¹³³¹ However, this option restricts the word “humanity” (*adam*) in Gen 6:1 to a specific group of men in Gen 6:2. This also requires understanding the “daughters of humanity” as “daughters of descendants of Cain.” Furthermore, Moses never specifically delineated men from the lineage of Seth as “the sons of God.”¹³³²

In addition, this view ignores any other lines of descent from Adam and Eve (Gen 5:4). It assigns an evil nature to every descendant of Cain, while presuming the godliness of everyone from Seth’s line. Finally, it fails to explain why Moses employed the phrase “daughters of humanity” to describe wicked people, especially since the text calls them “good” (*tov*), a positive quality associated with marriageability.¹³³³

Nevertheless, until nineteenth century archaeologists unearthed great quantities of Ancient Near Eastern cuneiform tablets and Egyptian hieroglyphics, this view held sway.¹³³⁴ Today, few experts advocate this interpretation.¹³³⁵

Read Gen 6:1–2. List the strengths and weaknesses for the view that these men were descendants of Seth who intermarried with the descendants of Cain:

strengths–

weaknesses–

Fallen Angels as the Sons of God

c) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: This chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of God/the gods saw the daughters of humanity (*adam*), that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.”

The term “sons of God” does occasionally refer to angels in the Old Testament (Job 38:4–7; Ps 89:6).¹³³⁶ Therefore, a second view of this passage asserts that “the sons of God” consisted of fallen angels or spirits (Job 1:6).¹³³⁷ In this case, they sinned by transgressing the boundaries between the material world of humanity and the spiritual arena of the heavenly realm.¹³³⁸ Throughout Genesis 3–11, people sought to overstep this boundary to achieve divine status. Here we see the opposite: members of the angelic world illicitly seeking to impose upon humanity.¹³³⁹

Until the second century AD, scholars teaching this passage unanimously claimed that fallen angels engaged in sex with women.¹³⁴⁰ According to the second century BC Jewish

¹³²⁸Augustine, *The City of God*, 2 Vols, 15, 2:62, <https://archive.org/stream/TheCityOfGodV2#page/n73/mode/2up>.

¹³²⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³³⁰Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³³¹Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³³²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 264.

¹³³³I. Höver-Johag, “טוב” (*tov*) *TDOT* 5:296–317, 306.

¹³³⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 291–3.

¹³³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140.

¹³³⁶Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³³⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 263.

¹³⁴⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

work the Testament of Reuben:

“Women...overcome by the spirit of fornication...allured the Watchers [angels] who were before the Flood; for as these continually beheld them, they lusted after them, and they conceived the act in their mind; for they changed themselves into the shape of men and appeared to them when they were with their husbands. And the women lusting in their minds after their forms, gave birth to giants.”¹³⁴¹

Early Christians also attributed the fall of Satan’s subordinates to their lust for “the daughters of men.”¹³⁴² For example, Justin Martyr (100–165 AD) wrote:

“God, when He had made the whole world, and subjected things earthly to man, and arranged the heavenly elements for the increase of fruits and rotation of the seasons and appointed this divine law—for these things also He evidently made for man—committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He appointed over them.

“But the angels transgressed this appointment, and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons; and besides, they afterwards subdued the human race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they enslaved by lustful passions; and among men they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate needs, and all wickedness.”¹³⁴³

Some modern scholars, such as Gordon Wenham, hold this view. They contend that unless Moses meant angels, the text says that “the sons of some men” married “the daughters of other men.” Wenham notes that, in Ugaritic texts, the “sons of *El*” refers to lesser gods in the divine pantheon.¹³⁴⁴

However, the ones serving in *El*’s Council are not angels but gods.¹³⁴⁵ A frequently cited text says, “The offering which we offer, the sacrifice which we sacrifice, it ascends to the (father of the *bn zl* [sons of the gods]), it ascends to the dwelling of the *bn zl*, to the assembly of the *bn zl*.” Scholars often cite this text as a parallel to Gen 6:1–4, yet *bn zl* describes gods.¹³⁴⁶ Hence, a recent translation says, “May it be borne aloft [to the father of the gods, may it be borne aloft to the pantheon of the gods, may it be borne aloft to the assembly of the gods.”¹³⁴⁷

Furthermore, interpreting the “sons of God/the gods” as angels does not fit the context of the flood.¹³⁴⁸ This passage in Gen 6:1–6 focuses upon the intensification of human sin.¹³⁴⁹ Accordingly, the Lord judged “flesh” (*basar*) in Gen 6:3, not spirit beings.¹³⁵⁰ Although angels can eat and drink (Gen 19:1–3),¹³⁵¹ Jesus clarified that they do not marry (Luke 20:34–36).¹³⁵² The conviction that angels could not indulge in sexual activity led second century AD Jewish scholars to reject this explanation in favor of another interpretation.¹³⁵³ Christian

¹³⁴¹R. H. Charles, trans., “Testament of Reuben,” in *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (London: Black, 1908), 1–16, 5.2–7, 11–2, <https://archive.org/stream/testamentsoftwel08char#page/10/mode/2up>.

¹³⁴²Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 141.

¹³⁴³Justin Martyr, “The Second Apology,” in *ANF01* (Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds.; revised by A. Cleveland Coxe; Buffalo, NY; Edinburgh: Christian Literature, 1884), 363, https://archive.org/stream/TheApostolicFathersWithJustinMartyrAndIrenaeus/apostolic_fathers_with_justin_martyr_and_irenaeus#page/n359/mode/2up.

¹³⁴⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139.

¹³⁴⁵Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³⁴⁶H. Haag, “בְּנֵי” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:145–59, 2:157–8.

¹³⁴⁷N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit, 2nd Ed.* (BibSem; New York: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 345.

¹³⁴⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³⁴⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 292.

¹³⁵⁰Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³⁵¹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 262.

¹³⁵³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

commentators distanced themselves from it soon afterward but, as we have already seen, took a differing view.¹³⁵⁴

Read Gen 6:1–2. List the strengths and weaknesses for interpreting the “sons of God” as fallen angels:

strengths–

weaknesses–

Kings as Sons of the Gods

d) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: The chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of the gods/God saw the daughters of humanity (*adam*), that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives, whomever they chose.” This leads us to the third possibility: that “the sons of the gods” refers to kings and other rulers.¹³⁵⁵

Since the nineteenth century, archaeologists have unearthed over a million cuneiform tablets in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Prior to then, no evidence affirmed this view.¹³⁵⁶ Today, most Jewish experts and many Christian scholars hold it.¹³⁵⁷ In the ANE, people believed that a king enjoyed a father-son relationship with a god. After all, that god generated him.¹³⁵⁸ For example, an Akkadian man lamented, “When I lie down at night my dream is terrifying. The king, the very flesh of the gods, the sun of his peoples, his heart is enraged (with me) and cannot be appeased.”¹³⁵⁹ This man considered his monarch a deity. Such equivalence occurred widely in the ANE.¹³⁶⁰

Pre-flood kings’ lists included god-rulers.¹³⁶¹ The Sumerian King List opens by saying, “When kingship was lowered from heaven....”¹³⁶² This continued after with flood, with designations such as “the divine Gilgamesh.”¹³⁶³ The Sumerian king Gudea, who ruled from 2144–2124 BC, wrote of himself as, “The offspring of the goddess Gutumduq, dowered with sovereignty and the scepter supreme by the god Gal-alim.”¹³⁶⁴

When the Ugaritic King Keret mourned the loss of his children, the chief god noticed his pain. According to the legend, “His father El, [replied], “*E[nough] for thee* of weeping, Keret; of crying, Beloved, Lad of El.”¹³⁶⁵

Numerous pharaohs from before and after Moses’s era called themselves the sons of a

¹³⁵⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 291.

¹³⁵⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

¹³⁵⁶Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate*, 205.

¹³⁵⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 139–40.

¹³⁵⁸Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³⁵⁹W. G. Lambert, trans., “I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom,” in *ANET*, 1:594–6, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n627/mode/2up.

¹³⁶⁰Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 35–39, 42–43, 45, 47–48.

¹³⁶¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 186.

¹³⁶²Thorkild Jacobsen, trans., “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n289/mode/2up.

¹³⁶³Jacobsen, “The Sumerian King List,” in *ANET*, 265–6, 266,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n291/mode/2up.

¹³⁶⁴Gudea, “Inscription on Statue A of the Louvre,” in *Records of the Past, Being Ancient Translations of the Ancient Monuments of Egypt and Western Asia, 2nd Series, Vol. II*, (Archibald Henry Sayce; London: Samuel Bagster, 1888), col ii, lines 16–9, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/rp/rp202/rp20221.htm>.

¹³⁶⁵H. L. Ginsberg, trans., “The Legend of King Keret,” in *ANET*, 2:59–62, 143.

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n167/mode/2up. Italics original.

god, whether of Atum, Amon-Ra, or Re.¹³⁶⁶ According to one of the pyramid texts, a deceased pharaoh, “is the being of a god, the son of a god, the messenger of a god.”¹³⁶⁷ Finally, a contemporary of Moses, Tukulti-Nunurta of Assyria claimed to be “The eternal image of [the god] Enlil...Enlil, like a physical father, exalted him second to his firstborn son.”¹³⁶⁸

People considered ANE kings divine progeny.¹³⁶⁹ Claiming descent from the gods conferred legitimacy to a monarch’s rule. Consequently, rulers’ inscriptions claim divine ancestry from Sumerian times (2500–2000 BC), through the Old Babylonian era (2300–1670 BC), and in both the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods (1392–612 BC). Being a son of a god was a royal prerogative.¹³⁷⁰ Gilgamesh provides an excellent example of this. He reigned over the city of Uruk. Two texts describe him as “the flesh of the gods.”¹³⁷¹ Officially, “Two-thirds of him is god, [one-third of him is human].”¹³⁷²

Although the Bible gives no credence to such claims of semi-divinity, even Israel employed such rhetoric.¹³⁷³ For example, the psalmist Asaph called Israel’s judges “gods” and “sons of the Most High.” Yet, contrary to other ANE writers, Asaph never implied they were anything more than human (Ps 82). Furthermore, the Lord called the future king from David’s line “God’s son.” His need for discipline indicates this did not refer exclusively to Jesus (2 Sam 7:12–17).¹³⁷⁴

As a result of this evidence, the highly-regarded Hebrew theological dictionary *TDOT* concluded that the author of Gen 6:1–4 wrote of kings as sons of the gods.¹³⁷⁵ Given the tremendous evil perpetrated by these men, their possession by demonic forces remains a strong option (Cf. 1 Pet 3:18–22).¹³⁷⁶ Moses did not report mythological unreality. Instead, he remained faithful to his historical context.¹³⁷⁷

Read Gen 6:1–2. List the strengths and weaknesses of the view that the sons of the gods consisted of ancient human rulers.

strengths–

weaknesses–

After reviewing all three options (descendants of Seth, fallen angels, and human kings), what do you conclude?

¹³⁶⁶Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 38–9.

¹³⁶⁷Samuel A. B. Mercer, trans., *The Pyramid Texts* (London: Forgotten Books, 2008), utterance 471, line 920a, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/pyt/pyt25.htm>.

¹³⁶⁸Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology*, 47–8. Niehaus quoted from W. G. Lambert’s *Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*.

¹³⁶⁹Meredith G. Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4,” *WTJ* 24, no. 2 (1 May 1962): 191–2, http://www.meredithkline.com/files/articles/Divine-Kingship-and-Genesis-6_1-4.pdf.

¹³⁷⁰Walton, *Genesis*, 293–4.

¹³⁷¹Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 9.2.10–4; Assyrian version 1.5–7, 88, 90, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n113/mode/2up and https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n115/mode/2up.

¹³⁷²Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 1.2.1, 73,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n97/mode/2up.

¹³⁷³Walton, *Genesis*, 294.

¹³⁷⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140.

¹³⁷⁵Haag, “בן” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:157.

¹³⁷⁶Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹³⁷⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 264.

Taking Wives for Themselves *Please note that this post carries a trigger warning.*

e) Gen 6:1–2 cont.: The chapter opens with, “And it came about, when humanity (*adam*) began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, and the sons of the gods saw the daughters of humanity (*adam*), that they [were] good (*tov*). And they took to themselves wives (*isha*), whomever they chose.” Based on the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context of Genesis, the “sons of the gods” (*bene ha elohim*) in Gen 6:1–4 refers to kings.¹³⁷⁸

What exactly was their transgression? Moses reported, “And they took for themselves wives, from all whom they chose.” “Taking a wife” usually meant getting married (Gen 11:29).¹³⁷⁹ Some scholars contend that the sin of these tyrannical rulers consisted of incorporating great numbers of women into their harems.¹³⁸⁰ However, ANE cultures viewed polygamy as an acceptable, albeit imperfect, practice even within Israel (Gen 30:1–13; 2 Sam 3:2–5).¹³⁸¹

The key lies in the phrase, “all whom they chose.” Both the pharaoh whom Sarah encountered, and David added married women to their harems (Gen 12:10–20; 2 Sam 11:2–5, 27).¹³⁸² The Lord prevented one king from violating Sarah because Abraham had tricked him into adding her to his wives (Gen 20:1–9). Therefore, this phrase appears to include already-married women. In the “right of the first night,” a king or other government official could demand to spend a woman’s bridal night with her before she went to her husband.¹³⁸³

The Epic of Gilgamesh provides insight into this practice of oppressive rulers.¹³⁸⁴ Just after noting that Gilgamesh is primarily a god, the epic states:

“The onslaught of his weapons verily has no equal. By the *drum* are aroused [his] companions. The nobles of Uruk are worried in [their chamb]ers, ‘Gilgamesh leaves not the son to [his] father. [Day] and [night] is unbridled his arro[gance]. [Is this Gilga]mesh, [the shepherd of ramparted] Uruk? Is this [our] shepherd, [bold, stately, wise]? Gilgamesh] leaves not [the maid to her mother], the warrior’s daughter, [the noble’s spouse]!’

“The [gods hearkened] to their plaint. The gods of heaven Uruk’s lord [they...]: ‘Did not [the gods, the *Aruru*] bring forth this strong wild ox? [The onslaught of his weapons] verily has no equal. By the *drum* are aroused his [companions]. Gilgamesh leaves not the son to his father; Day and night [is unbridled his arrogance]. Is this the shepherd of [ramparted] Uruk? Is this their [...] shepherd, bold, stately, (and) wise?... Gilgamesh leaves not the maid to [her mother], the warrior’s daughter, the noble’s spouse!’

“When [the god Anu] had heard out their plaint, the great Aruru (goddess of pregnancy and childbirth) they called, ‘Thou, Aruru, didst create [the man]. Create now his double; His stormy heart let him match. Let them contend, that Uruk may have peace!..For Gilgamesh, king of broad-marted Uruk, the *drum* of the people is free for nuptial choice, that with lawful wives he might mate! He is the first, the *husband* comes after. By the counsel of the gods it has (so) been ordained. With the cutting of his umbilical cord it was decreed for him!’”¹³⁸⁵

Even in this tale of a great hero, the text conveys the oppressive nature of Gilgamesh’s divinely-ordained right to sleep with any woman he chose on her wedding

¹³⁷⁸Haag, “בן” (*ben*), *TDOT* 2:157.

¹³⁷⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 140–1. Note that *isha* can mean “wife,” “woman,” or “female” per *BDB* (<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/60/mode/2up>).

¹³⁸⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 263.

¹³⁸¹Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³⁸²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹³⁸³Walton, *Genesis*, 293.

¹³⁸⁴Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:2.

¹³⁸⁵Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 1.8–32; 4:31–9, 73–4, 78, https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n103/mode/2up. Italics original.

night.¹³⁸⁶ This horrific practice continued for many years. Close to 425 BC, the Greek historian Herodotus reported that a group of people in Libya “show the king all virgins that are to be married. The king then takes the virginity of whichever of these pleases him.”¹³⁸⁷

Even the *Babylonian Talmud* acknowledges the practice, stating: “What [was the] danger? If I say that [the Roman authorities] said, ‘a maiden that gets married on the fourth day [of the week] shall be killed,’ [then how state] ‘they made it a custom’? ‘We should abolish it entirely!’—Said Rabbah, ‘[That] they said, “a maiden that gets married on the fourth day [of the week] shall have the first sexual intercourse with the prefect.” ‘[You call] this danger? [Surely] this [is a case of] constraint!—Because there are chaste women who would rather surrender themselves to death’” (*b. Kethuboth* 3b).¹³⁸⁸

Violence could easily erupt from this tyrannical practice (Gen 6:13).¹³⁸⁹ According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, when a mighty man named Enkidu arrived in Uruk: “The men were clustered about him, and kissed his feet...Suddenly a handsome young man arrived...Enkidu blocked the entry to the marital chamber, and would not allow Gilgamesh to be brought in. They grappled with each other at the entry to the marital chamber, in the street they attacked each other.” Gilgamesh lost the fight. He and Enkidu became friends and set off on their epic journey.¹³⁹⁰

By separating the account of the forbidden unions from that of the resulting offspring in Gen 6:4, Moses emphasized the sinfulness of the actions of these men.¹³⁹¹

Read Gen 6:1–2. How would you describe what Moses depicted in these verses? What does God’s reaction in Gen 6:5–7 tell you about his concern for those who experience sexual assault?

Limiting Human Life Spans

f) Gen 6:3: Due to the behavior of the sons of the gods (Gen 6:1–2), “The Lord said, ‘My spirit shall not strive with humanity forever because he is flesh. And it shall be that his days will be 120 years.’” While many words of this sentence have been controversial, in recent years Hebrew scholars are developing a consensus.¹³⁹²

Since God’s spirit produces life,¹³⁹³ Moses emphasized the Lord’s life-giving power. He did not refer to the Holy Spirit in this instance (Cf. Gen 2:7; Ps 104:27–30). Although one can translate the verb *din* as “abide” instead of “strive,”¹³⁹⁴ many modern scholars conclude that God said he would not contend with humans forever (Cf. Prov 22:10; 2 Sam 19:9).¹³⁹⁵ In

¹³⁸⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 293.

¹³⁸⁷Herodotus, “The Histories,” in *Herodotus with an English Translation* (trans. A. Godley; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 4.168.2, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0126%3Abook%3D4%3Achapter%3D168%3Asection%3D2>.

¹³⁸⁸https://halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_3.html#PARTb.

¹³⁸⁹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 185.

¹³⁹⁰Maureen Gallery Kovacs, trans., *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), tablet 2, <http://jewishchristianlit.com/Texts/ANEmyths/gilgamesh02.html>.

¹³⁹¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 265–6.

¹³⁹²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 141.

¹³⁹³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹³⁹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 141–2.

¹³⁹⁵V. Hamp, “דִּין” (*din*), *TDOT* 3:187–8. This is contra *BDB*.

either case, the same result ensued.

In Hebrew, the word translated as “flesh” (*basar*) has multiple meanings. Usually it refers to physicality, such as of an animal or human body (Exod 21:28; Gen 2:21).¹³⁹⁶ Since weakness, inadequacy, and a transitory nature all characterize flesh, *basar* also conveys the necessity of a total dependence upon the Lord for strength and life itself (Ps 56:4; Isa 40:6–8). An ethical aspect to the word also occurs in connection with the human tendency to commit sin (Ps 78:37–41; Jer 17:5; 2 Chron 32:7–8).¹³⁹⁷

God’s judgment in Gen 6 indicates that both human frailty and sinfulness result from our existence as fleshly creatures.¹³⁹⁸ We cannot survive without God sustaining us (Job 34:12–15; Isa 40:6–8; Luke 12:16–21).¹³⁹⁹ By calling even powerful kings “flesh,” the Lord not only emphasized their mortality but mocked their divine aspirations.¹⁴⁰⁰

Noah lived for 500 years old by the time he fathered his three sons (Gen 5:32). The flood occurred when he reached 600 years old (Gen 7:6). Therefore, some commentators hold that the phrase “his days shall be 120 years” reflects a period of grace before the flood would begin,¹⁴⁰¹ giving people time to repent, just as in the days of Jonah (Jon 3:4–6).¹⁴⁰² They conclude Noah spent those 120 years building the ark to warn people of impending judgment (2 Pet 3:3–9).¹⁴⁰³

However, we have no indication that Noah built the ark over a period of 120 years.¹⁴⁰⁴ It appears that Noah’s sons were born before he received the Lord’s command (Gen 6:10–13). That would leave a maximum of 100 years between God’s command to build the ark and the flood.

By limiting human life spans, individuals had less time to accrue power and foist their corrupt practices upon others.¹⁴⁰⁵ We should probably take the meaning of “his days shall be 120 years” at face value. God would no longer permit extraordinarily long lives.¹⁴⁰⁶ Tyrants could no longer oppress and terrorize others for hundreds of years.¹⁴⁰⁷

With this interpretation, we immediately run into a problem. Several biblical patriarchs who lived after the flood survived for more than 120 years. For example, Abraham survived for 175 years; Isaac for 180; and Jacob for 147 years (Gen 25:7; Gen 35:28; Gen 47:28).¹⁴⁰⁸ As God’s chosen men, the Lord may have blessed these patriarchs with life spans beyond what he promised to others.¹⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand, God may have gradually implemented this edict, just as Adam did not physically die on the day he ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16–17; Gen 3:19; Gen 5:3–5).¹⁴¹⁰ In the generations after Jacob, the bible records only Aaron exceeding 120 years (Num 33:39). Even Moses lived for only the maximum set by God (Deut 34:7).¹⁴¹¹

Parallels also exist in Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) texts. A tablet from Emar recounts

¹³⁹⁶Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “דִּין” (*din*), *BDB*, 192,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/192/mode/2up>.

¹³⁹⁷N. P. Bratsiotis, “בָּשָׂר” (*basar*), *TDOT* 2:328–9.

¹³⁹⁸Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 268.

¹³⁹⁹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴⁰⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 188.

¹⁴⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴⁰²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 269.

¹⁴⁰³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 117.

¹⁴⁰⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

¹⁴⁰⁵Walton, *Genesis*, 298.

¹⁴⁰⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴⁰⁷Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁴⁰⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 142.

¹⁴⁰⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

¹⁴¹⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 269.

¹⁴¹¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

this conversation between the god Enlil and a man named Namzitarra:

“[Enlil says,] ‘Your fate will be allotted to you [like your name]...you will have silver, you will have lapis lazuli gems, you will have cattle, you will have sheep.’ [To which Namzitarra replies, ‘Where will I have taken your silver, your lapis lazuli, your sheep? The days of mankind are declining, day after day they are diminishing. Month after month they are diminishing. Year after year they are diminishing. [The days of mankind]—they are diminishing. 120 years—that is the limit of mankind’s life, its term, from that day till now, as long as mankind has existed. So, I am going home. Do not stop me.’”¹⁴¹²

This ancient Syrian text affirms the decrease in the limit to human life spans reported by Moses: 120 years.¹⁴¹³

Read Gen 6:3. Do you think that the 120 years refers to a limit of people’s life spans or a period of grace before the flood? Why?

Nephilim in the Land *Please note that this post carries a trigger warning.*

g) Gen 6:4: Moses wrote, “The Nephilim were in the land in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of the gods went into the daughters of men. And they bore to them those mighty ones from of old, men of renown.” Some scholars remain uncertain how this verse fits with those preceding it (Gen 6:1–3).¹⁴¹⁴ While, “In those days” refers to the period before the flood, the phrase “And also afterward” indicates that such people reemerged from among the descendants of Noah.¹⁴¹⁵

This brings us to another point of contention. Who exactly were the Nephilim? Were they typical people living at that time, the sons of the gods themselves, or the progeny resulting from illicit unions between kings and the women they assaulted?¹⁴¹⁶

Within the Old Testament (OT), only the account of the men who did reconnaissance prior to Israel entering Canaan also mentions Nephilim (Num 13:30–33).¹⁴¹⁷ The Greek translation of the OT called these men in the book of Numbers “giants” (Num 30:33).¹⁴¹⁸ “Nephilim” derives from a verb which means “to fall” (*naphal*),¹⁴¹⁹ making a literal translation “fallen ones” (Deut 22:4).¹⁴²⁰ Their name connotes that anything so gigantic and exalted must fall (Jer 46:6; Ezek 26:15–18; Ezek 31:16–18).¹⁴²¹

Many commentators identify the Nephilim as children of the violent tyrants of Gen 6:2.¹⁴²² Their designation refers to particular characteristics of people—¹⁴²³ men of great physical prowess and military might—¹⁴²⁴ rather than depicting their ethnicity. Some

¹⁴¹²Yoram Cohen, “‘Enlil and Namzitarra’: The Emar and Ugarit Manuscripts and A New Understanding of the ‘Vanity Theme’ Speech,” *RA* 1, no. 104 (2010): lines 11–28, 87–97, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23281403?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

¹⁴¹³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:3.

¹⁴¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 142.

¹⁴¹⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143.

¹⁴¹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 269.

¹⁴¹⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 296.

¹⁴¹⁸Brannan, et al., *LES*, Num 13:33.

¹⁴¹⁹Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “נָפַל” (*naphal*), *BDB* 656–8, 656,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/656/mode/2up>.

¹⁴²⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 270.

¹⁴²¹H. Seebass, “נָפַל” (*naphal*), *TDOT* 9:488–97, 497.

¹⁴²²Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁴²³Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBOT*, Gen 6:4.

¹⁴²⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 116–7.

compare these heroic warriors to knights from the Middle Ages who wandered in search of great quests.¹⁴²⁵

After the parenthetical comment about these mighty men, Moses again described the sin of the sons of the gods (Gen 6:1–4). He noted that they “went into” the daughters of men. While the word *bo* has many meanings, here it serves as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.¹⁴²⁶ When human sexuality did not involve reciprocal enjoyment but reproduction or lust, Scripture employs the phrases “go into” (*bo*) (Gen 16:2; Deut 22:13; Ruth 4:5, 13)¹⁴²⁷ or “lie with” (*shakav*) (Gen 39:7–12; 2 Sam 11:4).¹⁴²⁸ This verb alone exonerates Bathsheba as an unwilling participant in David’s sin.¹⁴²⁹

Due to the actions of the sons of the gods, women “bore to them those mighty ones (*gibor*) from of old.” While the word *olam* usually depicts a long duration into the future, it can also denote remote antiquity.¹⁴³⁰ Examples of this occur in Josh 24:2 and 1 Sam 27:8.¹⁴³¹ Although prior to the flood Moses named none of these individuals, we have several examples of these “mighty ones” later in history. Gilgamesh represents the epitome of these men.¹⁴³² His epic describes him as “accomplished in strength, [who] like a wild ox, lords it over the folk.”¹⁴³³

In Gen 10:8–12, Moses depicted Nimrod as one “mighty on the earth.” Nimrod’s activities included great hunting exploits and founding eight municipalities. Several of those cities became the most prominent of antiquity. Instead of the Bible treating legend as history, it seems that actual events have been transformed into the myths of the Ancient Near East.¹⁴³⁴

Read Gen 6:4. Who were the Nephilim? How did Moses describe the offspring of the sons of the gods and the daughters of men?

Rebellious Angels

2) Jude 6–7: The author of this letter exhorted its recipients to defend the faith by removing the false teachers who infiltrated their congregation (Jude 3–4).¹⁴³⁵ He compared those in error with notorious sinners from the Old Testament (OT).¹⁴³⁶

This short epistle makes heavy use of apocryphal works popular in his day.¹⁴³⁷ Jude typically alluded to them, rather than citing them directly.¹⁴³⁸ However, this does not mean that he necessarily agreed with everything which appears in those books.¹⁴³⁹ In effect, he did

¹⁴²⁵Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton, *IVPBBCOT*, Gen 6:4.

¹⁴²⁶H. D. Preuss, “בוא” (*bo*) *TDOT* 2:21–49, 21.

¹⁴²⁷Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “בוא” (*bo*), *BDB*, 98,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/98/mode/2up>.

¹⁴²⁸Holladay, “שָׁכַב” (*shakav*), *CHALOT*, 368.

¹⁴²⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 220.

¹⁴³⁰Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “עוֹלָם” (*olam*), *BDB*, 761–3, 761,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/760/mode/2up>.

¹⁴³¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143.

¹⁴³²Walton, *Genesis*, 294.

¹⁴³³Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, 1.4.36–9, 75,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n99/mode/2up.

¹⁴³⁴Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁴³⁵Robert L. Webb, “Jude” *DLNT*, 611–21, 611.

¹⁴³⁶Douglas J. Moo, *2 Peter, Jude* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 239.

¹⁴³⁷Richard J. Bauckham, “Jude, Epistle of,” *ABD* 3:1098–1103, 1099.

¹⁴³⁸Webb, “Jude,” *DLNT*, 614.

¹⁴³⁹Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 450.

the same thing preachers do today when they reference popular culture to make a specific point in their sermons.¹⁴⁴⁰ The great theologian Jerome (347–420 AD) wrote, “Many things in sacred Scripture...are said in accordance with the opinion of the time in which the events took place, rather than in accordance with the actual truth of the matter.”¹⁴⁴¹

Since the nineteenth century, archaeologists have unearthed over a million cuneiform tablets in the Ancient Near East which confirm that “the sons of the gods” in Gen 6:1–4 refers to powerful kings. Prior to then, no evidence affirmed this view.¹⁴⁴² During Jude’s lifetime, people believed that “the sons of God” consisted of angels who engaged in sexual activity with human women. The interpretations of earlier Jewish authors reached their culmination in *1 Enoch*.¹⁴⁴³

Notably, John Calvin omitted any reference to Gen 6:1–4 or the “sons of God” in his commentary on Jude 6–7.¹⁴⁴⁴ However, in Calvin’s commentary on Genesis, he wrote, “That ancient figment, concerning the intercourse of angels with women, is abundantly refuted by its own absurdity; and it is surprising that learned men should formerly have been fascinated by ravings so gross and prodigious.”¹⁴⁴⁵

Jude began v. 6 by comparing false teachers to “angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their own dwelling places.” In their rebellion against the Lord, they left their positions in the heavenly spheres which God entrusted to them.¹⁴⁴⁶ As a result, those angels crossed proper boundaries.¹⁴⁴⁷

Jude appears to have based this teaching upon 1 Enoch 15:2–3, where the Lord commanded Enoch to confront the Watchers of heaven. He asked, “Wherefore have ye left the high, holy, and eternal heaven, and lain with women, and defiled yourselves with the daughters of men and taken to yourselves wives, and done like the children of earth, and begotten giants (as your) sons?”¹⁴⁴⁸

As a result, 1 Enoch provides the basis for the New Testament concept that evil spirits consist of angels who have fallen away from serving the Lord.¹⁴⁴⁹ However, Jude emphasized the guilt of the false teachers in the church for a similar dereliction of duty.¹⁴⁵⁰

Regarding fallen angels, Jude wrote, “for judgment of the great day, he has kept them in chains, eternally under darkness.” The term “the great day” refers to what others called “The day of the Lord.” God shall intervene at the end of human history to complete the salvation of his people and deliver retribution to those who rebelled against him (Isa 13:6–9; Zeph 1:14–18).

Nevertheless, their punishment has already begun. Rather than literal shackles, Jude

¹⁴⁴⁰Webb, “Jude,” *DLNT*, 614.

¹⁴⁴¹Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* (Michael Graves; Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 28:10–1, 173.

¹⁴⁴²Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate*, 205.

¹⁴⁴³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241.

¹⁴⁴⁴John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles* (trans. John Owen; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software), 435–6, <https://archive.org/stream/JohnCalvinInstitutesOfTheChristianReligion/John%20Calvin%20-%20Peter%2C%20John%2C%20James%2C%20Jude#page/n281/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁴⁵John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (trans. John King; Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 238.

<https://archive.org/stream/JohnCalvinInstitutesOfTheChristianReligion/John%20Calvin%20-%20Genesis%20Volume%201#page/n131/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁴⁶Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241.

¹⁴⁴⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 448.

¹⁴⁴⁸Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” 15:2–3, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe018.htm>. Note that the Aramaic term “watcher” appears in Dan 4:23.

¹⁴⁴⁹George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament, Rev. Ed.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 653.

¹⁴⁵⁰Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 52.

depicted the misery and impotence of those who once exulted in God’s marvelous light but have been plunged into profound darkness (Jude 12–13).¹⁴⁵¹ Although the Lord has cast them into a state of torment, they remain free to carry out their evil deeds.¹⁴⁵²

In Greek thought, this “darkness” (*zophos*) referred to the underworld of Hades, where the spirits of the dead reside.¹⁴⁵³ The great playwright Aeschylus (ca. 525–456 BC), wrote these lines for the ghost of the Persian king Darius, “As for me, I depart to the darkness (*zophos*) beneath the earth. Farewell, Elders, and despite your troubles, rejoice while each day is yours; for wealth does not profit the dead at all.”¹⁴⁵⁴

Once again, the concept found in Jude occurs in 1 Enoch: “And again the Lord said to [the angel] Raphael, “Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert...and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire.”¹⁴⁵⁵

Although false teachers already suffer affliction by God, doom awaits them (Rev 20:10–15).¹⁴⁵⁶ Note Jude’s grim play on words: those who did not keep (*tēreō*) their proper place are now kept (*tēreō*) in chains. The punishment fits the crime (Cf. 1 Cor 3:17; Rev 16:4–7).¹⁴⁵⁷ No one can sin with impunity, so we must resist false teaching (Jude 19–21).¹⁴⁵⁸

Jude then compared the judgment awaiting the infiltrators of the church to that of infamous sinners. He wrote, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and also the cities around them, these in the same way indulged in illicit sexual relations and went after other flesh. They are exhibited as an example, undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

People in Israel regarded Sodom and Gomorrah as the paradigm of those who incur divine judgment (Gen 19:23–25; Deut 29:22–25; Lam 4:6; Luke 17:28–30).¹⁴⁵⁹ Of the surrounding cities, God spared only Zoar (Gen 19:15–22).¹⁴⁶⁰ The men of Sodom sought to rape Lot’s visitors (Gen 19:4–9). Similarly, Jude charged the false teachers with sexual immorality.¹⁴⁶¹

How to interpret “other flesh” (*sarx heteros*) has generated some controversy. Some scholars see the issue as men desiring sex with angels.¹⁴⁶² However, most commentators view it as lusting for flesh other than that of women (Rom 1:27).¹⁴⁶³ After all, the men of Sodom had no idea that Lot’s guests were angels (Gen 19:1–5).¹⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, angels do not have flesh,¹⁴⁶⁵ and it is unlikely that the false teachers of Jude’s era desired sex with angels.¹⁴⁶⁶

Jude’s contemporaries regarded the continued desolation of the area where Sodom had

¹⁴⁵¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 448–9.

¹⁴⁵²Erickson, *Christian Theology, 3rd Ed.*, 416.

¹⁴⁵³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 241.

¹⁴⁵⁴Aeschylus, *Persians* (vol. 1 of *Aeschylus, with an English Translation, in Two Volumes*; trans. Herbert Weir Smyth; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), lines 839–40,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0012%3Acard%3D800>.

¹⁴⁵⁵R. H. Charles, trans., “Book of Enoch,” in *The Apochrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 10:1–6, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/boe/boe013.htm>.

¹⁴⁵⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 51.

¹⁴⁵⁷Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 53.

¹⁴⁵⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 449.

¹⁴⁵⁹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 53.

¹⁴⁶⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 451.

¹⁴⁶¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

¹⁴⁶²Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 54.

¹⁴⁶³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

¹⁴⁶⁴Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 453.

¹⁴⁶⁵Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 60.

¹⁴⁶⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 54.

been as evidence of God’s sentiment concerning sexual sin.¹⁴⁶⁷ This zone south of the Dead Sea remained a place of sulfurous devastation.¹⁴⁶⁸ According to Philo (20 BC–40 AD), “Even to this day there are seen in Syria monuments of the unprecedented destruction that fell upon them, in the ruins, and ashes, and sulphur, and smoke, and dusky flame which still is sent up from the ground as of a fire smoldering beneath.”¹⁴⁶⁹

Josephus (37–100 AD) described Lake Asphaltites (the Dead Sea), which yielded much bitumen. Then he wrote, “The country of Sodom borders upon it. It was of old a most happy land, both for the fruits it bore and the riches of its cities, although it be now all burnt up. It is related how, for the impiety of its inhabitants, it was burnt by lightning; in consequence of which there are still the remainders of that Divine fire, and the traces [or shadows] of the five cities are still to be seen.”¹⁴⁷⁰

Although we cannot ascertain that the false teachers of Jude’s era committed the same kinds of sin perpetrated by the men of Sodom, these sites constantly reminded people in Israel of the reality of the judgment which awaits those who rebel against God.¹⁴⁷¹

a) Read Jude 6–7. Why would a New Testament author allude to sources which were not regarded as part of the Bible? What did people in the time of Jude believe about “the sons of God” (pp. 113–114)? Why did later theologians disagree (pp. 115–116)? How were the false teachers like the men of Sodom? What would happen to them?

Guilty of Misconduct

b) Jude 8: In this verse, Jude applied the examples from Jude 6–7 to the church’s situation.¹⁴⁷² He wrote, “But in the same way, these [people] also by dreaming defile flesh, and reject authority, and speak irreverently of glories.” Jude named the sins of the false teachers. By their sexual misconduct, mistreatment of angels, and defiance of God’s authority, they committed the same sins as some men in Sodom (Gen 19:1–9).¹⁴⁷³

It appears that the false teachers cited prophetic revelations to justify their behavior. Although the Lord can use dreams as a means of authentic disclosure (Gen 40:5–8, 20–22; Dan 2:27–29), more often the Old Testament (OT) denounces those who appealed to their dreams as false prophets (Deut 13:1–5; Jer 23:25–32; Zech 10:1–2).¹⁴⁷⁴ Claiming to have experienced a dream from the Lord cannot validate what someone teaches,¹⁴⁷⁵ particularly when that revelation contradicts Scripture (Col 2:18–19; 1 Thess 5:19–21).¹⁴⁷⁶

¹⁴⁶⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243.

¹⁴⁶⁸Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 54–5.

¹⁴⁶⁹Philo, “On the Life of Moses, II,” in *The Works of Philo Judaeus* (trans. Charles Duke Yonge; London: H. G. Bohn, 1854), 85, <https://archive.org/stream/workspphilouft#page/84/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁷⁰Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 4.8.4,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D4%3Awhiston%20chapter%3D8%3Awhiston%20section%3D4>.

¹⁴⁷¹Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 453–4.

¹⁴⁷²Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 243.

¹⁴⁷³Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 454–5.

¹⁴⁷⁴Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 55.

¹⁴⁷⁵Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 455–6.

¹⁴⁷⁶Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 56.

Evidently, these teachers appealed to their dreams for permission to indulge in sexual immorality. They asserted that God himself granted them sexual freedom, rather than recognizing that their behavior defiled them. This viewpoint enabled them to transcend the morality which applied to others.¹⁴⁷⁷ Even today, we see this on occasion: “God told me to divorce my wife and marry my girlfriend.”

In keeping with that attitude, the false teachers rejected authority. Jude did not employ the typical word for “authority” (*exousia*) here, which can refer to human governance, such as that of church officials.¹⁴⁷⁸ Instead, he used the term *kyriotēs*, which derives from the same root as “Lord” (*kyrios*). Hence it signifies that these debauched people despised the majestic authority of God.¹⁴⁷⁹ They denied the lordship of Christ by the way they lived (Jude 4).¹⁴⁸⁰

By writing that the false teachers “speak irreverently of glories,” Jude employed jargon familiar to his readers. Since they participate in the majesty of God, “glories” serves as a euphemism for angels (Heb 9:5).¹⁴⁸¹ Indeed, the Greek word *doxa* means both “glory” and “a transcendent being deserving of honor.”¹⁴⁸² The apocryphal Testament of Judah states, “For he saw in a vision concerning me that an angel (*doxa*) of might followed me everywhere, that I should not be overcome.”¹⁴⁸³

Jude did not mince words: these people blasphemed (*blasphēmō*) angels. “Blasphemy” carries the nuance of “slander, revile, defame, speak irreverently/impiously/disrespectfully of or about.”¹⁴⁸⁴ A person can blaspheme the Spirit by attributing the work of God to the devil (Matt 12:22–32) and the Bible by acting as if it endorses sin (Tit 2:3–5).¹⁴⁸⁵ Only here and in 2 Pet 2:10 did New Testament (NT) authors apply this concept to angels instead of to the Lord or the Word of God (Rev 13:3–6).¹⁴⁸⁶ These false teachers failed to give angels the honor due to them.¹⁴⁸⁷

Due to the context of Jude 9, the author was referring specifically to demons.¹⁴⁸⁸ Thus, their sin consisted of belittling the supernatural forces of evil.¹⁴⁸⁹ Even though participation in evil deforms the majesty of demonic forces, some of that glory remains.¹⁴⁹⁰ One can indeed slander Satan (2 Pet 2:9–11).¹⁴⁹¹

Notably, throughout Jude 6–8, the author never claimed that angels engaged in sexual activity with human women.¹⁴⁹² Consequently, even with this passage, most NT scholars reject that “the sons of God/the gods” in Gen 6:1–4 consist of fallen angels. They conclude that Jude did not endorse 1 Enoch as truth but cited popular tradition to make his point about the false teachers.¹⁴⁹³ As a result, the NT does not contradict the predominant view of OT scholars that “the sons of the gods” were human rulers.¹⁴⁹⁴

¹⁴⁷⁷Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 456.

¹⁴⁷⁸Werner Foerster, “ἐξουσία” (*exousia*), *TDNT* 2:560–75, 566.

¹⁴⁷⁹Werner Foerster, “κυριότης” (*kyriotēs*), *TDNT* 3:1096–7.

¹⁴⁸⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 456.

¹⁴⁸¹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 57.

¹⁴⁸²Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “δόξα” (*doxa*), *BDAG*, 256–8, 258.

¹⁴⁸³Rutherford H. Platt Jr., trans., “The Testament of Judah,” in *The Forgotten Books of Eden* (New York: Alpha House, 1926), 1:25. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe277.htm>.

¹⁴⁸⁴Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “βλασφημέω” (*blasphēmō*), *BDAG*, 178.

¹⁴⁸⁵Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 244.

¹⁴⁸⁶Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, “βλασφημέω” (*blasphēmō*), *TDNT* 1:621–5, 621–2.

¹⁴⁸⁷Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 244.

¹⁴⁸⁸Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 457.

¹⁴⁸⁹Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 57–8.

¹⁴⁹⁰Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 458.

¹⁴⁹¹Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 245.

¹⁴⁹²Walton, *Genesis*, 297.

¹⁴⁹³Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 249.

¹⁴⁹⁴Walton, *Genesis*, 297.

Read Jude 8. How were the false teachers like the men of Sodom? What would happen to those leaders? When is it dangerous to accept a person’s claims of inspired revelation as true? Why do most current NT scholars reject the idea that “the sons of God” were angels?

God Grieves

Please note that this post carries a trigger warning.

5) Gen 6:5–6: This passage asserts that the flood resulted from the wickedness perpetrated by the people living at that time,¹⁴⁹⁵ specifically sexual assault and further violence (Gen 6:1–4). Even during the Old Testament (OT) era, the Lord never acted arbitrarily. Divine judgment came in response to great evil (Gen 15:13–16; Deut 9:4–5).¹⁴⁹⁶

The contrast with Gen 1:31—where all was the very best it could be—could not be starker.¹⁴⁹⁷ Moses wrote, “And the Lord saw that great was the evil of humanity on the earth, and all of the purpose of the thoughts of their hearts was every day only evil.”¹⁴⁹⁸ Humanity reeked of corruption. Fully aware of the situation upon the earth,¹⁴⁹⁹ God detected the extent and the depth of human sin (Gen 19:13; Ps 53:2–3).¹⁵⁰⁰ Where the phrase “the Lord saw” occurs elsewhere, the author conveys the idea that God knew of the problem for some time and had at last determined to take decisive action (Cf. Gen 29:31; Exod 3:7–9).¹⁵⁰¹

Not only did people act wickedly, vile images consumed their attention (Matt 15:18–19).¹⁵⁰² The biblical concept of the heart (*lev*) included all of an inner person: mind, will, and emotion.¹⁵⁰³ By repeating “all/every” (*kol*) and “evil” (*raah*) Moses emphasized that these people were entirely wicked all of the time.¹⁵⁰⁴ This provides an excellent description of total depravity (Gen 8:21; Ps 14:1–4; Jer 17:9–10).¹⁵⁰⁵ What the text does not say is also important. Moses mentioned neither idolatry, nor a false conception of God, nor a human/spirit hybrid form of life.¹⁵⁰⁶ The Lord’s motivation stemmed from humanity’s lack of morality.¹⁵⁰⁷

Other Ancient Near Eastern flood texts lack this moral focus.¹⁵⁰⁸ In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the survivor of the flood tells the protagonist, “their heart led the great gods to produce the flood.”¹⁵⁰⁹ Later in that tablet, the god Ea decreed, “Let not [the god] Enlil come

¹⁴⁹⁵Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 2nd Ed., 133.

¹⁴⁹⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁴⁹⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁴⁹⁸“Their hearts” is singular (“its heart”) in the Hebrew text since it views humanity as a collective entity. I have substituted plurals for easier reading.

¹⁴⁹⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵⁰⁰Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁵⁰¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143–4.

¹⁵⁰²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁵⁰³Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “לֵב” (*lev*), *BDB*, 524,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/524/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁰⁴Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 395,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/394/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁰⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵⁰⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵⁰⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 273.

¹⁵⁰⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵⁰⁹Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, tablet xi, lines 11, 93,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n117/mode/2up.

to the offering, for he, unreasoning, brought on the deluge and my people consigned to destruction.”¹⁵¹⁰

The version of the flood story in the Atrahasis Epic says:

“Twelve hundred years had not yet passed [after the gods created humanity] when the land extended and the peoples multiplied. The land was bellowing like a bull, the god got disturbed with their uproar. Enlil heard their noise and addressed the great gods, ‘The noise of humankind has become too intense for me, with their uproar, I am deprived of sleep.’”¹⁵¹¹

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, the gods acted arbitrarily. The Atrahasis Epic noted that a human population boom disturbed the sleep of the gods.¹⁵¹² According to those sagas, sin did not bring about the flood.

Yet, the biblical text does not portray the Lord acting on impulse in a fit of anger.¹⁵¹³ Instead, “The Lord was sorry that he had made humanity on the earth. He was vexed to his heart.” The verb for “was sorry” (*naham*) derives from the same word as Lamech’s desire for Noah to bring relief (*naham*) from his painful toil (*itsabon*) (Gen 5:29). This is related to the term used to describe the Lord’s vexation (*itsab*). Thus, Lamech’s hope corresponds to the creator’s anguish.¹⁵¹⁴

This brings us to another quandary. How can our unchanging God regret what he has done (Heb 13:8)? In the OT, there are nine occasions when the form of the verb *naham* which appears here refers to the Lord being sorry for what he has done or choosing to alter his earlier decision (e.g. 1 Sam 15:10–11, 29; Ps 106:40–45; Exod 32:7–14; Jon 3:4–10).¹⁵¹⁵

Throughout the OT, this complex word carries a wide range of meaning. One popular Bible, the NIV, translates *naham* in ten different ways. In fact, some of these mean the opposite of the others.¹⁵¹⁶ The most authoritative Hebrew dictionary lists these definitions for this specific form of the verb: “become remorseful, repent of something, regret, be sorry, feel sorrow or sympathy, find comfort, be comforted.”¹⁵¹⁷

By viewing these definitions as an accountant would, John Walton finds that each of them fit together rather than oppose each other. In essence, the debits and credits of personal, national, and cosmic accounts must remain in balance. Good things resulting from the difficult situation counterbalance personal losses (Gen 24:67). When the Lord determines that judgment is due, repentance by the offenders brings the ledger back into balance, leading God to extend grace by revoking the intended punishment (Jer 26:12–13; Joel 2:11–19). However, those who fail to repent suffer the consequences (Jer 18:7–11).¹⁵¹⁸

The unchanging God invariably feels the pain of human sin. For those who refuse to repent, he will always alter his plans to deliver good things to them.¹⁵¹⁹ In the same way, he will choose not bring harm to evil people who have a change of heart. When the Lord repents, he begins to act differently (Ezek 33:11–20).¹⁵²⁰ A paradox exists: the unchangeable God is quite willing to change his mind.¹⁵²¹ Nevertheless, the Lord is never impulsive or

¹⁵¹⁰Speiser, trans., “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” in *ANET*, tablet xi, lines 166–9, 95,

https://archive.org/stream/Pritchard1950ANET_20160815/Pritchard_1950_ANET#page/n119/mode/2up.

¹⁵¹¹W.G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, trans., “Epic of Atra-Khasis,” in *Readings of the Ancient Near East (RANE)* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 26.

¹⁵¹²Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵¹³Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵¹⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁵¹⁵H Simian-Yofre and H. J. Fabry, “נָחַם” (*naham*), *TDOT* 9:340–55, 343.

¹⁵¹⁶Walton, *Genesis*, 309.

¹⁵¹⁷Simian-Yofre and Fabry, “נָחַם” (*naham*), *TDOT* 9:342.

¹⁵¹⁸Walton, *Genesis*, 309–10.

¹⁵¹⁹Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵²⁰Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁵²¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 275.

fickle (Num 23:19). It appears that 100 years passed between when he resolved to destroy humanity and when the flood came (Gen 5:32; Gen 7:11–12). This gave people time to repent. Divine repentance follows a human change of heart, for better or for worse.¹⁵²²

Due to the evil perpetrated by the sons of the gods, the Lord “was vexed to his heart.” This verb is related to the noun which means “pain.” Therefore, *atsab* indicates severe emotional or mental distress (Gen 45:5; 1 Sam 20:3).¹⁵²³ Just as Adam and Eve felt pain due to their sin (Gen 3:16–17), so does the Lord over the sin of humanity. God is neither aloof nor beyond the ability to grieve.¹⁵²⁴

In Hebrew thought, the heart was the center of a person’s thoughts, feelings, morals, and will.¹⁵²⁵ God grieved over the brutality which he witnessed until he felt bitterly indignant, reacting with a combination of anguish and rage. This same word describes God’s emotions in Ps 78:40–41 and Isa 63:10. Dinah’s brothers felt this way after Shechem raped her (Gen 34:1–7).¹⁵²⁶

Due to sexual assaults and the resulting violence, human sin reached the point where God would inevitably intervene.¹⁵²⁷ The deep love of the Lord spurred him to take drastic action.¹⁵²⁸ It was time for the accounts to be put back into balance (Dan 5:27). Justice would be served.¹⁵²⁹

a) Read Gen 6:5–6. What characterized the people during this time? How did the Lord feel about their thoughts and actions? What comfort does this give to those who have experienced violence? How can God be unchanging and yet change his mind?

Wiping Out Everyone

b) Gen 6:7: Due to the brutal oppression of women by mighty men (Gen 6:1–4), God determined that humanity’s idolatry of power and violence could not continue (Gen 6:5–6).¹⁵³⁰ Moses wrote, “The Lord said, ‘I shall wipe away (*makhah*) humanity, which I have created, from all of the face of the earth.’” The verb *makhah* connotes washing away a spot or stain.¹⁵³¹

Since Moses’s original readers had lived in Egypt, they likely recognized this concept. When a scribe made an error on a sheet of papyrus, he took a wet rag tied to his waist and removed the wet ink.¹⁵³² People employed the word to describe erasing people’s names from official records and even to depict cleaning dishes (Exod 17:14; Exod 32:30–36; 2 Ki 21:10–

¹⁵²²Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144.

¹⁵²³C. L. Meyers, “אָטָב” (*atsab*), *TDOT* 11:278–80, 279.

¹⁵²⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 274.

¹⁵²⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 118.

¹⁵²⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 144–5.

¹⁵²⁷Walton, *Genesis*, 308.

¹⁵²⁸Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 147.

¹⁵²⁹Walton, *Genesis*, 310–1.

¹⁵³⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 189.

¹⁵³¹L. Alonso-Schökel, “מָחָה” (*makhah*), *TDOT* 8:229–31, 229.

¹⁵³²E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition, and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 53–4.

13).¹⁵³³ God can wipe away a person’s sins (Ps 51:1–2, 9; Isa 43:25). However, in this case, the Lord intended to blot out sinners.¹⁵³⁴ The term which God used foreshadowed how he would wipe them away. He intended to annihilate humanity with water (Gen 7:4, 23).¹⁵³⁵

The Lord foretold a wide scope of destruction: “from humanity to animals to creeping things, and to flying creatures of the sky, because I am sorry that I have made them.” Virtually all humans and animals would cease to exist.¹⁵³⁶ God would reverse his creative activity (Gen 1:20, 24–30).¹⁵³⁷ Just as the ground suffered the consequences of human sin (Gen 3:17–18; Gen 5:29), so would the creatures which the Lord had made.¹⁵³⁸ It remains unclear whether the animals contributed to the depravity of the world or were innocent victims.¹⁵³⁹

Read Gen 6:7. What made God’s proclamation that he would wipe out humanity an apt metaphor? Who would he include in that judgment?

Noah Found Favor

c) Gen 6:8: By Noah’s era, a great number of Seth’s descendants had deserted his godly way of living, until the people of God neared extinction (Gen 5; Gen 6:1–7).¹⁵⁴⁰ However, at the end of God’s catastrophic announcement came a glimmer of hope:¹⁵⁴¹ “But Noah had found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” The Hebrew construction of this verse indicates that Noah received grace from God long before Moses mentioned it at this point of the narrative.¹⁵⁴² As Lamech hoped, his son Noah provided relief for the plight of humanity (Gen 5:28–29).¹⁵⁴³

The phrase “to find favor in someone’s eyes” occurs forty-three times in the Old Testament (OT).¹⁵⁴⁴ This formal expression refers either to a person making a request of a superior or to an authority assisting someone of lower status (Gen 33:8–10; Gen 39:2–4).¹⁵⁴⁵ In either case, the relationship occurs between two parties of unequal rank.¹⁵⁴⁶ Note the significant difference between Noah “finding” (*matsa*) favor with God and “winning” it.¹⁵⁴⁷

An alternate translation for “favor” is “grace” (*khen*),¹⁵⁴⁸ an undeserved gift which someone gives freely and unilaterally (Exod 33:12–19; Num 11:10–15; Judg 6:11–18).¹⁵⁴⁹ Noah received God’s grace; he did not strive to attain it.¹⁵⁵⁰ Despite his righteousness, his

¹⁵³³Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵³⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 275.

¹⁵³⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵³⁶Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵³⁷Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵³⁸Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

¹⁵³⁹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁴⁰Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*, 210.

¹⁵⁴¹Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵⁴²Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, 455,

<https://archive.org/stream/geseniushebrewgr00geseuoft#page/454/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁴³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

¹⁵⁴⁴S. Wagner, “מַצָּא” (*matsa*) *TDOT* 8:465–83, 469.

¹⁵⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145.

¹⁵⁴⁶Wagner, “מַצָּא” (*matsa*) *TDOT* 8: 469.

¹⁵⁴⁷Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁴⁸Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “כֶּן” (*khen*), *BDB*, 336,

<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewenglishlex00browuoft#page/336/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁴⁹John S. Kselman, “Grace: Old Testament,” *ABD* 2:1084–6, 1085.

¹⁵⁵⁰Wagner, “מַצָּא” (*matsa*), *TDOT*, 470.

character did not tip the scales in his favor (Gen 6:9).¹⁵⁵¹ If Moses wrote Gen 6:8 and Gen 6:9 in reverse order, the text would say that Noah’s righteousness earned the Lord’s favor.¹⁵⁵² However, even Noah’s uprightness was a gift from God (Ps 80:14–19; Phil 2:12–13; 1 Cor 15:10; Heb 13:20–21).¹⁵⁵³

Moses is one of the very few people whom the OT asserts found favor in God’s eyes (Exod 33:12–17). Therefore, this statement puts Noah on the same level as Moses. In the context of Gen 6, it also suggests that Noah would survive the great deluge, enabling him to begin a new era in human history.¹⁵⁵⁴ In a world terrorized by evil people, Noah stands as a model of righteousness. Although he could not stop the progression of human depravity, he stood firm.¹⁵⁵⁵ We too must walk in the power of the Holy Spirit within our culture, whatever the cost (Gal 5:16–26).¹⁵⁵⁶

Read Gen 6:8. How did Noah offer a glimmer of hope in his generation? On what basis did he find God’s grace? How does this passage encourage and challenge you today?

Difficult Times in the Last Days

6) 2 Tim 3:1–4: Recognizing that his life would soon end in martyrdom, Paul wrote 2 Timothy with a sense of urgency (2 Tim 4:6–9).¹⁵⁵⁷ This letter represents the apostle’s last will and testament, as he passed the responsibility for standing firm for the gospel to his spiritual heir (2 Tim 3:10–17).¹⁵⁵⁸ As Paul’s top lieutenant, Timothy worked in Ephesus to counteract the effects of false teachers who had infiltrated the church since Paul’s visit with the elders of that church (Acts 20:17, 28–30; 2 Tim 2:14–26).¹⁵⁵⁹

The apostle began by identifying them,¹⁵⁶⁰ then he created a vice list. Greco-Roman authors commonly applied this literary technique.¹⁵⁶¹ Although it may resemble a standard catalog of offenses, Paul tailored it to fit the situation in Ephesus (2 Tim 3:6–9).¹⁵⁶² A vice list consisted of a string of numerous evils to avoid. Since authors crafted them for an oral culture, they employed repetition of sounds and other rhythmic literary devices to produce a memorable impact.¹⁵⁶³ Eleven of the evils begin with the Greek letter “a,” which like the English prefix “un,” negates the quality associated with it.¹⁵⁶⁴ The inventory concludes with a stern warning: “these people avoid.”

People in the early church believed that wickedness would intensify in the last days. In addition, many individuals within their congregations would fall away (Matt 24:9–14; 2 Thess 2:3–4; Jude 17–19).¹⁵⁶⁵ Due to sin within the church, Paul believed that he and

¹⁵⁵¹Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁵²Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, 276.

¹⁵⁵³Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 119.

¹⁵⁵⁴Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 145, 147.

¹⁵⁵⁵Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* 120.

¹⁵⁵⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 147.

¹⁵⁵⁷Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 2 Tim.

¹⁵⁵⁸Jerome D. Quinn, “Timothy and Titus, Epistles to,” *ABD* 6:560–71, 562.

¹⁵⁵⁹Keener, *IVPBBCNT*, 2 Tim.

¹⁵⁶⁰Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 552.

¹⁵⁶¹Walter L. Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 269.

¹⁵⁶²William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 2000), 542.

¹⁵⁶³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 552–3.

¹⁵⁶⁴Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543.

¹⁵⁶⁵Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 554.

Timothy lived in the last days.¹⁵⁶⁶ Consequently, the apostle began this section of his letter by writing, “But know this: that in the last days, difficult times shall come.” Due to the conflict and moral decay which Timothy encountered in Ephesus,¹⁵⁶⁷ Paul asserted, “the future is now” (1 Tim 4:1–6).¹⁵⁶⁸ Old Testament writers identified the final period of the world as the “last days.”¹⁵⁶⁹ At that time, the messiah would come to set all things right, restoring the godly and judging sinners (Mic 4:1–5; Zeph 1:14–18).¹⁵⁷⁰

New Testament (NT) authors described the last days in various ways. Peter pinpointed their onset with the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (1 Pet 1:20–21; Acts 2:16–21). The author of Hebrews cited the ministry of Jesus as beginning this era (Heb 1:1–2). John specified that the last days had arrived because antichrists had appeared (1 John 2:18–22). Paul simply noted that the last days are here (1 Cor 10:11).¹⁵⁷¹ Thus, the last days consist of the time between Christ’s birth and his return to earth.¹⁵⁷²

When he comes, Jesus shall execute judgment while fully completing the salvation of believers (Matt 25:31–46; Rom 2:5–10; 1 Cor 4:5).¹⁵⁷³ Therefore, in this present age, God calls us to use every available opportunity to share Christ with those who do not belong to him (Gal 1:3–5; Eph 5:6–16).¹⁵⁷⁴

By stating, “In the last days, difficult times shall come,” Paul reminded Timothy that this period of distress would remain for a long duration.¹⁵⁷⁵ The word translated as “difficult” (*kalepos*) appears elsewhere in the NT only in Matt 8:28. It connotes being “hard to bear,” “cruel,” or “dangerous.”¹⁵⁷⁶

Although strong commonalities exist with the list of vices in Rom 1:28–32, note that Paul attributed the evils mentioned in these verses to those who claimed to follow Christ.¹⁵⁷⁷ As a result, this passage provides a convenient catalog of sins which believers must avoid today.¹⁵⁷⁸ A word study of each character trait included in this list reveals that authors during or close to Paul’s era charged their contemporaries with committing every sin on this list.¹⁵⁷⁹

Two types of misguided love—for self and for pleasure—appropriately bookend the series of vices,¹⁵⁸⁰ for a self-centered lack of morality emerges as a prominent theme. When a person places love for self and greed at the forefront of life, all the other vices follow.¹⁵⁸¹ Paul ended his catalog of sins with this powerful conclusion: “loving pleasure rather than loving God.”¹⁵⁸² This brings us full circle back to self-love, the first vice in the list.¹⁵⁸³

Although the word “loving pleasure” (*philēdonos*) occurs only here in the NT,¹⁵⁸⁴ Scripture condemns the concept (Luke 8:14; Tit 3:3; Jas 4:1–3).¹⁵⁸⁵ People in the Greco-

¹⁵⁶⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 552.

¹⁵⁶⁷Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543.

¹⁵⁶⁸Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 268.

¹⁵⁶⁹Walter Elwell et al. (eds.), *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible (BEB)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1310.

¹⁵⁷⁰Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 269.

¹⁵⁷¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 553.

¹⁵⁷²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 544.

¹⁵⁷³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 553.

¹⁵⁷⁴Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 269.

¹⁵⁷⁵Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 554.

¹⁵⁷⁶Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “χαλεπός” (*kalepos*), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology: Abridged (NIDNTA)* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 600.

¹⁵⁷⁷Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 555.

¹⁵⁷⁸Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 276.

¹⁵⁷⁹I originally examined each character trait listed but the result is too long and boring to publish.

¹⁵⁸⁰Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 554.

¹⁵⁸¹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 543–5.

¹⁵⁸²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 546.

¹⁵⁸³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559.

¹⁵⁸⁴Result of Logos 7 word study of φιλήδονος (*philēdonos*).

¹⁵⁸⁵Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559.

Roman milieu also criticized those intent upon the pursuit of pleasure.¹⁵⁸⁶ In fact, they often charged their philosophical opponents with valuing self-gratification above virtue or wisdom.¹⁵⁸⁷

Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40–112 AD) sarcastically wrote of the type of behavior a king should avoid at all costs:

“Let his steps also be guided by Delusion, a very beautiful and enticing maid, decked out in harlot’s finery, smiling and promising a wealth of good things and making him believe that she is leading him to the very embrace of happiness, till unexpectedly she drops him into the pit, into a morass of foul mud, and then leaves him to flounder about in his garlands and saffron robe. In servitude to such a tyrant and suffering such tribulation those souls wander through life... enslaved to pleasure, pleasure-loving (*philēdonos*), and carnally-minded, go on living a disgraceful and reprehensible life, not from choice, but because they have drifted into it.”¹⁵⁸⁸

“Lovers of God” (*philotheos*) alludes to Deut 6:4–9. Jesus denoted loving God as the most important commandment (Mark 12:28–34). Indeed, when people replace love for the Lord with the love of self, money, and pleasure, the other vices naturally follow.¹⁵⁸⁹

Read 2 Tim 3:1–4. How would you briefly characterize the type of people Paul described in these verses? What warning does this passage give to you? How do we know that Paul believed that he lived in the last days? In what ways are our last days like the time before the flood?

Having a Form of Godliness

b) 2 Tim 3:5: Paul concluded his vice list in 2 Tim 3:1–5 by describing the false teachers as “having a form of godliness but its power having denied.” These leaders maintained a mask as a protective shell.¹⁵⁹⁰ This gave them an external appearance of piety without the inner renewal of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹¹

In Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, “godliness” (*eusebeia*) refers to a specific way of living which derives from belief in the gospel (Cf. 1 Tim 3:16). Reverent conduct results from that confession.¹⁵⁹² Thus, Paul utilized “godliness” as a technical term for true faith (1 Tim 2:1–6; Tit 1:1).¹⁵⁹³

Amazingly—despite their vices—these people exhibited a pretense of piety.¹⁵⁹⁴ They likely enjoyed religious discussions and practices, assuming their righteousness because they engaged in asceticism and sacred rituals (1 Tim 4:1–7).¹⁵⁹⁵ However, on close inspection,

¹⁵⁸⁶Gustav Stählin, “φιλήδονος” (*philēdonos*), *TDNT* 2:918.

¹⁵⁸⁷Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559.

¹⁵⁸⁸Dio Chrysostom, “The Fourth Discourse on Kingship,” in *Orations*, 5 vols. (LCL; trans. H. Lamar Crosby; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 1:221–3, <https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.57799/2015.57799.Dio-Chrysostom-Vol-1#page/n225/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁸⁹Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹¹J. Behm, “μόρφωσις” (*morphōsis*), *TDNT* 4:754–5.

¹⁵⁹²Werner Foerster, “εὐσέβεια” (*eusebeia*), *TDNT* 7:175–85, 182–3.

¹⁵⁹³Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁵⁹⁴Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 271.

¹⁵⁹⁵Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

their behavior unmasked them (Tit 1:16; 2 Pet 2:1–3, 18–19).¹⁵⁹⁶ To achieve their evil ends, such people tend to make their vices appear as virtues (2 Cor 11:3–4, 13–15).¹⁵⁹⁷

The Jewish philosopher Philo (20 BC–40 AD) described certain people who claimed to believe the entire universe belongs to God. He wrote, “These are the doctrines, not of men who are halting between two opinions, but of those who are occupied in a firm and sure faith; since, even now, there are some persons among those who make a show and pretense of piety.”¹⁵⁹⁸

As a result of our personal union with Christ, we receive the power of God (2 Tim 1:7–8).¹⁵⁹⁹ Our proclamation of the gospel and lives transformed by the Holy Spirit to conduct ourselves in obedience to God’s commands mark true believers. A close connection exists between right thinking and right living.¹⁶⁰⁰ When people’s behavior fails to match their words, how they act reveals what they truly believe.

By rejecting the power of godliness in the past, the false teachers remained estranged from the Lord (2 Tim 2:12).¹⁶⁰¹ Their sinful behavior revealed the truth concerning the nature of their faith (Matt 7:15–23).¹⁶⁰² Lacking the presence of the Holy Spirit, they possessed counterfeit spirituality (1 Cor 4:20).¹⁶⁰³ After detailing the attitudes and behaviors of false teachers in his vice list, Paul affirmed that he and Timothy lived in the end times.¹⁶⁰⁴

Then he wrote, “Such [people] as these avoid (*apotrepō*).”¹⁶⁰⁵ Once again, Paul used a term which appears only here in the New Testament.¹⁶⁰⁶ Fortunately, Greco-Roman sources shed light on its meaning. When describing the destruction of a city, Josephus (37–100 AD) wrote, “In hopes of Titus’ giving them his right hand for their security, and out of a consciousness that they had not given any consent to the war, they avoided (*apotrepō*) fighting.”¹⁶⁰⁷ An apocryphal book captures another nuance of the term, asking, “How is it that when we are attracted by foods that we aren’t allowed to eat, we can walk away from (*apotrepō*) the pleasure that we would get from them?” (4 Macc 1:33, CEB).

Consequently, in this passage Paul repeated his commands to Timothy to deliberately turn away from associating with false teachers (1 Tim 6:20–21; 2 Tim 2:16–18).¹⁶⁰⁸ This charge confirms that the unbelievers he described associated themselves with the church of Ephesus.¹⁶⁰⁹

Earlier in his ministry, Paul commanded that the church in Corinth hand such people into Satan’s sphere of influence (1 Cor 5:9–13). They likely accomplished this by banning them from worship and especially from participating in the Lord’s Supper.¹⁶¹⁰ As a result, the

¹⁵⁹⁶Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 559–60.

¹⁵⁹⁷Plantinga, *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 98.

¹⁵⁹⁸Philo, “On Planting,” in *The Works of Philo, Vol. 1* (LCL; trans. Charles Duke Yonge; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 430,

<https://archive.org/stream/worksofphilojuda01yonguoft#page/430/mode/2up>.

¹⁵⁹⁹Walter Grundmann, “δύναμις” (*dunamis*), *TDNT* 2:284–317, 310.

¹⁶⁰⁰Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁶⁰¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 560. In Greek grammar, the perfect tense indicates that an action has occurred in the past with effects which continue to the present time.

¹⁶⁰²Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547.

¹⁶⁰³Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 560–1.

¹⁶⁰⁴Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 548.

¹⁶⁰⁵The word “such” (*toutous*) occurs in the masculine plural form, which can apply to only men or to a group of men and women.

¹⁶⁰⁶Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, “ἀποτρέπω” (*apotrepō*), *BDAG*, 124.

¹⁶⁰⁷Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 3.10.5,

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D3%3Awhiston+chapter%3D10%3Awhiston+section%3D5>.

¹⁶⁰⁸Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 548.

¹⁶⁰⁹Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 271.

¹⁶¹⁰Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Rev. Ed.*, 229.

apostle advocated their removal from the congregation (1 Cor 5:1–6; 1 Tim 1:18–20).¹⁶¹¹

Sadly, that such imposters infiltrate our churches no longer seems surprising.¹⁶¹²

Psychopathic people often present themselves as intelligent, attractive, and trustworthy. Yet they possess no moral core. While swearing to remain forever true, they produce chaos in the lives of others with no sense of guilt.¹⁶¹³ Christians tend to be easy prey, for we often have a false sense of security that those within our congregations are honorable and reliable. Thus, we must take proper precautions to protect the vulnerable among us, remaining on guard (Matt 18:1–6).¹⁶¹⁴

Read 2 Tim 3:1–5. How would you describe the type of people Paul depicted? What makes them so dangerous? How can you protect yourself and your church from them?

¹⁶¹¹Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 561.

¹⁶¹²Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 274.

¹⁶¹³Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 97.

¹⁶¹⁴Liefeld, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 276.