

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 1: The Great Blessing**  
**Genesis – Deuteronomy**

**Message 2 – Noah: The flood and the spread of nations**  
**Genesis 6-11**

**Introduction**

Genesis 5 contains a genealogy leading us to the key character in chapter 6, Noah. Genesis 11 contains another genealogy taking us to the next key character, Abraham. Thus, Genesis 6-11 is a bridge section covering the time from Noah to Abraham. This section is designed to prepare us for the main storyline of Genesis: the origins of the Jewish nation through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12-50). It prepares us in several ways: 1) We read about the rampant spread of corruption on earth and God's judgment in the form of a massive flood. It becomes very clear that divine intervention is necessary if humanity is to have a future that even remotely resembles God's original, lofty designs. Left to ourselves, we sink quickly and deeply into wickedness. 2) We learn about the spread of nations from Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Special attention is given to explain the geographical locations of the descendants from these three lines. This was important for the Exodus generation of Israelites as they sought to find their own geographical "place in the world." 3) We read about a curse from Noah upon Canaan, the son of Ham. It was the land of Canaan that God was giving to the Exodus generation hundreds of years later. Thus, this story helps us understand, at least partially, why the land of Canaan was being given to Israel. 4) We read of mankind attempting to build a kingdom at Babel and to "make a name for themselves." God moves to scuttle this endeavor. Though humanity tries desperately to recover its true glory and climb back to heaven, only God can bring us back to the Garden. We cannot get there ourselves. As a fitting response, God begins to build His kingdom with Abraham in Genesis 12. Genesis 6-11, then, serves to prepare us for the first major stage of God's plan to bring His presence into the world through Abraham.

## The sons of God and the daughters of men: 6:1-4

*Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.*

The main message of this passage must not be lost due to the controversial part (discussed below). The Spirit of God determined not *strive with man forever* (v.3). This points to the restraining work of the Spirit against human sin in that day. The mention of 120 years here points to the remaining duration of time that the Spirit *will* strive to restrain wickedness on earth, before the divine judgment comes in the form of a flood. Thus, at Genesis 6:3 the judgment clock starts ticking: 120 years until doomsday.

This difficult passage has generated much debate and controversy. There are four different interpretations as to the identity of the "sons of God" here. 1) The "sons of God" and "daughters of men" are nothing more than normal human beings getting married and having children. 2) The "sons of God" are the godly descendants from the line of Seth, from the previous chapter, who sinned by marrying the ungodly female descendants of Cain. 3) The "sons of God" are sons of noblemen and rulers who tried to form their own kingdoms via polygamous relationships with the daughters of men. 4) The "sons of God" are fallen angels that left their proper abode and somehow comingled with women, thus producing a strange race of giants.

While all views have certain difficulties to overcome, I take view #4, that the "sons of God" were fallen angels. On this view, fallen angels left their proper place and inhabited bodies of human despots and warriors, who in turn had immoral relations with women. Their unusual offspring (the Nephilim, a race of giants) was the result (6:4). This was the view of the earliest Jewish interpreters, and it also seems to have support from the New

Testament writers (see 1Peter 3:19,20; Jude 6; 2Peter 2:4). Also, “sons of God” is a phrase used elsewhere of angelic beings.

Interpreted this way, the importance of this passage is huge. The rebellion that Satan started among humanity in Genesis 3 is being advanced here in Genesis 6. Satan was sending his demons out in the attempt spread his own “seed” among mankind. In this way, Satan hoped to avert the promised seed of the woman (the Serpent crusher – Genesis 3:15) from coming into the world. This helps to explain the extreme level of wickedness upon the earth in those days. It also makes sense of the mention of “the Nephilim” here. These were giants renowned in the O.T. for their size and strength. It also helps us understand God’s determination to eradicate the corrupted seed of humanity, and to start over with the seed of Noah.

*As you read through the Bible, keep in your mind the cosmic backdrop to the entire story: Satan has rebelled against God and is seeking to establish his own kingdom here on earth. The conflict between God and Satan will become clearly visible during the life and ministry of Jesus, the Serpent-crusher. Note how Paul strongly emphasizes the spiritual warfare we are in (Ephesians 6:10-13). The final book of the Bible, Revelation, centers around the final great battle between God and Satan; the overthrow of all Satan’s attempts to establish his dominion over humanity.*

### **God chooses to purify the earth: 6:5-22**

When a computer becomes filled with viruses that compromise the operating system, it is sometimes necessary to perform a complete erasure and reboot of the device. When a person’s limb becomes severely infected, it is sometimes necessary to amputate that limb so that the rest of the body can survive and thrive. In other words, in severe cases of corruption, severe actions are necessary to reverse conditions and recoup future potential. Such was the situation with the whole earth in Genesis 6. Notice the repeated emphasis on the extreme level of corruption upon the earth at this time. Conditions were spiraling out of control, to the detriment of humanity.

**Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only**

***evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them" (6:5-7).***

***Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth" (11-13).***

“. . . every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (6:5). God is concerned with the thoughts of our hearts, not just our outward actions. The real root of sin is the defiled human heart. This is why Jesus so emphasized the problem of our heart condition (see Matthew 15:18-20). This is why we need a spiritual rebirth (John 3:1-10) a new heart given to us by God (Ezekiel 36:26,27; Jeremiah 31:31-34). In Noah, God saw something different: “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (6:8). He embodied the same kind of faith as his great grandfather, Enoch.

Noah was chosen by God to be the lone man through whom humanity was preserved on the earth. He was the original “Doomsday Prepper.” He was chosen because of his righteousness:

***“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (6:8,9).***

One key to Noah’s righteousness might be contained in the genealogy back in chapter 5. Working with the numbers we find that Noah had 595 years of influence from his father, Lamech. He had 600 years of influence from his grandfather, Methusaleh (who died the same year the flood came upon the earth). Enoch was the father of Methusaleh, the grandfather of Lamech, and the great-grandfather of Noah. You will recall that Enoch “walked with God, and God took him” at a relatively young age (365 years). There was a heritage of godliness in Noah’s ancestors!

Noah was instructed to make an ark in which he would preserve remnants of life for the renewed earth. It took Noah and his sons

nearly 100 years to construct the massive ark according to the God-given plans. If you wonder what such a vessel looked like . . . a man in Holland decided to build a modern ark after the measurements given by God in Genesis 6. See what it looks like at: <http://www.foxnews.com/science/slideshow/2012/12/12/man-builds-life-sized-replica-noah-ark/#slide=1>

### **The flood and destruction of every living thing: 7:1-24**

***“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights” (7:11,12).***

The floodwaters came from beneath the earth and above, quickly covering the ground and remaining for 150 days. Noah and his family were in the ark for a little more than one year (compare 7:11 with 8:13,14). Jesus strongly emphasized the historical reality of the Noah story by making a direct parallel between His second coming to earth and the coming of the flood upon the earth in Noah’s day:

***“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:37-39).***

The New Testament book of Hebrews points to Noah as a prime example of living *by faith*, and thus pleasing God:

***“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7).***

“And without faith it is impossible to please God . . .” (Hebrews 11:6). Read Hebrews chapter 11, the great Faith Hall of Fame. Note how *difficult* it was for each individual to believe what God said and to do what He commanded. The exercise of our faith is never easy. “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). Faith is taking God at His word and moving forward in obedience.

## **The waters subside; Noah worships God: 8:1-22**

Recall that Moses was writing in particular to the Exodus generation to show them their roots in the plans and purposes of God. Imagine how they must have related to this account of Noah being brought safely through the waters of God's judgment. Israel had just passed through the Red Sea on dry land, by God's protective hand. Then, they had witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh's entire army as God allowed the waters of the Red Sea to encompass them. The story of God's preservation of Noah through the flood would have assured the Exodus generation that God is the protector of those who trust in Him, and the One who brings and allows consequences to those who reject Him.

Noah showed patience as he waited the final 2 months before God's timing to exit the ark. Upon exiting, Noah immediately built an altar and worshipped the Lord. His first priority was to bow before God and acknowledge 1) God's holiness in judging sin upon the earth, and 2) God's mercy in saving him and his family. Notice the Lord's response to this act of worship:

***The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (8:20-22).***

*"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart . . ."* Here we have one of the few places in the Bible where we get a peek inside of God's heart. He smelled the pleasing aroma of Noah's sacrifice and responded by determining (in His own heart) to never again destroy the earth in this same way. God's intention becomes formal in the next chapter, when He enters into a covenant with Noah and all future generations.

Don't miss the comment God makes here about human nature: *"Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood."* Passages like this led to the doctrine of "original sin" – that we are each born into this world with a sin condition inherited from Adam (see also Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3). No wonder we have to teach children "to be good." The tendency to *not* be good is hardwired into human nature.

*"The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart . . ."*  
That is God responding in His heart to the worship offered by one man. Have you ever paused to consider that God's heart responds to you, every time you engage in worship? God has emotions. He feels joy, sadness, anger, grief, delight, etc. Try to bring this idea more intentionally with you into times of private and corporate worship: *Your worship moves the heart of God . . . in some way.*

### **God's covenant with Noah and his descendants: 9:1-17**

This section reads almost like a redo of Genesis 1 and 2, where God initially commanded man to fill, rule and subdue the earth. Noah and his descendants are being re-commissioned as God's viceroys upon the earth, with a few important modifications to the original plan.

#### **- God commands Noah to repopulate the earth.**

*Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything" (9:1-3).*

Note here that a new "fear and dread" will exist between animals and man. This appears to be related to the fact that now mankind can hunt for and consume animals, fish and birds, while previously consuming only vegetation.

#### **- The dignity of human life emphasized.**

*"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it" (9:4-7).*

*“For your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting . . . from every animal . . . and from each human being, too.”* The value of human life is strongly emphasized here. It matters not whether a human life is taken by an animal or another human being – God will demand an accounting for every life taken! Why? Because mankind has been made “in the image of God” (v.6). The flood came precisely because the divine image in humanity had become so distorted. Now, after the flood, God reaffirms that mankind uniquely bears His image, and this image must be respected and protected. The careless taking of *human* life is a serious affront to the divine image within every human being.

**- God’s covenant ratified for all future generations.**

*Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you - the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you - every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth” (9:8-17).*

God here makes formal what He felt in His heart earlier: He promises to never again destroy the earth with a flood. The rainbow in the clouds is a perpetual symbol/reminder of this covenant that God has made with the earth and with all future generations. The fact that God is a covenant-keeping God would have served to encourage the Israelites as they came out of Egypt and entered into a formal covenant with this same God, Yahweh.



They would have learned that God always fulfills His part of a covenant relationship. In Exodus and Deuteronomy, Moses will call the nation Israel to respond by fulfilling its part of the covenant arrangement as well.

### **The curse upon Canaan: 9:18-29**

*The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth. Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers." He also said, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth's territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth." After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died (9:18-29).*

There is an obvious lesson here about the need to respect our parents and elders. This will show up in the 10 commandments where we are told: "*Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you . . .*" (Exodus 20:12). But Moses had another important reason for recounting this story. He probably had some explaining to do for the Exodus generation as to their "foreign policy" of taking over the land of Canaan. What right had the Israelites coming out of Egypt to possess the land of Canaan? Answer: The origins of wickedness in the land of Canaan go way back to the curse upon Canaan, pronounced by Noah, in the days after the flood. Bear in mind that this one incident in Noah's day was not the sole reason why the Canaanites were driven out of the land. Other passages clearly indicate that the wickedness of the Canaanites was so great that God caused the land to "spew them out" (see Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-28). Thus, Noah's curse upon his grandson Canaan is just one of a complex of events and

conditions that caused God to remove them from their land and give it to the Israelites. This is also why the specific territorial boundaries of Canaan’s land are mentioned in the following chapter (see 10:19). Again, Genesis serves to show the Israelites their roots in the wider plans and purposes of God for humanity.

### Descendants of Shem, Japheth and Ham: 10:1-32

The purpose of the genealogy in chapter 10 is given to us in the last verse:

***“These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood” (10:32).***

Nations were birthed from the three sons of Noah. This chapter focuses on those nations that were of primary importance to Israel, as they moved toward their own land inheritance in Canaan. The genealogy, unlike most others, makes note of the general territorial locations of the nations springing forth from Noah’s three sons.



## The tower of Babel: 11:1-9

Humanity tries to build the first mega-city complete with a high-rise tower in the center.

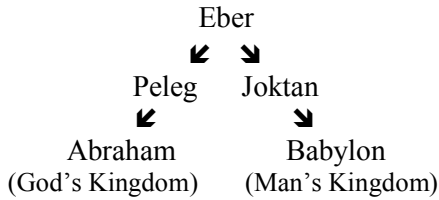
*They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth” (11:4).*

The project seems to be motivated by human pride and self-preservation. “*Let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad . . .*” God opposes the proud spirit and intention behind this massive building project. He disperses them by means of the confusion of their languages. In later Scripture, the name “Babylon” (derived from “Babel”) will become synonymous with Satan’s anti-God kingdom as it appears in various forms throughout human history. It is no coincidence that Revelation 18 gives the final depiction of this great anti-God movement, there named “Babylon the Great.” In that final scene, Babylon falls for the final time, under the judgment of God. Then, in Revelation 19-22, the kingdom of God comes into full view. This parallels what happens in the narrative of Genesis 11-12. First we see the kingdom of Babylon falling under God’s judgment (ch.11); then we see the kingdom of God coming into view with the calling of Abraham (ch.12).

## Genealogy from Shem to Abraham: 11:10-32

The genealogy in Genesis 11 takes us from Shem (one of Noah’s 3 sons) to Abraham, preparing us for the next stage of God’s plan. But there is something deeper here as well. If you were paying attention to the genealogies in Genesis 10, you may have noticed that the line of Noah’s son Shem was covered already (10:21-31). So, why is a second genealogy of Shem’s descendants given in Genesis 11 (11:10-27)?

Notice that the two genealogies of Shem’s descendants correspond *until you come to Eber, who had two sons: Peleg and Joktan*. The genealogy in Genesis 10 follows the line through Joktan, whose descendants move eastward toward Babylon. The descendants of Peleg, on the other hand, move us toward the birth of Abraham and the ongoing movement of God’s plan for humanity. What is the underlying message in these two genealogies?



Notice that in the narrative arrangement of Genesis 10 and 11, the story of the tower of Babel is what separates the lines of Peleg and Joktan. The message? One line of Shem (Joktan) leads to Babylon and man’s plan to build a kingdom. The other line of Shem (Peleg) leads to Abraham and God’s plan to build His kingdom among men. One great line of humanity is seeking to make a name for itself. The other great line is all those for whom God will make a name as “children of Abraham.”

### Summary/takeaways

There are many practical lessons from this section of Scripture. Here are three key lessons:

First, there is the lesson of passing along a godly heritage through the generations; passing the baton of faith, so to speak. Enoch walked with God, and God took him safely to heaven at a relatively young age. His great grandson, Noah, walked with God, and God took him safely though the flood, using him to preserve a remnant of humanity upon the earth. Methusaleh and Lamech, Noah’s grandfather and father, were the generational bridge between Enoch and Noah. What steps are you taking to pass along a godly heritage to the next generation(s) in your lineage? Will future generations point back to you, as their “Enoch,” who left “footprints of faith” for others to follow in?

Second, there is the idea that sometimes God must tear down before He can build up. There are “severe mercies” that come to us from God. He may be sending “a flood” in order to sweep away impurity in us and to start a new work. He may be thwarting our effort to build our own “tower of Babel” so that He can build something of eternal value in us and through us. This section of the Bible is focused on God’s judgments; but God’s judgments and disciplinary actions have a redemptive purpose.

We must believe this by faith while in the midst of the difficult time; for it is only long after the water has subsided, or the tower has collapsed, that we will see with our own eyes the point of God's severe mercies with us.

Third, we find in the Noah story an example of a man who was willing to be a "light to the world" even in the darkest and most difficult times. In the New Testament book of 2Peter, Noah is called "*a preacher of righteousness*" (2Peter 2:5). For roughly 100 years, during the construction of the ark, the Spirit of God was calling out through Noah to a wicked generation, inviting people to put their hope in God. Noah endured ridicule and contempt, along with his family; but they stuck together as they obeyed God. God can use you (and your family) in the present day, just as He used Noah in that day. But we must be willing to stand against the strong tide of the culture and walk in God's ways. Jesus put it like this:

***"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a [g]basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).***