

The Beginnings of Civilization; The Flood and Its Aftermath

Cain and Abel; The Beginnings of Civilization; Adam's Descendants to Noah; Wickedness of Mankind; Preparations for the Flood and the Great Deluge; Emerging from the Ark: Sacrifice and Commandments; the Noah Covenant; Noah's Sons and the Division of the Nations.
Genesis 4:1–11:26

Cain and Abel (4:1–16)

- Cain
 - Wordplay: “[Eve] conceived, and bare Cain [*qayin*], and said, I have gotten [*qaniti*] a man from the Lord” (Genesis 4:1)
- Cain's Sacrifice Rejected
 - The First Fruits were considered an acceptable sacrifice (see Leviticus) – so why was Cain's sacrifice unacceptable to the LORD?
 - Cain wanted Abel's flocks!
 - Cain and Abel as an allegory for the traditional rivalry between herders and agriculturalists?
- “...sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.” (Genesis 4:7)
 - An alternative translation “**sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it**” (Genesis 4:7, NRSV)

The Beginning of Civilization (4:17–26)

- A Second Fall for Cain?
 - “And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord” (4:16; cf. 3:24)
 - Cain fears reprisal and the Lord marks him to prevent repercussions
 - In Biblical times death was repaid with death, leading to lasting family feuds
 - Was the Lord protecting Cain with this mark?
- “Progress” of Civilization
 - Genesis 4:17–24 detail Cain’s descendents but also the progression of civilization
 - Cities, livestock, music, metal workers
 - But this focuses mankind on its own accomplishments and not God and his creation
 - Civilization takes man away from God, holy men leave civilization (e.g. flee to the wilderness) to find God
 - Another murder: worldliness leads to strife and another killing (4:23)
 - As with Cain, Lamech is afraid of reprisal for killing a young man

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

3

Antediluvian Prophets (5:1–32)

- Genesis 5 is an example of genealogy lists [*toledot*]
 - “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam [humankind], in the day when they were created.” (Genesis 5:1-2)
 - Note “generations” can also mean “stories”, and Adam can also be translated “humankind”
 - Note also the solemn monotony of “and he died” after each entry!
- Enoch
 - “And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” (Genesis 5:23-24)
 - Note Enoch’s age when compared to all the others listed
 - In the sense of rapture or “snatching”
 - The only mention of Enoch in Genesis, yet there are many apocryphal stories and various books of Enoch *and of course the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price*

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

4

Wickedness of Mankind (6:1–8)

- Sons of God and Daughters of Men
 - Likely denotes differences in culture and lifestyle – “daughters of men” were born outside the covenant
 - The “Giants” – possible mythological encroachment on Genesis?
 - In Hebrew, the “giants” are called *Nephilim* which is related to the Hebrew word “to fall”
 - Apocryphal literature sees the “sons of God” were angels who chose to seek after the “daughters of men”
- “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil* continually. And it *repented the Lord* that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” (Genesis 6:5–6)
 - “Imagination” is better translated “inclination” → a double hit of both *nature (due to the fall)* and *nurture (the effects of wicked society)*
 - “repented the Lord” is better “the Lord was sorry”

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

5

Preparations for the Flood (6:9–7:10)

- Covenant will be with Noah’s family (Genesis 6:18)
 - Another “generation” list, but it is just Noah and his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth (6:9–10)
 - Noah was “*perfect [blameless] in his generation*” (perhaps compared to the others of his age) and “*walked with God*”
- Two pairs of every animal (6:19)
 - Seemingly contradicts 7:2 “Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that *are* not clean by two, the male and his female.”
 - Dividing by clean and unclean – possibly reflects “P” account?
 - Genesis 8:20 – perhaps a need to take more clean animals to eat and for sacrifice?
- “Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him” (7:5)
 - He and his family were saved by his obedience

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

6

The Deluge (7:11–24)

- The Near Eastern/Mesopotamian model of the cosmos (waters above and beneath the earth) made a universal flood reasonably easy to accomplish!
 - Still, conservative Protestants and Latter-day Saints generally do not have a problem with God being able to do anything . . .
 - A universal flood has considerable symbolic potential (baptism of the earth, etc.)
 - Rather small populations would allow massive, local flooding to still have the same effect: destroy a wicked society
- Exposition: An act of mercy?
 - A way of preventing spirits from coming into impossibly negative environment (see again the “nature and nurture” problem of (6:1–8; see Jackson, 31 = packet, 31)
- Why kill all the animals to punish wicked humanity?
 - A similar pattern will be seen with the Israelite conquest of Canaan: not only the wicked but all of their possessions (including livestock) were to be destroyed
 - Particularly for “P,” sin was seen as a contaminating agent, an invasive filthiness that corrupted everything it came in contact with
 - Still, difficult to understand from with modern sensibilities

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

7

Emerging from the Ark . . . (8:15–9:7)

- Noah’s first post-flood act: **sacrifice** (8:20)
 - Effect: the LORD is pleased and promises not to smite all living things again and for seasons [i.e., life] to continue
- God’s first post-flood commandments
 - **Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth** (9:1, 7)
 - **Be good stewards of the earth, particularly of other living creatures** (9:2–3; contra 1:29–30)
 - **Respect life!** (9:4–6)
 - **Blood is symbolic of mortal life → don’t eat it!**
 - The Talmud (post-second century AD) expanded these into seven “Noahide” commandments for righteous Gentiles
 - Prohibitions on idolatry, murder, theft, sexual immorality, blasphemy, eating blood/animals while alive and an injunction to seek justice

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

8

Covenant with Noah (9:8–17)

- The word “covenant” first appears in Genesis 9:9, but it is renewed and explained 9:8–17
- Meaning of “covenant” (*bərit*): “act, compact, covenant.”
 - between men: a treaty, alliance, league
 - between God and man: **alliance of friendship; a divine constitution or ordinance with signs or pledges**
 - Gospel definition: **“a solemn, binding, two-way promise between God and men”**
- After the flood, God’s covenant is associated with a ritual act, God’s “hanging his bow in the sky,” which serves as a lasting sign/token of his promise to Noah
 - In antiquity a god or a king “hung up his bow” to signal that conflict had ended, symbolizing peace...
- This sets up the following introduction of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . .

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

9

Noah’s Sons

- **Misadventures with Vineyards and Drunkenness (9:18–29)**
 - An unspecified offense against Noah’s modesty earned Ham and his son Canaan “cursings,” whereas Shem and Japheth were blessed
 - Apocryphal texts suggested that Ham had stolen Noah’s garment, which had once belonged to Adam → **exposition**: tried to usurp the rights of the priesthood?
- **The Generations of the Sons of Noah (10:1–32)**
 - Another *tôlēdot* list, seeking to explain the ethnic geography from the perspective of Moses (or later editors)
 - Reverse order: Japheth (the youngest) first, Shem (the oldest) last
 - Japheth’s descendants along the upper periphery of the known world (Indo-Europeans)
 - **Ham’s descendants constituted most of the great early civilizations and early empires in North Africa/Egypt, Palestine, early Babylonia, etc.**
 - **Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord: divine favor or disapproval?**
 - Shem’s descendants consist of the “children of Eber” (meaning “migrants” or “transients” → wilderness folk!)

9/16/2009

4. The Beginning of Civilization; the Flood and Its Aftermath

10

The Divisions of Nations

- Anticipated by 10:25, “Peleg, for in his days was the earth divided”
 - *Peleg*, which means “division,” probably referring to divided among peoples and not divisions of continents . . .
- “The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech . . .” (11:1)
- The Tower of Babel (11:2–9)
 - An act of *hybris* or sinful arrogance: “reaching unto heaven” and “making a name” for themselves
 - Also wanted to escape future floods?
 - Confounding of languages
 - Note that Noah, who lived 950 years (9:29), some 350 of them after the flood, was around for all of this!
- Generations of Shem (11:10–26)
 - Connects the following Abraham saga with the earlier story of Noah and his family