

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The children of God, among whom the true religion was at first preserved, corrupt it by forming matrimonial connections with irreligious women, Genesis 6:1, Genesis 6:2. God, displeased with these connections and their consequences, limits the continuance of the old world to one hundred and twenty years, Genesis 6:3. The issue of those improper connections termed giants, Genesis 6:4. An affecting description of the depravity of the world, Genesis 6:5, Genesis 6:6. God threatens the destruction of every living creature, Genesis 6:7. Noah and his family find grace in his sight, Genesis 6:8. The character and family of Noah, Genesis 6:9, Genesis 6:10. And a farther description of the corruption of man, Genesis 6:11, Genesis 6:12. Noah is forewarned of the approaching destruction of the human race, Genesis 6:13; and is ordered to build an ark for the safety of himself and household, the form and dimensions of which are particularly described, Genesis 6:14-16. The deluge threatened, Genesis 6:17. The covenant of God's mercy is to be established between him and the family of Noah, Genesis 6:18. A male and female of all kinds of animals that could not live in the waters to be brought into the ark, Genesis 6:19, Genesis 6:20. Noah is commanded to provide food for their sustenance, Genesis 6:21; and punctually follows all these directions, Genesis 6:22.

Verse 1

When men began to multiply - It was not at this time that men began to multiply, but the inspired penman speaks now of a fact which had taken place long before. As there is a distinction made here between men and those called the sons of God, it is generally supposed that the immediate posterity of Cain and that of Seth are intended. The first were mere men, such as fallen nature may produce, degenerate sons of a degenerate father, governed by the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life. The others were sons of God, not angels, as some have dreamed, but such as were, according to our Lord's doctrine, born again, born from above, John 3:3, John 3:5, John 3:6, etc., and made children of God by the influence of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:6. The former were apostates from the true religion, the latter were those among whom it was preserved and cultivated. Dr. Wall supposes the first verses of this chapter should be paraphrased thus: "When men began to multiply on the earth, the chief men took wives of all the handsome poor women they chose. There were tyrants in the earth in those days; and also after the antediluvian days powerful men had unlawful connections with the inferior women, and the children which sprang from this illicit commerce were the renowned heroes of antiquity, of whom the heathens made their gods."

Verse 3

My spirit shall not always strive - It is only by the influence of the Spirit of God that the carnal mind can be subdued and destroyed; but those who wilfully resist and grieve that Spirit must be ultimately left to the hardness and blindness of their own hearts, if they do not repent and turn to God. God delights in mercy, and therefore a gracious warning is given. Even at this time the earth was ripe for destruction; but God promised them one hundred and twenty years' respite: if they repented in that interim, well; if not, they should be destroyed by a flood. See the note on Genesis 6:5

Verse 4

There were giants in the earth - נפילימ (nephilim), from נפול (naphal), he fell. Those who had apostatized or fallen from the true religion. The Septuagint translate the original word by γῆγεννητοί, which literally signifies earth-born, and which we, following them, term giants, without having any reference to the meaning of the word, which we generally conceive to signify persons of enormous stature. But the word when properly understood makes a very just distinction between the sons of men and the sons of God; those were the nephilim, the fallen earth-born men, with the animal and devilish mind. These were the sons of God, who were born from above; children of the kingdom, because children of God. Hence we may suppose originated the different appellatives given to sinners and saints; the former were termed γῆγεννητοί, earth-born, and the latter, ἀγγελογεννητοί, i.e. saints, persons not of the earth, or separated from the earth.

The same became mighty men - men of renown - גיבורים (gibborim), which we render mighty men, signifies properly conquerors, heroes, from גבר (gabar), he prevailed, was victorious. and אנשי חששם (anshey hashshem), men of the name, גיבורים, Septuagint; the same as we render men of renown, renomati, twice named, as the word implies, having one name which they derived from their fathers, and another which they acquired by their daring exploits and enterprises.

It may be necessary to remark here that our translators have rendered seven different Hebrew words by the one term giants, viz., (nephilim), (gibborim), (enachim), (rephaim), (emim), and (zamzummim); by which appellatives are probably meant in general persons of great knowledge, piety, courage, wickedness, etc., and not men of enormous stature, as is generally conjectured.

Verse 15

Thou shalt make - the length of the ark - three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits - Allowing the cubit, which is the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, to be eighteen inches, the ark must have been four hundred and fifty feet in length, seventy-five in breadth, and forty-five in height. But that the ancient cubit was more than eighteen inches has been demonstrated by Mr. Greaves, who traveled in Greece, Palestine, and Egypt, in order to be able to ascertain the weights, moneys, and measures of antiquity. He measured the pyramids in Egypt, and comparing the accounts which Herodotus, Strabo, and others, give of their size, he found the length of a cubit to be twenty-one inches and eight hundred and eighty-eight decimal parts out of a thousand, or nearly twenty-two inches. Hence the cube of a cubit is evidently ten thousand four hundred and eighty-six inches. And from this it will appear that the three hundred cubits of the ark's length make five hundred and forty-seven feet; the fifty for its breadth, ninety-one feet two inches; and the thirty for its height, fifty-four feet eight inches. When these dimensions are examined, the ark will be found to be a vessel whose capacity was more than sufficient to contain all persons and animals said to have been in it, with sufficient food for each for more than twelve months. This vessel Dr. Arbuthnot computes to have been eighty-one thousand and sixty-two tons in burden.

As many have supposed the capacity of the ark to have been much too small for the things which were contained in it, it will be necessary to examine this subject thoroughly, that every difficulty may be removed. The things contained in the ark, besides the eight persons of Noah's family, were one pair of all unclean animals, and seven pairs of all clean animals with provisions for all sufficient for twelve months.

At the first view the number of animals may appear so immense that no space but the forest could be thought sufficient to contain them. If, however, we come to a calculation, the number of the different genera or kinds of animals will be found much less than is generally imagined. It is a question whether in this account any but the different genera of animals necessary to be brought into the ark should be included. Naturalists have divided the whole system of zoology into Classes and Orders, containing genera and species. There are six classes thus denominated:

1. Mammalia;

2. Aves;

3. Amphibia;

4. Pisces;

5. Insectae;

6.

Vermes.

With the three last of these, viz., fishes, insects, and worms, the question can have little to do.

The first Class, Mammalia, or animals with teats, contains seven orders, and only forty-three genera if we except the seventh order, cetæ, i.e. all the whale kind, which certainly need not come into this account. The different species in this class amount, the cetæ excluded, to five hundred and forty-three.

The second Class, Aves, birds, contains six orders, and only seventy-four genera, if we exclude the third order, anseres, or web-footed fowls, all of which could very well live in the water. The different species in this class, the anseres excepted, amount to two thousand three hundred and seventy-two.

The third Class, Amphibia, contains only two orders, reptiles and serpents; these comprehend ten genera, and three hundred and sixty-six species, but of the reptiles many could live in the water, such as the tortoise, frog, etc. Of the former there are thirty-three species, of the latter seventeen, which excluded reduce the number to three hundred and sixteen. The whole of these would occupy but little room in the ark, for a small portion of earth, etc., in the hold would be sufficient for their accommodation.

Bishop Wilkins, who has written largely and with his usual accuracy on this subject, supposes that quadrupeds do not amount to one hundred different kinds, nor birds which could not live in the water to two hundred. Of quadrupeds he shows that only seventy-two species needed a place in the ark, and the birds he divides into nine classes, including in the whole one hundred and ninety-five kinds, from which all the web-footed should be deducted, as these could live in the water.

He computes all the carnivorous animals equivalent, as to the bulk of their bodies and food, to twenty-seven wolves; and all the rest to one hundred and eighty oxen. For the former he allows one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five sheep for their annual consumption; and for the latter, one hundred and nine thousand five hundred cubits of hay: these animals and their food will be easily contained in the two first stories, and much room to spare; as to the third story, no person can doubt its being sufficient for the fowls, with Noah and his family.

One sheep each day he judges will be sufficient for six wolves; and a square cubit of hay, which contains forty-one pounds, as ordinarily pressed in our ricks, will be amply sufficient for one ox in the day. When the

quantum of room which these animals and their provender required for one year, is compared with the capacity of the ark, we shall be led to conclude, with the learned bishop, that of the two it is more difficult to assign a number and bulk of necessary things to answer to the capacity of the ark, than to find sufficient room for the several species of animals and their food already known to have been there. This he attributes to the imperfection of our lists of animals, especially those of the unknown parts of the earth; and adds, that the most expert mathematicians at this day, and he was one of the first in Europe, could not assign the proportion of a vessel better accommodated to the purpose than is here done; and concludes thus: The capacity of the ark, which has been made an objection against Scripture, ought to be esteemed a confirmation of its Divine authority; since, in those ruder ages men, being less versed in arts and philosophy, were more obnoxious to vulgar prejudices than now, so that had it been a human invention it would have been contrived, according to those wild apprehensions which arise from a confused and general view of things, as much too big as it has been represented too little. See Bishop Wilkins's Essay towards a Philosophical Character and Language.

Verse 16

A window shalt thou make - What this was cannot be absolutely ascertained. The original word חַוּלָה (tsohar) signifies clear or bright; the Septuagint translate it by $\text{ἀνοίξω... ἵνα ἴδωσιν ἡμέραν}$, collecting, thou shalt make the ark, which plainly shows they did not understand the word as signifying any kind of window or light. Symmacus translates it ἵνα ἴδωσιν ἡμέραν , a transparency; and Aquila, ἵνα ἴδωσιν ἡμέραν , the noon. Jonathan ben Uzziel supposes that it was a precious luminous stone which Noah, by Divine command, brought from the river Pison. It is probably a word which should be taken in a collective sense, signifying apertures for air and light.

In a cubit shalt thou finish it above - Probably meaning that the roof should be left a cubit broad at the apex or top, and that it should not terminate in a sharp ridge. But this place is variously understood.

Verse 17

I-do bring a flood - מַבּוּל (mabbul); a word used only to designate the general deluge, being never applied to signify any other kind of inundation; and does not the Holy Spirit intend to show by this that no other flood was ever like this, and that it should continue to be the sole one of the kind? There have been many partial inundations in various countries, but never more than One general deluge; and we have God's promise, Genesis 9:15, that there shall never be another.

Verse 18

With thee will I establish my covenant - The word בְּרִית (berith), from בָּרָא (bar), to purify or cleanse, signifies properly a purification or purifier, (see on Genesis 15 (note)), because in all covenants made between God and man, sin and sinfulness were ever supposed to be on man's side, and that God could not enter into any covenant or engagement with him without a purifier; hence, in all covenants, a sacrifice was offered for the removal of offenses, and the reconciliation of God to the sinner; and hence the word בְּרִית (berith) signifies not only a covenant, but also the sacrifice offered on the occasion, Exodus 24:8; Psalm 50:5; and Jesus Christ, the great atonement and purifier, has the same word for his title, Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; and Zechariah 9:11. Almost all nations, in forming alliances, etc., made their covenants or contracts in the same way. A sacrifice was provided, its throat was cut, and its blood poured out before God; then the whole carcass was divided through the spinal marrow from the head to the rump; so as to make exactly two equal parts; these were placed opposite to each other, and the contracting parties passed between them, or entering at opposite ends met in the center, and there took the covenant oath. This is particularly referred to by Jeremiah, Jeremiah 34:18, Jeremiah 34:19, Jeremiah 34:20: I will give the men (into the hands of the enemies, Jeremiah 34:20) that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, etc. See also Deuteronomy 29:12. A covenant, says Mr. Ainsworth, is a disposition of good things faithfully declared, which God here calls his, as arising from his grace towards Noah (Genesis 6:8) and all men; but implying also conditions on man's part, and therefore is called our covenant, Zechariah 9:11. The apostles call it ἰσχυρισμὸς , a testament or disposition; and it is mixed of the properties both of covenant and testament, as the apostle shows, Hebrews 9:16, etc., and of both may be named a testamental covenant, whereby the disposing of God's favors and good things to us is declared. The covenant made with Noah signified, on God's part, that he should save Noah and his family from death by the ark. On Noah's part, that he should in faith and obedience make and enter into the ark - Thou shalt come into the ark, etc., so committing himself to God's preservation, Hebrews 11:7. And under this the covenant or testament of eternal salvation by Christ was also implied, the apostle testifying, 1 Peter 3:21, that the antitype, baptism, doth also now save us; for baptism is a seal of our salvation, Mark 16:16. To provide a Savior, and the means of salvation, is God's part: to accept this Savior, laying hold on the hope set before us, is ours. Those who refuse the way and means of salvation must perish; those who accept of the

great Covenant Sacrifice cannot perish, but shall have eternal life. See on Genesis 15:10 (note), etc.

Verse 19

To keep them alive - God might have destroyed all the animal creation, and created others to occupy the new world, but he chose rather to preserve those already created. The Creator and Preserver of the universe does nothing but what is essentially necessary to be done. Nothing should be wantonly wasted; nor should power or skill be lavished where no necessity exists; and yet it required more means and economy to preserve the old than to have created new ones. Such respect has God to the work of his hands, that nothing but what is essential to the credit of his justice and holiness shall ever induce him to destroy any thing he has made.

Verse 21

Of all food that is eaten - That is, of the food proper for every species of animals.

Verse 22

Thus did Noah - He prepared the ark; and during one hundred and twenty years preached righteousness to that sinful generation, 2 Peter 2:5. And this we are informed, 1 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 3:19, etc., he did by the Spirit of Christ; for it was only through him that the doctrine of repentance could ever be successfully preached. The people in Noah's time are represented as shut up in prison - arrested and condemned by God's justice, but graciously allowed the space of one hundred and twenty years to repent in. This respite was an act of great mercy; and no doubt thousands who died in the interim availed themselves of it, and believed to the saving of their souls. But the great majority of the people did not, else the flood had never come.