

6. Adam's Descendants (5:1–6:8)

5:1-6:8 is the second account (תולדות *toledot*) of Genesis.

5:1-2 introduction

5:3-32 genealogy; concluded in 9:28-29

6:1-8 two parallel panels contrasting earthly and heavenly perspective on days of Noah.

I. Genealogy (5:1-32)

A. General pattern

1. A lived *i* years and bore/fathered B.
2. Then A lived *j* years after he bore/fathered B, and he bore/fathered other sons and daughters.
3. So all the days of A were (*i+j*) years, and he died.

8 times we hear the refrain וַיָּמָת “Then he died”; the same refrain occurs in 9:29.

The genealogy has ten generations (cf. Gen 11:10-26), and highlights the seventh and the tenth (cf. Ruth 4:18-23 which highlights Boaz and David).

B. Insertions

Four times the pattern is broken

1. Adam

	When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son <i>in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and he died.</i> (3-5)
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Adam fathered Seth in his own likeness, according to his own image (בְּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצַלְמוֹ).

As God did to Adam, so Adam did to Seth.

Image of God is not obliterated by the fall and curse.

Naming

Adam lived

2. Enoch

	When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah. Enoch <i>walked with God</i> after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. <i>Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.</i> (21-24)
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Whereas other men “lived,” Enoch “walked with God.” cf. Noah (6:9); Abram (17:1).

Whereas other men died, Enoch “was not, for God took him.”

Enoch, the seventh from Adam through Seth, is to be contrasted with Lamech, the seventh from Adam through Cain (4:19-24).

3. Lamech

	<p>When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>“Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.”</i></p> <p>Lamech lived after he fathered Noah 595 years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Lamech were 777 years, and he died. (28-31)</p>
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Naming formula

Lamech named his son נֹחַ *Noah*, from נִיחַ *nuaḥ* vb. “rest,” saying

“This one shall give us relief (נָחַם *naḥam* “comfort”)

- from our work and
- from the painful toil (עֲצָבוֹן *iṣṣabon* cf. 3:17) of our hands
- from the ground which Yahweh has cursed (אָרַר *arar* cf. 3:17)”

In chapters 5-8 there is an elaborate wordplay on these words.

- The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry (נָחַם *naḥam*) that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved (עָצַב *‘sb*) him to his heart. (6:5-6)
- And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma (רִיחַ הַנְּיִחוֹחַ *reah ha-niḥoah*, lit. the aroma that puts one at rest), the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse (קָלַל *qalal*) the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. (8:21)

4. Noah

	<p>After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (5:32)</p> <p>After <i>the flood</i> Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years, and he died. (9:28-29)</p>
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Description of three sons not just first-born, cf. 11:26.

Insertion of Flood Narrative before conclusion of Noah’s genealogical record to emphasize that, though Noah died, he was saved through the Flood.

New beginning: second part of Noah’s life begins at Flood, not at birth of son.

II. Noah and the Nephilim (6:1-8)

A. Structure

Two parallel panels, each of four verses and three scenes. Numerous words are used in both panels.

<p>¹When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.</p>	<p>⁵The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.</p>
<p>³Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”</p>	<p>⁷So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.”</p>
<p>⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.</p>	<p>⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.</p>

Act 1. Earthly perspective (6:1-4)

Man (אָדָם *ha-adam*) on the land (הָאָדָמָה *ha-adamah*).

1. Sons of God see that it is good טוֹב.
2. Yahweh speaks
3. Nephilim

Act 2. Heavenly perspective (6:5-8)

1. Yahweh sees that it is evil רָע.
2. Yahweh speaks: he will remove man (אָדָם *ha-adam*) from the land (הָאָדָמָה *ha-adamah*).
3. Noah

This structure sets up contrasts:

1. Between man and Yahweh: what man sees as good, Yahweh sees as evil.
2. Between the Nephilim and Noah: the Nephilim are the earthly heroes, but Noah is Yahweh's hero.

B. The sons of God and the daughters of men

There has been much debate over the identity of the sons of God. Among the suggestions are:

- **descendants of Seth:** Calvin, Vos; traditional Christian interpretation. The sin here is the intermarriage of the godly line of Seth with the ungodly line of Cain, the failure of the godly line to keep itself pure.
- **fallen angels:** Kidner, VanGemeren; earliest Jewish interpretation, most common current interpretation. The only other use of the term בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים, is in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. In Job 1:6; 2:1 it clearly refers to the heavenly council (or divine council), the angelic beings gathered around God's throne. Two obscure NT passages (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6-7) support this interpretation. But angels do not marry (Matt 22:30), and why is mankind punished for the sin of the angels?
- **demon-possessed men:** Stedman, Waltke. A modification of the “angelic” interpretation: the fallen

angels took up residence in people.

- **kings:** rabbinic interpretation (2nd century AD), Kline (divine kings).
- **ordinary men:** Sailhamer (reading 6:1-3 with ch.5). Descended from Adam, created by God Himself, i.e. origin from God.

My opinion: ancient Israel was surrounded by civilizations that exalted stories of gods marrying humans and producing offspring who had immortality. This view is supported by the description of the Nephilim in v 4. The LXX (Greek translation of OT) translates the Nephilim as γίγαντες *gigantes* (giants), who in Greek mythology were the product of the union of heaven and earth. These were the heroes of old (cf. “the mighty men of old, men of renown”):

Hero: “a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*)

The most famous hero of Greek mythology was Hercules (Herakles), the son of Zeus and the mortal Alcmene.

But Yahweh saw this intermingling of heaven and earth not as something good but as something evil. The path to immortality did not lie in this direction.

C. Relenting/Repenting

Given the high view of Scripture concerning God’s sovereignty and omniscience, it is jarring to read of God “changing his mind.” But the Scriptures show repeatedly that this is what he does:

- of destroying Israel after the Golden Calf incident:
[Moses implored the LORD his God:] “Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and *relent* from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” And the LORD *relented* from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. (Exod 32:12-14)

when his people cried out to him in the days of the Judges:

Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was *moved to pity* by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. (Judg 2:18)

of appointing Saul as king

“I *regret* that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments.” And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night...²⁹“And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or *have regret*, for he is not a man, that he should *have regret*.”...³⁵And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD *regretted* that he had made Saul king over Israel. (1 Sam 15:11, 29, 35)

of destroying Jerusalem with plague following David’s census:

And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD *relented* from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (2 Sam 24:16, cf. 1 Chr 21:15)

major theme in Jeremiah (Jer 4:28; 15:6; 18:8,10; 26:3,13,19; 42:10)

6. Adam's Descendants (5:1–6:8)

“For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be dark; for I have spoken; I have purposed; I have not *relented*, nor will I turn back.” (4:28)

“You have rejected me, declares the ; you keep going backward, so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you—I am weary of *relenting*.” (15:16)

“...and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will *relent* of the disaster that I intended to do to it...and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will *relent* of the good that I had intended to do to it.” (18:8, 10)

26 It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may *relent* of the disaster that I intend to do to them because of their evil deeds...Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will *relent* of the disaster that he has pronounced against you....Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and did not the LORD *relent* of the disaster that he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great disaster upon ourselves.” (26:3, 13, 19)

“If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I *relent* of the disaster that I did to you.” (42:10)

other prophets:

“and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he *relents* over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and *relent*, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? (Joel 2:13-14)

The LORD *relented* concerning this; “It shall not be,” said the LORD ...The LORD *relented* concerning this; “This also shall not be,” said the Lord GOD. (Amos 7:3, 6)

Nineveh

[The king of Nineveh's proclamation:] “Who knows? God may turn and *relent* and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.” When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God *relented* of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it... And he [Jonah] prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and *relenting* from disaster.” (Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2)

On the one hand, Yahweh is not like a man that he should change his mind; yet, man is to repent in the hope that Yahweh will have compassion and change his mind! The Hebrew mind saw no problem with this tension; e.g.

“the Glory of Israel will not lie or *have regret*, for he is not a man, that he should *have regret*” (1 Sam 15:29); but very clearly God does have regret and “change his mind” (15:11, 35)