

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XXX : GENESIS 5:1–6:8 – THE BOOK OF THE HISTORY OF ADAM – PART 4

“A prodigious wickedness, then, everywhere reigned, so that the whole earth was covered with it. Whence we perceive that it was not overwhelmed with a deluge of waters till it had first been immersed in the pollution of wickedness.” [Calvin, 1:247]

“This horrid paragraph is an exposé on the degeneracy of the human heart. Collectively, society has decayed beyond recovery in God’s estimation. The progression in this small cluster of verses is arresting: ‘The LORD saw ... The LORD grieved ... The LORD said.’ He himself brings sanctions against all humanity, including the most vulnerable (animals). The threat of extinction is not only inclusive of all living things but also is geographically all-encompassing. Repeatedly, ‘on the earth’ highlights the divine intention to obliterate the living world he has created by his own voice and formed with his own hands.” [Mathews, 1:339]

Twelfth Paragraph – Punishment is Decreed on the Generation of the Flood but Grace is Shown to Noah:

‘⁵ Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” ⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.’ (Gen 6:5-8 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

**v. 5 – The Lord saw / that the wickedness of man was great / in the earth;
and that every device of the thoughts of his heart / was only evil continually.**

**v. 6 – And the Lord was sorry / that He had made man / on the earth,
and it grieved Him to His heart.**

v. 7 – So the Lord said,

**“I will blot out man whom I have created / from the face of the ground,
man and beast and creeping things / and flying creatures of the air,
for I am sorry / that I have made them.”**

v. 8 – But Noah found favour / in the eyes of the Lord.

THE PAGAN MYTHS — “In the flood stories of Israel’s neighbors, the Sumerian and Babylonian myths show the gods debating among themselves the justification of a universal flood destroying all mankind. Ea challenges Enlil’s drastic actions, ‘How couldst thou, unreasoning, bring on the flood?’ **The biblical narrative (6:5-8, 11-13) repeatedly sets any question of this sort to rest; so pervasive is human sin that there must be a divine response. God’s sorrow is over what has become of his noble creation, not the destruction itself.**” [Mathews, 1:339] “It really should not surprise us that in a system of thought where the gods are not necessarily morally superior to human beings, and where the line between good and evil is blurred, there is no recording of the fact that man is to be drowned because he is a rebel and a sinner.” [Hamilton, 1:274]

v. 5 – The Lord saw — *That the Lord ‘saw’ is not to imply sudden perception but the consideration of a state of affairs that had long been in existence and on account of which a decision has to be taken.* It is used of both mankind (30:1, Rachel; 30:9, Leah; 50:15, Joseph’s brothers) and the Lord (6:12; 29:31; Exod 2:25; 3:4; 4:31; etc.). Verse 5 records the consequence of vv. 1-4: the Lord ‘saw’ and condemned the unprecedented corruption of the human family.

that the wickedness of man was great in the earth; — “God blessed mankind that they should be fertile and fill the earth (1:28), and He implemented His promise: men began to ‘multiply’ on the face of the ‘ground.’ *Man, however, was an ingrate: he, too, ‘increased,’ but it was ‘evil-doing’ that he increased; truly, he filled ‘the earth,’ but he did so with ‘violence.’*” [Cassuto, 1:302] *“That it spread throughout the earth, wherever it was inhabited by men, both among the posterity of Cain and Seth, and who indeed now were mixed together, and become one people.... [The sins] were both great in quality and great in quantity; they were frequently committed, and that everywhere; the degeneracy was become universal.”* [Gill, 1:47]

earth — Hebrew, *’erets* . “Note that in 6:5-13, ‘the earth’ (*hā’ārets*) is mentioned eight times. *Thus the description has all the appearances of a universal condition rather than a local one.* To be sure, *’erets* is frequently rendered as ‘(local) land,’ ‘ground,’ and even ‘underworld.’ When *’erets* refers to a particular piece of land, however, it is often followed by a prepositional phrase that further identifies the land (e.g., the land of the Canaanites, land of the east, land of the fathers), except in those places where mention is made theologically of the land promised to Israel.” [Hamilton, 1:273]

and that every device of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. — *“Wickedness is an inner compulsion that dominates their thoughts and is not just overt action; they plot evil as a matter of lifestyle.* Our phrase ‘inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil’ is similar to God’s utterance after the flood (8:21), where sin is attributed to humanity from his youth. *The flood does not change the essential sinful character of the human heart, but it does exact justice and rescue the lone remnant of a blessed lineage.*” [Mathews, 1:340f] *‘And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.”’* (Gen 8:21)

device — Hebrew, *yētser* , describing that which is framed in the mind; ‘intention’ (ESV); ‘intent’ (NKJV, NASB, Modern English Version, Legacy Standard Bible); ‘imagination’ (Geneva 1599, KJV, Darby, ASV, RSV, YLT); ‘inclination’ (NIV, NET, Christian Standard Bible, NRSV Anglicized, International Standard Version); ‘scheme’ (Holman Christian Standard Bible). Cassuto: ‘formation, devised, creation.’ Wenham: ‘what is molded and created by the mind.’ *“The term for ‘imagination’ (*yētser*) is closer to action than the English suggests: it is derived from the potter’s verb ‘to form’ (cf. 2:7), and implies design or purpose.”* [Kidner, 85] *It is related to the verb *yātsar* , which was used earlier of God’s creation of humanity. The contrast is obvious: what God forms is very good, but what man forms, in mind and deed, is evil.*

A THEOLOGICAL TERM IN LATER JUDAISM — “Later Judaism made it a technical term for each of the twin impulses, towards good and evil, which it considers to coexist in man; but the New Testament is the true exponent of the passage, finding ‘no good thing’ in our fallen nature (Rom 7:18).” [Kidner, 85] “The word *yētser* became a significant theological term in Rabbinic literature for what might be called the sin nature – the evil inclination.” [NET Study Bible, 18]

of the thoughts — Hebrew, *māchāsĵāvhāh*, ‘thought, plan, purpose,’ often suggests thinking ahead.

heart — Hebrew, *lēvh*, ‘heart, mind, inner man,’ the center of the human personality and cognitive processes (e.g., Gen 31:20; Ps 33:11; 1 Sam 10:26), where will, feeling, thought and morality originate. It is not merely emotions as in English.

evil — “This text asserts that every human thought from its inception is intrinsically ‘evil,’ (*ra’*, cf. Prov 15:26), a comprehensive and general term of condemnation, especially for things disapproved of by God. *Few texts in the OT are so explicit and all-embracing as this in specifying the extent of human sinfulness and depravity.*” [Wenham, 1:144]

THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN — “*In the two halves of the verse man’s evil is presented extensively and intensively, the latter with devastating force in the words ‘every ... only ... continually.’ A more emphatic statement of the wickedness of the human heart is hardly conceivable.*” [Kidner, 85] “*Only evil, nothing but evil, ‘all the day’ – every day, and every moment of every day. If this is not total depravity, how can language express it? ... It does not mean that man is as bad as the devils, or that every man is as bad as every other, or that any man is as bad as he possibly may be, or may become. That is, there are degrees of intensity, but no limit to the universality or extent of the evil in the soul. So say the Scriptures, and so says the awakened conscience.*” [Lange, 1:287] “*Hence appears the necessity of regeneration, and proves that the new creature is not an improvement of the old principles of corrupt nature, since there is no good thing in man but what is put into him.*” [Gill, 1:47]

IRRECONCILABLE WITH THE ANGEL THEORY — As argued in lesson 29, we believe the Lord sent the flood because the sin of mankind and not that of angels cohabitating with human females. “Now when the wickedness of man became great, and ‘every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil the whole day,’ i.e., continually and altogether evil, it repented God that He had made man, and He determined to destroy them. *This determination and the motive assigned are also irreconcilable with the angel-theory. Had the godless race, which God destroyed by the flood, sprung either entirely or in part from the marriage of angels to the daughters of men, it would no longer have been the race first created by God in Adam, but a grotesque product of the Adamitic factor created by God, and an entirely foreign and angelic factor.*” [Keil, 1:139]

v. 6 – And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, – LAMECH’S PROPHECY REGARDING NOAH FULFILLED —

“There are three verbs in this sentence, *nācham* (Niph’al: ‘be sorry, regret;’ Pi’el: ‘to comfort, console’),

‘*āsāh* (‘do, make’), ‘*ātsavh* (‘grieve, suffer’); and all three of these stems have already appeared, in precisely the same order, in the opening words of Lamech (5:29): ‘*This one SHALL BRING US COMFORT (y^enachamēnū) FROM OUR LABOUR (mimma‘asēnū) AND FROM THE TOIL (ūmē‘itsts^evhôn) of our hands.*’ This is certainly no coincidence. At the least, we have here a parallelism of form linking the two paragraphs together; and possibly there is also an antithesis of thought. *Lamech had hoped that his son would be a source of ‘consolation’ from the ‘travail’ resulting from manual ‘labour’ of people who perform hard work on the accursed ground; but he did not consider that just as the works of human beings in the field of physical toil brought them pain, so their deeds in the moral sphere caused suffering to their Creator; and that just as*

Niph’al = bears some resemblance to the Greek middle voice; i.e., reflective or reciprocal / mutual action. Pi’el = intensive or causative action.
[BiblicalHebrew.org]

men were yearning to be ‘comforted’ for the ‘sorrow’ caused them by their material work, so the Creator, out of His heart’s ‘grief, regretted’ that He had ‘made’ man upon the earth. The hopes that Lamech set on his son were realized in a manner far different from which he had imagined.” [Cassuto, 1:303]

THE LORD ‘LAMENTS’ BECAUSE OF WHAT MAN HAD BECOME, NOT BECAUSE HE HAD CREATED MAN NOR BECAUSE OF THE COMING JUDGMENT — *“God’s response of grief over the making of humanity, however, is not remorse in the sense of sorrow over a mistaken creation; our verse shows that God’s pain has its source in the perversion of human sin. The making of ‘man’ is no error; it is what ‘man’ has made of himself.* By recurring reference to mankind in 6:5-7, the passage focuses on the source of his grief. God is grieving because this sinful ‘man’ is not the pristine mankind whom he has made to bear his image. The intensity of the pain is demonstrated by the use of *nācham* elsewhere in Genesis, where it describes mourning over the loss of a family member due to death. *But his is not regret over destroying humanity; paradoxically, so foul has become mankind that it is the necessary step to salvage him.”* [Mathews, 1:343]

THEOLOGICAL QUESTION: ‘DOES GOD REPENT?’ — The Hebrew verb *nācham* may be understood in four different ways dependent upon the context (see below). Several major English versions translate this as *‘repented’* (Wycliffe Bible, Geneva Bible 1599, KJV, YLT, Darby Translation, Douay-Rheims 1899, ASV, Jubilee Bible) which causes an *‘apparent contradiction’* with verses stating *‘God does not repent’* (again, see below). Probably for that reason most of our English versions translate this as *‘regretted’* (Amplified Bible, ESV [but note the ESVUK translates this as *‘was sorry’*], NET, NIV, Holman Christian Standard Bible, New American Bible Revised Edition, Christian Standard Bible, Common English Bible, Complete Jewish Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version, International Standard Version, Legacy Standard Bible, Lexham English Bible, New Catholic Bible, Revised Geneva Translation, Tree of Life Version, The Voice Bible) or *‘was sorry’* (mostly paraphrases but a few major translations as well: NKJV, RSV, New RSV Anglicised Edition, NASB, Contemporary English Version, Easy-to-Read Version, Easy English Bible, ESV Anglicised, The Expanded Bible (with ‘regretted’ in margin reading), God’s Word Translation, Good News Translation, International Children’s Bible, The Living Bible, The Message, Modern English Version, The Names of God Bible, New Century Version, New Life Version, World English Bible). **One version translates it as ‘was very sad’** [New International Reader’s Version].

How is this Hebrew word used? – “In the Niphal stem the verb *nācham* can carry one of four semantic meanings, depending on the context: (1) *‘to experience emotional pain or weakness,’ ‘to feel regret,’* often concerning a past action (see Exod 13:17; Judg 21:6, 15; 1 Sam 15:11, 35; Job 42:6; Jer 31:19). In several of these texts *kî* (*‘because’*) introduces the cause of the emotional sorrow. (2) *Another meaning is ‘to be comforted’ or ‘to comfort oneself’* (sometimes by taking vengeance). See Gen 24:67; 38:12; 2 Sam 13:39; Ps 77:3; Isa 1:24; Jer 31:15; Ezek 14:22; 31:16; 32:31. (This second category represents a polarization of category one.) (3) *The meaning ‘to relent from’ or ‘to repudiate’* a course of action which is already underway is also possible (see Judg 2:18; 2 Sam 24:16 = 1 Chr 21:15; Pss 90:13; 106:45; Jer 8:6; 20:16; 42:10). (4) *Finally, ‘to retract’ (a statement) or ‘to relent or change one’s mind concerning,’ ‘to deviate from’ (a stated course of action)* is possible (see Exod 32:12, 14; 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 110:4; Isa 57:6; Jer 4:28; 15:6; 18:8, 10; 26:3, 13, 19; Ezek 24:14; Joel 2:13-14; Am 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2; Zech 8:14). The first category applies here because the context speaks of God’s grief and emotional pain (see the following statement in v. 6) as a result of a past action (his making humankind).” [NET Study Bible, 18]

Is there a contradiction? – Those who speak of the ‘*apparent contradiction*’ base their arguments on the following verses which clearly states the Lord does not repent:

‘God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent’ (Num 23:19 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, RSV, ASV, YLT, Amplified, NKJV, NASB 1995; most English translations, ‘*change His mind*’ or something similar)

‘And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.’ (1 Sam 15:29 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, Douay-Rheims, RSV, ASV; most English translations, ‘*change His mind*’ or a few, ‘*have regret*’)

But our verse in Gen 6:6 as well as a handful of other verses speak of the Lord repenting:

Moses interceding for Israel as they are led out of Egypt: *‘Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.... And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.’* (Exod 32:12, 14 KJV; see also Darby, RSV, ASV, YLT; most English translations, ‘*change your mind*’ or ‘*relent*’ or something similar)

The Lord raising up judges to deliver Israel because of their oppression: *‘And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.’* (Judg 2:18 KJV; see also Darby, ASV, YLT; some English translations have something such as ‘*relenting, change His mind*’ or something similar; many versions understand the Hebrew word differently: ‘*was moved to pity, had compassion, felt sorry for them, would have mercy*’)

The Lord when King Saul sinned: *‘It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments’* (1 Sam 15:11 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, Douay-Rheims, RSV, ASV; most English translations, ‘*I regret*’ or ‘*I am sorry*’)

Again regarding King Saul: *‘and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.’* (1 Sam 15:35 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, Douay-Rheims, RSV, ASV, YLT; most English translations, ‘*was sorry*’ or ‘*regretted*’)

When David sinned in the numbering of Israel: *‘And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand.’* (2 Sam 24:16 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, RSV, ASV, YLT; most translations ‘*relented, changed His mind*’ or something similar)

The Lord using the potter as an illustration for Jeremiah: *‘If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.’* (Jer 18:10 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, Douay-Rheims, RSV, ASV; most English translations, ‘*I will relent, I will reverse My decision, I will not carry out, I will change my mind,*’ or something similar)

The Lord speaking to Judah through Jeremiah, if Judah repents, the Lord will withhold judgment: *‘If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.... Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.’* (Jer 26:3, 13 KJV; see also Wycliffe, Geneva 1599, Darby, Douay-Rheims, RSV, ASV, YLT, NASB 1995; most English translations, ‘*relent, change His mind*’ or something similar)

The elders admonishing Judah to listen to Jeremiah: *‘Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.’ (Jer 26:19 KJV: see also Wycliffe, Geneva 1599, Darby, Douay-Rheims, RSV, ASV, YLT; most English translations, ‘relent, change His mind’ or something similar)*

The response of the Lord to Amos interceding for his people: *‘The Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord.... The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.’ (Amos 7:3, 6 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, RSV, ASV, YLT; most English translations, ‘relented, change His mind’ or something similar)*

The Lord’s response to Nineveh’s turning from their sin: *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.’ (Jonah 3:10 KJV; see also Geneva 1599, Darby, RSV, ASV, YLT, New American Bible Revised Edition); there are great inconsistencies with the verbiage found in other English versions but most have the sense of ‘relented’ or something similar.*

How are these verses to be explained? *As with all things relating to our God, the more we delve into Who He is and What He does, the more inexplicable it becomes.* Who can understand the trinity? Who can understand the two natures of Christ dwelling within one Person? Who can fathom the depths of the Sovereignty of God and man’s responsibility? *So as we consider these questions, there is one sense in which there is a will of God that is absolute, unchanging, and involves all the workings of creation (His workings, angels, mankind, all the inanimate objects of creation) from eternity past unto eternity future. These are His ETERNAL DECREES which are known only to Him and always works out according to His will. When speaking of Who He is and what He does in relation to His eternal decrees, in that sense there is never any repentance, relenting, any changing in the mind of God. His decrees are absolute, perfect, and always accomplished as He designs.*

But those things are way beyond you and I, and we are to work with what has been revealed to us in His Word. *‘The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.’ (Deut 29:29) And in that sense it might be said that any apparent ‘repentance’ or ‘changes’ of what God does in relation to mankind is dependent upon what man does. It is not that the nature of God changes; He is always holy and acts in love. But since His intrinsic nature does not change, when man sins God acts in judgment; when man repents, God relents in His judgment. His nature does not change but His action towards mankind changes according to what mankind does.*

“‘Regret’ or ‘repent’ may suggest a mere change of attitude, but when God ‘repents,’ he starts to act differently. Here and in 1 Sam 15:11 and Jer 18:10 he regrets some good thing he has done for his people, whereas in Exod 32:12, 14; 2 Sam 24:16; Amos 7:3, 6 he repents of some evil he is carrying out.... [Divine] repentance is a response to man’s changes of heart, whether for better or worse.” [Wenham, 1:144]

“God’s attitude toward man is conditioned by man’s attitude toward Him.” [Morris, 175]

God changed His direction because the people changed. When there is true repentance, God forgives.” [Ham, 173f]

Using words like *‘repent, relent, change His mind’* could be described as anthropomorphisms, or the attributing human characteristics or behavior to God.

“The force of ‘it repented the Lord,’ may be gathered from the explanatory ‘it grieved Him at His heart.’ This shows that the repentance of God does not presuppose any variableness in His nature or His purposes. In this sense God never repents of anything (1 Sam 15:29). The repentance of God is an anthropomorphic expression for the pain of the divine love at the sin of man, and signifies that ‘God is hurt no less by the atrocious sins of men than if they pierced His heart with mortal anguish’ [Calvin].” [Keil, 1:139f]

“[Not] that repentance, properly speaking, can fall upon God, for he never changes his mind or alters his purposes, though he sometimes changes the course and dispensations of his providence. This is speaking by an anthropopathy, after the manner of men, because God determined to do, and did something similar to men, when they repent of any thing.” [Gill, 1:47]

and it grieved Him to His heart. — This gives the reason for His *‘being sorry’* (NKJV) or His *‘regret’* (ESV) for making man.

grieved — Hebrew, *‘ātsavh*, *‘to hurt, pain, grieve.’* *“The root ‘ātsavh is used to express the most intense form of human emotion, a mixture of rage and bitter anguish. Dinah’s brothers felt this way after she was raped; so did Jonathan when he heard Saul planned to kill David; and David reacted similarly when he heart of Absalom’s death (34:7; 1 Sam 20:34; 2 Sam 19:3[2]). A deserted wife feels this way (Isa 54:6). The word is used of God’s feelings in only two other passages (Ps 78:40; Isa 63:10). Only here is the verb supplemented by the phrase ‘to his heart,’ underlining the strength of God’s reaction to human sinfulness.” [Wenham, 1:144f]*

THE IMPASSIBILITY OF GOD — Theologians who teach *‘God is impassible’* (meaning *‘incapable of suffering or feeling pain’*) without qualification are unbalanced. ***In an attempt to maintain the loftiness and majesty of our God, they diminish His ability to feel emotions.*** As with most truths, when taken to the extreme, the truth becomes an error (*‘God is sovereign’* but taken to the extreme of eliminating the responsibility of man it becomes an error. *‘Man is responsible’* but taken to the extreme of eliminating the sovereignty of God it becomes an error. *‘Jesus was human’* but taken to the extreme of eliminating His deity it becomes an error. And so on, *ad infinitum*). As it relates to our passage, there are those who would say this is only an anthropomorphism since *‘God is beyond our human emotions’* and *‘mere man cannot effect our sovereign God.’* That is an extreme and a misunderstanding of Scripture as a whole.

“It is easy, of course, to dismiss such allusions as anthropopathisms, and to feel that they can tell us nothing about the essential nature of God. But verses like this remind us that the God of the OT is not beyond the capability of feeling pain, chagrin, and remorse. To call him the Impassible Absolute is but part of the truth.” [Hamilton, 1:274]

“God is no robot. We know him as a personal, living God, not a static principle, who while having transcendent purposes to be sure also engages intimately with his creation. Our God is incomparably [‘immeasurably’] affected by, even pained by, the sinner’s rebellion. Acknowledging the passibility (emotions) of God does not diminish the immutability of his promissory purposes. Rather, his feelings and actions toward men, such as judgment or forgiveness, are always inherently consistent with his essential person and just and gracious resolve (Jas 1:17). When we consider the metaphor of God as a feeling

person who loves, is angry, and grieves, the aim of the figure is to point to a mitigated correspondence between human experience and God. This does not say that the emotions of humans and God are equivalent in their entirety either in intensity or in quality, for God does not grieve in the same way as men and woman. Nor is he angry in the same fashion as sinful mortals, but to conclude that such language reveals nothing of God's essential personhood makes all such language pointless. ***For what purpose is there in describing God in any terms understandable to us other than to reveal something of God's mysterious nature? In Christ we see God so moved by grief and love that he chooses to take upon himself the very suffering of our sins. Do we not appeal to the incarnational role of Christ as our vision of the nature of his Father (cf. Matt 23:37 par.)? God is not a dispassionate accountant overseeing the books of human endeavor; rather he makes a personal decision out of sorrowful loss to judge Noah's wicked generation.*** [Mathews, 1:344]

"Talk as we will of impassibility, we must think of God as having affections, something connecting him with the human, and, therefore, human in some aspect or measure of agreement. We must either have in our thoughts a blank intellectuality making only an intellectual difference between good and evil (if that can be called any difference at all), or we are compelled to bring in something emotional, and that, too, with a measure of intensity corresponding to other difference by which the divine exceeds the human. Without this, the highest form of scientific or philosophic theism has no more of religion than the blankest atheism. ***We could as well worship a system of mathematics as such a theistic indifference. The emotional in view of the true and the right, the evil and the false, is a higher thing than the intellectual perception of them, even could we suppose such separable cognition. We do not rightly see the true, or truly see the right, unless we love it; we do not truly see the evil or the false, unless we have the opposite affection. It belongs to the very essence or being of the ideas. Such emotional is the highest thing in man, and is it rational to suppose that all this is a blank in the higher being of God? ... We do not raise the objection of anthropopathism when love is ascribed to God, and yet it is as strictly anthropopathic as the divine indignation, or the divine sorrow. An unemotional love is utterly inconceivable.***" [Lange, 1:288]

The key to understanding emotion in God is to look to God-incarnate:

"Perhaps we would do better, after all, to adhere to Luther's recommendation concerning this mystery: ***'I follow this general rule: to avoid as much as possible any questions that carry us to the throne of the Supreme Majesty. It is better and safer to stay at the manger of Christ the Man. For there is very great danger in involving oneself in the mazes of the Divine Being.'***" [Mathews, 1:344; quoting Luther's Works 2:45]

"For while indeed the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, we can accept what the Infinite One reveals concerning himself. Jesus Christ reveals the very heart of the Father. He came for that very purpose. The grief of Jesus will reveal the grief of the Father. Suppose, therefore, we allow as an exposition of this difficulty Luke 19:41-44: ***'And when he draw nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."***'" [Carroll, 1:176]

v. 7 – So the Lord said, — The Lord did not actually speak to any one, but ‘*He resolved, decided,*’ and introduces God’s thoughts to Himself.

“I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, — This is usually understood as ‘*I will destroy*’ but the verb *māchāh* has much more significance than mere destruction. ***In its most basic sense the word signifies the ‘erasure of writing from a book;’*** e.g.,

‘Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off [wash them off] into the bitter water.’ (Num 5:23)

Metaphorically, “‘*Yet now, if You will forgive their sin — but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.*” And the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.”’ (Exod 32:32, 33)

‘Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.’ (Ps 69:28)

Therefore whenever the Bible speaks of blotting out anyone’s name or memorial, it means its erasure – literal or figurative – from the books of remembrance; and whenever reference is made to the blotting out of iniquities, their expunction from the Heavenly Court’s book of remembrance is intended. ***From this meaning ‘to rub out, to completely remove one thing from another’ comes a secondary meaning: ‘to cleanse, to purify something from what was on it before;’*** e.g.,

‘I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.’ (2 Kings 21:13)

‘She eats and wipes her mouth’ (Prov 30:20)

“In our verse, and further on in the section of the Flood (7:4, 23), the verb signifies to ‘expunge’ from the face of the ground, just as one rubs off writing from a book, or, generally, one thing from another.” [Cassuto, 1:305] ***“It’s interesting that there has been virtually no evidence of the pre-Flood civilization found in the fossil record. Such a civilization has been blotted out of the book of creation so to speak.”*** [Ham, 174]

man and beast and creeping things and flying creatures of the air, — The destruction of the animal kingdom along with humanity demonstrates that mankind’s wickedness has cosmic implications. ***“The further fact that all life is bound together is made equally plain, with man’s fellow creatures sharing his doom and, as the story develops, his deliverance – a theme taken further in Romans 8:19-21.”*** [Kidner, 86] ***“We all need to understand the gravity of man’s sin and what this has done to creation. As we look on the fallen world with so much death, disease, and suffering, we should be reminded that our sin did that, and fall on our knees before a holy God in repentance.”*** [Ham, 174]

for I am sorry that I have made them.” — Here recur the two verbs that appeared at the beginning of v. 6.

v. 8 – But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord. — Note the word-play [anagram]: *nōach*, Noah – *chēn*, favour. “Not all is lost however. There is in the midst of the wicked generation a favored man, Noah (6:8). God graciously preserves Noah’s lineage (8:1) and gives him a ‘name’ (shēm), which is his son, ‘Shem’ (shēm; 11:10-26); by Shem’s family the Lord gives Abraham, upon whom he confers a ‘name’ (12:2; cf. also 2 Sam 7:9).” [Mathews, 1:339] ***“Already at this stage the Bible wishes to inform us that at the very moment that the Lord***

decreed punishment on the wicked, He prepared, by means of the righteous man, salvation for the world and the fulfilment of His promises to mankind. Thus the section ends on a note of grace.” [Cassuto, 1:307]

NOTE THE ‘GRACE’ (‘FAVOR’) OF GOD — “The term ‘favor’ (*chēn*), also translated ‘grace,’ commonly occurs in the formula ‘*found favor in the eyes of*’ (e.g., Abraham, 18:3; Lot, 19:19; Laban, 30:27; Jacob, 32:5 [6]; 33:8, 10, 15; 47:29; Shechem, 34:11; Joseph, 39:4; 50:4; and the Egyptians, 47:25).... It usually indicates securing approval and provision, often in the context of request, whether of man or God.” [Mathews, 1:345f] *“A close study of the word for grace will support the idea that it signifies unmerited favor. If the word is given its proper meaning, it means that the recipients of grace actually deserved the judgment too. The discussion of Noah’s righteousness comes in the next section. Here, Noah received sovereign grace and escaped the catastrophe. No one escapes divine judgment apart from grace. The passage in its entirety is clear enough, in spite of the difficulty of some of the details. God’s people are recipients of grace; they are spared from the divine wrath on the wicked.”* [Ross, 185] *“What a wonderful word is ‘grace,’ here appearing for the first time in Scripture. In sovereign mercy and by the election of grace, God had prepared the heart of Noah to respond in obedient faith to His will.”* [Morris, 177]

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF NOAH — As flushed out further in the NT, *we see the grace that regenerated Noah also sanctified Noah. ‘Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.’* (Gen 6:9). *Ezekiel mentions Noah twice as one of the three most righteous men in history:*

““Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” says the Lord God.... “even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live,” says the Lord God, “they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness.”” (Ezek 14:14, 20)

Noah is mentioned in the Hebrews 11 ‘Godly Hall of Faith’:

‘By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.’ (Heb 11:7)

Peter calls Noah a ‘preacher of righteousness:’

‘... and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly’ (2 Pet 2:5)

“This does not mean that Noah’s character automatically secures divine favor, for God is under no obligation to bestow his favor. It presupposes a relationship. The proper emphasis in our passage is God’s gracious favor, just as we see his preservation of the human family in chaps. 1-11 despite human sin.” [Mathews, 1:346] *“‘To find favor’ is a formal expression often used when someone is making a request of a superior (e.g., 33:8, 10) or when someone in authority helps someone without status (39:4). It is sometimes used in prayer when men are asking favors of God (e.g., 18:3; Exod 33:12, 13, 16), but it is very rare for it to be said outright that a man has found favor in God’s sight. One such example is Moses (Exod 33:17). This sentence therefore puts Noah on a par with Moses as one of the greatest saints of the old covenant and of course leads us to expect that Noah will escape the coming cataclysm.”* [Wenham, 1:145]