

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 6, Sons of God and Daughters of Men (Gen 5:1-6:8) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 6, Sons of God and Daughters of Men (Gen. 5:1-6:8), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Genesis Session 6 lecture analyzes Genesis 5:1-6:8, focusing on the genealogies of Sethites and Cainites. **He emphasizes the importance of biblical genealogies**, highlighting God's superintendence of history and the contrast between Enoch's righteous life and the wickedness of others, including Lamech. **The lecture explores the controversial "sons of God and daughters of men" passage**, offering multiple interpretations of the identities of the "sons of God" and their actions, and also discussing the meaning of the Nephilim. **Mathews connects the increasing wickedness to the intermarriage between these groups**, culminating in God's decision to flood the earth. Finally, **he explains God's preservation of Noah** as a sign of hope and a new beginning.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Mathews_Genesis_
Session06.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 6, Sons of God and Daughters of Men (Gen. 5:1-6:8)

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Genesis Session 6:

Briefing Document: Genesis 5:1-6:8 - "Sons of God and Daughters of Men"

Overview: This session focuses on the transition from the genealogies of Genesis 5 to the narrative of increasing human wickedness leading to the Flood in Genesis 6. Dr. Mathews emphasizes the importance of genealogies in understanding God's superintendence over history, the unity of the human family, and the contrasting paths of the Sethites and Cainites. He then explores the controversial passage about the "sons of God" and "daughters of men," offering two interpretations, ultimately leaning towards the Sethite interpretation. The session concludes with the rationale for God's judgment through the Flood and the hope embodied in Noah.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Importance of Genealogies:

- Genealogies are not mere lists but reveal how God "superintends the history of the outworking of his promissory blessings for the human family." They connect the universal human family (Adam to Noah) with the particular family of blessing (Shem to Abraham).
- Genealogies demonstrate the unity of the human family, both positively through the Sethites and negatively through the Cainites.
- Linear genealogies (like Genesis 5) trace a single line of descent, while segmented genealogies (like Genesis 10) show the branching out of a family.

1. Contrasting Figures: Enoch and Lamech:

- Enoch's life deviates from the typical pattern of "lived and died." He "walked with God," a phrase indicating a righteous relationship, and was "taken away" by God, suggesting translation into God's presence rather than death. This offers hope of life beyond death.
- Lamech names his son Noah, anticipating he will bring "comfort" (playing on the Hebrew word), but Noah ultimately embodies a new Adam who delivers humanity from depravity through the Ark.

1. Long Lifespans:

- The long lifespans in Genesis 5 are unusual and cannot be easily explained. Dr. Mathews reviews interpretations including figurative use of numbers or a reference to ancestral lineage, but ultimately acknowledges the difficulties.
- He notes parallels to the long reigns in the Sumerian King List, suggesting the idea of long lifespans existed in the ancient world.
- The gradual reduction in lifespan from Genesis 5 to later figures like Abraham and Moses indicates the increasing corruption of both humanity and nature due to sin. "...the reduction in the years of the lifespan testified to the sinful condition and its implications for humanity and life as well as nature's corruption due to sin."

1. Bridge to the Flood Narrative:

- The narrative of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" serves as a bridge, explaining the escalating violence and wickedness that necessitate God's judgment through the Flood.
- The intermarriage between these two groups represents a crossing of boundaries, a concept that would have resonated with the original readers, especially in the context of Israel's separation from neighboring idol-worshipping groups.

1. Interpretation of "Sons of God" and "Daughters of Men":

- **Two Main Interpretations: Angelic View:** The "sons of God" are interpreted as angels (or fallen angels/demons), who are attracted to the beauty of human women and have children with them. This view finds support in the use of the phrase "sons of God" for angels in Job. The focus is on the sexual obsession of angelic beings that transgress their own proper sphere of habitation, the heavenly realm.

- **Sethite View:** The "sons of God" are understood as the Godly lineage of the Sethites, while "daughters of men" refer to any women, potentially from either the Cainite or Sethite lines. The problem arises when the Sethites intermarry indiscriminately with these women, abandoning the boundaries of their Godly heritage, which was established through Seth as a new lineage in which worship of God and a relationship with him flourished after the murder of Abel. Dr. Mathews leans towards this interpretation because of the narrative flow of chapters 4 and 5 which contrast the two lineages of the Cainites and the Sethites.
- Dr. Mathews emphasizes that the problem is primarily one of human sinfulness, not a focus on angels as the agents of sin. "...there is no word against angels. That all of the terminology that's used for the practices and the judgment of God would be men or humankind...the concern is human and the concern is not with angels."

1. **God's Response to Sin:**

- The increased human population is accompanied by a parallel increase in sin and wickedness. "So, there's an explosion of procreation, and concomitant with that is an explosion of sinfulness."
- The phrase "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only and then evil," highlights the utter depravity and moral corruption of humanity.
- God's response is that "My spirit will not contend with humanity forever," limiting human lifespan to 120 years, which may be a reference to the average lifespan, or an opportunity to repent, or both. "And therefore, the idea of mortal as flesh as opposed to eternal spirit is in mind."
- God's grief at humanity's corruption is depicted in anthropomorphic terms, reflecting his love for his creation and the pain he feels at their wickedness.
- God plans to "wipe mankind...from the face of the earth," reflecting a reversal of creation, returning the world to its unformed state. The Flood is God's necessary judgment for human sin.

1. **The Nephilim:**

- The Nephilim are not necessarily the offspring of the intermarriage of the sons of God and daughters of men but rather contemporaries. They were "heroes of old, men of renown" or "men of name," known for their strength and wickedness, representing a "tradition, a heritage" of violence.
- Dr. Mathews suggests the mention of Nephilim in Numbers may draw upon this earlier tradition, serving as an iconic representation of wickedness and power. "So when they look at the Nephilim and they look at the Canaanites...they draw on that language to say, look, we're overwhelmed."

1. **Hope in Noah:**

- Despite the pervasive wickedness, God preserves Noah, who is a "righteous man" following in the tradition of Enoch.
- Noah and his family are a "remnant" through whom God will establish a new covenant. "...yet God takes steps to curb this out-of-control wickedness, and that's through the judgment of the floodwaters. And then how he steps in and redeems a remnant, a family, the Noahic family..."

Quotes:

- "...how God recognizes and superintends, is a better term, how he superintends the history of the outworking of his promissory blessings for the human family."
- "And then Enoch walked with God, that kind of repetition to reiterate his holy lifestyle. Then he was no more. This is very cryptic...God took him away."
- "So, he named him Noah and he will Noah us."
- "And so, we see an ongoing reduction. And this is probably due, as I said, on the corruption of the human condition and nature's corruption."
- "...the reduction in the years of the lifespan testified to the sinful condition and its implications for humanity and life as well as nature's corruption due to sin."
- "So, there's an explosion of procreation, and concomitant with that is an explosion of sinfulness."
- "...there is no word against angels. That all of the terminology that's used for the practices and the judgment of God would be men or humankind...the concern is human and the concern is not with angels."
- "And therefore, the idea of mortal as flesh as opposed to eternal spirit is in mind."
- "So when they look at the Nephilim and they look at the Canaanites...they draw on that language to say, look, we're overwhelmed."
- "...yet God takes steps to curb this out-of-control wickedness, and that's through the judgment of the floodwaters. And then how he steps in and redeems a remnant, a family, the Noahic family..."

Conclusion: This session lays the groundwork for understanding the Flood account, presenting it not as an arbitrary act of God but as a necessary response to humanity's deeply rooted and escalating sinfulness. While many passages in this text are deeply problematic to interpret, Dr. Mathews encourages an awareness of the various interpretive options and maintains an important focus on the main narrative themes. It emphasizes God's sovereignty over history, the consequences of human sin, and the enduring hope of God's redemptive plan, specifically through the lineage of the Sethites and ultimately through Noah.

4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 6, Sons of God and Daughters of Men (Gen. 5:1-6:8)

Genesis: The Sons of God and Daughters of Men Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the significance of genealogies in the Bible, according to Dr. Mathews?
2. What is a linear genealogy, and where is it found in Genesis? What about segmented genealogy?
3. How does the story of Enoch deviate from the typical pattern in the genealogy of Genesis 5, and what is its significance?
4. What does Lamech hope for in naming his son Noah, and how does that relate to the curse on the ground?
5. What are some of the explanations given for the long lifespans of the patriarchs in Genesis 5?
6. How do the genealogies of Cain and Seth function as a bridge to the narrative of the intermarriage described in Genesis 6:1-4?
7. What is the traditional view of the "sons of God," and where does it come from?
8. What is the second interpretation of "sons of God" given by Mathews, and what is the logic behind this approach?
9. What is the meaning of God's declaration that "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh"?
10. Who were the Nephilim, according to Dr. Mathews, and what is their significance in the context of Genesis 6?

Answer Key

1. Genealogies are important because they show how God superintends the outworking of his promissory blessings for the human family, connecting the universal family from Adam to the specific family of Abraham. They also highlight the unity of the human family, both positively and negatively, through the Sethites and Cainites.

2. A linear genealogy names one descendant from each father, as seen in Genesis 5. A segmented genealogy, such as the one in chapter 10, names all the descendants of a father.
3. Enoch is said to have "walked with God" and was "taken away" by God without experiencing death, unlike the others in the genealogy, suggesting a destiny beyond death through a translated life into God's presence. His story introduces the idea that death isn't the end.
4. Lamech hopes that Noah will bring comfort from the toil and pain caused by the cursed ground, echoing a play on the word "Noah" and the Hebrew word for "comfort." In this he sees Noah as a new Adam, delivering a fresh start for the human race.
5. Some have suggested the numbers are figurative, or represent an ancestral lineage, but these explanations are problematic. Mathews suggests the lifespans did indeed get shorter because of a deteriorating world and the ongoing corruption of human nature and sin.
6. The genealogies of Cain and Seth contrast the righteous and unrighteous lineages; this contrast highlights the boundary violation that results in the intermarriage in Genesis 6:1-4, as well as the explosion of sin. This intermarriage then acts as a bridge to the explanation of the wickedness of humanity and the need for the flood.
7. The traditional view interprets the "sons of God" as angels, particularly fallen angels, or demons, who have transgressed their designated sphere and are driven by sexual obsession for human women. This view is drawn from other uses of the phrase in the Old Testament, such as in the book of Job.
8. The second interpretation sees "sons of God" as referring to the "godly offspring" of the Sethites and "daughters of men" as a generic term for the offspring of Cainites or Sethites, emphasizing that the boundaries of Godly lineage were disregarded. This approach aligns with the narrative of the righteous and unrighteous lineages in chapters four and five.
9. God's declaration limits his life-giving spirit by setting an impending, mortal destiny for humankind as a result of the intermarriage. This statement references the breath of life given to the first man in Gen 2:7, in contrast with the "flesh" of humankind, emphasizing that their state is mortal, not eternal.

10. Mathews suggests the Nephilim were not a race of giants but rather were contemporaries and warriors who were “heroes of old,” and an “icon of violence” rather than giants who had a reputation. They had a reputation as fierce and strong, and were used later to describe later, formidable foes.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the genealogy in Genesis 5, analyzing its structure, the exceptions to the pattern (such as Enoch), and the overall message it conveys about God's role in history.
2. Compare and contrast the two interpretations of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective and drawing connections to the broader context of Genesis 1-6.
3. Analyze the relationship between sin, intermarriage, and the reduction of human lifespans according to Genesis 5 and 6. How do these concepts work together to create a picture of a corrupt world before the flood?
4. How does the narrative in Genesis 5-6 prepare the reader for the flood account in subsequent chapters, focusing on the intermarriage of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" and its consequences?
5. Explore the concept of "boundaries" as presented in the passage, both literally and figuratively. How does the crossing of boundaries lead to corruption, and how does this relate to Israel's identity and the need for separation?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Genealogy:** A record or account of the ancestry and descent of a person, family, or group.
- **Linear Genealogy:** A genealogy that traces descent through a single line, naming one descendant from each generation.
- **Segmented Genealogy:** A genealogy that branches out, naming all of the descendants of a particular patriarch or family head.
- **Sethites:** The descendants of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve, often associated with the righteous lineage in Genesis.
- **Cainites:** The descendants of Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, often associated with the unrighteous lineage in Genesis.
- **Translation:** The act of being taken up or transferred to another place or state, as in the case of Enoch, without experiencing death.
- **Nephilim:** Transliterated from Hebrew, it is a name applied to heroes of old; giants, strong warriors, or, perhaps, vicious, violent people from ancient times.
- **Sons of God:** A phrase used in Genesis 6:1-4 that has two main interpretations: (1) angelic or demonic beings, and (2) the righteous or godly descendants of Seth.
- **Daughters of Men:** In Genesis 6:1-4, this phrase refers to human women, whose inclusion in the narrative is seen as part of the moral decline of the human race.
- **Elohim:** The Hebrew word for God, which can be used to refer to the one true God, a plural group of gods, or in a descriptive way, as in "godly."
- **Anthropomorphic:** Describing God in human terms.

5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 6, Sons of God and Daughters of Men (Gen. 5:1-6:8), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source, formatted with markdown:

FAQ on Genesis 5:1-6:8

1. **Why are genealogies important in the Bible, particularly in Genesis 5?**
Genealogies are crucial because they demonstrate God's superintendence of history and the outworking of his promissory blessings for the human family. Genesis 5, specifically, connects the lineage from Adam to Noah and then to Abraham through the Shemite line (as seen in chapter 11). They highlight the unity of the human family, both positively through the Sethites and negatively through the Cainites. Additionally, they provide a framework to understand how God's plan continues despite sin's increasing influence.
2. **What makes Enoch's story unique in the genealogy of Genesis 5, and what is meant by the phrase "he walked with God"?** Enoch's story deviates from the pattern of "lived and died." Instead, it says he "walked with God," implying a close, righteous relationship. This is further emphasized by the statement that "God took him away," suggesting he did not experience death but was translated into God's presence. This highlights a hope beyond death, a different destiny than the typical pattern of mortality in a fallen world. "Walking with God" signifies a life characterized by righteousness and obedience.
3. **What is the significance of Lamech naming his son Noah?** Lamech names his son Noah, which sounds similar to the Hebrew word for "comfort". Lamech expresses the hope that Noah will bring comfort from the toil and pain caused by the curse on the ground. This hope is further significant as Noah eventually becomes a "new Adam" through whom God would deliver a new start for humanity after the flood, preserving a family in a vessel he built.

4. **How should we understand the long lifespans mentioned in Genesis 5?** While the exact interpretation of the long lifespans remains debated, it is likely that the extremely long lifespans in Genesis 5 were historical in some manner that is currently unknown. The text is clear, however, that the ages diminish through the generations and later on with other well known Biblical figures, likely due to the corruption of the human condition and the deterioration of the natural world. There are other ancient near eastern texts that speak of extraordinarily long reigns (not life spans), such as the Sumerian King List, that point to an ancient understanding that humans lived longer lives than we do today.
5. **What is the primary problem with the intermarriage between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" in Genesis 6?** The intermarriage described in Genesis 6 is problematic because it represents a crossing of boundaries that results in increased wickedness. It signifies a turning away from the righteousness of the Sethite lineage. This intermarriage led to a further explosion of sinfulness, which ultimately provoked God's judgment. The core issue is the corruption caused by a mixing of those who followed God and those who did not, resulting in a generation far more wicked than previously known.
6. **What are the main interpretations of who the "sons of God" are in Genesis 6:2, and what interpretation is preferred by the lecturer?** There are two main interpretations: (1) *Angels/Demons*: This traditional view interprets the "sons of God" as fallen angels or demons who transgressed their sphere and took human wives based on their beauty. (2) *Godly Lineage*: This view, which the lecturer prefers, understands the "sons of God" as the Godly offspring of the Sethite lineage, in contrast to the "daughters of men," who represent any offspring who are not faithful to God, or the Cainites. The primary reasons for preferring the second option are a close reading of the surrounding text, specifically the two lineages being presented in chapters four and five, with the clear theme of intermarriage between them being established in Chapter 6.
7. **What does the phrase "My spirit shall not always strive with man" in Genesis 6:3 mean, and what do the 120 years signify?** "My spirit shall not always strive with man" likely refers to the fact that God's life-giving breath will not continue to strive with humanity's immorality. The "120 years" is interpreted by the lecturer to be a reduction of the human lifespan, which was then further reduced later in the Biblical narrative. Some interpretations will take the 120 years as a window of time before the flood was to come.

8. **Who were the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4, and how should their appearance be understood in the context of the passage?** The Nephilim were not necessarily a race of giants as is commonly believed. They are described as "heroes of old, men of renown," and were contemporaries with the sons of God and daughters of men, not their offspring as many believe. They appear to be a symbol of viciousness and violence that existed during the time of this intermarriage. The lecturer posits that they were not necessarily a race of giants born of the intermarriage, but rather a known group of warriors with reputations and that the reference to them, including later references to Nephilim, is metaphorical or symbolic rather than literal.