

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Session 15, Genesis 6-9, The Flood Narrative Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Genesis, Session 15, Genesis 6-9, The Flood Narrative, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Robert Vannoy's Old Testament History course examines the biblical flood narrative in Genesis 6-9, exploring its duration, cause, and historicity. Several interpretations of Genesis 6:1-4, concerning the "sons of God" and "daughters of men," are considered: a mythological approach, an interpretation involving angels, a Sethite/Cainite interpretation, and a kingship view. The lecture also compares the biblical flood account to similar Babylonian flood stories, noting both similarities and significant differences in details, while arguing for the biblical account's historical accuracy despite these parallels. Finally, the difficulty of establishing a precise date for the flood is discussed.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Vannoy, Genesis, Session 15 – 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).**



**Vannoy_Genesis_Se
ssion15.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 15, Genesis 6-9, The Flood Narrative

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture transcript, "Vannoy_History_EN_Lecture15_Gen6_Flood.pdf":

Briefing Document: Genesis Flood Narrative (Gen. 6-9)

Source: Lecture Transcript by Robert Vannoy, "Old Testament History, Lecture 15: The Flood Narrative (Gen. 6-9)"

Date: Not specified in transcript

Overview: This lecture focuses on the biblical flood narrative in Genesis 6-9, analyzing the extent and duration of the flood, its causes, the controversial passage about "sons of God" and "daughters of men," the historicity of the flood and comparing it with similar Babylonian flood stories.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Duration of the Flood:

- The flood lasted approximately one year and ten days, from the 17th day of the second month of Noah's 600th year to the 27th day of the second month of the following year.
- The lecturer acknowledges discussion about solar vs lunar year calculations but emphasizes the flood's extraordinary nature: "...this wasn't a normal annual flood. This was something of a magnitude that was unparalleled."

1. Cause of the Flood:

- The primary cause of the flood was the wickedness of humanity. 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." (Genesis 6:5)
- "...the earth was corrupt for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." (Genesis 6:12)
- "...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21)
- The lecturer emphasizes the intensity, inwardness, inclusiveness, exclusiveness and continuousness of human evil.

- The lecturer stresses that this evil is seen as congenital, a result of the fall, not learned behavior.
1. **Sons of God and Daughters of Men (Gen. 6:1-4):**
 - This passage precedes the stated reasons for the flood (Gen 6:5-7) and provides an example of the kind of wickedness present at the time.
 - The lecturer explores four primary interpretations:
 - **Mythological Approach:** (Rejected by Vannoy). Critical scholars see this as mythology, with divine beings marrying earthly women and producing a race of giants, not to be taken literally.
 - **The Angels View:** (Viewed with skepticism). The "sons of God" were fallen angels who had sexual relations with human women, producing the Nephilim (giants). The lecturer raises objections to this view:
 - The judgment in verse 3 is on men, not angels.
 - Angels are not mentioned explicitly in the immediate or broader context.
 - The concept of angels engaging in sexual relations is "totally foreign to Hebrew thought."
 - References to Jude 6 are not necessarily related to spatial departure of angels.
 - **The Sethite View:** The "sons of God" are the descendants of Seth (the godly line), and the "daughters of men" are the descendants of Cain (the ungodly line). The sin was the mixed marriage of the two. Objections to this view include:
 - It forces the Hebrew term *ha'adam* (men/mankind) to have two different meanings in consecutive verses.
 - It doesn't explain why the offspring of these marriages would be the Nephilim and Giborim (giants).
 - **The Kingship View:** (Preferred by Vannoy). The "sons of God" (better translated "sons of the gods") refers to pre-flood kings who, in keeping with Near Eastern customs, were called "sons of gods," and the "daughters of men" are simply women in general. The sin was polygamy, the kings taking as many wives as they wanted.

- This view interprets the use of "of" (min) in the text to mean "even all that they chose," referring to the number of wives they took, not specific wives from a specific group.
- It is supported by ancient Near Eastern cultures which frequently considered kings to be of divine origin.
- This view also better explains the emergence of the "Nephilim" and "Giborim" (mighty men).

1. **Violence Factor:**

- The lecturer connects the violence described in Genesis 6:12-13 with the Nephilim, Giborim, and men of renown, suggesting their actions contributed to the earth being "filled with violence".

1. **Historicity of the Flood:**

- The lecturer affirms that the biblical flood story is intended to be understood as a historical event. He cites:
- The flood is presented as a historical event throughout the Bible.
- References in the New Testament (Matthew 24, Hebrews 11, 2 Peter) use the flood as a real event.
- "So it seems clear that the Bible represents this as something that actually happened."

1. **Comparison with Babylonian Flood Stories:**

- Many have suggested the biblical story is simply a modified version of the Babylonian stories.
- The lecturer acknowledges that the two stories share a very similar structure, such as:
- A great flood destroys almost all human life.
- A few people and animals are saved by a ship.
- Divine revelation warns of the impending flood.
- Instruction to build an ark or boat.
- The boat has multiple stories.

- The boat rests on a mountain.
- Birds are released to determine the conditions outside.
- Sacrifices are made after exiting the boat.
- There are also various versions of the Mesopotamian flood story such as Sumerian (Ziusudra), Gilgamesh (Utnapishtim), and Atrahasis Epics.
- Despite the structural similarities, the lecturer emphasizes many variations in details. For example, descriptions of:
 - The shape of the boat (cube vs. rectangular)
 - Number of decks/stories (six vs. three)
 - Specific dimensions of the boat.
- The lecturer concludes that, given the strong structural similarities, there must be *some* kind of relationship between the stories, which will be discussed in the next session.

Quotes:

- "In other words, the evil is congenital; it's not learned. Something subsequent to the fall that is characteristic of man as man. He has a sinful nature. He is evil from his youth."
- "It came to pass when men began to multiply, men generally, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men generally. They were fair and they took them wives of all whom they chose."
- "God looked down upon the earth, behold it is corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them.'"
- "So it seems clear that the Bible represents this as something that actually happened."
- "Such is the ancient flood story of Babylon, which was purified of its polytheistic elements, and survived among the Israelites. The two sources are now woven together into a single moving story in Genesis 6:5 to 9:17."
- "Obviously there are instances in Scripture where angels take on the form of human beings. That's true. But then it is a large next step to say that they were

capable or interested in sexual relationships with human women. This would be the only instance of that in Scripture, if it is that."

Conclusion: This lecture provides a detailed analysis of the biblical flood narrative, exploring its various aspects and interpretations. The lecturer's own leanings are towards the divine kingship view of Genesis 6:1-4, but is open that this is a difficult and complex text to fully understand. He seeks to establish the historicity of the flood while also noting similarities and differences with extra-biblical flood accounts, which he will explore further.

This briefing document provides a condensed version of the transcript. Please ask if you have further questions.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 15, Genesis 6-9, The Flood Narrative

The Genesis Flood Narrative: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the lecture, what is the approximate duration of the flood described in Genesis?
2. What is the primary cause of the flood, according to Genesis 6:5-8, and what specific qualities of evil are emphasized?
3. What are the three main interpretations of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" in Genesis 6:1-4?
4. What is the "mythological" approach to the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" and why does the lecture reject this view?
5. What is the "angels view" of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" and why does the lecture find this view problematic?
6. What is the Sethite view of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men", and what is one of its major problems according to the lecture?
7. What is the Kingship view of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men," and what does it suggest about the sin committed?
8. What evidence does the lecture cite from the New Testament that the flood was considered a real historical event?
9. What similarities exist between the Biblical flood story and the Babylonian flood stories?
10. According to the lecture, what is one example of a difference in detail between the biblical ark and the ark in the Gilgamesh Epic?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The flood lasted approximately one year and ten days, based on the time from when the waters began to rise to when the earth was dry enough for habitation. The lecture acknowledges that different calendar systems might lead to varying exact calculations, but the general duration is about a year.

2. The primary cause of the flood is the extreme wickedness of humanity, with the text emphasizing the intensity, inwardness, inclusiveness, exclusiveness, and continuousness of evil in the hearts of people. This pervasive and unceasing evil grieved God and prompted his decision to send the flood as judgment.
3. The three main interpretations are: (1) the mythological view, which treats the passage as a legend, (2) the angels view, which posits that the "sons of God" were angels, and (3) the Sethite view, which interprets the "sons of God" as the descendants of Seth. Another view discussed is the Kingship View.
4. The mythological approach views the Genesis 6:1-4 passage as a myth borrowed from other ancient cultures, where divine beings married earthly women and produced a race of heroes. The lecture rejects this view as it does not fit with the Old Testament's view of itself.
5. The "angels view" interprets the "sons of God" as fallen angels who entered into physical relationships with women. The lecture finds this problematic because the judgment is primarily on humans rather than the angels, angels are not mentioned in the immediate or broader context, and the concept of angels engaging in sexual relationships is foreign to Hebrew thought.
6. The Sethite view interprets the "sons of God" as descendants of Seth and the "daughters of men" as descendants of Cain, with the sin being mixed marriages between the godly and ungodly lines. One major problem with this view is that it forces the Hebrew term ha'adam (men) to be interpreted in two different ways in successive verses.
7. The Kingship view translates the "sons of God" as "sons of the gods," interpreted as pre-flood kings who were viewed as divine figures, and suggests the sin was polygamy, with these kings taking as many wives as they chose. According to this view, the offspring were "mighty men" in positions of power.
8. The lecture cites Matthew 24:37-39, Hebrews 11:7, and 2 Peter 2:5 and 3:6 to demonstrate that the New Testament treats the flood as a real historical event, drawing analogies and making references to its occurrence as a factual part of human history.
9. The similarities include a great flood destroying most of humanity, a few people and animals spared in a ship, prior warning of the flood, divine instruction to build a ship, a ship with multiple stories, the ship resting on a mountain, sending

out birds to test the conditions, and a sacrifice to God following release from the ship.

10. One key difference is in the shape and size of the ark; in the Biblical account, the ark is a rectangular vessel with three stories, while in the Gilgamesh epic, the ark is described as a cube with six decks.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the various interpretations of Genesis 6:1-4, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each viewpoint. Which interpretation do you find most convincing, and why?
2. Analyze the significance of the flood as a theological event. How does it reveal aspects of God's character, and what lessons can be drawn about sin and judgment?
3. Compare and contrast the biblical flood story with the Babylonian flood stories, considering the similarities and differences. What does the lecture suggest about the relationship between these narratives?
4. Evaluate the arguments for and against the historicity of the flood narrative. How does the lecture address challenges to its historicity, and what does the evidence suggest to you?
5. Examine the implications of the flood for human history and the development of civilization. How does the flood narrative fit into the broader biblical narrative?

Glossary of Key Terms

Atrahasis Epic: An ancient Mesopotamian flood narrative where Atrahasis is the hero.

Baal: A general name for a deity common in the ancient Near East.

Cainite Line: In the Sethite view, the ungodly lineage descended from Cain.

Cubits: An ancient unit of length, roughly equivalent to the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger (approximately 18 inches).

Divine Kingship View: The interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 that understands the "sons of God" as pre-flood kings viewed as divine and the sin as polygamy.

Elohim: A Hebrew word that can be translated as God (singular) or gods (plural).

Gilgamesh Epic: A Mesopotamian epic that includes a flood narrative with Utnapishtim as the hero.

Gibborim: A Hebrew term referring to "mighty men," often used in the context of powerful or renowned individuals.

Ha'adam: A Hebrew term for "men" or "mankind."

Historicity: The quality of being historically true or real.

Lunar Year: A calendar year based on the cycles of the moon.

Mesopotamian: Relating to the ancient region of Mesopotamia, situated in the Tigris-Euphrates river system.

Min: A Hebrew preposition that can be translated as "of," but can also have an explicative meaning, "even all."

Mythological Approach: An interpretation that treats the Genesis 6:1-4 passage as a myth or legend borrowed from other cultures.

Nephilim: A Hebrew term that is often translated as "giants," but may also refer to

warriors.

Partitive: Relating to a part of a whole (e.g., "some of").

Polygamy: The practice of having more than one spouse at the same time.

Sethite Line: In the Sethite view, the godly lineage descended from Seth.

Solar Year: A calendar year based on the cycles of the sun.

Utnapishtim: The hero of the flood story in the Gilgamesh Epic.

Ziusudra: The hero of the flood story in the Sumerian flood myth.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Genesis, Session 15, Genesis 6-9. The Flood Narrative, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: The Genesis Flood Narrative

- **How long did the flood last according to the Genesis account?** The flood lasted for approximately one year and ten days. It began on the 17th day of the second month of Noah's 600th year and ended on the 27th day of the second month of the following year. The text doesn't specify whether it was a solar or lunar year, which would affect the precise calculation of days.
- **What was the primary cause of the flood, according to Genesis?** The primary cause of the flood was the overwhelming wickedness and corruption of humanity. Genesis 6:5-8 emphasizes the great extent and intensity of human evil, describing it as inward, inclusive, exclusive, and continuous, with every imagination of the heart being only evil. God's sorrow over this state led to the decision to destroy mankind and other creatures on Earth. The sinful nature of humanity is also described as being congenital, "evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21).
- **Who are the "sons of God" and "daughters of men" mentioned in Genesis 6:1-4?** There are different interpretations of this passage. The "mythological" view sees them as divine beings marrying earthly women, producing a race of heroes. The "angel" view interprets the "sons of God" as angels entering physical relationships with women, resulting in the Nephilim. However, this view is challenged because the punishment in verse 3 is on men, not angels. The "Sethite" view posits the "sons of God" as the godly line of Seth and the "daughters of men" as the ungodly line of Cain, with the sin being mixed marriage. A final and potentially most viable perspective is the "divine kingship" view. It interprets the "sons of God" as pre-flood kings, who were called "sons of the gods" (elohim, which can be translated as singular or plural), engaging in polygamy with the daughters of men. These unions resulted in a violent class of princes (Nephilim and Giborim).
- **What is the "divine kingship" view of Genesis 6:1-4?** This view interprets the "sons of God" as referring to powerful pre-flood rulers who were considered "sons of the gods" based on ancient Near Eastern customs. The "daughters of men" are simply the general population, and their sin was polygamy, as the kings took as many wives as they desired. This resulted in a class of violent and powerful princes known as the Nephilim and Giborim.

- **How does the Bible represent the flood?** The Bible consistently represents the flood as a real, historical event. References in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 24:37, Hebrews 11:7, 2 Peter 2:5, 2 Peter 3:6) present the flood as a significant historical judgment by God, and thus it is intended to be taken literally.
- **What are the similarities and differences between the biblical flood story and other flood accounts, particularly the Babylonian stories?** There are striking structural similarities between the biblical account and the Babylonian flood stories. Both tell of a great flood that destroys almost all of humanity and involves a select few being spared with some animals on a boat or ark built according to divine instructions. Both also feature birds released to ascertain the conditions outside. Both also mention a sacrifice offered to God after release from the ship. The Bible's flood account differs from the Babylonian accounts in details such as the shape and dimensions of the ark, the number of its decks, and the overall theological underpinnings of the events.
- **How should we understand the similarities between the biblical flood story and other Mesopotamian flood stories?** The similarities are significant enough to suggest a relationship between these accounts. The structure of both stories is remarkably similar, which indicates there is more than just coincidence. There are different versions of Mesopotamian flood stories from Sumeria, Gilgamesh, and Acadian versions of the story. While there are structural similarities across these accounts, there are differences in detail that may stem from local variations and later embellishments. There is not one conclusive and universally accepted answer that best explains these similarities.
- **What challenges exist in determining the precise date of the flood according to the biblical text?** Determining the precise date of the flood using biblical genealogies is difficult because of gaps in the genealogical records. The genealogies provided in Genesis (particularly in chapters 5 and 11) are not complete chronological records and don't provide an unbroken timeline. It is impossible to arrive at an exact date without making assumptions.