

Genesis 6:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt;
for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

Analysis

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon... This passage belongs to the primeval history section (Genesis 1-11) which establishes universal truths about God, humanity, sin, and divine purposes before focusing on Abraham and Israel. These chapters answer fundamental questions about human origins, the spread of wickedness, God's judgment, and the preservation of a righteous remnant.

Recurring patterns emerge: human sin escalating from individual disobedience to societal corruption, divine patience followed by judgment, gracious preservation of a remnant, and covenant promises ensuring redemptive purposes continue. The genealogies connect historical persons, demonstrate the fulfillment of divine promises (blessing and multiplication), and trace the line leading to Abraham and ultimately Christ.

Key theological themes in this section include:

1. sin's destructive progression affecting all humanity
2. God's righteous judgment while preserving mercy
3. human pride and autonomy opposing divine sovereignty
4. cultural development as both blessing and potential idolatry
5. God's sovereign plan advancing despite human rebellion.

These narratives provide the necessary context for understanding God's calling of Abraham and the covenant promises through which all nations will be blessed.

Historical Context

The primeval history (Genesis 1-11) parallels ancient Near Eastern traditions including Sumerian King Lists (pre-flood longevity), Akkadian flood traditions (Atrahasis, Gilgamesh), and Mesopotamian city foundation myths. However, Genesis demythologizes these traditions, presenting monotheistic history rather than polytheistic mythology. The genealogies connecting Adam to Noah to Abraham provide historical framework absent in pagan myths.

Archaeological evidence confirms ancient urbanization (chapter 4's cities), agricultural development, metallurgy, and musical instruments emerging in Mesopotamia's early history. The Babel account reflects Mesopotamian ziggurat construction (stepped pyramid temples), particularly in Babylon. Linguistic diversity requiring explanation was obvious to ancient peoples, making the Babel narrative culturally relevant.

For Israel in covenant with Yahweh, these chapters explained their relationship to surrounding nations. All peoples descended from Noah, but Israel descended from Shem through Abraham—chosen for blessing all nations. The flood demonstrated God's justice and mercy: judging wickedness while preserving the righteous. This pattern would recur throughout Israel's history, assuring them that God's covenant faithfulness endures despite judgment on the wicked.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Wickedness emerge from this passage?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּרְא	אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יָם	אֶת	הָאָרֶץ:	וְהִנֵּה ה	הַשָּׁחַ יָת	כִּי
looked	And God	H853	upon the earth	H2009	and behold it was corrupt	H3588
H7200	H430		H776		H7843	
הַשָּׁחַ יָת	כָּל	בֶּשָׂר ר	אֶת	עַל דִּרְכֵי ו	הָאָרֶץ:	
and behold it was corrupt	H3605	for all flesh	H853	his way	upon the earth	
H7843		H1320		H1870	H776	

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 15:3 (Parallel theme): The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

2 Peter 2:5 (References God): And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Job 33:27 (Parallel theme): He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not;

Genesis 6:8 (Parallel theme): But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Genesis 7:1 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.