

Genesis 9:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

Analysis

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.... 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

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?

3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

תְּאַכְּלُ: לֹא בְשַׂר בְּנֶפֶשׁ וְלִם
But flesh with the life thereof which is the blood H3808 thereof shall ye not eat H398

H389 H1320 H5315 H1818

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 12:23 (Blood): Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

Deuteronomy 12:16 (Blood): Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

Deuteronomy 15:23 (Blood): Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

Acts 15:20 (Blood): But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

Leviticus 7:26 (Blood): Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, whether it be of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings.

Acts 15:29 (Blood): That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Leviticus 3:17 (Blood): It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.

Leviticus 19:26 (Blood): Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

1 Timothy 4:4 (Parallel theme): For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: