

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

Last time, we looked at the story of Enoch's life which is one of the most significant facts told to us in chapter 5 of the book of Genesis. However, as we go forward into the life and times of Noah, we find one small but important fact given about Noah before we leave chapter 5. Verses 28 & 29 tell us Lamech lived one hundred eighty-two years and begat a son, which he chose to name "Noah," and then we are told why. Lamech says it's because this son, "...shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands,..." Then he specifically points out that this work he is talking about has to do with the fact God cursed the ground. If you look back up the verses to chapter 3 verse 17, where God curses the ground, you will read God did so for man's sake. This means God cursed the ground, not out of revenge or anger, but because there was a lesson all men needed to learn for themselves now that they had obtained the knowledge of good and evil. This statement, on the part of Lamech, shows us right from the start, man did not see it that way. What man was looking for was a way to get around the curse instead of accepting the fact there was a point to it.

One thing which can be said of Lamech's statement is that at least he used the word "comfort." In the original Hebrew, the word "comfort" is translated from, is very much understood by our English expression, "breathe a sigh of relief." The idea being that one has been holding their breath or that something has taken their breath away, and finally they come to a place where the tension or shock has been relieved and they can exhale or breathe again in a way which will restore the oxygen they have deprived themselves of, thus, returning their system to normal. In a big way, Lamech was saying the strain of the work put on man after he had been removed from paradise was so shocking that man had never had the chance to catch up. In other words, the world was not as it was because man was doing his thing. In Lamech's mind, man had been struggling to survive. Now, it's not unusual for parents to wax prophetic about their children's future, but for whatever reason, La-

mech had decided that Noah would somehow change these circumstances. He was saying Noah would pity man or avenge man in some way, in order to relieve man of his suffering which God had placed on him.

When you look at the description given in the next chapter about the conditions of life leading up to the time of Noah, there is no real mention of turmoil due to hard labor. In fact, just the opposite is true. Man was living it up. He was marrying, having children, raising those children and giving them away in marriage, which just kept the cycle going and continued to grow the population. So, the question which should come to mind is, why were they begetting so many children and giving them in marriage if life was so full of toil? By talking about the curse of the ground, Lamech is referring to the basic needs of men, like food, clothing and shelter as causing toil, but nothing relieves the work and labor of needing these things like having fewer mouths to feed. In spite of this fact there is no evidence they took too much thought about bringing more children into this world. Jesus told us in Matthew chapter 24 that they just kept this up all the way to the very day the waters of the great flood began to fall on the earth. In fact, the continuance and growth of man's population was so important that it superceded the fact people who serve God should not be unequally yoked with those who do not. (II Cor. 6:13-18) Apparently, people who claimed to serve the Lord were just as willing to give their daughters unto the sons of those who did not and take daughters for their sons to wife.

If you look back on the story of Cain and Abel, you find that after Cain killed his brother, he went off to build a world of his liking. It was not until the birth of Enos, Adam's grandson through Seth, we are told that man began to call upon the name of the Lord. (Gen. 4:16-26) People miss the fact God cares about the individual. God wants each of us to know Him. That is what is important in life, not having everything this world has to offer. It should not

have been so important to those men, who served the Lord, to get married and have children, that they would take wives which did not care for the things of God. Their relationship with God should have meant more to them than all the beauty in the world, but their minds were on things of this earth instead of things above. This is also where Lamech's mind was. His mind was on the toil and work man had to exert in order to have the things he wanted in the here and now. He believed Noah would be an agent to relieve that. Now, Lamech's grandfather was Enoch, and it's not likely that Lamech was a straight up unrighteous man. The fact Noah grew up to be one who found grace in the sight of the Lord, likely has to do with the fact his parents taught him the things of God. However, Lamech's perspective was still wrong. He was looking for a way to see the curse God had laid on the ground for man's sake, to be removed or relieved. Lamech's thought that his son would be a great man in the earth was about Noah being the man who would find the answer to the curse; and in many ways, Lamech could not have been more wrong!

Noah's life would not be the relieving of curses which God had placed on our fleshly existence, but many men's toil and labor on this earth would come to an end. The planet would be wiped clean of all the choices man had made, up to that point, and start over with one man who had the right perspective on life. Noah would give up everything he ever wanted in life in order to build the ark God instructed him to build; and on the other side of the flood, all that would be left of man's "accomplishments" would be just what Noah carried with him.

Genesis chapter 5 ends by telling us Noah was five hundred years old and had three sons. Some have suggested these three were triplets because they are all listed together; but in reality, this verse is simply the wrap up of this particular piece of the genealogy story. Verse 1 of chapter 6 is going to take a leap backward in time which is a simple fact we do not often talk about. So, verse 32 of chapter 5 is simply saying that by the age of five hundred, Noah had begotten these three sons. Noah would apparently not have any more sons between this time and the flood. Which makes perfect sense. Who in their right mind could know what was coming and still continue to bring children into the world? Noah had the right perspective, and this is why God chose him to build the ark, which, up to that time, would likely have been the biggest undertaking in human history. It would not be the relieving of the curse of the ground, but a much bigger curse. "Build and board a great ship or even planting food and building houses won't be enough to survive," was the message Noah was entrusted with!

As I just mentioned, chapter 6 verse 1 takes a step backward in time from where chapter 5's genealogy takes us. This is why it starts by saying "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth,..." Chapter 5 told us the simple genealogy leading down to Noah, but chapter 6 starts off by telling us why Noah's life at age five

hundred comes to a place which needs more details than just how long he lived before he died. Why is it important that we see verse 1 of chapter 6 as taking us back in time? Well, because we are too easily caught up on the idea that it was about one hundred and twenty years between the time of God's determination there would be a flood and the flood itself. This takes us off the emphasis of verse 3 that God in actuality was putting a cap on man's physical life span. We also tend to miss the fact God was watching all along. God did not simply walk away from man after He cursed the ground, and then one day decided to come back and check on them, at which time He decided they weren't doing what He wanted. He has always been watching our development and He saw it all as "...it came to pass,..."

Verse 1 is following the circumstances all the way back to the earlier fact that Cain had left the presence of God and went out to build a city for himself. This brought a certain amount of separation between those who wanted to serve the Lord and those who did not. It's important to note, verses 1 and 2 do not refer to the sons of Seth or Enos and then the daughters of Cain. Instead, they state there were "daughters of men," and "sons of God." Some teachers think this is a reference to angels and/or demons having relationships with humans, but that is not the case. For a time, there was a separation between those desiring the ways of God and those who had specifically rejected a relationship with God just as Cain had done. We do not know how much family crossover there may have been in all this, but truly the birds of a feather were flocking together. However, there came a day when these were not two small groups living in two different countries. As man began to populate, he translated from being the family of Adam and truly began to be the human race! What we see here in these verses is the same thing we see over and over in the life of the children of Israel. It is difficult for people who are serving God not to be drawn in by the fact we are all flesh. This is especially true when those who do not want God start painting our differences as "peculiar," and our desire for separation as high mindedness, even though that is exactly what God has asked of us. (Titus 2) It's also very easy for the righteous to get frustrated and feel our flesh has a right to have some of the same things others enjoy. After all, we were all created equal, right?

This has been a problem from the beginning. Eve became convinced they were missing out on something, even though she and her husband were the only two humans on the planet at the time, and they literally had all the time in the world! Because she thought there was something more to be had and God was simply trying to keep them from having it, she took of the forbidden fruit and gave to her husband as well. As time moved forward, later generations of those living for God showed a very immature attitude. They found there were girls out there who were not the same dull, homegrown girls they grew up with. They believed these girls, on the other side of the fence, were better, and

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Defining Holiness Part II

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

This brings us to the core of what you asked, and that is, what is the difference between The Holy Ghost and holiness? If what I've said so far makes sense to you, then we should understand a little about why The Holy Ghost is called The Holy Ghost. Simply put, The Holy Ghost is the part of God which is mirrored by our spirit. Now, I don't mean this in a negative way, but the truth is, family relationships are a very fleshly thing. That is why it should have been obvious to the studied men of Israel that there would be no marrying and giving in marriage after the resurrection. (Matt. 22:23-32) The union of marriage was established so that new humans can be formed and then raised in an environment which makes sense. Now, I could write a whole book on this subject, but the base meaning is simply to say, those humans who choose to procreate should think ahead and take on the responsibility of creating and maintaining the nurturing environment children need. This is simply why the institution of marriage is required before the engagement into physical relationships between a man and a woman. It's also why physical relationships do not belong between two males or two females. There is simply no point unless you have distorted the meaning of a physical relationship to be primarily about something other than procreation - which our society definitely has!

Our main point here is simply that all of what we call family relationships have to do with the things of this world and life, not the next one. We are all created equal, but familiarity causes us to greatly care for one human or group of humans more than others. Family automatically gives us at least a sense of familiarity; and for parents to raise children, there is a requirement of special adherence to our parents, no matter how much we agree or disagree with them. This adds to the way we feel about family as a whole. Familiarity also has to do with the feelings which lead us to create things like our separation into, and consideration of, communities, states, nations, etc. So, I say again that family relationships are a fleshly thing; and thus, we understand it fairly well. This is why the representation of Son was given to Jesus. Jesus is the part our flesh is an image of. However, The Holy Ghost stands in much the same position as The Son, under The Father. This is why we put The Holy Ghost on the lower corner of our triangle, directly opposite The Son. This is also why we do not put a direct line between The Son and The Holy Ghost. They do not connect directly; They connect through The Father. This again is true of us. Our flesh and spirit are not connected directly, they are only connected through our mind, which must process everything.

The Holy Ghost and The Son are very similar to each Other in Their positions and functions. However, They function in two very different - shall we say - realms, and this is where words begin to really fail us. Because the spirit and the flesh operate differently and are two distinctly different parts, God has avoided simply describing the spirit side as another son. In fact, the Bible goes so far as to tell us Jesus is "...the only begotten of the Father,..." John 1:14 This fact is why it should be clear to us, there are only three parts in the Godhead. There is The Father, there is The Son, and there is The Holy Ghost. Three distinct parts and only three! What I mean by saying that The Son and The Holy Ghost are similar to each other is, they are the balancing parts on either side of the pivot which is The Father. Let's be clear, understanding the flesh does not give us an understanding of the spirit!

To understand what our spirit is, we must attempt to understand what our spirit is. Words are only the description of things we understand, and we do not understand our spirit very well. This leaves us with no good analogies to describe that third part of God, so He is simply called The Holy Ghost. He is also referred to in English as The Holy Spirit. This is not something to be confused by, it's simply the weakness of our language. Neither gives us much understanding as to what we are talking about. To say spirit or ghost is to use words which have very vague meaning to us. Now, it's just my personal opinion, but I think, today, the word "ghost" carries with it more weight than "spirit." It seems to me, at times we are not sure that spirits exist, and even if we believe they do, we have trouble looking at them as an individual item. We tend to think of spirit as a more general, very undefined, force or energy. I believe the word "ghost" is more of a solid noun to us. We may doubt the existence of a ghost(s), but if something happened which convinced us a very defined but not physical entity did exist, we might be more likely to describe it as a "ghost."

We must understand that The Holy Ghost is not just wind or energy. The Holy Ghost is as much a definable part of God as Jesus. We have trouble describing Him because we think in such physical terms. We simply have not developed the words necessary to speak verbally about spiritual things. This is why we are left with words like "spirit" or "ghost" for this part of God instead of something more familiar, and relationship understandable, such as we have in saying father or son.

The problem is, we have distinct memories from a very early age in life which show us how we began to understand

the physical world. At times, it was bright and sometimes dark, and as children, we are fascinated by the fact the physical can be so many shades in-between the extremes. We are also fascinated by the fact our world is composed of so many different colors and shapes! We just can't wait to experience things with all our physical senses. This is why children don't just look at something. They have to touch it, smell it, put it in their mouth, bang it against other things and with other things. We want input! As we grow, this tendency wanes in light of many factors. We learn things are delicate and breakable. We also learn other people may treasure many things breakable, which is a fact that has gotten us into much trouble. We also learn not everything is something which is pleasant to smell, taste, or even touch, and some things will do right harm us. Different people will have different feelings about all this, but most of us will recoil quickly from something hot or sharp. We understand what it means to fall from too great a height, or have something fall on us. In modern times, we even experience things which are of high speed. When some of the first mechanical passenger machines were built, some wondered what the effects of speed would have on the human body, but it was not until much later that machines finally went fast enough that true concern was warranted. Today, whether in a car, train, roller coaster or plane, most of us have a chance to find out just where our limit is on acceptable speed, as well. The point is, all our experiences shape who we choose to be and what we choose to do with our lives, but we often forget and/or never come to understand that these experiences are also spiritual.

As a child grows, they also learn what hurts and what is comforting in spiritual ways; but on a spiritual level people not only wane in their exuberance, they tend to ignore the fact our spirit exists altogether. This makes us, even before the death of our physical forms, a very lopsided, unwhole person. It even causes some ministers to teach that our spirit is dead, at least until we come to "salvation." However, this is untrue. The spirit is not where sin resides and it will not die, but it does get ignored greatly. Instead of using our mind to create a balance between listening to the spirit as well as the physical and then making choices which truly make sense, we simply allow the flesh and its instincts to determine our path. Now, we've already talked about the fact this happens, but the question is, why do we allow or even desire this to happen? Well, one of the base reasons is because, unlike God, we are not omnipresent. This is one of the most obvious details which shows us we are not God or gods in and of ourselves, but only made in His likeness.

Humans are encapsulated in time and space. All of our three parts have to exist together on one spot at one point in time. We have to use time in order to move to another spot. Now, it may seem like I'm trying to get all metaphysical on you, but just the opposite is true. Many religions, made up by people all around the globe, try to tell us we can live on a higher plane of existence. What they are often talking

about is a way of existing without our bodies. Even so-called "science-fiction" writers, who believe in evolution, will portray the idea that when man "evolves" further, he will someday be more of an energy with no consistent physical form. All these ideas are based on man's hope he doesn't need what Jesus came and died to provide for us. With the devil's help, religions the world over (including evolution) try to tell us that having a body is primitive and a better way of life can be obtained by shedding it. They tell us we can learn to exist in a form which does not have physical properties, per say. This is a perfect example of how the devil attempts to tell the truth but distorts the ending. We cannot simply convert into spirit. We are already spirit. We do need to, and will have to, shed these physical forms someday, but that doesn't mean we become some ghost which is no longer limited or restricted by time and/or space. When we lose our physical side, we will need something to replace it. Why can't God simply make us something entirely different? The answer is simple. Sin and its wages, which are death, have not really been overcome if the destruction of our bodies means a complete change in the composition of who we were created to be! (Rom. 6:23) Thus, Jesus' work was not to do away with the part of us which mirrors Him, but to provide new incorruptible forms so we can be whole again!

Now, the new forms are different from the ones we have now but not by much. We know this because Jesus demonstrated this new form for many days before He returned to The Father. (Acts 1:1-4) After His resurrection, Jesus is still touchable, and Jesus even eats food, which shows the new form has at least some compatibility with the physical we know now. When Christ returns to this planet, the Bible tells us the dead in Christ will rise from the dead. Then we which are alive and remain will not stay the same but be changed in the twinkling of an eye. (I Cor. 15:51-52) All those who are resurrected and changed will then have the new form Jesus died to provide, and they will live with Christ right here on this planet for over a thousand years. (Rev. 20) This can be done because, again, there is compatibility between the physical we know now and the new incorruptible forms we shall receive. However, part of the meaning of calling these new forms incorruptible is to say, like our spirit and mind the new form will not be mortal. It is not dependent on sustenance like the forms we have now. It will also not be vulnerable to the things which can harm or kill these current forms.

These new forms were purchased so those who desire to be with God can be made whole again, and ultimately go on to live eternally in a place Jesus is preparing for us. As we talked about before, this universe we live in now will be gone, and those who do not desire to be with God will not receive new forms. The two immortal parts of them will be cast into the place we call Hell. This will be great misery; and in an attempt to get us to understand this fact, the Bible uses physical imagery to help us once again. The fact this is

imagery is why hell is described as a lake of fire, (Rev. 20:15) while Jesus also talked about outer darkness, (Matt. 22:13) and there is even mention of a worm that never dies. (Mark 9:43-50) All these things have to do with the direct physical ideas we know about death which pertains to our flesh. We all understand what it means to be burned, but the greater point here is the fact fire destroys physical forms. Cremation is often used to dispose of bodies because it's the quickest way to return a body to dust. Darkness is an image of death because the grave is a place of utter darkness. One of the scariest nightmares for almost any human is the thought of being buried alive, and much of the horror has to do with the image of smothering darkness. Then there is the worm. Insects like worms are nature's common way of returning our bodies back to dust. So, what the Bible is really emphasizing by telling us these things is the fact hell is a place of utter destruction. It also emphasizes, there will be no replacement for our physical forms if hell is where we end up. If serving our fleshly desires is what is important to us, all that will disappear forever when we die. (Matt. 16:25)

You see, our physical bodies are not a prison, they are a part of who we are. Our mind needs our flesh and our spirit. So, when the Bible speaks to us about living in the spirit, it's not talking about an attempt at an "out of body experience," it's talking about allowing our spirit, which will go on into eternity, to have precedence in our lives over our flesh which will return to dust one day. What God asks us to trust in Him for is, He will make a way to overcome the fact we will, after death, be unwhole. Because only through God's work can we be given a new physical form which will not simply die again someday. This is one of the biggest differences between healing and receiving our ultimate healing. Lazarus was raised from the dead and so were others the Bible tells us, but those people are not walking amongst us today. Someday later, they died again. Sinful flesh is doomed to death. We can be healed of everything, including the ultimate failure of these physical forms; but we will simply start right down the path of deteriorating once again. This was true from the beginning of creation. The difference was, man had continuous access to a source of perfect healing and renewal. The fruit of the Tree of Life was more than just a food source! This is why God removed man from it after man sinned. (Gen. 3:22-24) Our flesh has to die. So the choice is clear. Leave this life without God and you will be miserable. Accept the way God created us to live and find out what life can truly be! This has direct relationship to our discussion about holiness; but getting back to our point here, we need to understand we were created to put one foot in front of the other. This will not change in heaven, and to do this you have to have feet!

What this simply boils down to is, we are just what we believe we are at those times we look out into the night sky and think about how small we are in comparison to the universe. This is not meant to be discouraging, but it's a

reality. There is a lot out there, but unless we develop the capability of actually going out there, we will not experience it. We cannot, through ceremony or practice, find a way to send our soul out of our body and explore the universe without our flesh. That is not how the spirit works. This is true even right here on good old planet earth. Again, we look at the baby who can only go places if someone takes him. Then one day, the child learns to roll, hold up its head, and crawl. These are big steps in a human's life, and the bigger step is when we learn to step, which is why we use the word "step" in the way I have in this sentence. The simple point I'm trying to make is that what we experience has a lot to do with our mobility. Mobility is something which is very physical so we tend to focus on it, and that is one of the biggest reasons we become so "fleshly minded."

This is one of the many ways we are different from God. God is omnipresent (meaning He is everywhere) but His presence is also capable of different - shall we say - "strengths." This is to say, God is everywhere (with the exception of that place He prepared for the devil and his angels) whether we are - for lack of a better term - conscious of it or not. However, God can - as we say - "draw closer" to us, which really has to do with God's presence strengthening in our lives. God can also "reveal" Himself to us. In Exodus, God came down in a "thick cloud." (Ex. 19:16) He was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to Israel. (Ex. 13:21) In the book of Acts, The Holy Ghost's presence was seen in cloven tongues of fire which appeared on the heads of those who were baptized. (Acts 2:1-4) The Bible also shows us God can choose to walk with us in a very, one foot in front of the other way. We see this in the Garden of Eden, (Gen. 3:8) and in Abraham's life; (Gen. 18) but again, man's ultimate opportunity to be side by side with God came when The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

All this shows us God can come to us even though we are limited in our ability to move through time and space, and how strong and/or direct His presence is in our lives, is mostly up to us. What we must clearly understand is this is as true on a spiritual level as it is on a physical level. This is why Jesus told us He would not leave us comfortless, but He would ask The Father to send to us The Holy Ghost. Those who understood who Jesus was had become very accustomed to walking with God in a very direct, touchable way. Jesus was talking to those very people when He said I will not leave you comfortless. He was telling them that even though He had to go and prepare that place where we would ever be side by side with the direct presence of God, He did not want them to lose what they had gained by having Jesus right there in fleshly form. (John 14:15-21) This promise would also be for their children and their children's children and for as many generations as it took before Jesus returned. (Joel 2:21-32, Act 2) This is one of the reasons Jesus made the statement in Matthew 24:34 "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be

fulfilled.” Everybody living from that point until the time of Jesus’ return would have an opportunity to have God directly in their life; and just as Jesus, at that time, only changed the world through His message, so too The Holy Ghost would work. This is why we are told, “...he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” II Thessalonians 2:7 The Holy Ghost is not here to take the next step in the process, that will be Jesus’ responsibility when The Father decides the time is right for His return to this planet. (Matt. 24:35-39) Simply put, The Holy Ghost is here to continue the ministry Jesus began, and this should tell us something about the balance between spirit and flesh.

The Holy Ghost is here with us now, and the Bible tells us there is a baptism of The Holy Ghost. John the Baptist told those who followed his ministry that he baptized in water but there was One who was coming after him who would baptize us with The Holy Spirit and fire. (Matt. 3:11) John was, of course, talking about Jesus, and the fact He would give us the fulfilment of the promise that God would someday write the law in our hearts, by sending to us The Holy Ghost. (Jer. 31:33) What does the law have to do with it? Well, that question brings us squarely to our discussion about holiness!

The basis of everything is faith, and faith is a relationship with God. We cannot earn it or create it. The door of faith has to be opened to us. This truth is why the Scripture tells us that to every man is given the measure of faith. (Rom. 12:3) Which means every human who has ever been born has, at the very least, had the opportunity to know God. That’s pretty special, and that is why Eph. 2:8 does not say we are saved by faith but that we are saved by grace through faith, and even that is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God! It’s because of God’s grace that we are given a chance at a relationship with Him. So the question becomes, what do we want? Do we want a relationship with God or do we want only what we can find on our own in this life? If we believe God is what we want, then we must make the choice to seek Him. We must take hold of that measure of faith God has already granted us. That hand - so to speak - which God has already reached out to us. (Rom. 5:6-8) Then we must put forth effort to grow our relationship with God in much the same way any relationship takes effort to grow.

Now, God has put so much effort in on His side that without taking from us the free will He created us to have, there is nothing more He can do but wait for us to put forth effort on our side of things. This is where we get the old saying, “God can beat an elephant with a worm if He can get a wiggle out of the worm.” God is literally waiting for us, and this is where the conversation about holiness begins! You see, we can talk about a desire to know God, but if in the end, we have no desire for holiness, then we will

never truly see God. (Job 19:25-27, Heb. 12:14) The scripture uses the word “see” because, once again, it’s using terms we can physically relate to. We can know God and even have a relationship with Him, but we will not continue to grow and maintain our relationship with God if we do not have a desire for holiness. This is because of the truth we talked about above. We cannot ascend to God. God must come to us. Through The Holy Ghost, God has even opened an opportunity for us to reach out and touch Him in a very personal and powerful way; but what stands in our way now is the simple truth there is one thing God can’t do. God can not tolerate sin! Why? Because He is HOLY!

With this, we can wrap up our discussion about names. You see, The Holy Ghost is not called The Holy Ghost because holiness and The Holy Ghost are the same thing. He is called The Holy Ghost because He is more than just “a spirit” or “a ghost”; He is The Spirit part of God! The relationship between holiness and The Holy Ghost is that we can grow in holiness by listening to The Holy Ghost. We are not perfect in our ways. We do not make perfect judgments, but if we will hear the voice of The Holy Ghost, we can avoid mistakes, because He can literally tell us what is the right thing to do in any given circumstance. The Spirit of God is already Holy, so He, of course, is the best teacher for our spirit to become holy! This is why The Holy Ghost, in relationship to us, is called The Comforter. Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him. (Matt. 16:24) He also told us not to worry when the world hates us for attempting to be what God wants us to be, because the world hated Him long before it hated us! (John 15:18) True believers will suffer in this world because this world is not righteous, and it certainly does not want to be holy. So, as this world vexes us for attempting to be righteous, which is connected to holiness, The Comforter is here to lead us through. Those who do want to be righteous are going to be at odds with this world on a constant basis, (James 4:4) and this is why The Father took Jesus from us. Jesus was not here to comfort our flesh. He came so we could afford to die. It does not matter what happens to our flesh, it’s doomed already; and, in fact, the more we give it what it wants the more it takes us off course from what we need. Our spirit is the part which needs comforting, protection and training. Thus, The Father sent to us The Holy Ghost to comfort and train our spirit which will go on into eternity. The fact the spirit and mind will go on even for those who do not choose God, is why II Peter 2 tells us it would be better to never have known the truth than to know it and turn from it.

In our next segment we will talk about what holiness is. Until then, I pray you will ever find His guidance growing greater in your life, as you seek to stand your faith in the power of God!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip Busby.***

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remaining separate from this other group was only keeping them from having something more, in their eyes.

Verse 2 tells us this was not an isolated few incidents of men finding good women willing to serve the Lord which they brought home to mom and dad, or that there were those men who just could not resist certain women they found to be so attractive they just couldn't help themselves. Verse 2 specifically points out, "...they took them wives of all which they chose." When it rains, it tends to pour! Now, remember that another thing which Genesis chapter 4 tells us is the practice of taking more than one wife was under way from a very early point among the family of Cain. So, what the sons of God also saw was an opportunity which was not necessarily afforded to them among their own group. They saw not only that the girls of the other group were pretty but that they could take what they desired of them, and that is exactly what they did! This is the point in time when the practice of multiple wives became an acceptable practice among all men.

Now, verse 3 is where we are told something about God's determinations which we should never forget! God states for us that His spirit would not always strive with man. This word "strive," is translated from a Hebrew word which we would very much relate to in our sport worshipping societies. It essentially means something like refereeing or serving as an umpire. This is where the curse of the ground had come from. It's not the idea that you did wrong and now I'm going to make you miserable in exchange. It's that you have taken a step which has to be counterbalanced by another action. This is the position we have put God in. He wanted us to live in innocence, follow Him, and He would teach us what we needed to know while taking full care of all our needs. Instead, God has to "strive" with us to make us play by at least enough of the basic rules that we do not simply destroy ourselves completely. He is still protecting us, but people who do not desire the ways of righteousness are constantly pushing for that edge in spite of the fact God is trying to keep us from falling over it. When those who choose to serve the Lord are drawn away from the things of God by the pleasures of sin for a season, the problem gets immensely worse. When you have a group who is walking in the ways of God and others who are simply going their own way, there is the hope sin's misery will eventually turn some to the truth. Once an individual makes this choice, they can go to be with those who desire to live in righteousness. There they can learn and grow in the things of God in an everyday environment which is not so full of sinful temptations; but once there is an intermingling, these advantages are lost. Not only do you lose that clean environment, but there becomes what looks like middle ground in-between two extremes. This "middle ground" becomes the "normal" way of living, and most fall into it. This draws down many more from the ways of righteousness than it ever brings up those who don't care about God, because it

only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump. (I Cor. 5:1-8) Those walking in righteousness are easily corrupted with the idea that if some can "get away with it," then we can to. More and more the point is lost that living for God is not just about having the good life here, or going to a better place upon death, but it is about a relationship with God which becomes more and more impossible the further from God's created truths we stray!

This is what causes God to have to referee. Man has a free will and he can, on this planet, do what he wants. For those who only care for this life, what they obtain here is their reward; (Matt. 6, Jude 1:10-21) but for those who desire the ways of God, this world, even at its best, is a distraction and a hindrance to knowing God. God is not going to allow sinful men to keep all others from ever knowing Him, and God is also not going to blot a name out of the Book of Life simply because a person has a long road getting back to the full truth of how God intended us to live. So, God intervenes in ways which will not end the free will He gave unto us, but also does not allow men to completely destroy others' ability to find and serve Him. This requires a constant striving with man, and when we see this statement in verse 3, people often think of it as being the determination on God's part that He would send the flood, from the perspective that He was tired of striving with man. However, the statement is not about the determination God would send the flood but that God would not take such measures to maintain man's earthly existence forever. We see the furtherance of this determination on the other side of the flood when God says He would never again destroy everything in the way He had done with the flood. It was simply too much, and God was saying that He would intervene in other ways, but never again would it be worth taking such drastic measures. This is what the rainbow means. We think of the rainbow as a scientifically explainable event which has to do with the bending of light, but it was not a part of creation. God creates the rainbow phenomena as a way of symbolizing He will constantly be involved, but He would never take such drastic measures again. Instead, He will simply bring this universe to a complete end.

In short, God was saying He would intervene this time and many times hereafter, but His promise to all humanity speaks to why Lamech named his son Noah. God continually destroying and changing the creation for man's sake is no way to live, and living would not always have to be so painful! In fact, right then and there, God determined the struggle of this existence would not last for hundreds of years, but man's days would only be one hundred and twenty. God had already taken us away from indefinite life in the flesh by removing us from The Tree of Life, now He would shorten our life span even further. Just as Cain had killed Abel, and just as Methuselah lived nine hundred sixty-nine years and his son only lived to be seven hundred seventy-seven, we are not guaranteed to live a hundred and twenty years. However, those who desire to go on to be with the Lord can rest assured they will not have to endure longer

than that, (Mark 13:12-13, James 1:12) and those who want to live here forever are informed, even if they believe they can do it without The Tree of Life - God has said no!

The next verse tells us something which some people use to further the idea angels or demons had relationships with humans, and that is the fact there were giants in the earth. The problem is that we look at this word and think of physical stature, but that is not what it means here. The original Hebrew is a word which comes from a root meaning "to fall." In English, we might have a tendency to say the root means to be pushed down, or, at the very least, that is the tone which it carries when morphed into the word "giants," is translated from in verse 4. These giants were not necessarily men of great height but men who were down right tyrannical. Chapter 4 tells us there were already men in Cain's family who were more than just instructors when it came to certain crafts, but later there would be giants: men who would oppress the rights of others to live their lives as they chose. In fact, this may be the very first reference to slavery, and even if it's not directly referring to the full-blown practice of slavery, it's definitely talking about the roots from which such an institution is formed!

Verse 4 goes on to tell us, after the intermixing of the righteous and the unrighteous, there were children born of them who became "...mighty men,...men of renown." The key to understanding this is in the word "renown." This word is translated from a word which denotes an individual who has great character. This word is actually very important because the other way to say what this word means is that these men were "marked" as specific individuals whose moral principles were unquestioned. The Bible would later use the symbolism of people being marked for one side or another, and no where is this more prominent than in the book of Revelation. Most people are at least somewhat familiar with the "Mark of the Beast." However, Ezekiel chapter 9 talks about putting a mark on the forehead of those who grieved because of Israel's sin, and Revelation 14 talks about the one hundred and forty-four thousand who have the name of God in their foreheads. This should emphasize to us the words of Jesus when He told us His second coming would happen when the world is as it was in the days of Noah! (Matt. 24:35-39)

To understand all this, you must take verse 4 as a package deal. You'll note that in the King James there is not a period until the end of the verse. What this is talking about is that gray area which developed. Instead of having a distinct group who at least attempted to live the way God created us to live, and another which did its own thing, more and more there was simply a society of humans. On the streets of everyday life, there was not a lot of distinction between those who cared and those who did not. So, what stood out were the top and the bottom. There were "giants." These were the very evil and nasty ones. It did not matter

whether you cared for God's ways or not, you did not want to come under their influence. Then there were mighty men of "renown." These were men who stood for right, not just in their personal life but in a very outward way. This began the classic view of good verses evil: superheroes and super-villains fighting it out while the little people stand by and watch. Now, maybe that is being a little melodramatic, but I hope it makes the point because it's important for us to understand how this changed the world forever!

The fact there was little separation among the sons of God and the sons of men is why the Tower of Babel was such a threat after the flood. It's also why God established the nation of Israel. At a time before the flood, many factors brought an end to a human's ability to be literally separated from the ways of men and live unto God. All men began to live in a way which included giants, men of renown, and a everything in between. The Garden of Eden had truly been lost in all ways, shapes and forms! It's not likely that good and bad were ever separated again in the same way it was in the beginning; but in any case, the same intermingling problem would rear its ugly head again at some point, even after such a drastic measure as the flood. Because of this, God would have to strive with men again and again to keep this problem from becoming insurmountable.

This brings us to the truth of verse 5 which is the fact eluded to, when God said, He would not always strive with men because man is part flesh. As long as man lives in this corruptible flesh he will have to struggle with the temptation to see life through the flesh's desires. Without separation, the whole of what man had allowed his flesh to create in this world was vile! The intermingling had overtaken any chance at a place where God's presence could live among men in a very direct way, and even the hearts of men had grown to think upon things which were evil on such a continual basis that God could not even dwell in individuals. Sure, there were mighty men of renown, but they were "mighty men of old." Man had gone so far down into sin that even what man marked as good and decent was so far off the mark from the righteousness of God, that even the best were no longer holy. Man's fleshly existence had choked out almost every avenue of communion with God, and so verse 6 tells us simply this, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." So, it became the determination of God that He would have to destroy this creation which He had made, but then there was that man which ended chapter 5. His name was Noah. He was about five hundred years old when this all came to a head, and he found grace in the eyes of the LORD!

Until next time, Shalom!