

Questions From the Book of Genesis

By Dr. Thomas Figart

[Editor's note: Dr. Thomas Figart, who writes for the "Prophecy" section of the ATRI Journal, recently received a series of questions from his grandson's 8th grade class at a Christian school. He has graciously consented to allow us to add those questions and his answers to our "Bible for Dummies" section. Some of these may be questions you have wondered about—but were afraid to ask. Special thanks to the kids who were willing to ask.]

Question # 1: from KD: *When Cain killed Abel, the Bible says, "And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him." Does this mean that people could see the mark, or was it invisible, but still affected them?*

Answer: The mark which God put upon Cain is not to be regarded as a mark upon his body, but as a certain sign which protected him from vengeance, though just what kind of mark it is impossible to determine. Two things should be remembered: First, Cain left his home and dwelt in the land of Nod (wanderings), which was "east of Eden." He would be away from those who knew he murdered Abel. Second, he established a "city" called Enoch in which he was respected, and raised a family. Whether the mark had something to do with an identification on his clothing, or was visible in any way, we do not know. Whatever it was, those who knew he murdered Abel were aware of the mark, and did not dare to harm Cain.

Question # 2: from JH: *When Noah woke from being drunk and found out what his youngest son had done to him, why did he get so mad?*

Question # 3: JH adds: *Why did Noah curse his son for not covering him up, and why did he bless his other sons?*

Answers: First, it is an assumption to conclude that Noah's youngest son was cursed. The Hebrew words are *b'no hakkatan*, "the youngest of all." If Noah meant Ham, then why did he curse Canaan? What was Ham's sin? No sin is mentioned, and no curse was placed on Ham! Ham did not uncover his father; Noah was already naked when Ham saw him. He was probably so shaken that he immediately went outside and told his brothers, and they went in backwards and covered Noah.

Why was the curse pronounced? For some reason Noah became drunken. He is one of only two people who are said to have "walked with God." Possibly, because the effect of wine was a new experience, it was easy to become intoxicated. Somehow, Canaan, the *b'no hakkatan*, the youngest of Noah's grandchildren was involved in getting Noah drunk, or to commit some unnatural sexual sin; we just do not know. What we *do* know is, Noah was *drunk and naked, and that Canaan was cursed.*

None of the Canaanite tribes were Negroid, and furthermore, there are no Canaanites in existence today, so it is wrong to say Ham was cursed, and even more in error to say that the curse of slavery was passed on to the Negro race.

There is no *record* that Noah blessed Ham, this is true, but it does not mean he did not

bless Ham. We only have the record of his blessing on Shem and Japheth. I do not know why this is.

Question # 4: JA asks: *When the Flood came, did sharks, whales and all other sea animals live because they were already in the water?*

Answer: Yes. It is probably true that in some places the waters were more turbulent than in other places, and some sea animals may have been destroyed, but we do not even know this much.

Question # 5: B writes: *What exactly are the Nephilim? Also, Why didn't God make a rule against polygamy in Genesis instead of waiting till later?*

Answer: Some believe the word Nephilim comes from the Hebrew word *naphal*, "fallen ones." They associate this with the fallen angels of Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4. Then, these fallen angels were "the sons of God who married "the daughters of men," in Genesis 6:4, producing an evil race. Others believe Nephilim comes from the Hebrew word *pul*, meaning "mighty," or "wonderful," and thus the King James Version calls them "giants." They produced an evil and powerful race of humans. It is difficult to determine who the Nephilim really were. It is unlikely that they were angels, since Christ says in Matthew 22:30 that angels do not marry nor are given in marriage.

The question about polygamy can be approached in this way: First, God said in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." When the Pharisees asked Him, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away? He saith unto them, Because of the hardness of your hearts he permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it wasn't so" (Matthew 19:7-9). If God had not permitted this, their hard hearts would have prompted them to commit sins of greater proportion. So, in fact, God prohibited polygamy from the beginning as well; it was to be one man for one woman for life. The fact that godly men like Abraham, David, Solomon, and others, had more than one wife, was *not directed* by God, but was *permitted* by Him, as Christ said about divorce. But God also reminds us concerning Israel in the wilderness, "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for his counsel. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And God gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalm 106:13-15).

Question # 6: KB asks: *In Genesis 10:25, what does it mean when it talks about the earth's division?*

Answer: Genesis 10:21-32 gives a list of the descendants of Shem and in 10:25 it mentions the time of Peleg, whose name came from the Hebrew word *palag*, "to divide." He actually lived in the days of Genesis 11:8 when the Lord divided the *population of the earth* because they began to build the city and tower of Babel.

Question # 7: BM asks: *How did Adam live 930 years and how did all those people live so long, when they did not have the good medical technology we have?*

Answer: Life among the early inhabitants of earth was longer for the following reasons:
1. Adam and Eve still had the after-effects of their creation which would not have been

immediately exhausted after the Fall of Man.

2. The climate, weather and other conditions on earth were different from those after the Flood.
3. God allowed longer life with longer ability to have children in order to increase the human race more quickly.
4. In the godly families, morals, traditions, discipline and commitment tended to longer life.
5. While life was simple, without technology, it was also cleaner, without chemical and mechanical pollutions that we have today.

Question # 8: JD writes concerning Lot's wife: *Was she turned into a pile of salt or like a statue or something?*

Answer: The Scripture says, "But his wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt." A pillar is usually thought of as an upright column of wood or stone, not necessarily in the human form. She was turned into salt, but not like a statue; simply a pillar, or upright column.

Question #8A: JD also asks: *What does "image of God" mean? Do we look like Him or because we have a personality?*

Answer: The image of God has both physical and spiritual qualities. As humans, we have body, soul and spirit. Our body is the outward contact with the world; our soul is our "breath of life," the *inward* life breathed into our bodies. Our spirit is the *upward* contact with God. All three constitute our person. Therefore, we are complete persons, as God is a Person. Obviously, He has capabilities we do not possess; Omniscience, all knowledge; Omnipotence: all powerful; Omnipresence: everywhere present. But we are promised that in our resurrection we shall have glorified bodies: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Just everything that this means, only the future will fully reveal.