

Genesis 6.1-7.24 / FBC / 09.20.20

Introduction

- † **[1: animals entering]** How many of you had a Noah's ark toy when you were a child or bought one for your children? How many of you learned about Noah's ark in church growing up? How many of you read a story or watched a video of Noah's ark as a child or as a parent or teacher in the church? Almost all of us were exposed to this story at some point.
- How many of you watched the movie five years ago about Noah, with Russell Crowe? Y'all need to come up for prayer after the service! That movie was filled with bad theology, even heresy. It did not represent biblical history well at all! I pray it will never affect your thinking!
- † Today we are going to look at the first half of the Noah narrative as revealed in the *Bible*, and we will try to understand why God put this in the Bible. Sure it is a fascinating story, but this is God's revelation; there must be something God wants us to take from this history.
- We saw before that Adam and Eve had several children, and those children reproduced through several generations. We also saw that many of these people were not walking with God, they pursued the ways of the flesh, caring nothing for God's provision or promises and rebelling against God's commands with violence, perversion, and self-glorification.
 - We also saw that Noah's father, Lamech, a righteous man, hoped Noah would be the promised savior, the seed of the woman who would mitigate the effects of sin and evil. Today we will start to learn about Noah, so open your Bible to Genesis 6. We are going to read two chapters of Genesis today; that's only two pages, but it seems like more when you are just listening, so you will want to have a Bible open to read along. I'm going to sit here like a grandfather reading y'all a story, a story about God and his man named Noah. We will start in Genesis 6.1.

Genesis 6.1-6.4 NIV: When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

- † Let us pause here, so I can say, the beginning of Genesis 6 raises several questions. I have spent hours trying to figure out who were the Nephilim, "the sons of God," "the daughters of humans," and "the mighty heroes of renown." We talked about those questions last week.
- I still have questions about all that, but let's not miss the main point: people were walking apart from God and this angered God, so he set a time limit and then he was going to withdraw his Spirit. That cannot imply happy times. In 120 years, something awful is going to happen.

Genesis 6.5-6.22 NIV: The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them

the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.

I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.” Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Genesis 7.1-24 NIV: [After the ark was complete] The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.” And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen

cubits. Every living thing that moved on land perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

Main Points

- † **[2: 6.5]** One main point we want to see from this passage is that almost everyone was living on what we call the bottom line, they had turned their backs to God, they were walking apart from God, pursuing the ways of corrupted flesh and evil.
- † 6.5 says: **The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.**
 - Whoever the sons of God were, they saw something that looked good to them, so they took it, just like Eve in the Garden of Eden [3.6]; they were driven by lust, not discernment about God's revelation. As we have seen, in general people were immersed in sexual sin, corruption of the concept of marriage, violence, arrogance, and of course failure to honor God.
 - People walking by flesh without God deteriorated so much that their every thought was about something evil. They were filled with lust, pride, hate, materialism, violence. They were not reflecting the character of God or representing God on Earth.
 - I don't want to minimize this; it is extreme language. **The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was *only evil* all the time.** That sounds pretty severe, severe enough that God wanted to kill everyone. But I remember being like that. I never murdered anyone or worshipped the devil, but I can remember being filled with lust, pride, anger, materialism, selfishness. Sometimes I still struggle with those things.
 - I wonder if we had an audit done of our minds this very day, what percentage of our thoughts would really be God honoring and what percentage would be blatantly sinful. The Bible says people today who have not been born again are depraved, and that even believers struggle with our corrupted nature, our fleshly passions, our worldly thinking.
 - This passage speaks to the extensiveness and the intensiveness of sin in people, even among Seth's descendants. Remember, the narrator has presented a contrast between Seth's and Cain's descendants. Cain's people were all astray from God; several of Seth's were notably righteous and walking with God. But by this time, it seems almost everyone was willfully sinful.
- † **[3: 6.11-12]** In 6.11-12, the text says: **Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.**
 - Contrast that with creation. During the creation, God saw all that he created was good, it was pure and useful for his purposes. Now he sees the earth is ruined by sin.
 - Some scholars say the animals died in the flood because of mankind's sin, just as they suffered the original curse because of mankind's sin. But the snake had a role in the earlier problem and this passage actually says that "all flesh" is corrupted and sinful; the NIV interprets that as all

people, but throughout the Noah narrative, the term “all flesh” includes land animals, birds, and people. The animals too, one can imagine, had turned violent.

- I don’t know what to tell you about the fish and other sea creatures. Perhaps they were not sinning or perhaps they were insignificant for this judgment.
- But the first main point is that almost all people had turned away from God.

† **[4: 6.6]** The second thing we need to note from this passage is that, because these people brought God sorrow, he brought them judgment.

† Look at 6.6: **The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.**

- We know God does not change his mind or get surprised in the sense that we do, because he already knows everything that will happen; but God does work in historical time in response to the actions of people. His anger over sin is justified, so he will respond with judgment.
- This verb translated as “regret” here, [נָחַם] in Hebrew, is used about God thirty-four times in the Old Testament. It reflects God’s emotional sadness more than the idea of changing his mind. It also signals God responding to human circumstances by changing his stated plan of action.

† **[5: 6.13]** So in 6.13, **God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.”**

- The sons of God saw something that looked good, so they took it; God saw that they and all mankind were evil, so God judged them with destruction.
- There is wordplay here. The Hebrew verb for “corrupt” in 6.12 is the hipel form of [תָּשַׁח], which is the same word used for “destroy” in 6.13. This is designed to show justice: God would destroy those who destroyed or corrupted the Earth.

† **[6: 6.3]** In 6.3, God gave people 120 years. Jerome tells us that as far back as the fourth century, people have interpreted the 120 years as a new life span limit, but Jerome pointed out that we know people after Noah’s day lived longer than that; Abraham, for example, lived to be 175.

- It is better to see the 120 years as the time until God would fulfill his threat. The 120 years would give Noah time to follow God’s instructions; perhaps the 120 years also was time for people to repent.
- With the coming flood, God would wipe out the unrepentant seed of the serpent – those following Satan – which was almost everyone, since mankind had become utterly corrupt. With the flood, God punishes, but also purges. The wicked were washed away, their signs of wickedness were washed clean, so the faithful remnant could start again.
- God had said he would withdraw his Spirit; this is something of a reversal of creation: in the flood we see the earth return to its chaotic state in Genesis 1.2, with the release of the bounded waters above and below.
- People were immersed in sin so God judged and destroyed them, immersing them in water.

† **[7: 6.8]** The third thing we want to note is that, in contrast with almost everyone else, Noah walked with God as a recipient of God’s grace.

- † In 6.8, the text says, **“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”**
- The Hebrew word [חֵן] can mean favor. The Old Testament also uses it to mean grace. Grace, theologically speaking, is unmerited favor. Noah received grace, he found favor, in several ways.
- † **[8: 6.9]** In 6.9 the narrative focus shifts from God to the image of God, Noah. This is signaled by a line that starts and ends with Noah’s name in Hebrew, literally, **“Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless among his contemporaries. With God walked Noah.”**
- So the focus shifts to Noah as the image bearer of God, as the representative of God the protagonist, but even so we do not hear Noah speak! Did you notice that? God speaks, Noah implements. Twice we read that Noah did all that God commanded him [6.22; 7.5].
 - This is the first time terms like “righteous” and “blameless” occur in the Bible narrative. Like his ancestor Enoch, Noah walked with God, and that helps define these terms for us. These men were not sinless, but they sought to trust and obey in a faith relationship with God. In contrast to most people acting in the flesh on what we call the bottom line, Noah lived by faith and obedience to God’s revelation on what we call the top line.
 - Noah would have repentantly confessed his sins, would have offered animal sacrifices to appease God’s wrath, and would have trusted in the promise of a savior who would be born, a promise which he would have learned from his father, Lamech, as we discussed before.
- † In one sense, Noah finds grace for deliverance through the ark because of his righteousness, but this righteousness itself was a gift of grace. As scholars Bruce Waltke and Alan Ross point out, the narrator contrasts the fate of Noah with the fate of everyone else, in that Noah found grace instead of judgment, and grace is what allowed him to escape corruption and to know God in the first place.
- † **[9: Hebrews]** This cycle of grace plays out in Noah’s deliverance from the flood. In the New Testament, **Hebrews 11.6-7 NET: Now without faith it is impossible to please him [God], for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, when he was warned about things not yet seen, with reverent regard constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family. Through faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.**
- By grace, God offers Noah deliverance, with the instructions to build the ark [6.14], the invitation to enter the ark with his family [7.1], the sealing of the hatch [7.16], and survival of the storm that wiped out everyone else [7.23].
 - **[10: 7.23]** 7.23 literally says [NASB] **“only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.”** “Left” is the niphal form of the Hebrew verb [נָצַח]; it refers to those who have been delivered through an affliction or legal judgment. Noah and his family survived, not from their own ingenuity, but because God spared them by grace.
 - By faith, Noah responded to this grace. He did build the ark, he did enter the ark, he did trust that God would deliver him through the storm.
- † Think about the faith it would take to build this ark! Maybe it took Noah all 120 years!
- The ark was 440 feet long, which is about 50% longer than a football field. It was 73 feet wide and 44 feet high, which is like a three or four story building.

- With multiple deck levels, scholar Victor Hamilton estimated the ark had almost 96,000 square feet of deck space. He also estimated displacement of about 43,000 tons. Noah build a ship bigger than any of Columbus' ships that sailed from Europe to America.
- Think of how many years of work it would take to cut all that wood by hand; move it all into place without machinery; cut it to fit; and actually put it all together! I imagine Noah invested all his wealth and time into this project. That is faithful obedience, especially if everyone else is mocking you, and mocking you steadily for over 100 years!
- Noah walked with God as a recipient of God's grace.

† **[11: 6.18]** The last thing to see today is that God did not deliver Noah just to be nice; God did this to fulfill his previous covenant promises.

- In 6.18, God said to Noah: **"I will establish [or confirm] my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you."**
- The Hebrew verb for "establish" here, the hiphil form of [קָיָם], suggests more the idea of keeping or fulfilling an existing covenant rather than establishing a new one.

† What covenant would this be? God previously created people to be his image bearers, to reflect his character, represent him in all situations, reproduce his image throughout the earth, and rule over creation in his name. After sin entered the picture, God also promised to bring a savior seed of the woman to bring victory over evil, sin, and death.

- Note it is God's covenant and God controls it! Catastrophe, even judgment, does not interrupt God's plans for a representative people in his own image and for a savior seed.
- God would preserve Noah and his family, so that through them these promises could come to fulfillment, both image and seed. These are very important concepts. If you do not understand what the Bible teaches about image and seed, you are going to miss out on much of the Bible's message. God has made a covenant with mankind, image and seed, and that will continue through Noah.

Summary

† **[12: Psalm 14]** Listen to **Psalm 14.1-3 NIV: The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.** David wrote this about his generation, 1000 years before Jesus was born, long, long after Noah's flood.

- We look around today and we see the same problems. The world is filled with violence: school shootings, ethnic cleansing, wars, rapes, murders, beatings; even violence in churches is rising.
- We see sexual perversion everywhere, with our culture and media not just tolerant, but celebrating adultery, divorce, abortion, lust, homosexuality, gender identity, and polygamy.
- Most of the world is walking apart from God. Most of even the Christian world is walking apart from God, not responding in faith to God's gospel promises, nor to God's commands.

- † **[13: Matthew 24]** Will judgement come? In Matthew 24, Jesus promised judgement was coming, but said nobody knows when.
- Then, in **Matthew 24.37-39 NET**, Jesus said, “**For just like the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man [Jesus] will be. For in those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. And they knew nothing until the flood came and took them all away. It will be the same at the coming of the Son of Man.**”
 - Scholar Alan Ross wrote, “God’s plan to bring about his theocratic blessing [his divine governance] involves the removal of the wicked. It is sometimes alarming to look around today and observe how satanic and corrupt the world has become. Many pagan ideas and symbols are reemerging in religious practices, reminding us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers that make subtle appeals to the senses. Only God’s warning of imminent judgment provides the clarification... The point of this passage is that the wickedness of pagan idolatry and fornication (in spite of their claims) brings pain to God and judgment to the world, a judgment that can be escaped only by God’s grace” [186].
- † Judgment is coming, when Christ returns, the coming of the Son of Man, as Jesus called it.
- How will he find us? Will we faithfully be standing firm on the top line, submitting to God and depending on God, trusting and obeying? Will we be walking in God’s light, following Christ?
 - Or will we look no different from the world that has turned away from God, the world which does not know him? Will we be walking in spiritual darkness, following Satan?
 - Scholar Brueggemann writes, “Noah regards God’s commands as promises of life.” Do we?
- † **[14: end]** Do we believe that true life comes from knowing and walking with God? Or do we think life is found over in the pagan world? What does our lifestyle testify to our beliefs?
- Are we ready to respond to the gospel, to go beyond baptism and membership in a church, to being passionate in worship, devout in prayer, diligent in obedience and service?
 - Are we ready to really shine God’s light in our community, reflecting his image and distinctively representing God, such that people have to ask why we are different?
 - Are we ready to be “all in” at the church, to immerse ourselves in the community that is the body of Christ, taking our fair share of the burdens, rejoicing in our fair share of the blessings?
- † Some of you have chronic pain. Some struggle with anger, depression, anxiety, or other emotional issues. Some of you suffer with ambivalence about God and his revelation and his church.
- Faith in the gospel means having faith that ultimately you will be delivered from these problems, but it also means having faith that God can deliver you through these problems now, that he will carry you and empower you, so that you do not have to wallow in self-pity or apathy, but instead you can live a life in victory over sin and evil.
 - Like we saw with Cain back in Genesis 4, you have a choice. You have to choose the top line, to trust and obey. Christ has set you free! Are you ready to give yourself over 100% to that promise and to that way of life? Noah was the distinction in an otherwise spiritually dead and wicked world; today is our day to be distinct and to be delivered. Let’s pray . . .