

“Then Jesus answered and said to them,... ‘You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;

And These Are They Which Testify of Me

Sermons on Genesis

Noah

Genesis 6-9

With Study Questions

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Summary

In chapters six through nine of Genesis we see the deterioration of humanity. This, likely, apexes when the sons of God marry the daughters of men. The earth became inhabited with giant, mighty men and every thought of every man was continuously evil. It is said that was God sorry He made man and decides to judge the entire race through a great flood, all except for Noah who had found grace in the eyes of God, and Noah's family.

God instructs Noah to make an ark which will house him, his wife, his sons and their wives. It will also house representative creatures from which the earth would be re-populated after the flood (also some would be for sacrifice). It would rain for forty days and forty nights. Not only would it rain but fountains of the deep would also add to the catastrophe. The waters prevailed on the earth for 150 days. After doing a couple of tests with birds, Noah determined there was dry land.

Noah and his family then left the ark, built an altar and sacrificed animals. God revealed that He would not curse the ground again. At this point God allows the eating of meat. He gives the ordinance of capital punishment. He establishes His covenant with a rainbow being a sign of the covenant. He becomes a farmer, makes wine, gets drunk and becomes uncovered in his tent. His youngest son, Ham, sees his father and, instead of dealing discretely, tells his brothers. This results in a curse upon the descendants of Ham.

I. Points of Difficulty

Once again, let's start by addressing some common questions or difficulties contained in these four chapters.

Sons of God

First of all, who are the sons of God and daughters of men in Genesis 6:2. It seems as though the beginning of the problem, in terms of the deterioration of mankind leading to the flood starts with the sons of God taking wives from the daughters of men. It is not even a matter here of fornication, but of ungodly unions of marriage. The three most popular suggestions here are that the sons of God are either angels, the line of Seth or kings and nobles of the Cainite line. It seems to me that the easiest understanding is that the line of Seth (the godly line) began courting the line of Cain (the ungodly line). This is a typical problem that has plagued God's people throughout history. Whether what happened through the counsel of Balaam, the example of Solomon, or those who did not heed the

counsel of Paul in 2 Corinthians 6 to avoid being unequally yoked. Suffice it to say, being unequally yoked is massively destructive and is to be avoided at all costs.

Connected to this problem is a second, who are the giants in 6:4? This is easy. They are the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men, warriors, fighting men.

God is Sorry?

In Genesis 6:6 there is a statement that has caused much dispute. It says that God was sorry He had made man. How are we to understand this? First of all, we are not to understand these types of statement about God to violate what we know of the character and nature of God. In other words, if a man is sorry that he did something, it usually means either he didn't know what would happen, or realizes that he made a mistake. These types of qualities cannot be imposed upon God. God knows everything and is incapable of error. We must understand that God is not a man, but desires to communicate with His creation as a father. This might be called an anthropomorphic or anthropopathic description of God. He is revealing to us, in a way we might understand, His disposition toward sin. Calvin calls this accommodation. God is accommodating Himself to our weakness.

All Those Animals

Finally, the most asked question is how could all those animals fit in the ark? First, we must realize the ark was the length of a football field and a half. It was about 75 feet wide and as high as a five story building. It also contained three levels inside. It is also important to point out that it wasn't necessary for every breed of every species to be on the ark. They didn't need two bull-dogs and two German shepherds, etc. "For all practical purposes, one could say that, at the outside, there was need for no more than 35,000 individual vertebrate animals on the ark."¹ With its approximately 100,000 square feet of deck space and 1,400,000 cubic feet of open space, this would not be difficult.

II. Points of emphasis

Now onto some points of emphasis in these four chapters.

Unequal Yokes

Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and

¹ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison* (Baker Book House, 1975), p. 122.

they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose” (Genesis 6:1,2).⁴ There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown” (Genesis 6:1,2,4).

We see here that the deterioration of the human race was preceded by unholy unions. This was not simply because God does not want Israelites marrying Egyptians or Philistines. The point of Paul’s admonition in 2 Corinthians 6 to avoid unholy unions is because of the influence they will inevitably have.

The church is continually bombarded by the unholy methodologies and philosophies of secular corporations. It is not uncommon for today’s mega-church to have developed their philosophy of ministry from Fortune 500 companies rather than the Scriptures. Similar to the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men, they might generate their own ‘mighty men’. But this can hardly be equated with the advancement of the true kingdom of God.

When do you know you have entered into one of these unholy unions? At very least, it is the moment you are either obliged, or find yourself unwittingly, doing or thinking as the world. As Paul writes, **“Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).**

God’s Limits

And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years” (Genesis 6:3).

Peter points out the patience of God. **“...who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared...” (1 Peter 3:20).** But men must know that God will not strive with man forever. As we read in Romans 1, and elsewhere, God will forbear the hardness of men’s hearts only so long, then comes judgment. The judgment may take form in any number of ways. Sometimes it is God simply allowing men to have their own way. But judgment will come. It is a solemn warning not to tempt the patience of God.

Where Men End Up Through Apostacy

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

We learn in verse five that the rejection of God does not leave men in a morally neutral position. It is not as if the Christian faith is a club that happens to be moral and service orientated. It is the source of morality. To reject the faith is to begin down a path void of true, or objective righteousness. Such was the case with the entire world during the time of Noah.

No Safety in Numbers

We should not think there is safety in numbers. Simply because there are entire generations of people living a certain way, does not grant us a sort of mob anonymity. If everybody in every church decided it was okay to own slaves in an unjust manner, they would be foolish to think that judgment would not eventually visit their households. Again, Peter points out the obvious.

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:4,5).

We must live in such a way as to be willing to go against the tide of ungodly public opinion, even if that opinion is dominant in the church.

Noah’s Faith

“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

I won’t go into the detail of the building of the ark but I will say this. In the one hundred or so years it took for Noah to build the ark, he, a preacher, had no converts and was likely an object of ridicule. This is no doubt a lesson in perseverance. We will often make a few efforts or pray a few times, then grow discouraged. Noah was steadfast and immovable. He was exemplary.

We must however, be careful not to separate Noah from the phylum of humanity. Noah found grace in the eyes of God and did his good works, based upon the same criteria as any modern man, by faith. It is healthy, from time to time, to take a good hard look at what we are putting our faith in. How reliable, eternal and powerful is the chief object of our trust and affections?

Establishing a Covenant

“But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (Genesis 6:18).

It may be good to stop at this verse for just a moment. A theme we will see through Genesis, and through all of Scripture, is that of a covenant God. God had earlier made a covenant in the garden of Eden that the seed of the woman would defeat the seed of the serpent. This is not a promise that God would forget. It would be through the seed of Noah that God would preserve His promise of a Messiah. We shall see this will be through Shem. And as you, know the sign of this covenant would be a rainbow and included God’s promise not to destroy the human race this way again.

Blood

After forty days and forty nights of rain, then 150 more days until the dry land appeared, then another six months until the earth was inhabitable, Noah and his family left the ark. This is followed by a some interesting events. First there is the issue of blood and sacrifice.

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. ²² ‘While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease” (Genesis 8:20-22).

Noah gets off the ark and makes a sacrifice to the Lord. This sacrifice, clearly done in faith, was a soothing aroma to God. How could something be a soothing aroma to God? When it is done in faith in the blood of Christ. It is as if the aroma brings the blood of Christ to the mind of the Father, compelling Him to pronounce that He will not curse man again (even though man is yet sinful).

“So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² ‘And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³ ‘Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things,

even as the green herbs. ⁴ ‘But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵ ‘Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ ‘Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man. ⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it” (Genesis 9:1-7).

God teaches of the value of blood. He gives restriction here regarding the eating of animals with their blood still in them, for He equates blood with life. He then gives the first mandate for capital punishment. He who sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed. He then makes the final connection as to why killing men requires the death penalty. It is ultimately a strike against that which most closely resembles God—“For in the image of God He made man.”

Respecting Authority

The end of chapter nine conveys an interesting story which will set the stage for the history of mankind.

“Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. ²⁰ And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹ Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness. ²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. ²⁵ Then he said: “Cursed *be* Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brethren.” ²⁶ And he said: “Blessed *be* the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant. ²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant.” ²⁸ And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. ²⁹ So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

Noah plants a vineyard and gets drunk and ends up uncovered (whatever this actually meant, it was clearly a shameful display). His youngest son, Ham,

instead of handling this respectfully and discreetly, runs out and tells his two brothers. They, in turn respect their father. This event will be the event that casts the descendants of Ham (Canaan) wayward. We must be careful that we are not extra critical of those in authority, simply waiting for them to slip that we might expose them. Forbearance is virtuous. There is nothing to indicate that Noah was a chronically evil man. He had an isolated incident, that was not responded to very well by his youngest, and as a result, this rebellious youth would find a curse on his progeny.

III. Primary

Having said all this, what is the primary purpose of this very popular story? As we seek to apply the words of Jesus to our study of the Old Testament **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39)**. What is the greatest way the story of Noah testifies of Jesus? The answer is, perhaps, found in 1 Peter 3.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Peter 3:18-22).

It is important to understand the terms ‘type’ and ‘antitype’. A type is something we read about in the Old Testament which foreshadows something we see in the New Testament. The thing it foreshadows is called the antitype. Having explained this, let’s see if Peter brings this story to the cross of Christ.

Saved Through Water

It is of interest to note that Peter writes, **“in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water” (1 Peter 3:20)**. As you’re reading this, it would seem more natural to say that they were saved through the ark or from the water. How is it they were saved through water? Simon Kistemaker suggests (and I agree) that when Noah went into the ark he **“left behind a sea of iniquity...Noah’s family left the ark and knew that God had saved them from**

being drowned by an ocean of human corruption” Peter is about to make a statement of comparison between the symbolism of the waters of the flood and the waters of baptism. **“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism” (1 Peter 3:21a).** Kistemaker states that,

“...as the flood waters cleansed the earth of man’s wickedness, so the water of baptism indicates man’s cleansing from sin. As the flood separated Noah and his family from the wicked world of their day, so baptism separates believers from the evil world of our day.”²

Not the Removal of Filth from Flesh

And to avoid confusion, Peter makes the parenthetical statement, **“(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)” (1 Peter 3:21).** In other words, it is not the sacrament of baptism which saves but that of which it is a sign. The divines of Westminster addressed this issue in chapter 27, chapter 2.

“In every sacrament there is a spiritual relationship or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified. And so the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

Ananias might have said to Paul, “get up be baptized and wash your sins away,” thus acknowledging the spiritual relationship between the sacrament of baptism and the spiritual act of baptism. But this in no way suggests that mere water can or does bring a sinner before God with a good conscience. In other words we cannot separate the sign from the thing signified. Baptism as an outward rite. And though God may use it as a means of grace to the person receiving it and those around, putting water on somebody, in and of itself, will not yield a good conscience before God. The folly of thinking that you can stand before God with an unsaved, uncircumcised heart and appeal to a day when you had water sprinkled on you has been the demise of many poor souls – mostly Roman Catholics.

Baptized into Christ’s Death

The baptism which saves is, by the grace of God, is being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The old man dies and the new man lives. The appeal of a good conscience that is now obtained before God finds as its source of power the resurrection of Jesus Himself. There is no human behavior, no ritual, no prayer, no thought, not even a sacrament that can purge

² Simon J. Kistemaker’s *Commentary on 1 Peter*, pp. 146,147.

the conscience and allow a man to stand naked before the living God justified. Paul says Jesus was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). Apart from faith in the resurrected Savior the conscience remains defiled and man estranged from His Creator.

So the question really is this, what will the flood waters of God's judgment be to you? Will you be saved through it or judged by it? Are the flood waters a foreshadow of you being washed away as part of the ocean of human corruption or are they a type of being cleansed by the living waters of Jesus Christ?

Questions for Study

1. Who are the sons of God and daughters of men in the opening verses of chapter six?
2. In what respect was God sorry for having made man?
3. How could all of those animals fit on the ark?
4. What sin is mentioned in the opening of chapter six which precedes the deterioration of humanity?
5. What is meant when God says He will not strive with man forever?
6. Where does apostasy lead?
7. Ultimately, how is it Noah found favor in the eyes of God?
8. Discuss the covenant.
9. What was the first thing Noah did when he got off the ark? Why?
10. Discuss Noah's drunken episode. Why was Ham's lineage cursed?
11. How do we see Christ in the story of the flood?
12. Why does Peter say Noah and his family were saved "through" the water (1 Peter 3:20)?
13. Compare the flood waters with baptism. What are their similarities (1 Peter 3:21)?