The Creator Destroys and Redeems

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God’s glory is revealed in salvation that comes through judgment.

So far in our study of Genesis, we’ve seen how God created the heavens and the earth and human beings made in His image. We watched how Adam and Eve sinned. In the previous session, we saw how sin became an epidemic, not something that could be quarantined in the hearts of our first parents. It was a sickness that spread to their children, and as it spread, it began to manifest itself in increasingly wicked ways.

What are some sins in society today that we still see as shameful? What are sins we treat with indifference? What sins does our society boast about?

In this session, we see how God responds to the rebelliousness of humanity. He grieves over the wickedness of the world even as He pronounces judgment upon humanity. But in this righteous judgment, God shows favor to Noah and his family, saving them from a great flood and then commissioning them to fulfill His good intentions for humanity. Like Noah, we are saved from God’s judgment and called to obey God as His redeemed people.

Voices from the Church

“The story of the flood reveals a God who is both a holy Judge and a gracious Redeemer.”
–Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen
1. God grieved as He judged the wickedness of the world (Gen. 6:5-7).

Sin spread wide and sin spread deep. By the time we get to Genesis 6, we may be wondering what God thinks about this situation and what He will do about it.

When the Lord saw that man's wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time, the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then the Lord said, “I will wipe off from the face of the earth mankind, whom I created, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky—for I regret that I made them.”

Every thought was nothing but evil, we read. Imagine that kind of a world—a place where in every thought and deed people were in essence shouting at God: “I don’t trust You! I don’t believe You! I defy You!” Such is the essence of sin—a faithless defiance of God the Creator.

God’s reaction was one of sorrow and grief. That word “grieved” (v. 6) in the Hebrew means “toil, languish, agony, to be injured in feeling.”

How can this word be used of God? How can an infinitely powerful God who lacks in nothing be in toil, languish, or agony? How could He be injured in any way? The basis for this grief is love—love for the people He created. It’s why, after reading in Genesis 3:7 about Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, God didn’t simply step in and destroy them and the world in Genesis 3:8. He judged, but He judged with patience, longing to be in relationship again with His people.

What is the significance of “grief” preceding God’s judgment of sinful people?

What does this description tell us about the character of God?
God could have annihilated His world and all its inhabitants, but instead, He chose to purge the world of its great wickedness. Yet He would save one family. He chose not to give up on all humanity, not to turn His back and start over completely. Even though He knew Noah and his descendants would again disappoint Him, defy Him, and walk in faithlessness, God decided to preserve this remnant. Why? Because like a father who will not stop loving his children no matter how often they disobey, God bound His heart to His people.

What this means is that God willingly and happily bound up His heart and His life with us. He simply loved us. He didn’t have to love us, and He didn’t need to, but in His great love, He extended grace to us. He is our Father, and He has tied His own joys with our joys, and He tied His own pains with our pains.

The flood story is certainly one of judgment—the declaration of a holy and righteous Judge against all that is evil. And yet, it is also one of grief—the tears of a loving Father who will not give up on His people.

What picture of God do we have when we consider His anger apart from His grief? What about when we think of God as grieving but never angry?

Why is it important to hold these two truths together?

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The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect character through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent beauty of God, the unbearable brightness and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having “fallen short” of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us—to glorify Him.
2. God showed favor to a righteous man’s family (Gen. 6:8-22).

8 Noah, however, found favor in the sight of the Lord.

9 These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries: Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth. 13 Then God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

14 “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside. 15 This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. 16 You are to make a roof, finishing the sides of the ark to within 18 inches of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

17 “Understand that I am bringing a flood—floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will die. 18 But I will establish My covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives. 19 You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. 20 Two of everything—from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds—will come to you so that you can keep them alive. 21 Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.” 22 And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

There are two truths here we must not miss. First, grace precedes righteousness. It’s no accident that the text specifies Noah receiving favor from the Lord before being declared righteous. Grace came first. It wasn’t that Noah obeyed and that’s why he was saved. It was that Noah received grace, and that’s why he obeyed.

What are some of the signs in Noah’s life that demonstrated his righteous character?
Why is it important that we recognize that God’s grace must precede our obedience?

The second truth is that the covenant God made with Noah benefited the members of his family. The righteousness of Noah was the foundation of the preservation of the rest of his family.

Does that sound like anyone else whom you know? The story of Noah points us ahead to Jesus. In Noah we see a pattern for how God is going to offer ultimate salvation. Jesus is the One in whom God was truly pleased, the One God truly favored. Though all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, though none are righteous, not even one, based upon the sole person of Jesus and His righteousness, God offers us salvation.

Noah’s family is saved from the flood not on the basis of their righteousness but on the basis of Noah’s righteousness. They’re saved because they belong to Noah. In salvation from sin, we’re not saved by our own works but by the work of Jesus alone, and we’re saved only if we belong to Him.

What lessons can we learn from Noah’s example of faithfulness?
3. God commissioned Noah’s family (Gen. 9:1-11).

The story of the flood doesn’t end with Noah’s rescue but with God making a covenant with Noah and then commissioning his family to fulfill the original mandate He gave to Adam and Eve.

1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority. 3 Every living creature will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything. 4 However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it. 5 I will require the life of every animal and every man for your life and your blood. I will require the life of each man’s brother for a man’s life. 6 Whoever sheds man’s blood, his blood will be shed by man, for God made man in His image. 7 But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it.” 8 Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, 9 “Understand that I am confirming My covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. 11 I confirm My covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by the waters of a flood; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Compare Genesis 9:1-11 to the original mandate God gave Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-28. What similarities do you see? What are the differences?
We see clearly through God’s words to Noah and his family that the flood did not fix everything and restore everything back to its proper order and place. The flood’s inability to solve the sin problem points us back to the beginning of this session. The sin of man has spread wide and deep. How wide and how deep? So wide and deep that even the destruction of most of the world and starting over with one righteous man and his family was not sufficient to redeem and restore humanity back to God.

A greater solution than the flood was needed. And the good news of the gospel is that a greater solution was given to us at the cross. At the cross we see the true extent to which God was willing to be grieved so that we might be saved. The Son of God was willing to drink the cup of God’s judgment in order that we might be spared eternal death.

And just as Noah’s story ends with a reaffirmation of God’s covenant with humanity and a commissioning to follow God in obedience, so also our salvation is not an end in itself but what precedes our own obedience. God has commissioned us not only to be fruitful and multiply but also to take the good news of this holy and merciful God to the rest of the world. Noah could only save seven members of his family, but God has given to Jesus people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Just as Noah spent his life in faith building an ark while the world rejected his message (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5), we should spend our lives faithfully telling people about the coming judgment and the good news of the provision God has made for our salvation—Jesus Christ.

Voices from Church History

“God’s purpose...was to eliminate all apprehension from Noah’s thinking...He said, remember, ‘Just as I brought on the deluge out of love, so as to put a stop to their wickedness and prevent their going to further extremes, so in this case too it is out of my love that I promise never to do it again.’”

—Chrysostom (circa 347-407)

Noah is described in the New Testament as “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). In what ways does our mission to call people to repentance and faith resemble Noah’s example?
Conclusion

In this session, we’ve seen the grief of a good God, who in righteousness judged the world during the days of Noah. We’ve explored the parallels between Noah’s salvation and ours so that we can have our hearts filled with gratitude for the great salvation God has given us through Christ.

But the parallels between Noah’s mission and our mission are also notable. Noah walked with God. His life of obedience was a testimony to the God who showed favor to him. Noah believed God when he was told a day of judgment was coming, and he preached righteousness to the rest of the world, even though they rejected his message.

We should see in Noah a figure who points us to Christ and who remains an example of faithful mission. We are to walk with God, allowing His grace to shape our obedience so that others see a testimony to His goodness. We are to believe God regarding the coming day of judgment—hell for the unrepentant after they die and final judgment upon this world when Christ returns. No matter how unpopular or unlikely such a message seems in our age of tolerance, we are to take God at His Word. Believing in a God who grieves over our sin and has promised to purge this world of evil in the future, we call others to turn from sin and accept God’s offer of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Judgment is coming. May we be known as preachers of righteousness.

CHRIST CONNECTION: Just as God showed favor to righteous Noah and extended salvation to his family, so also God grants salvation to all who come by faith into the family of His righteous Son, Jesus Christ.
1. What are some thoughts people in our culture might have about God judging the wickedness of the world? How would you respond to these thoughts?

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2. What parallels do you see in the story of the flood and the gospel of Jesus Christ?

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3. How will you carry out the Great Commission in light of your salvation in Christ from the coming judgment?

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MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God calls us to proclaim the reality of His righteousness and grace so that others may join His family and be saved from the coming judgment.
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SESSION 1

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

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SESSION 5

SESSION 6

SESSION 7

SESSION 8

SESSION 9
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3. John R. W. Stott, Understanding the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) [eBook].

SESSION 10
1. J. D. Greear, Jesus Continued (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 173.

SESSION 11

SESSION 12

SESSION 13
2. Dan Allender, quoted in As We Forgive, by Catherine Claire Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009) [eBook].