

The Story of Noah

Genesis 6:8-22

The story of Noah is always popular. It's an especially favorite children's story, and a very popular craze such that we often see ark-shaped outdoor playground equipment and bedroom murals, children's bedsheets, and everything else from stuffed animals to clothing to toys of all kinds. And what's not to like? You have all the animals, and all the colors of the rainbow. So everyone, it seems, likes the story of Noah and the ark.

But for far too many people, it is just that, a story. For many, Noah's ark has become a legend, a fable, or perhaps just a story for children with some good moral lessons attached. But it isn't considered as something that actually happened. Those of us who believe that these things actually happened aren't quite so common! There aren't nearly so many of us who believe that, 1656 years after the creation of the world, a 600 year old man built a wood box 450 feet long and 75 feet wide, and lived in that floating box for a full year with his family and two of every kind of all animals during a worldwide flood brought about by rain that lasted for 40 days and 40 nights.

But let me tell you—that is exactly what happened. A 600 year old man built a wood box 450 long by 75 wide, filled that box with two of every kind of animal, along with his family, took food on board and floated on the waters of the flood. The story really is about that 600 year old man, the man to whom we were introduced last Sunday, the man named Noah. So actually, the emphasis of the story isn't about the animals at all. It's about one godly, righteous and obedient man. A man whose faith is recorded for us in the great lineup of the saints in,

Heb. 11:7 "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."

And so we read in verse 9, "This is the genealogy of Noah." This is the account of Noah; this is the history of Noah, the actual history of a real man. And we see clearly what kind of man he is. Noah was a godly man!

I. NOAH LIVED AS A GODLY MAN IN AN UNGODLY AGE.

Remember the descriptions of mankind which we studied last week.

v.5 "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Then we read this morning,

v.11 "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth."

But Noah was different.

v.8 "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD."

Even more specifically,

v.9 "These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God."

But go back to verse 8. Read it again. Let me give you a clearer understanding of what is in the Hebrew. Instead of favor, substitute the word grace. The Hebrew word is the word normally translated "grace." And that is what verse 8 means. The meaning is not that Noah did good works, and therefore earned God's favor. No, first and foremost, Noah received grace. And

you know the definition of grace. Unmerited favor. Undeserved blessing. An unearned gift.

We read in the NT that,

Eph.2:8. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

You can read the same idea into Genesis 6:8. The LORD had just said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But God would be gracious to Noah. Noah was saved by grace, through faith. It was not from himself. It was the gift of God. Not by works, so that he could not boast.

With that understanding of his relationship to God, we read again how he actually lived.

v.9 "This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.”

And when all was said and done, with all this stuff about building a huge ark and gathering all the animals of the world into it, we read that,

v.22 “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.”

What is so plainly obvious is that,

A. By God’s grace, Noah lived a righteous life.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was saved by grace. And that grace was not without effect. What Paul wrote about himself, was surely true of Noah,

1Cor. 15:10 “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His

grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

And so, verse 9 describes Noah’s actual life. He was righteous. That is, just. Obedient. He lived according to God’s standards, he obeyed God’s laws. “Noah did all that God commanded him.” Surely, there is no better definition of righteousness than that! He obeyed God. It wasn’t self-righteousness. It wasn’t works salvation. It was simply a sinner saved by grace living a godly life.

So much so that he was called blameless. Now, that word always conjures up ideas of sinless perfection. The fundamental idea of the Hebrew word is to be complete, or whole. Blameless is a good translation of it, as is the word integrity.

Noah had integrity. He was wholehearted in his devotion to God. He had a clear conscience, that is he was blameless. There were no skeletons in the closet, no open or unconfessed sin. There was nothing hidden, nothing to hide. And as such a fitting summary, we read of him, like we did Enoch, that he walked with God. Noah walked with God. He lived with God. Every day. All day. He did everything just as God commanded him.

None of that is meant to say that he achieved a state of perfection. None of that is to say that was without sin, anymore than it would today. We ought to strive to be blameless and above reproach, and Elders specifically are called to such a standard. Yet, none of us are without sin, for we read in,

1John 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

So none of us can claim to be without sin. But we can be called blameless. We can live above reproach. We can live with a clear conscience. We, too, can be righteous and blameless. Such is the meaning of Jesus' words in,

Mat.5:48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

For Noah, as it is for any who live a similar life today, the contrast becomes overwhelming. The contrast with the wickedness of the world.

Noah's righteousness was contrasted with the world's evil. We read in verse 9 that he was "blameless among the people of his time." He was blameless among his generation. The implication is that he, alone, was blameless among all his contemporaries.

The contrast is dramatic, for we read in,
v.11-12

And this, also, despite God's grace.

B. Despite God's grace, the world of Noah's day lived in violent rebellion against God.

Corrupt, verse 11. It is the same word used in verse 13, "behold, I will destroy them with the earth." In other words, God would destroy people who had, in effect, already destroyed themselves.

The earth was corrupt in God's sight, it was destroyed. And it was full of violence, describing the sort of willful, sinful oppression inflicted by men upon other men. It is the idea of man's inhumanity to man--fraud, assault, no doubt rape, and murder, extortion, injustice, and the like. Human rights were being

trampled upon in horrible fashion, giving us insight into the prevailing anarchy and lawlessness of those days.

And it wasn't just a small group, it wasn't a minority. It wasn't even merely the majority. It was everyone.

v.12

In God's eyes, everyone was corrupt. It appears that Noah was the only one righteous, though you could include Methuselah, the last remaining of the forefathers listed in Genesis 5, who died in the year of the flood. What a contrast from,

Gen. 1:31 "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning --the sixth day."

All of this in just 1656 years! Such is the rapid progress of sin! Only one righteous man left in the whole world. That's a good perspective to have when you consider the circumstances of our own day, today. It is not hard to recount the increase and prevalence of evil and wickedness just in the past generation. It is easy to think of our own age as uniquely wicked and rebellious. And then we come to study the day of Noah. And to be sure, what we see then is a message that we need to hear today.

II. GOD ANNOUNCES HIS JUDGEMENT UPON AN UNGODLY AGE.

v.13

I believe that the emphasis in this chapter is upon the protection and salvation offered to Noah, and we'll return to that emphasis shortly, but for the moment, let's look at this judgment upon his unbelieving generation. Clearly,

A. The destruction of the flood demonstrates God's universal judgment upon sin.

Again, v.13

God would put an end to all people. Literally, he will put an end to all flesh, and that flesh includes both men and animals, all living souls in whom God had put the breath of life.

v.17

That universal destruction is also specified in,

Gen. 7:21 “And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. 22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died.”

Notice that the animals were subjected to God’s judgment, though not by any fault of their own. They were judged with man, for man had been appointed to rule over them. Just like the original curse announced by God after Adam’s first sin, the animals were joined with man in experiencing God’s wrath. As verse 13 ends, man would be destroyed with the earth! It was, therefore, a universal flood, not just a local flood in one particular area. The earth was destroyed, all living creatures all over the earth. It seems very clear from verse 17 that the flood would cover the whole earth. Every creature would perish, all over the world. It was a universal judgment. That is confirmed by,

2Pet. 3:6 “...by which [waters] the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”

God’s wrath was poured out as a punishment for sin! God’s condemnation is announced. Upon the whole world. And so we read this commentary in,

Hebr. 11:7 “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.”

The very existence of the ark which protected Noah and his family would speak judgment upon everyone else, for the ark meant that the flood was coming, and everyone not on the ark would be killed in that judgment. But even further,

B. The destruction of the flood symbolizes God’s eternal judgment upon sin.

The symbolism is implied here, because of the universal nature of the judgment.

v.13

That implication of eternal judgment is made clear in,

2Pet. 3:3 “...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”

We also read about the flood as a symbol for future judgment in,

2Pet. 2:4 “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... 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 11 whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. 12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness.”

Having said all of that, something else actually stands out in the story of Noah. Something other than God’s judgment. As I mentioned earlier, the emphasis in this story is not so much upon the condemnation of the world as it is upon the salvation of Noah and his family. This great salvation is announced by God as a covenant, the covenant of salvation, the covenant of grace by which God saves his people. Genesis 6:18 is the first time the Hebrew word “covenant” is actually used in the Bible.

v.18

And so the real emphasis of this story of Noah is that,

III. GOD EXPLAINS THE COVENANT HE ESTABLISHED WITH HIS PEOPLE.

What was the nature of the covenant? It’s pretty obvious that the essential nature of the covenant is escape from judgment. Noah and his family escaped this universal judgment. They were

saved through the water! Specifically,

A. Through his covenant, God promises to protect his people from his judgment.

The ark was the protection.

v.14-16

Let me get a little technical for a minute, and ask you to look at that ark like an engineer would. Picture this in your mind. It was 450 feet long and 75 feet wide, which assumes that a cubit equals 18 inches. The actual dimensions are given in cubits.

450 feet long. That’s the equivalent of one and one-half football fields. Not really so huge when compared to modern ocean liners. But still big, huge, actually, for one man to build. 450 feet long and 75 feet wide. It’s pretty skinny. 6 times as long as it is high, not exactly what you see in most of the pictures. And 45 feet high, made up of three decks.

Let me read from the description given by a professional engineer, Henry Morris. He was a civil engineer, specializing in water resources, and taught for years at Virginia Tech. I used one of his textbooks when I was there. This is what he writes. “God instructed Noah to build a huge bargelike structure called an ark...According to God’s instructions, the ark was to be designed for capacity and floating stability rather than for speed or navigability.”

Morris then says of the ark that, “It can be shown hydrodynamically that a gigantic box of such dimensions would be exceedingly stable, almost impossible to capsize. Even in a sea of gigantic waves, the ark could be tilted through any angle up to just short of 90° and would immediately thereafter right itself again. Furthermore, it would tend to align itself parallel with the direction of major wave advance and thus be subject to minimum

pitching most of the time.”

So, it was a huge, stable wood box. A three story barge, made of gopher wood, the identification of which no one knows exactly. But no doubt, some sort of very hard wood, sealed with pitch on the inside and outside. It would be divided up into various rooms.

It had a window, according to verse 16, an opening for daylight extending all around the ark’s circumference 18 inches from the top. And one door. Nowhere for the animals to go once they entered, no way to leave.

But how many animals could it hold? And as secular scientists would ridicule, how could it possibly hold two of every animal? I will answer again with the words of Henry Morris: “The total volumetric capacity of the ark was approximately [1.5 million] cubic feet, which is equal to the volumetric capacity of [560] standard livestock cars such as used on modern American railroads. [Think about that for a moment. A train of 560 livestock cars. That’s a lot of animals! Morris continues.] Since it is known that about 240 sheep can be transported in one stock car, a total of over [134,000] sheep could have been carried in the Ark.”

So could it hold two of every animal? Again, I’ll let Morris answer: “Authorities on biological taxonomy estimate that there are less than 18,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians living in the world today. This number might be doubled to allow for known extinct land animals. Allowing then for two of each species, there might have been a total of about 72,000 animals on the ark--say 75,000; to allow for the five extra animals in each clean species.”

His conclusion? “Since the ark could have carried as many as [134,000] sheep, and since the average size of land animals is surely less than that of a sheep, it is obvious that no more than 60% of its capacity would have to be used for animals. Actually, it would have been less than this, since the biblical “kind” is probably considerably broader than that of the arbitrary “species” category of modern biology.”

In simple language, the ark was plenty big enough! Big enough for the animals and big enough for Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. But that’s not the main point. The main point was not the size of the ark, but its purpose. The purpose was protection. Protection from God’s judgment.

The covenant was a covenant of protection.

v.18 “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. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.”

In that protection from God’s judgment, let me go back to the idea of water.

v.17 “And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.”

There is the first mention of HOW God will bring judgment. Water. But water also represents cleansing from sin! Thus,

B. Through his covenant, God promises cleansing.

Though that idea is not obvious in the words of Genesis 6, it is very obvious in Peter’s inspired explanation of Genesis 6.

1Pet. 3:18 “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.”

The ark enabled Noah and his family to be saved from God’s judgment. They were saved through water, water that symbolizes baptism. The flood waters which destroyed every living creature on earth symbolize the water of salvation which is symbolically poured out at baptism. Water that symbolizes cleansing! That’s amazing!

And one more thing. One more thing made very obvious in Genesis 6, something so obvious that it is often not said. But actually, it is the focus of this whole story.

C. Through his covenant, God promises life.

The covenant with Noah was a covenant of life.

v.18

They would live! They would enter the ark, and live! And not only Noah and his family, but also animals, all the living souls in which God had placed the breath of life.

v.19-21

I might add that even the food supply necessary to sustain life is not a difficult problem to consider. Animals, though not man,

are very shrewd about adapting their food supply to their needs. And most animals, if not all, have the remarkable and instinctive ability to cope with prolonged periods of bad weather. There is every likelihood, that as these animals entered the ark, in response to the suddenly darkened sky and chill in the air, they simply settle down for a year-long “sleep” in their respective nests. Today, we call that ability hibernation. It is very likely these animals hibernated during their stay on the ark.

And they all survived. They lived. Noah, his wife, his three sons, his three sons’ wives, and two of all the animals. God promises life, and God provided life. Now, let me end with the obvious NT fulfillment of the life that is pictured in this covenant with Noah. Let me end by speaking about eternal life, everlasting life. Life that means that we, too, shall be protected from God’s judgment, for God’s judgment ultimately means death.

Life is the central idea in the gospel. And the focus of Jesus’ work was to bring life. And so, as the apostle John defines the gospel so clearly,

1John 5:11 “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

So ultimately, the story of Noah points to Jesus Christ. And the simple, absolute separation among mankind is easy to define, “He who has Jesus has life; he who does not have Jesus does not have life.”