

NOAH & THE FLOOD, GEN 8:18-9:17

The Formidable Unforgotten #2

♦**Noah and the Flood is good news and bad news.** We'll talk about both this morning. First let's ponder our own fascination with mass-destruction stories. I'm sure we could list together several dozen films about world destruction and narrow escapes. Humans have always told them. Almost every known ancient culture has a flood story. The Babylonian flood story, a contemporary of the Hebrew people, has it's Noah (means "comfort" or "rest"), Utnapishtim ("the one who found life"). Utnap built a huge ship to save himself, his family, and the animals. He sends out birds to check the waters. He comes to rest on a mountain and offers a sacrifice afterwards too. But there's a big difference in the accounts.

♦Utnap lives in a fairy-tale world. He builds his ship in seven days. Noah worked on his roughly 75 years all the while warning the folks around him. The Babylonian flood lasts all of a week, not 150 days. It's caused by a goof decision of the god Enlil, who rams it through in a slight political move. Another god, Ea, tips Utnapishtim off about the coming flood, so Utnap whips up a boat, and parties with his soon-to-be-dead neighbors. (Hardly a "preacher of righteousness" as Noah is termed by the Apostle Peter.) And afterwards the gods award him divine status for his cleverness.

♦In contrast the Genesis account bears marks of real history, as well as scientific accuracy. And while many cultures tell tales they acknowledge are myth, or legend, the biblical writings allow

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no hint of this. There are many questions worth exploring on the subject of Noah and the Flood, but I want to focus today on its over-all message. Many wonder and hypothesize about the causes of the disasters and destructions that take place on our planet. Ancients liked to blame it on the gods. Moderns don't believe in gods, so they have nothing left but to call life a nebulous web of existential freedom; that is, it's all accident and chance. But God's word tells us the last thing we want to hear:

♦1. The cause behind even natural disaster is ultimately the fallen moral state of mankind. Everybody wants to survive, even the folks who think this is all a cosmic accident want to live on. But nobody wants to think that what's wrong with the universe is the people in it. Yet that is the very case, and it's one of the author's points. Ground is hard to farm because of Adam (Gen.3), mankind. Likewise the Flood was a result of human wickedness.

♦"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them."" Genesis 6:5-7, NIV.

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♦ "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."

Genesis 6:13, NIV.

♦ The Apostle Paul makes the same connection in his letter to the Roman Christians:

♦ "*The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*" Romans 8:19-22, NIV.

♦ A. The Babylonian version of the Flood account elevates the hero who survived, as though man is the famous savior of himself, and not the problem in the first place. We're no different. We act as though we are the solvers of our floods. We will survive. We'll find a way. We'll just outrun our messes like a plane outrunning an earthquake. Truth is, we won't be solving it ourselves. We make our messes. One thing the Flood shows us in that evil is a dead end road and it starts in the human soul. God will destroy all evil in the end. Fill that in with any of the things God's word warns us against. Lying is a dead end. Greed

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is a dead end. Gluttony is a dead end. Lust is a dead end. Paul tells us none of this will live on into the Kingdom of God.

♦"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers. Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Corinthians 6:7-10, NIV.

♦NB the phrase "Why not rather be cheated." This is God's way. Is it yours? [Everything costs so much more these days. One reason: people sue each other for everything they can get. We want others to be responsible for our well-being. We think we're entitled to a trouble-free life. That's not the way of the Kingdom. That which doesn't fit will all wash away.]

♦B. Let's apply this to the country we live in. America's biggest problem is not that another ice age is coming, or the globe is warming, or that California might break off at the San Andreas Fault and fall into the Pacific. It is not the police departments or racism either. Those are impersonal entities. The problem is us, each of us. It is not that the democrats control the House, or that the President tweets poorly. It's each of us including the

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people in the protests. Our problem is the morally dying soul of our country that wants pay without working, and sex without marriage, and wealth without generosity, and freedom without responsibility, and gender without science.

♦C. And your biggest problem is not your inadequate spouse, or the glass ceiling at your job, or the unfair circumstances that got you born into a family with dysfunctional parents, or without a hidden skill to be found by *Americas Got Talent*. Your problem is not the world dealt you a bad hand of cards. Your problem is you and what you choose to do in response to the troubles you face.

- ◆ How do you choose to respond to your husband or wife?
- ◆ How do you choose to respond to bad politicians, or bad parents for that matter?
- ◆ What do you do when injustice has been done? More injustice so everyone knows you're mad? Isn't this what the riots around the country are doing right now. Over 60 consecutive days of nightly rioting in Portland, OR! The problem is us! The citizens. The human being!

♦D. And once again, our character has a resultant effect on the earth itself. As goes the spirit of man, so goes the health of the earth. We are probably not quick to adopt the idea, but listen to the Scriptures:

- ◆ "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows

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bloodshed. Because of this the land mourns, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea are dying.” Hosea 4:1-3, NIV.

♦“How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, “He will not see what happens to us.”” Jeremiah 12:4, NIV.

♦The prophet Isaiah says the same things. The Book of Job says it. (Now this is a general principle; not implying devastation can be always linked to a particular persons moral failure.) In contrast, when the Messiah brings God’s kingdom...

♦“The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox... They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,” says the LORD.” Isaiah 65:25, NIV.

♦E. What all of this means, I think, is that you and I have more weight on our shoulders than we think. God has set mankind in general as the overseer of his creation already in Genesis 1. Then after the Flood, God repeats Genesis 1 to Noah and his family (9:1,7) We are the force that affects history most. And the Church has the weighty role of preserving the earth by its presence and influence. Jesus said his followers were the “salt of the earth.” The preservative and flavor (Mt.5:13) God assured Abraham that for a mere ten righteous people, he would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you see? You, disciple of Christ, are affecting the world in undistinguished, perhaps unseen

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ways. You are the light of the world. You are the lamp not under the bushel basket but set on the stand. How you and I live matters to our surroundings! I personally very much believe that the USA has endured this long because of it's Christian foundations. But when God's people stop caring, and stop walking with God, and stop influencing culture -culture will necessarily degenerate. We must not think God is obligated to allow America to prosper or continue. People must turn back to him in obedience.

♦2. OK, that was the bad news. Now the good news in the Flood account. **The Flood is also evidence of God's grace.** You will notice that God did not scrap the whole creation. What he did do was wash it, and go on. We've already observed that he repeated the Cultural Mandate to Noah as he did to Adam. You will also notice that Noah and his family survived, not because they were so good, but because as God gave favor to Noah.

♦"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that *every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time*. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD." Genesis 6:5-8, NIV.

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♦ Notice to that the nature of mankind hasn't magically lost it's evil just because of the Flood!

♦ "The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though *every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood*. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."" Genesis 8:21, 22, NIV.

♦ We call this Grace, friends and you and I can access that grace through faith alone.

♦ "*By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*" Hebrews 11:7, NIV.

♦ The Flood event reminds us over and over again that our very life is a continuous stream of grace events. The flood reminds us that God is a washing God, a cleansing God vs a destroying God.

♦ I want us to notice that grace means God is on our side. God is taking us to his heaven. God is keeping his creation, and renewing it always in spite of us. This means stability.

♦ The rainbow for example, is not about pots of gold, or people with confused sexuality. It's a weapon. *Quechet*: "bow that you shoot." He's hanging it up on the wall!

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"Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you." Isaiah 54:9, 10, NRSV.

♦**Conclusion:** The Apostle Peter says the Flood a picture of baptism, the washing away of sin by the grace of God.

♦"*...[men] disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 3:20, 21, NIV.*

♦So bad news: someone needs a bath and it's us. Good news; God is in the business of washing. Your sin can be washed away by Jesus' death and resurrection. That is his true delight, to rescue us! *Believe on him, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins,* scripture urges us! Choose him, give your heart to fully obey him!

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♦Worship service opening exercise:

PHILLIPS SCREWDRIVER: can be used, as the name implies, to strip out Phillips screw heads.

HOSE CUTTER: A tool used to make hoses too short.

TABLE SAW: A large stationary power tool commonly used to launch wood projectiles for testing wall integrity.

BELT SANDER: An electric sanding tool commonly used to convert minor touch-up jobs into major refinishing jobs.

PLIERS: Used to round off bolt heads. Sometimes used in the creation of blood-blisters.

VISE-GRIPS: Generally used after pliers to completely round off bolt heads. If nothing else is available, they can also be used to transfer intense welding heat to the palm of your hand.

BAND SAW: A large stationary power saw primarily used by most shops to cut good aluminum sheet into smaller pieces that more easily fit into the trash can after you cut on the inside of the line instead of the outside edge.

BLAST- IT TOOL: Any handy tool that you grab and throw across the garage while yelling 'BLAST IT!' at the top of your lungs. It is also, most often, the next tool that you will need.

♦illustrative of our frustration when things we are working on don't turn out beautifully. Did God feel this way about us and our world when he sent the Flood?