

Genesis 6:9–7:24

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[0:00] That's Genesis 6, 9 through 7, 24. Please stand for the reading of God's word. These are the generations of Noah.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt. For all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them.

Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it.

The length of the ark, 300 cubits, its breadth, 50 cubits, and its height, 30 cubits. Make a root for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side.

[1:02] Make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 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, of the birds according to their kind, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind. Two of every sort shall come into you to keep them alive.

Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them. Noah did this. He did all that God commanded him. Then the Lord said to Noah, Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of all the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

[2:17] For in seven days I will send rain on the earth, forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground. And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.

Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went with him into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Of clean animals and of animals that are not clean, and of birds and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah as God had commanded Noah.

And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened, and rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark. They and every beast according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every winged creature.

They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh, in which there was breath of life. And those that entered, male and female, of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him, and the Lord shut him in.

[3 : 49] The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved on the earth.

Birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swam on the earth, that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things, and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

And the waters prevailed on the earth a hundred and fifty days. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning, and a great welcome to those of you who are visiting with us, especially.

[5 : 04] I'm just so pleased to see that the Lord continues to add to our number, and we are encouraged to see what he's doing in our midst.

All that said, I would be remiss to not open this message by indicating that we live in a city that has lost its way among a citizenry that is suffering, and even in the church among many who are losing heart.

That's this day. And it's especially true for us as it comes to us in matters of violence and corruption. On that scale, Chicago has you covered.

It was some five Sundays ago that I told you that Chicago had seen 51 homicides in the month of January alone. The number now stands at 176.

I mentioned that year to date there had been eight homicides in Englewood with 39 people being wounded. The number now stands at 14 killed and 69 wounded.

[6 : 21] I told you that a person is wounded in our city every three minutes and 12 seconds. It is now two minutes and 47 seconds.

I mentioned that a person is murdered every 15 minutes and 51 seconds. That is now 14 minutes and 43 seconds.

This week alone, 12 more murders, 10 more shot and killed, 65 being shot in total. The violence of our city, thus the lament of our worship.

Violence doesn't come on its own. It's connected to corruption. And on that front, we have you covered as well. When it comes to our body politic, WTTW covered the February 23rd, 2021 release of an annual study on corruption in our body politic.

And once again, Chicago took home the infamous prize. It is our city, which is the most corrupt city in the country.

[7 : 29] Our state, the second or third most corrupt state, depending upon what data you would like to mine, as though one might be at all better than the other.

According to the Department of Justice data in 2019, Chicago saw 26 political corruption convictions, six more down state, giving us a total of 32.

And all of that is set to rise from the data going forward from 2019. Think of Ed Burke and the 14 counts of patronage and political hiring that are in play.

Martin Sandoval's guilty plea to taking bribes in the red light camera scandal. Think of John Coley of Teamsters 29 and a \$325,000 shakedown.

It is a genuine sense of grief right here in our own church where we still recall the convictions of three consecutive aldermen that serve our neighborhood of Woodlawn.

[8 : 35] Clifford Kelly in 1987. Arenda Troutman in 2008. Willie Cochran in 2016. No wonder we plead for our leaders.

Violence and corruption. Is there any hope or any reason for the heart, the human heart, to rise? I would say the answer to that is yes. And otherwise I would not have a gospel of good news to proclaim. But it requires that we especially begin to look some hard truths in the eye.

Let me just say a few things this morning on that front. There was a time in human history when what can presently be said of our city could be said of the entire earth.

Just take a look again at the text. Chapter 6. I'm looking especially at verses 11 and 12. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

[9 : 59] And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt. For all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them.

See, evidently there is a natural relationship between violence and corruption, between corruption and what becomes destruction.

Things that are disintegrating by nature die. Fabric that is fraying over time through weight and use will fail.

Violence and corruption, as long as they are in the front seat and the driver's seat, the passengers will be part of a culture of death.

And though you and I can labor to slow the progress or the process of death, nothing we can do will ultimately bring us a different situation.

[11 : 08] Medicine is so wonderful today because they're able to turn things that were once fatal into that which is chronic, but carry the timeline forward over enough years or decades, and we all die.

Eventually, we all go. And so too then, corruption is a sure sign of destruction. The interesting thing in the text, though, is the surprising truth that God will not put up with it forever.

That's the link I want you to see. God will not have it forever.

And therein is your strange hope. Take a look again at these words. I've been interested this week in these words, corruption and violence.

Think of the word corruption itself. It's actually used seven distinct times in the Noahic flood narrative. That material that began in chapter 6, verse 9, and moving itself all the way through chapter 9.

[12 : 28] The word corrupt, which appears three times in the verses I read, is translated in verse 17 as God bringing the flood of waters upon the earth to destroy.

There's the word. The same stem. Those who have corrupted the earth will be corrupted by God. Those who have lived ruinously on the earth will be ruined.

Those who find themselves compromised accordingly to the text, they will be destroyed. You can see it in verse 17. You can see that same word used elsewhere.

Think of even in the midst of chapter 9 and verse 11. There will be a flood to destroy the earth. Or verse 15, never again will he bring waters to destroy all flesh.

Seven times in complete fullness. There is not merely a linear connection between corruption and destruction. In the text, there is a lexical connection between that which is corrupt and that which is destroyed.

[13 : 40] We're not only ascertaining things logically by way of inference, We're retaining things according to natural law and things that are inherent in and of themselves.

This is the truth. Because we have done ruinously, God will ruin. I talked to two Hebrew scholars in our congregation this week to get a sense of these terms.

And one of them came back to me with this pristine clarity. The people have ruined the earth. So God is going to ruin the people.

That is, in one sense, your strange hope. That God will not permit corruption and violence to rule forever.

And this story is meant to teach us that truth. Now, I will concede to you as you hear me speak, knowing that many of you are not yet even among those who have entered into the Christian faith, but are merely coming along week by week to explore what the beginnings of God's book have to say.

[14 : 59] I will concede to you that the flood seems to portray, on first glance, a portrait of a God who is unloving.

This God who will bring destruction upon all the deceitful ones of the earth. And we may be corrupt, you say to yourself, but then as the reading was read, you think, this God is even worse than our corruption, for He appears to be universally capricious.

How do we think about this? For yourself? How would you think about this as you talk to your neighbor or your friend later this week concerning their understanding of God and the Bible? Let me just make three comments to that end. It's an inadequate way of describing God, to think of God as being capricious, and to appeal to this text for your support.

Look at verse 13 once again in our text. God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence.

[16:15] Here it is. Look at every word. Through them. The corruption that leads to destruction is really self-destruction brought about by the inclination of our actions, not God's.

I mean, this is really important. What God does in the book of Genesis is very good. What we do is violence and not good.

When God removes violence and corruption and wickedness from the earth, He is indicating that He intends for His creation to be that which He wanted it to be.

So this notion that He's capricious and I'm corrupt and He's worse than me, think about it. Don't you want the removal of evil and wickedness?

God of the scriptures says He will accomplish it. Secondly, the text is clear that God does see things going on down here, that God does care about things going on down here.

[17:31] I mean, there's a notion in our minds where we're like, man, if there is a God, if there were a God, he, she, or it, it matters not to me, certainly they would see what's happening and care.

Thus of the lament of our very opening, does He even see? Does He know? But again, look at the text. So often the writer has been trying to tell you that God is seeing things.

Back in chapter 6, verse 5, the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth. Or even within our own text, verse 11, now the earth was corrupt in God's sight.

Verse 12, and God saw. So all of this movement prior to the act of the flood is written in a way that the reader would know, I am reading a book where God does see things that are unjust, wicked, evil, corrupt, and decaying, and He cares enough to hold things accountable, each and every one, even if it's universally applied upon a fallen human race.

So it's inadequate to describe God as the one that needs to answer to us.

[19:02] The violence is here through us. He sees and cares more than us. And third, it would be inappropriate to disbelieve in God because of this, because He's the one that actually acts.

That's what the whole passage indicates. He's going to get it done. Well, with all that there, I want to look at this in terms that might be helpful to us.

How does God act here? Where is the hope here? Well, the hope really emerges even immediately at the opening of verse 9. We find that little phrase again.

These are the generations of Noah. We end up reading a story. We've come to another part of the book. Not just that God made everything good. Not just that we went from wonder to ruin.

Not just that we went from a ruinous condition to that which everything was seeming to die. But all of a sudden, here comes another part of the book. Let me tell you the story as it relates to Noah.

[20:13] He is the one, what? Back in verse 29 of chapter 5, who would bring relief. You want relief? Welcome to the story of the family through whom relief came.

There's hope in the story of Noah. Relief comes, also notice verse 9, through one who was a righteous man, blameless in his generation, one who walked with God.

Relief did not come from violence by appealing, ironically, to the political corrupt world to fix it, which is just as disingenuously engaged in it.

Relief in the scriptures comes through one who was righteous, one who was blameless, one who walked with God.

Now, I indicated last week that Noah found God's favor as a gift. There it was in verse 8 of chapter 6. And his favor was his grace. Noah was not inherently better than all other men and women on the earth, but God was gracious to him.

[21:28] And when God was gracious to him, he equipped him to live and walk under his word. That which God chooses, he confirms through their way of life.

And so Noah himself embodies, embodies almost as it is, the righteous man of Psalm 112, the one who gives generously to the poor, the one who guards his way, the one who is concerned with matters of justice on a horizontal plane.

This is who Noah was. He was upright. He walked in integrity. He stood out among his peers.

He actually walked with God. There is hope here, not only in Noah, but that he was given offspring, their names listed, a family man, a family that would create families who might accentuate the relief that comes through favor granted, righteousness given, and rest restored.

So God does have a plan. Noah does embody it. He was the salt of the earth in his own day, even though the earth had come down to a singular grain of salt.

[22 : 51] If corruption is the sure sign of destruction, then your hope is amplified as you continue to read the text. It's elevated because the ark's construction is a sure sign of our deliverance.

That's where the text moves. Just take a look at verses 14 and following. Noah, make yourself an ark. Verse 7. Verse 14.

Make rooms. Verse 15. This is how you're to make it. Verse 16. Make it with a roof. Verse 16. Make it have lower and second and third decks.

In fact, seven times over, he's told to make this ark. Seven times over, you're told it's an ark that he will make.

So the literary beauty of the story is almost above us as well. Our corruption is sevenfold.

[24 : 01] That leads to destruction. But the construction is sevenfold, both in its making and in the vessel itself.

It is almost as though the writer wants you to say, while it may be a fullness of fallenness, there is a fullness upon a fullness of what I am going to do to preserve a people for myself.

And this is really spectacular. Noah then is called to make the way of escape. He's actually doing it not only for himself, although there are later moments in the prophetic literature where it would get so bad on the earth again that the writer would say, hey, if Noah lived it this time, he'd be the only guy to get out of it, not even his wife and family and kids.

But at the time here, Noah makes something not only for himself, but for his family, not only for himself and for his family, but for other creatures of the flesh.

That's all of the literature you heard read about the pairs, the male, their counterpart, that there might be reproduction even within the created order itself.

[25 : 21] So all he had to do was to build something then that by God's grace would get him through something, and he not only had to build it to get through it, but he had to get into it.

Did you notice that in the reading as well? Just as there's a seven-fold making and a seven-fold arc to match the seven-fold corruption, there is a seven times in the narrative, go into the ark.

You get into it. That's your way through it. And it is a thing of beauty to read. The literary patterns are there.

The text is making this case that Noah did both. Noah built it. Noah got into it. Can I just show you that in the reading?

It probably will take a Bible in front of you more readily than it will a phone. Another advantage to, at least on Sundays, finding a way over time to bring a larger copy with you.

[26 : 25] Because sometimes your eyes can see a whole page where the scrolling doesn't quite match. But on the page that I'm looking at, there's this literary pattern by way of reoccurrence that is trying to wed to the reader visually this idea of going in, and he did all of that he was commanded.

He built it, and he went into it. Let me just show it to you. Verse 17, 18, I will establish my covenant with you. You shall come into the ark.

Now notice the echo of verse 22, the end of that paragraph. Noah did this. He did all that God commanded him. That's what's holding it. You need to get into it, and he actually went ahead and built it.

Verse 17, 1, Go into the ark. Verse 5, And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him. Verse 7, With his wives then he went into the ark.

Verse 9, Noah did as God had commanded him. Again, this final fourth refrain, down there in verse 13, with them entered the ark, and then verse 16, as God had commanded him.

[27 : 48] This literary body of the text that stands between the building of the ark and the coming of the flood is meant to allow the reader to say he was to go into it, and he built it.

He built it, and he went into it. In fact, four times over. In fact, it's almost in two parts because the first two units in chapter 6, verse 18 through 7, 5, those first two repetitive refrains is something that he is supposed to do or he's going to do, something he shall do, but when you get to verse 6 and following, the second two that fall together, it almost reads as though this is something that he actually did.

It's almost as though the verbal tenseness of it goes to pass. It happened when he was 600 years old. He went into the ark, verse 7, not merely verse 18 above, where you shall go into the ark.

They entered into the ark, and so all of a sudden, this body of the text that was read today is in a literary way letting you know he built it, he went into it.

He did it, he did all that he was supposed to do, and the distinct particulars in there are very interesting. All that language about the created order needing to go into it with him, that repetition of creatureliness that comes in pairs.

[29 : 21] It's almost as though the reader is supposed to understand that the created order is also caught up in our own corruption. That when we kill one another and the blood goes into the ground and cries up to God for justice, that our own sin actually pollutes the very world in which we live.

And that very world and the creatureliness in that world is caught up in all that must one day be made new.

The created order is caught up in our corruption. The writer wants you to see this. But not only that, look at his concern for years and days and the nature of the factual occurrence of the flood.

Verse 6, Noah was 600 years old. Verse 11, it was in the 600 year of Noah's life in the second month on the 17th day of the month on that day.

I mean, what's all that little detail for other than to let the reader know this thing really happened. I'm not reading Aesop's fables. I'm not reading a moral.

[30 : 33] I'm not reading the Gilgamesh epic or I'm not reading something that may be myth or might not be myth or it might be the Jewish understanding of the regenerating power of life in springtime.

No, it was on, it was when he was this old in this month on this day on that day. And so the writer is just clearly letting you know in the body of this work that Noah built it, that Noah went into it, that that day arrived and the ark at the end then was buoyed up on the waters and came.

Don't you love the notion that God got it done as Noah got himself in? That as he executed the build and entered the boat, God did something about the wickedness, the evil, the violence, and the corruption.

the flood did come. And notice the detail. Again, even on the rocks, the mountains itself, verse 19, those waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.

The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them 15 cubits deep. He wants you to know that there was no rock high enough upon which any could survive this flood.

[32 : 14] God shut him in. Verse 16, God ultimately saved him. God rescued humanity by carrying one family over the waters.

What do we do with all this? I've had two movements in my message. Corruption leads to destruction.

The construction led to deliverance. But let's talk for five or six minutes, maybe even ten, what about a word of comfort and direction?

Let me say four things that I think ought to fill your minds and your conversations in the coming week. There's a warning here for us. That's first.

Just as this day came, there is another day coming. There's an interesting word. word. I like the word. I don't always use words very well and some of you have noticed over the years I've made up a few words.

[33 : 34] But there's a word I like called prolepsis. It's the representation of a thing as existing even before it does.

And the flood is a real historical event, but it's something that exists before another one like it really ever comes into being.

This is the way the New Testament writers speak of the flood. They refer to the flood as something which occurred long ago so that you might have certainty that the very end is coming and it will occur again, not with water but with fire.

that the flood event is meant to foreshadow the world's end. There's a warning here for us then because you and I live in a day where our own hearts are actually already rising up and saying where is God?

Where is the day of your coming? Which Peter in his second epistle says that's what's happening. People are saying where is he? If he was here would he not certainly do something?

[34 : 49] And Peter says but have you forgotten long ago? You actually neglect to remember this story which will give you certainty of a final cataclysmic end.

God will not suffer this wickedness forever. He won't have it. Well then why is he waiting? Well because his time is not like our time.

One day with him is like a thousand years in our world and he has intention to bring all to himself before the ultimate climactic destruction of all who do not enter in.

There's a warning here for us. Secondly let me just say that there is a way of escape that is open to us.

I guess I want to say I'd like you to consider becoming a Christian. There's someone you need to enter into by faith.

[35 : 57] Noah built an ark Moses was carried along in that same bark. but you will be saved from the final judgment by falling at the foot of the one on the cross.

The cross becomes your driftwood home. Taken by faith the work of Christ making payment for your rebellion latched on to in all hope that you might ride out the storm.

There's a way of escape that is open to us. Jesus was God's righteousness whose cross alone indicates a perfect payment for our wickedness.

So while Noah built an ark we stand here it is upon the rock that is higher than I.

The scriptures speak of this refuge that can be found in God alone. There's a warning here for us.

[37 : 26] There's a way of escape open to us to us. But even beyond that there's an encouragement that Jesus wants to speak from this text to us.

I think of Luke 18.1 right after the thing where he quotes Noah and so it will be in the end like it was in the days of Noah. He actually arrives in Luke 18.1 to say something very stunning to his own community and he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

See Jesus knew that when he started talking about the end time and the ultimate sense of wherein are we to go with all of our wickedness that we would lose heart. And so here's a word of encouragement to you from Jesus himself.

He knows the day in which you live and he would ask that you would spend your time in prayer and seeking him knowing the certainty of his return.

Finally there's a command that is given to us. When I think of Matthew 24 and its own use of our text it basically says because it's going to happen in the same way at the end you're called upon to stay awake and the problem is the church is slumbering the church is sleeping people are leaving the church people are done with the ability to continue persevering through these moments but it was Noah according to Hebrews that by his deeds demonstrated himself to be an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith you are to be active you're to be busy you're to be about doing the master's work but you better know what that work is there's a prioritization that I would call upon Christ church to make a prioritization of his own church of rebuilding the church of rebuilding a place for

[39 : 37] God's people of paying attention to the means of escape not merely the means of stemming the tide of further putrefaction we need both but the means of escape is critical did you know that the church through the centuries has often been equated with the ship in fact the denomination of the church that my wife grew up in was the four seas this congregational denomination that came from the New England Puritans and when you looked at their churches they didn't have a cross at top of their church you know what they hung on top of their church it wasn't a rooster no it was a it was a!

ship because the ship through the centuries has been the church itself and that which enables you to ride out the storm in fact the church that we planted Holy Trinity Church from some 23 years ago that was the logo of the entire church go there today pull out a bulletin as they hand it to you you will look at a boat indicative of Christ and the church and the way through the world our very first place that we ever rented in Hyde Park go and look at it the old co-op bookstore used to be in the basement of a building that's now owned by the university right across just south of the just south of the Oriental Institute go around to the west side look at the main door and look up it was the Congregationalist Seminary and above the door is a circular emblem and on the emblem is a ship and the irony of it all is they were the only place that would rent to us when we started this church 23 years ago we left a church that when they handed you a bulletin it had a boat on it and the only

place in Hyde Park that would let us enter in to do worship

I had to walk underneath the emblem of a boat and we have given our attention and prioritization to that place of escape and you and I need to do the same well we're only halfway through the story I suppose you'll have to come back next week because the very next verse gets this moment of relief to an explosive understanding that God remembered let me pray our heavenly father as we continue to make our way through this book and we tally sadly the number of deaths in our city to no end

I pray that it would not be long before we're numbering the conversions 3,000 we saw in Acts 500 who saw Jesus face to face Lord may the numbers of those who are entering in soon eclipse those who are being taken from because of the witness of this church and the power of your word we pray in Jesus name amen to you you to you to you you to