

Judgement and New Creation

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[0 : 00] The first reading is Genesis chapter 6, and we're going to read from verses 5 to 7, verse 1.

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. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

So the Lord 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 Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. 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.

[1 : 11] 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 roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above. And set the door of the ark in its side. 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.

[2 : 22] 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 kinds, 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 the Lord commanded him. Then the Lord said to Noah, Go into the ark, you and all your household.

[3 : 30] For I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. Good morning, everyone. I saw Ruby somewhere.

Hi, Ruby. Great to have you back with us from America, which is why I'm pointing out Ruby and embarrassing her right now. I'm just going to give you a heads up.

The three sections of this sermon, the first one is a lot longer. So if at the second interval you're like, Oh, we're here for a while. It's okay. We'll be okay. All right.

Why don't we pray as we come to God's word? Let's pray. Father, I pray as we come to a passage that is well known in one sense, even we think as Christians.

Lord, your word is alive and active and we've probably all got assumptions about this story that need correcting and we need further insight.

[4 : 34] So I pray that you would give us a learning spirit as we come to your word. Father, show us your character in all its glory, I pray.

Amen. Well, you can fear the God of the flood, but can you love him?

The pictures in our children's Bibles, maybe some people in their children's bedrooms have a mural of the flood, of Noah's Ark really, on the wall.

They don't do justice to this sentence that is in the passage. Everything on the dry land, in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died.

Like, this is a horrific story. Like, what has happened from chapter 1, verse 31? God saw all that he had made and behold, it was very good.

[5 : 40] What would motivate such a life-giving God? We saw in Genesis 1, he loves order out of the chaos. He loves peace. He loves life.

What would bring him to bring such destructive chaos of the flood? Like, is he like a big bully at school?

You just better not get him upset. Is he like the ancient Babylonian ideas of the gods?

Unpredictable. He's just moody.

Watch out, kids, if your dad wakes up on the wrong side of the bed. Is he moody? Unpredictable.

Ancient Babylonians, the gods sent the flood because people were noisy.

What idea of God do you see here in the flood? You can fear him, that's for sure, but can you love him? Well, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have loved one another before anything else was.

[6 : 48] And so he had no reason to be angry. No reason to be angry until evil and darkness came. Listen to the testimony of, I'm going to mispronounce this guy's name, but Miroslav Volf, a Croatian.

I used to think that wrath was unworthy of God. Isn't God love? God loves every person and every creature.

And then he recalls the war in his hometown and the destruction that happened there. And then he says, think of Rwanda in 1994, where 800,000 people were hacked to death in 100 days.

1994, this happened. How did God react to the carnage? By dotting on the perpetrators in a grandparently fashion?

By refusing to condemn the bloodbath, but instead affirming the perpetrator's basic goodness? I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil.

[8 : 07] God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love. That's his testimony.

Isaiah 28-21 says that God's wrath is strange to God. It's foreign to him. It's his foreign work.

It's not essential to him. It's what love does. Pure love does when it sees evil. God blesses what is good, what gives life, what enhances life.

And he curses, he punishes what's evil, what destroys and takes away from life. Could you love him if he saw evil and didn't care?

Could you love such a God who didn't care about evil? I couldn't. Could you love a God who blessed it?

[9 : 16] No way. As creator, he alone has the wisdom, he has the power, and he has the right to be the judge of all the earth.

And that's what we see here at the flood. Now, I reckon the need for justice, it's in our DNA, isn't it? Anyone heard of Sherlock Holmes?

Anyone not heard of Sherlock Holmes? Sherlock Holmes? Okay. Or even if you haven't, you're probably too embarrassed to put your hand up. But Sherlock, why is he such a classic?

I love Sherlock Holmes. I reckon it's because we need someone strong. Someone wise enough who sees through the truth and can untangle it, and he's able to catch the evildoer and bring them to justice, right?

He's stronger than even Moriarty. Like, isn't that why we love Sherlock Holmes? Or I love Sherlock Holmes. It's in our DNA, justice. I don't know what you think about movies and books where the villain doesn't get justice.

[10 : 28] How do you find those? Like, one evidence that Emma is more godly than me, this is just one of the evidences, is that when we watch a show or movie where there's just injustice after injustice, I feel a bit sick and uncomfortable.

Emma, she has to walk away. Like, she can't stand to watch it. I think she's closer to the character of God. God can't stand to watch it.

What God saw in Noah's generation grieved him to his heart. Working through the Constitution, I'm looking at sentences differently, reading the Constitution.

Just like, can you find a loophole in this sentence? John, you must be doing this all the time. Can you find a... If you want to not have a loophole for future generations, how do you need a word in this sentence?

Let's see if you can find a loophole in chapter 6, verse 5. What a sentence.

[12:01] I can't find a loophole in that. It's not necessarily saying all the behaviour looked evil all the time.

But it's saying God saw the heart. He saw the design, the purpose, the goal of every thought. Every goal was self-centred, was evil.

It was trying to take away from the good life God had designed. Now, before we just chuck our own imaginations in of what that looked like, Genesis has already told us.

The most immediate context shows us that even the descendants of Seth, the people who were holding on to the knowledge of God, they were worshipping, calling on the name of the Lord, even these descendants were now...

They were like Adam and Eve, the original sin. They saw and they took. They saw the attractiveness of the descendants of Cain and they took.

[13:08] Look, even they are corrupted now. If even the godly are corrupted, human race is in trouble.

And we've seen in chapter 4 how violent that taking looks like. It looks like Cain. It looks like Lamech.

Now, apparently in the Hebrew, the word for destroy sounds like the word for corrupt. Which is just an indicator that God's judgment, it's not excessive, it's fitting, it's reaping what we've sown.

It's completing the destruction that their actions have already begun. I don't think we've got an issue with the idea that there is such a thing as good and evil.

Some people might, I don't know, philosophically debate that, but I don't know. I don't believe anyone actually lives like that. But you've got another movie, a recent one, Noah, Russell Crowe in it.

[14:29] That movie had no problem with the idea of good and evil, but the point of that movie, the message... I don't know if you've seen it or not, but it's animals land good, humankind bad.

That's the message of that. The world would be a better place if we weren't here, is the message of the movie. It's not the message here.

So I don't think we have a problem with distinguishing good and evil, but I think we've got a problem with we don't get to determine what is good and evil. God discerns what's good and evil. He's the only one wise enough to do that.

I can only see your behaviour. I can't see your heart. I can't see your thoughts. God does.

I don't even know my own motives sometimes. I can't untangle them a lot of the time. Have you ever had an occasion where you thought someone was doing the wrong thing and later on you're like, oh, hang on.

[15:31] They had a really good purpose for doing that. I don't think we're wise enough to distinguish good from evil. I think of the priest Eli thinking Hannah was drunk.

She wasn't drunk. She was pouring out her grief to God in prayer. I don't think we're wise enough to see the heart, but God is. Only our creator is wise enough to be the judge.

I was skiing at Thredbo one time years ago now and it was a really rainy couple of days and where we were skiing, we were trying to traverse across this flat section and the water had come over the top.

So we're just waiting for some help from, I don't know what you call them, employees. We're waiting for help to get across. But while we're waiting, the sound of rushing waters was coming from the mountain above.

And when the Bible talks about the sound of mighty waters, it was deafening. And it was this, I don't know what you call it, landslide of snow, water.

[16:52] It was coming right towards us. Now, obviously I'm here today, but there was a cliff on the other side. And this avalanche coming down, it missed me by, I don't know, five metres maybe.

I had no chance. I don't think I would have survived if I was five metres forward. I was powerless.

I was absolutely powerless. And I think that's what we see here in the flood. God has, as creator, he has all the power, which is really good news.

For those who are oppressing people with their power, God has the power to bring about justice. He's got the wisdom and he's got the power to execute justice.

And he alone has the right, because it's his creation, to judge. The flood shows us that the judge of all the earth, he can't stand to look on evil.

[18:09] And it warns us today that we learn from elsewhere in scripture that a worldwide judgement is coming again. Jesus himself, don't separate Old Testament, God of wrath, New Testament, God of love.

That's a misunderstanding of God. Jesus himself says, It's a warning to us.

Don't let anyone redefine what salvation means. Can I suggest just be careful of people subtly changing why Jesus came to save us.

Jesus gave his blood to absorb the anger of God against evil. Don't let anyone move us away from the idea of God's anger.

That is why we need salvation. So the judge of all the earth, he sees the evil, but here's also the good news.

[19:48] He sees the righteous. Abraham later calls on God, Will not the judge of all the earth do right? Like talking about Sodom, Will you just sweep the righteous away with the wicked?

What you do right? Imagine saying that to God. What a man of faith. Yes, he will do right. He sees the righteous. He sees Noah.

Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord. One man. Now what made Noah different? Favour is the same word as grace.

Unmerited kindness. The idea that he found favour. He didn't earn favour. The prophecy at his birth, if you remember last week, before he'd done anything good or bad, there was a prophecy that he would bring rest.

I think they're all suggesting that God freely chose to give his grace to Noah. In other words, verse 8 is the reason for verse 9, and not the other way around.

[21:02] God chose to give favour, grace to Noah, and that's why he's a righteous man. He walked righteously. This is a really big term, righteous.

The first time we get it in scripture, it's to act according to the relationship God has with you. He's blameless. He's without blemish.

He walks with God. We've seen that term before. And what we see in the story is, and Tinian brought this out in the kids' talk, is his obedience.

He's received the instructions. In verse 22, Noah did this. He did all that God commanded of him. And 7 verse 5 says, Noah did, let me find it, 7 verse 5, Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

So a close walk with God looks like obedience. I think we often use that phrase in terms of our feelings and things. But a close walk with God looks like obedience.

[22:13] Noah alone, he's righteous. We're not told about his wife. We're not told about his kids and their wives. That's not the important thing. The important thing is they belong to Noah. They belong to the one righteous man.

Now where did his obedience come from? We've got Hebrews 11, 7 that helps us with this. By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events yet unseen, in reverent fear, constructed an ark for the saving of his household.

By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. All Noah had, he couldn't see the rain clouds coming.

He couldn't see the judgment. He had God's word. He had his warning. He had his promise that he would save him.

That's all he had, God's word. For years, like at least 55 years, years and years. Imagine cutting your own timber and milling it and then constructing that ark.

[23:30] The job itself, like you put that order in at Saddington's, it would take them a while, even at Saddington's with our technology. Even the job itself, let alone, I'm going to use some poetic license here, but imagine the taunts he got, the ridicule, maybe the threats like every sprinkle of rain before the flood came.

You could imagine the cheers at Noah. He believed God's warning. He took God at his word.

Obedience comes from faith in God's word. But Noah's obedience isn't the main focus. I'm glad Tin brought this out in the kids' talk as well.

The main focus is seen, chapters 6 through 8, is the structure of the story, is what's called a chiasm. Once you learn the term, everyone's looking for chiasms everywhere, but here is a chiasm. A chiasm is a mirror image of themes where it's working inwards and the centre is the main point. It's a thing to take away from it.

[24 : 52] I'm not going to go through the whole story. I'm going to try and tell you the mirror image. God resolves to destroy the corrupt race. And then at the end of chapter 8, the Lord resolves not to destroy mankind.

Next bit in. Noah builds an ark. Noah builds an altar. Coming again. The Lord commands Noah's family to enter the ark. He commands the family to leave the ark.

The flood begins. The earth dries out. The flood lasts 150 days, covering the mountain. The flood recedes 150 days.

The mountains become visible. And here's the heart of the story. Chapter 8, verse 1. But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark.

This isn't like our human remembering. Three hours after you should have picked your son up from soccer practice. Noah. It's not our remembering.

[26 : 04] God's remembering means God always acts according to his covenant commitment. Always. He keeps his promises.

He's a covenant-keeping God. That's why Noah survived. It's the fundamental reason why Noah and his family survived.

He remembered his covenant. It's the fundamental reason why Jesus went to the cross. It's the fundamental reason why faith in Jesus means we will sail through death and judgment into eternal life.

He keeps his word. God's word. It's good news. Okay. I'm going to invite Gareth up for the second, shorter reading.

Thanks, Gary. So our next reading is chapter 8 and it's verses 20 to 9, verse 1.

[27 : 04] Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered a burnt offering on the altar.

And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man. The intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The flood is all about new beginnings, a fresh start, salvation.

The parallels to Genesis 1, there are many, I'm not going to go through them all, but Noah is now pictured as a new Adam. He's now the head of humanity. He's a righteous head.

[28 : 22] Things are looking hopeful. So the flood shows us that God is determined to have a new beginning, a new creation. Evil is blotted out and just peace and righteousness.

And Noah leads the new humanity in worship. He offers sacrifice out of gratitude for salvation, out of total devotion to the Lord, but it actually took my three-year-old to, rather than my books, to ask a really obvious question.

Why, he didn't put it like this, but this was the gist of the question, okay? Why did God want the animals to be burned? I think I, I scared, see him.

Why did God, why was he pleased with burnt offerings? That's the first act. Isn't there enough? Death. He didn't say all that, but he was horrified when I was reading the story out loud.

It's a really good question. Why was he pleased? Because if we did that today, from what we know from the rest of Scripture, he would not be pleased. Garden of Eden, he told Adam to name the animals, not to offer them.

[29 : 49] Why was he pleased when he smelt the aroma? I think we have a hint here that Noah understood that he and his family needed to be made clean.

I think the Lord was pleased because he knew what it would really take. It wasn't these sacrifices. He knew what it would take to cleanse Noah.

to cleanse all who are righteous by faith. It's what Hebrews talks about, that once and for all sacrifice. I think that's why he was pleased.

When Jesus offered himself. We might get the wrong idea from the flood that God has a, he thinks human life is disposable. But the covenant he makes with Noah corrects any misunderstanding

here.

God has a huge value on human life. All human life are in his image. We didn't read this section but there's three threats to the sacredness of human life that God protects from.

[31 : 06] One is from animals. To put it simply, he's put the fear of man in animals. whatever it was like in Noah's day, he's now put us at the top of the food chain.

It's to stop animals from destroying the sacredness of life. He's even going to require reckoning of animals who kill humans which I'm not sure how that works. So firstly, from animals.

Secondly, from people. Whoever sheds the blood of man, verse 6, by man shall his blood be shed for God made man in his own image. There once was protection of Cain.

Now, there's authority given to mankind to punish murder. It restrains society from being as evil as it might otherwise become again.

And then third, most importantly, so from animals, from people and from God himself. You might want to look at verse 14 and 15 with me. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

[32 : 31] The word bow apparently is not bow wong but bow rainbow. It's for a warrior's bow.

So when we see a rainbow, I don't know what you think, oh, that's pretty. Whatever you think when you see a rainbow, when God sees it, he sees his warrior's bow hung up. Imagine if the rainbow was the other way around facing us.

you'd feel a little bit uneasy if it, but it's facing him. He's hung up his bow, his war bow.

And he makes this promise even though he knows there's going to be violence again. He says in verse 21, the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

The Lord knew that evil came with Noah and his family on that ark.

[33 : 48] How can the judge of the earth hang up his bow? All right, Gareth, let's have that third reading.

9 verse 18 if you're following along. The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Ham was the father of Canaan. These three were the sons of Noah and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed. Noah began to be a man of the soil and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward and they did not see their father's nakedness.

[34 : 56] When Noah awoke from his wine and knew that his youngest son had done what his youngest son had done to him, he said, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.

He also said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem.

and let Canaan be his servant. After the flood, Noah lived 350 years. All the days of Noah were 950 years and he died.

Well, this is a perplexing part of scripture if you're still awakened with me. This is strange, right?

It raises a lot of questions. And I'm not going to answer them all. I'm not even confident I have all the answers. But let me show you what I have come to.

[36 : 07] We've seen in the flood that God's goal is a new beginning, a totally fresh start where righteousness is. Noah is the new Adam. He's the head of humanity.

He's this giant of faith and obedience. It's rather shocking that out of the 350 years of Noah's life, everything that Moses could have told us about.

What did Noah do after the flood? We're told one thing. He gets drunk. What's that about?

Scripture says God gave wine to gladden the heart. It's not the wine itself. He's lost control. It's unfitting of an image bearer and Scripture also shows it's especially unfitting of those in authority and he's the head of the human race.

Noah is the new Adam. He's a new beginning but what we see here is a new beginning of sin. The Bible doesn't do what we hear at a lot of funerals.

[37 : 20] It always presents people's blemishes. Noah gets drunk. Abraham, cowardly, risks his wife to protect his own skin.

And then Hagar incident. Moses, a murderer, fleeing from Egypt and then losing his, getting into a rage, striking the rock. Elijah, just self-pitying, I'm the only one left.

David with Bathsheba and Uriah. Peter, denying Christ. Paul and Barnabas, getting into a conflict. Blemish everywhere.

All these giants of the faith, which is just by the by. It's encouraging in a way, is it not? God can graciously use flawed people.

But it all shows us that when a man turns up without any blemish whatsoever, he stands out.

[38 : 25] you sit up and listen. So there's a new beginning of sin.

We need a better Noah, a better head of the race. The biggest focus here is on Ham and his response to this. Now, we don't have time to go into it, but the passage cares more about the consequences for future generations, like all the societies that come from these three guys, more than the individuals themselves.

We might think of our actions as individualistic, the consequences are here and now, but, I don't know, the teachers, the psychologists, the social workers among us, we know, we know intergenerational consequences, even in our individualistic society.

So here, he sees Noah naked and drunk, and then he seems to go to his brothers to gossip and have a good laugh about it.

He takes a good look and he wants to go talk about it and have a good laugh. It doesn't say laugh, he just, I'm reading into it there, okay? He wants to talk about it for some reason.

[39 : 48] It's either gossip or slander, something. What's the big deal? We might ask, what's the big deal? Well, the respectful actions of the other brothers, they're so careful in walking backwards, it's almost humorous, but they're so careful to honour this blemish of their father.

And it highlights Ham's dishonour. He enjoys Noah's humiliation. Ham enjoys his humiliation.

Which suggests something spiritually is not right. And perhaps that's why Noah saw in these three a spiritual condition that's going to intensify as the generations go on.

But yes, Noah had lost control of himself. I'm not excusing that. I don't think scripture is excusing that. But he's Ham's father. He's the head of humanity.

He's the reason why Ham survived the judgement. And he enjoys his humiliation.

[41 : 09] Something's wrong there. It made me think how people today enjoy ridiculing Jesus even though he's got no blemish.

what's going on there? The flood is all about new beginnings. He's committed to a world no more evil only peace and blessing but there's a beginning of sin and there's a beginning of curse again. It's telling us that the human heart needs a deeper cleansing than water. I think this passage also shows us how patient God is and the rainbow reminds us of it how patient the Lord is because it's not Shem who's going to reverse the curse but it's through his line that we get to Abraham and so many generations until we reach Jesus Christ.

The Lord is patient. We need a deeper cleansing. So I think we've seen so many reasons why we can not only fear the God of the flood but we ought to love him.

He's so pure in his love he just can't stand to look at evil. He's determined to purge the world of all evil and violence.

[42 : 54] That is good news. That is really good news. He's determined he wants a new beginning. He wants a new creation where peace and righteousness reigns.

He's determined to give us rest. shalom as scripture calls it. He's a God who always remembers his covenant promise.

He's patient incredibly patient hanging up his bow but he's more than patient we eventually see that bow aimed at himself on the cross.

God has to come to see that God is looking for a fresh start. If you're looking for a new beginning if you feel like you're just at the bottom of the barrel the flood is good news.

The God is all about a new beginning. He invites you into a new creation. And brothers and sisters those of us with faith in Jesus who believe he's coming again to judge and to bring that new creation may our faith look as radical as Noah.

[44 : 26] We can't see it. All that God is his word. We walk in the footsteps of Noah.

I want to finish with the words of 2 Peter. The heavens let me start a bit earlier.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient toward you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.

The heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

therefore beloved since you are waiting for these be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace and count the patience of our Lord as salvation.

[45 : 43] May you pray me. Let's pray. Father, we praise you for your patience and thank you for absorbing your own anger in yourself.

Lord, thank you that as we look at the cross even though the day of judgment is ahead we can see that the judgment has already been poured out for our sins on your son.

Thank you for this confidence that we are in him the righteous one and that all we've got to look forward to is that new creation. Father, pray for us that you would help us have that reference point in our lives that we would live by faith seeking the salvation of others.

I pray this in Jesus name Amen.