

# Water of Death

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Preacher: Andrew Moody

[ 0 : 00 ] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 5th of September 2004. The preacher is Andrew Moody.

His sermon is entitled Water of Death and is based on Genesis chapter 6 verses 5 to 33. Heavenly Father, please help us to understand you and your word. Please help us to understand your character and to respond to it in humility and obedience and with transformed hearts, minds and actions.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. It's something of a cliché, isn't it, that the God of the Old Testament has a different character from the God of the New Testament.

The God of the Old Testament, it's said, is a God of judgment, a God of fire and brimstone, a God who repays sin with wrath, who wipes out people, who wipes out civilizations, an angry God, a God who is offended by sin.

[ 1 : 14 ] The God of the New Testament, on the other hand, is a God of compassion and mercy, a God who forgives, a God of grace, a God who understands, a God who is patient.

Most of the time, I guess, we probably prefer the Old Testament, the New Testament God.

Sometimes, we do want God, I think, to judge. I'm not sure what the content of your conversations was about that question, but when I see things like I saw on the news tonight, I want God to judge. I want God to destroy people who kill children and harm them. I want God to send people to hell like that. I want the God who judges.

But for me, and for my friends, and for my country, I want the God, the so-called God of the New Testament, the God of patience and grace, a God who forgives. Well, if that's the way we think about God, if we prefer the God of the New Testament, if we don't like the God of judgment, the God of the Old Testament, then tonight's passage and tonight's message has two bits of bad news and two bits of good news.

The first bit of bad news is that God is still a God of judgment. The Old Testament caricature of God is half right, isn't it?

[ 2 : 47 ] God really is a God who judges, who is grieved by sin, who pours out wrath on people who turn away from him. In verses 6 and 7 of Genesis 6, the passage was read to us before.

We read, And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created, people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. God is so sickened by what he sees when he looks at the earth that he wants to wipe it clean, just as we are so sickened when we look at the news and see the kind of things that happen in our world.

God is still a God of judgment though. This isn't simply a picture of God in the Old Testament, but the New Testament gives us the same picture of God.

In fact, the flood is simply a preview of another day of judgment, another more final act of judgment that is still to come. The Bible is, if you like, bookended by the flood and the final judgment that occurs when Jesus returns.

[ 4 : 04 ] Have a listen to how Jesus himself talks about it in Luke chapter 17, verses 26 to 30. Jesus says, Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man.

They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until the day Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed all of them. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on that day, on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them.

It will be like that on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. Jesus is saying when he comes back, when the Son of Man, that's Jesus himself, returns, is revealed, it will be like those days. God of the New Testament is a fearsome judge.

The same thing comes through in that passage from 2 Peter that we heard before, doesn't it? 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 5. By the word of God, heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished.

But by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire. Being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless. The God of the New Testament is a God of judgment just as the God of the Old Testament.

[ 5 : 30 ] And if it seems that that's not the case, then it's because God is holding back. That there is a period of amnesty which is now on us and that God is waiting until he brings that final day of judgment about.

These are the days of Noah, in other words. Just as God held back while Noah was building the ark, so God holds back now awaiting for people to turn to him. As it says in 2 Peter 3, the bit we read again before, 2 Peter 3 verse 8.

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but he is patient with you, not wanting anybody to perish, but all to come to repentance. God is still a God of judgment. That's the first bit of bad news for us. The second bit of bad news is that our world is still worthy of judgment.

We would like to think, I guess, that the world that God destroyed in Genesis 6 was somehow radically different from our world, that people were somehow much more evil than we see around us now.

[ 6 : 48 ] But we've already seen from Luke 17 that Jesus said, just as it was in the days of Noah, so too will be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage. Their lives were very much like ours.

And the things that God is grieved by are the things that we see in our world around us. So look at verse 5. The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

I wonder how your thoughts would stand up to close examination by God. I don't know if you're like me, but if you're like me, you would be very uneasy with the idea that even your best friend could see a full transcript or video of one day of your thoughts.

The idea that somebody else could know what I was thinking scares me. How must our thoughts look to God, the God who sees every one of our thoughts all the time?

And God is a person who, unlike our friend, isn't guilty of these same thoughts too. God knows and sees from a perspective of perfect purity what we are like on the inside.

[ 8 : 06 ] And verses 11 and 12, look at what upsets God about the world there. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth.

The word corrupt there is a kind of general word. It could translate it as mucked up or even destroyed. Human beings have mucked up the world, mucked up their ways.

They've destroyed relationships and filled them with violence. Our relationships with each other have been damaged and destroyed. Our relationships with God supremely has been damaged and destroyed.

Our relationship with the world has been damaged and destroyed. Wherever humans go, damage and destruction follows. Whatever virtues we may have personally, and we are not as wicked as we could be, whatever good things there are about us, there is also destruction, also corruption.

Wherever humans go, damage and destruction follow. One of the examples of this, I think, that I've seen in the last 10 years or so, was the birth of the internet. The internet was going to be, when it was being born, a great place for freedom of speech, for education, a new global community where people would share information and knowledge and discuss things in a peaceful way.

[ 9 : 40 ] Here at last was a beginning of a new world order. People see it in their more extreme moments. And what do we see these days about the internet? Well, some of those things are still true, aren't they?

Some of the great things about the internet are still true. And yet the most successful websites on the internet and most profitable websites are pornography sites. When we look at our inboxes, we are flooded with people trying to entice us to give us their money, trying to trick us, trying to sell us things which we don't want.

The World Wide Web is a corrupted place. It's where humans have gone. Yes, there is good things, but there is destruction and violence.

If you go to the right websites, I hear that you can see people having their throats cut in the name of religion or having their heads cut off. Which brings us to our second point.

Our corruption, humanity's corruption, leads inevitably to violence. There's violence in our thoughts, violence in our words, violence between individuals, violence between neighbours, violence between drivers on the road, violence between nations, violence in the name of religion, violence between sexes, violence towards children.

[11:02] There is violence everywhere. Violence enacted, violence spoken, violence thought. And God hates it. God said to Noah in verse 13, I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.

Now I'm going to destroy them along with the earth. The second piece of bad news for us is that our world is still worthy of judgment.

God is still a God of judgment. Our world is still worthy of judgment. But Genesis 6 provides us with two pieces of great news too.

The first is that God provides one rescuer. Even in the midst of God formulating his plans to eradicate everything on the face of the earth, he is setting aside one good man who will rescue humanity, who will rescue the world and all the creatures on it.

Noah, the one good man of his generation, the one man who serves God, who pleases God. This one man will become the saviour of the world in God's plans.

[12:27] One man who will respond to God's call and build an ark and be a safe place. The one safe place for all the creatures and for seven other human beings.

Noah is the rescuer that God provides. The one safe place in a world under judgment. And we can't hear that without immediately thinking that for us too there is a rescuer, one safe place to stand in the judgment that is still to come.

Noah is, to use a theological word, a type, a preview, a dull echo back in time of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus is our rescuer, the one who rescues us from the final judgment, the final and true flood that is still to come.

In 1 Thessalonians 1 verses 9 and 10 God says about the Thessalonians, you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

Jesus is our Noah just as the final day of judgment is our flood. But of course Jesus is a much greater rescuer than Noah. Noah rescues two of every animal, species, and seven other human beings.

[13:59] Jesus rescues millions. Anyone who turns to Jesus is rescued. Anybody who puts their trust in Jesus and asks for forgiveness in his name is rescued from that great wrath still to come.

Jesus' rescuing is so much greater. And this brings us to our second piece of great news that God offers us. God provides us with one rescuer and God makes great promises to those he saves.

You see, God doesn't just save Noah so it can all happen again. From a human perspective, it's hard to see how that's not going to happen.

If you know the story of Genesis, immediately after the flood, it all kind of falls to pieces again. Noah and his children aren't that great.

Noah proceeds to get drunk. His children proceed to disobey him and dishonour him. Within a few generations, they're building a tower to bring worship and praise to themselves. And of course, it just goes downhill from there.

[15:08] It looks like the whole thing is going to happen again. But the reason why it doesn't isn't because humans have got better but because God makes promises to humans. So God says to Noah that he will make a covenant with him.

Verse 18. Verse 17 we'll read from. For my part, I'm going to bring a flood of waters 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. 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.

So you see, God doesn't simply rescue Noah and set things back to the way they were before. He begins a new covenant.

Now part of that covenant is a reiteration or a repetition of the blessings he made in Genesis 1. The be fruitful and multiply language that sets creation in motion again.

[16:22] It's a return to the start in one sense. But there is also a promise to deal with humanity differently, to spare humans, to be kind to humans, to be patient with humans.

So in Genesis 8, after the flood, God says, I will never again curse the ground because of humankind for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

As long as the earth endures, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease. And then in Genesis chapter 9, verses 8 to 11, God makes his covenant with Noah.

Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals and every animal of the earth with you as many came out of the ark.

I establish my covenant with you that never again shall all life be cut off by the waters of a flood and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. So the thing that stops God from doing it again isn't that we are any better, isn't that humans have got better, but that God makes a promise not to do it.

[17:46] And the thing, of course, the question that raises, of course, is how is God going to do it? If we haven't got any better, is he going to change his character? Is he going to become soft on sin?

Is God like one of those parents who is hard on the first couple of kids, but by the time the youngest ones come along, he's got old and soft and lets them get away with anything. No, that's not the way it is.

The answer of the New Testament is that God pours out his wrath on Jesus. God is able to be patient with humankind because he's found a way to deal with that judgment in the person of Jesus Christ.

So Jesus is the one who fulfills the covenant to Noah, who makes it possible. But of course, God also makes a new covenant with Jesus and with the people who trust in Jesus.

Again, just as God makes great promises to Noah, he makes great promises to us. promises to forgive our sins, promises to send his Holy Spirit into our hearts to transform us and enable us to live a new life.

[18:59] As we saw last week, promises of an abundant life, the water of life that flows out from within us when God makes peace with us and lives in our hearts. Promises of sharing in God's people, of being given a useful part in his church, promises of a peace forever with him, living forever with him in the new Jerusalem, the new and remade heavens and earth where there will be no more suffering and no more weeping and where everything will be put right.

God makes great promises to those he saves. God is still a God of judgment.

Our world is still worthy of judgment. But God provides one rescuer and God makes great promises to those he saves. I wonder if you have those things fixed in your head in the way you think about God and in the way you live and the way you think about yourself.

Do you believe really that God is still a God of judgment? If you have turned away from that idea then you'll have an idea of God that is much more socially acceptable.

But at the same time you'll never really understand what it means to experience God's grace. You won't never understand God's grace because you won't understand what God's grace saves us from.

[20:27] His righteous judgment a judgment so severe that it wants to destroy the whole world. Do you really believe that our world is still worthy of judgment?

If you do then you'll have a passion to tell people about Jesus. If you don't well it'll be no big deal you'll get you'll just continue on with life.

And you'll misunderstand history because as we've seen the next thing that happens in history is the second judgment the final day of judgment. God is delaying that day so that people can be saved.

Do you have it fixed in your head that God has provided one rescuer for humanity? If you don't I think you'll have no great love for Jesus.

There'll be nothing really special about Jesus. He'll be a great man a great teacher maybe a great example but no real desire to stick close to him.

[ 21 : 34 ] But Jesus is our knower the only place to be safe the one who has saved us not simply by building a ship but by giving his very life for us a far more costly act of faith.

Jesus is our one rescuer. Do you have it in your head do you have it in your life that God makes great promises to those he saves? If you haven't really got that fixed in your head I think that you'll be distracted by life.

You'll be distracted by ordinary living all the things that crowd in on us and press in on us a business of having enough food or money the business of just ordinary relationships the business of seeking pleasure the business of pursuing our careers all good things but if we really had it fixed in our head that God makes promises to those he saves then how deep our joy and our love for those things would be how much more preoccupied we would be by the promises that God has made and wanting to see those enacted in our lives God really makes great promises to those he saves God is still a God of judgment our world is still worthy of judgment God provides one rescuer and God makes great promises to those he saves Heavenly Father please help us to live out these things help us to be transformed in the way we think and act thank you for the great rescuer you have provided for us in Jesus help us to love him and live for him help us to understand history correctly help us to understand our world and our lives in Jesus name

Amen you arechodzi you know you will have to the statue He's that will serve for us to you ■ it to