

Lord of the Storm

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[0:00] Imagine how hard it would be for Noah to build an ark in this day and age. After raising enough capital to purchase the size of a block, he would need a permit for construction and the land would need to follow zoning ordinances.

This wouldn't be a simple comply and develop situation. An environmental impact study needs to be taken. Surrounding neighbours need to be notified of the pending build with a 28-day cooling-off period for them to alert the Council of any concerns.

Timber would need approval from the Forestry Commission and the Department of Conservation and Land Management would check the logging region for endangered species. Ongoing skyrocketing costs of timber and non-perishable food will be a constant headache.

Carpenters are in short supply. Since COVID, everyone's doing renos. They're all union members and they have stopped working meetings for better conditions and they've got the Department of Industrial Relations on speed dial.

Numerous visits would occur from the RSPCA, World Wildlife Society, Humane Society, Workers' Compensation Insurance Authority, the Local Council and numerous other government departments all checking animal management, working conditions and compliance.

[1:16] The Department of Land and Water Conservation would demand a map of the proposed floodplain. An ABN, tax file number and passport would be required, especially if the final destination is Mount Ararat out of this country and risk assessment forms would need to be filled in, emergency exits, safety equipment, lifeboats and personal flotation devices installed, along with acquiring a boat licence from the Maritime Services Board.

Then the Council of Civil Liberties, Australian Civil Liberties, would issue an injunction against construction, since flooding the earth is a religious event and therefore goes against all secular views in society.

The Equal Opportunity Commission would claim Noah is practising discrimination by not taking godless, unbelieving people on board. After all that, there is an upside.

God wouldn't have to destroy the earth. Bureaucracy already has. Jokes aside, this is a heavy subject. We need to grasp what's going on.

In these early parts of Genesis, it still has implications for us today. It explains why things are the way they are and what God has done about it and what God is doing about it.

[2:31] The reality is, society today is not too different than the times of Noah. Genesis 6 verse 5. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

As a society, we've moved so far away from the heart of God and worshipped so much at the altar of this world that we've permitted the quenching of God's authority and any form of obedience to his word.

If we forget what God has done for us yesterday, we will not call on him today and our children will not know him tomorrow. We as a nation and a world are in desperate need of God's love and truth. The story of Noah, the ark and the flood are perhaps one of the most well-known in the Bible. It's also one of the more controversial parts of Scripture, especially for those who have doubts about Scripture or have doubts about the Bible or even objections to the Christian faith.

The subject of this passage is divine judgment. I've taught a lot of schools over the years and schools are a microcosm of society, a diverse range of ideologies, worldviews, faith traditions.

[3:58] And I know this particular subject of divine judgment is upsetting. It's considered outdated and irrelevant in this day and age. These assumptions are wrong.

Nevertheless, it does beg the question from skeptics and even Christians, if God is all-knowing and all-powerful, then why did he invent us if he knew this was going to happen?

Why did he make it if he knew he was going to destroy it and start again? What we've learned so far, God made everything and he said it was good. God created humanity in his image.

He gave us free will and he desires a relationship with us. From Genesis 3, we see the fall of humanity and how far we've turned our backs and turned away from a relationship with God.

And the consequences follow. Here in Genesis 6-9, we see the story of Noah and the flood is about second chances and new beginnings. God is ready to give us another chance.

[5:03] God calls us into three relationships relationships with the earth, with all the people of the earth, and with himself, the Lord of the earth. So three striking things help us to understand the meaning of judgment and what difference it makes in our lives.

The total depravity of humanity, the heartache of God, and the solution to both. First of all, the total depravity of humanity. Genesis 6, 11-13.

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become. So God said, I'm going to put an end to all people.

This passage is why a lot of people can't accept the Bible. They can't come to terms with a God who would do something like this, get rid of bad people, and start again. They also mistakenly think that humanity is inherently good.

Whereas we need to understand, human nature has been so utterly corrupted by sin that humanity is totally incapable of doing anything to accomplish its own salvation.

[6:14] Sin is at the very core of our being. Do you believe in divine judgment? It may be a problem for you, but it's actually an even bigger problem if you don't.

The thing that evokes God's judgment is human depravity. Genesis 6, verse 5, and 11-13 clarifies this. If you don't believe in God's judgment, that there is a judgment day when God will judge the world, that it's an archaic idea, it's distressing or primitive, you're faced with the insurmountable problem of human depravity.

Wickedness, violence, corruption, evil of the heart all the time. If there's no judgment, all these depraved things win.

There's no divine judgment, there's actually no intellectual defense against the naturalness of violence. We have no emotional defense against the poisonous of corruption.

And we have no cultural defense against how endlessly evil, wicked, and depraved humanity has become. Unless there is a God, and there is something that's outside us that transcends nature, on what basis can we say anything is wrong?

[7:31] If we're just a product of natural selection and survival of the fittest, we should never get outraged or wonder why big nations take over small nations. Violence is natural to nature.

Unless there is a God outside nature by which to judge nature, how can we say anything natural is wrong? In other words, we have to believe in the supernatural to even complain about a depraved humanity.

There's no God, there's no such thing as divine judgment, there's no intellectual defense against human nature being depraved. It's just natural. And we should never be morally outraged.

And if there's no defense against physical violence and corruption, then there's actually no defense against acts of emotional violence and corruption. Characters are assassinated. Hopes are killed. Dreams are crushed. Relationships are destroyed. The earth is filled with depraved humans. And when we're wronged, when someone does it to us, well, it's actually natural for us to be outraged.

[8:41] But our lives can be poisoned by that anger. It's hard to forgive when we're wronged. As the saying goes, holding unforgiveness is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.

It's hard to forgive. If you find it easy to forgive somebody, they probably haven't gone after you and really hurt you. Our defense to the poisonous and violence of corruption is actually knowing there is a judge who one day will judge and that we're not the judge.

We recognize we don't have the power or knowledge or right to give people what they deserve, but there is one who does. And grasping this means we're going to be able to forgive, not seek revenge.

We're going to be able to limit our anger we're going to have a defense against the poisonous of humanity's depravity. If you don't believe there's a God or that there's a God who's going to not

judge, who's refusing to judge, then vengeance is up to us.

And that kind of leads to a lot of wars and strife as we look around the world. Anyone who has really experienced violence and corruption, house burned down, family members killed or violated, you would want to pick up the sword.

[10:07] We're in a little bit of a bubble here in Sydney. Violence actually becomes an endless cycle of depravity and we know in certain parts of the world this has been going on for centuries, if not millennia.

If deep down you believe God will do it, that God will judge, then you won't pick up the sword. Only when you believe vengeance is God's will the cycle break.

This text tells us the reason God judges is because of the total depravity of humanity, steeped in violence and corruption, wickedness, evil on their hearts all the time.

If we get rid of a divine judge, we have absolutely no way to deal with humanity's depravity.

Intellectually, emotionally or culturally, we are doomed. So I hope you see the necessity for divine judgment.

If you find the idea of God's judgment or vengeance to be unbearable, let's look at the effect that it has on God. Here's the second point. The Lord saw how great humanity's wickedness on the earth had become on the earth and that every inclination of thoughts of the human heart was on evil all the time.

[11:23] The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth and his heart was deeply troubled. Verse 5 shows the necessity of judgment but verse 6 shows the problem of judgment because we see God's response.

His heart was broken. If you're upset about divine judgment, God's more upset. He wasn't just a little troubled, God was deeply troubled.

His heart was aching, grief stricken. What a statement. When God made us, he didn't make us out of need but when he did, he did so intentionally and in the process voluntarily bound and hid his heart to us.

He delights in us. In the garden, he made us in his image and looked on what he'd made and said, it's very good. So his own joy is deeply tied to us.

If he sees something going wrong with our lives, he experiences pain. Not just sadness, like, I'm a little bit disappointed, what a shame, but the deepest pain possible.

[12:41] The most shattering pain possible. It's been said, the tears of God are the meaning of history. If we don't see God suffering for sin, we don't know what history is all about.

We need to understand two things here. The history of the world is the history of our suffering together. Not just us suffering, but actually God suffering with us.

Every evil act breaks God's heart. I've got two kids, one's 20 tomorrow. Don't know what she said, but I remember the first day she lied to me, my oldest daughter, and I literally just went, oh, inside. It wasn't probably writing on the wall with crayon or something, something just trivial. Then he crushed me. I was like, oh, you just lied for the first time. Oh, I nearly cried.

A little lie writing on the wall with crayon. God's heart breaks. The history of the world is also the history of our deliverance.

[13:54] God loves us. Genesis 6 points to how in the future God willingly suffers and provides a solution for both the depravity of humanity and his own broken heart.

Our God is a God of truth and love. If God is just a God of love, then anything goes and God just accepts it. If God is just a God of truth, then he'll judge and smite everyone.

While we may not be able to think of a good reason why God will let evil and suffering go on, he allows history to go on, even since Adam and Eve, even since Noah. What we do know is that God has done something about it.

God has always remained engaged. He is vulnerable, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. God suffers. It's actually the nature of God. The flood points to the solution to our problem and God's.

The flood is the pattern for the solution, but it's not the ultimate solution. And do you realise here the flood is salvation through judgment. If we look carefully, we see God puts Noah and his family in an ark.

[15:02] The waters of judgment rain down. They give the world a fresh start and end to wickedness, corruption, violence and evil. Sin may seem enticing as if we know better than God,

but it's self-destroying.

In the flood, God is saying, I'm going to stop the destruction. I'm going to destroy, but what I'm going to destroy is the destruction of the earth. God's judgment is actually saving the world.

He's giving the human race a second chance. God said to Noah, build an ark. Trust me. And he builds an ark. Noah trusts the word of God. He trusts the promise of God. No one else does.

Along come the waters. The same water that sinks everybody else who didn't believe in the word of God. It lifts Noah up. Over 40 days, the flood kept coming on the earth and as the waters increased, they press down and crush everyone.

They are literally drowning, but they're also spiritually drowning in their sin. But the same waters that crushed people who didn't believe in the promise of God, these waters lifted up the people who did believe the word of God and the judgment saves them.

[16 : 24] The flood is a pattern of grace from judgment. The judgment was the grace. The judgment cleansed and saved. While Noah's family made it onto the ark with quite a menagerie of animals, sin also made its way onto the ark.

They weren't without sin. So history has carried on and we see the world is still messed up. We see the flood was inadequate. As a result, what God is showing us in the flood is a pattern of how he's going to solve the problem of his own pain and the problem of human depravity.

The flood points to Jesus. Jesus, the one who went into his waters at his baptism and a voice from heaven said, this is my son.

In him, I am well pleased. In the beginning of Genesis, we read, the spirit hovered over the waters and Jesus steps into creation and walks calmly on the waters.

Jesus, who's asleep in the boat when there's a huge squall, a massive storm that's going to destroy the boat and drown them and kill them, he's asleep.

[17 : 38] And we know from ancient scriptures that a storm was actually representative of destruction and chaos. They wake him terrified and the Lord of the storm speaks into the storm to the creation and says, peace, be still.

And creation settles down and it's at peace. The guys who were terrified of the storm were now terrified of Jesus. Who is this that the wind and the waves can obey him?

Jesus, who in Matthew 12 says, one greater than Jonah is here now. Jonah, who was thrown overboard and he dropped down and was crushed so that the others could be rescued and live. Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale and ultimately spat out and given a second chance three days later. Jesus, who resurrects three days later and gives us a second chance.

The flood points to a greater storm coming. Jesus is at the bottom of it and he is crushed. God's wrath and justice comes down on Jesus. Everything that the human race deserves for all its wickedness, its violence, its corruption, evil in the heart all the time, Jesus drowns under the weight of our sin.

[18 : 55] And just a little fun fact for all you scientists out there, he literally drowned. You asphyxiate when you're crucified on your own blood. Jesus says, my sinking will be your salvation.

If you believe in me, I will lift you up. In Genesis 6, we see God's heart breaking but on the cross, we see his heart completely broken and his judgment satisfied.

On the cross, Jesus suffers for sin. God was so committed to truth and love, Jesus died willingly. On the cross, through his judgment, we're saved.

The same judgment that's Saint Jesus can lift us up if we get into him. If you take that step of faith figuratively and climb on in and trust in Jesus in the midst of the turmoil and waves and buffeting winds and turbulent storms of life, they come our way.

Jesus, the Lord of the storm, is there and he brings us peace. When you observe the ceilings, not this church, but of ancient cathedrals, they were deliberately designed like the hull of a boat.

[20 : 12] When you entered a church, it was meant to be like coming into the ark. It's inverted, obviously, but it's symbolic of a place of safety, of peace, of sanctuary and a place where we're to find salvation.

In Jesus, there is now no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For whoever, that's whoever, calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, they will be saved.

As we conclude, what are the implications? Well, the flood narrative tells us that the physical world is actually important to God. Other faith traditions will say, this is all an illusion or you need to escape this or this is bad.

God saw what he made and said it was very good. The flood is God's commitment to creation and to the earth and to the animals and to us. That's why they're in the ark. God shows he's committed and enmeshed in this physical world and he loves us and this world.

His heart aches when things go wrong, when there's still evil and corruption and violence and injustice and wickedness. So when we see Jesus on the cross dealing with our suffering, removing our condemnation, God's played his part as God's willing to go to all that effort to deal with the pain in our hearts, what effort are we going to go to to deal with the pain in his heart?

[21:48] We actually can't sit back and go, I'm saved and now I'm just going to sit back and game or do whatever people do in their free time. Get involved with the world.

Speak out against injustice. Get involved with healing people physically, psychologically, socially. Care for the environment. It always astounds me that Christians are so destructive.

This world matters. Christmas is coming up. We've got some really good news. Start inviting people. I wasn't going to say this but I've got a quick little tangent. Don't let this distract you.

The first time I ever met my future father-in-law, he lived from the land there on the farm and I turned up and my hair used to be this long and it was blonde but that was natural and I had my earrings in and I don't know if you knew that but anyway, I had this big T-shirt.

It was from the Wilderness Society and it was a dead tree stump with a dollar sign on it and a cartoon face or something. Someone was blinded and said, no environment, no economy and he used that as his wedding speech.

[23:00] He said, when I met this guy, I was going to say, look after my daughter and blah, blah, blah and I've got a shotgun and no, but anyway, and he took him back and so, as Christians, God showed he cares for this world, the physical world.

Care for people. Love them. Care for the environment. Look after it. Get involved. I can't remember if I said this but Christmas is coming up. Get inviting people.

Alright, next thing. We need to balance truth and love. If you just tell people the truth all the time, like, you know, shake him, Bible basher, and I've got to say, when I was younger I was pretty bad at this. I was keen but it came across as judgmental and condemning and you don't win many friends that way but if you're just all lovey-dovey, God loves you, happy for everyone to do whatever they like, like the days of Noah, then you'll never tell anyone what's actually wrong and they won't understand their need for salvation and that judgment actually is coming.

If you commit to both truth and love, know this, you actually will suffer. Because you're getting involved with people's lives. If you want to tell people the truth and for them to see the truth and you're prepared to never give up on them, always committed, loving them and caring for them no matter what and not condemning them, but constantly trying to show them the truth.

If you're deeply involved in the sorrows of people and you choose to be the head, heart, and hands of Jesus, your heart's going to break for this world.

[24:32] Don't be afraid. Jesus didn't shrink back from those difficult, painful choices. In Ephesians, we're reminded, speak the truth in love. If you don't get into the ark of the gospel, if you don't remember or really think about what Jesus has done for you, if you don't live as if the judgment's in the past, when problems come into your life, it's going to crush you.

You're going to feel guilty. You're going to feel bitter against the world or other people or even blame God. Every time a problem comes up in your life, it's either going to make you a better person or a worse person.

The floods in life are going to sink you down and crush you under its pressure or as you get into the gospel, you're going to be lifted up. Are you thinking about the gospel filled with the knowledge of what Jesus has done for you?

Is a flood coming right now? Are you hurting and broken within, overwhelmed by the weight of your sin? Jesus is calling.

Get into the gospel. Finally, live as if the flood is over. Judgment is over. Sometimes we're our own worst critics.

[25:48] If you don't give it over to God, and know you're forgiven and walk each day, I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven, then you will be weighed down by sin.

If you're a Christian, you've called on the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved. There's now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. When you know and understand this, you can have peace with God now.

Whenever you fail, you won't beat yourself up. You'll handle failure without internal voices constantly shaming and guiltting and condemning. This world matters. Speak the truth in love. And when the floods and troubles come into your life, and they will come, even if you're a Christian, we need to get into the ark of the gospel and have peace with God. Live with Jesus. Judgment has passed. There is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Amen.