

Judgment & Salvation

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[0 : 00] This morning we are looking at Genesis chapter 6 starting at verse 9 through to chapter 8 verse 19.

I won't read the entire passage just because of its length, but I'm going to begin by reading the chapter 6, 9 through the end of chapter 6.

I think it's page 5 in your pew Bibles. Let me read this for us.

Genesis chapter 6 beginning at verse 9. 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.

[0 : 58] 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 for 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.

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.

[2 : 02] 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 God commanded him.

So of the major characters in Genesis, Adam, Eve, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Joseph, the most popular one may well be Noah. One person compared over 30 children's Bibles published from 1831 to 2013, and the number one most commonly included story from the Old Testament was, you guessed it, Noah and the ark.

If you grew up going to Sunday school or vacation Bible school or any kind of children's church, something or other, you can probably remember at least one song about Noah.

[3 : 17] Who built the ark? Noah, Noah. Noah, Noah. Or the Lord told Noah there's going to be a floody, floody, so get those animals out of the muddy, muddy. Even outside the church, references to Noah and the ark abound, whether it's the Russell Crowe movie or Evan Almighty or the full-size tourist attraction replicas of Noah's ark that you can visit in the Netherlands, in Hong Kong, or in Kentucky.

And it's not only in cultures influenced by the Bible where we find stories of a great flood. The story of a great flood is found in many cultures and people groups on every inhabited continent in the world.

And in particular, in the ancient Near East, in the time and place where Genesis was written, many other nations, the Babylonians, the Sumerians, the Akkadians, and later the Greeks, had stories of a devastating flood sent by the gods.

But one man builds a boat, and only those with him in the boat survive. Now, it's impossible to know for certain whether the author of Genesis knew about these other stories or vice versa, or whether they were drawing on a common source, but the overall story was almost certainly familiar in one way or another.

And yet, many of the details in the biblical story of the flood are distinct and different. And we'll point out some of those distinctive aspects of the biblical story as we go along.

[4 : 41] But when we look at the biblical story about the flood, it's much more than a cute children's story about a floating zoo. And it's far more than a familiar pattern that one finds across many cultures and religions.

On the one hand, the biblical story of the flood paints a picture of God's terrifying judgment. On the other hand, it paints a picture of God's promised salvation.

And so this morning, we want to look at those two themes, God's judgment and God's salvation.

The first thing we see from the story of Noah is that God's judgment is coming.

Verse 11, chapter 6, The earth was corrupt and filled with violence. That word translated violence can also mean deceit, slander, idolatry, and lawlessness, as well as bloodshed.

We saw last week how tyrannical leaders were abusing power and sex, and how the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intention of the human heart was only evil continually.

[5 : 57] The righteous remnant, those who trusted and obeyed God, had been reduced to only one faithful family, namely Noah's.

At the end of Genesis 1, it says, God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. Chapter 6, verse 12 says, God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt.

So, verse 13, God determines to destroy all flesh on earth. The word translated destroy in verse 13 is the same verb that's translated corrupted in verse 12.

All flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. In other words, all flesh had disfigured, spoiled, ruined their way on the earth, and so God would disfigure, spoil, and ruin them along with the earth. You see, we see here that God's judgment is entirely just. Over and over, human beings had refused to live within the moral boundaries that God had put in place.

[7 : 17] Human beings had exalted themselves to God-like status. They had blamed and mistreated and threatened and murdered fellow image bearers of God.

They had trampled upon God's creation and spoiled it, and they boasted of their exploits. This is what we've seen in the last couple of chapters of Genesis.

And so, God says, because you have rejected my moral boundaries and transgressed them, I will now remove the physical boundaries that I set in place to sustain life on earth.

Behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

Creation would revert to a state of watery chaos without any of the wise boundaries between sea and land.

Waters and the sky that God had instituted to promote and preserve life. Everything would be let loose. Now, the justice of God is one of the distinctive aspects of the biblical story of the flood compared to other stories of a flood from the ancient Near East.

[8 : 34] In the other stories, the gods send the flood because the world is overpopulated or because the people become too disruptive or for no stated reason at all.

And then after they send the flood, they are frightened and dismayed by it, and they realize they don't know what they've got themselves into. But the God of the Bible sends the flood because of humanity's moral corruption.

He destroys the earth because its people are destroying themselves. In some ways, the flood prevents sin from simply spiraling downward to its ultimate conclusion.

It cuts it off and puts an end to it. God's judgment in the Bible is entirely just.

But God's judgment is not only just, it is also inescapable. Genesis emphasizes the totality of the corruption and the totality of the destruction.

[9 : 41] All flesh, verse 12, had corrupted their way on the earth. Verse 13, I have determined to make an end of all flesh. Seven times in chapter 6, that phrase, all flesh, comes up.

Verse 17, everything that is on the earth shall die. Chapter 7, verse 4, every living thing I will blot out. Chapter 7, verse 21, all flesh died that moved on the earth.

Chapter 7, verse 23, every living thing that was on the face of the ground. Now, modern scholars debate how we should interpret these expressions.

Some say that these expressions indicate that the flood literally covered the entire globe. Others say the language could just as well refer to a localized flood. The author was speaking of the known world, where the author used intentionally expansive language to communicate an important message.

For example, later on in Genesis 41, verse 57, it says, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, for the famine was severe over all the earth.

[10:49] The author is painting a picture, not necessarily making a precise statement, but the picture, regardless of how we interpret that, the point that Genesis is making is very clear and should not be missed.

Nothing and no one can escape from the just judgment of God. If you go to the end of chapter 7, verse 17 or verse 18, it talks about the waters prevailing.

Four times, verse 18, verse 19, verse 20, verse 24, the waters prevailed, the waters prevailed, the waters prevailed, the waters prevailed. That word prevailed is the same word that's translated triumphed.

Like hostile warriors, the flood waters attack and undo God's creation until the devastation is complete. God's judgment is just and God's judgment is inescapable.

And when we go ahead to the New Testament, the New Testament says that God's judgment is not just something that happened way back then, once a long time ago in the days of Noah, Jesus says he will come again in the future to judge the world and his judgment will be both just and inescapable.

[12:10] Jesus himself said, just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage.

In other words, people were carrying on with their daily activities and with their worldly ambitions and pleasures until the day when Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. We read earlier from 2 Peter, the world that then existed was deep, deluged with water and perished. And the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will pass away with a roar. The earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. You see, the Old and New Testaments speak with one voice.

God's judgment is coming. Because the earth today, like the earth back then, is full of deceit and violence and idolatry and lawlessness that cries out for divine intervention and justice.

[13:20] Tyrannical leaders still abuse sex and power and boast about it. God still looks upon the corruption of the human heart, our evil intentions, our self-deception, our stubborn refusal to live within God's wise moral boundaries.

And God says, this must not last forever. One day I will expose and wipe out the evil in the world for good. But the scary thing is this.

We are all tangled up in the corruption. That God is utterly committed to wiping out. Sin infects each of our hearts far more deeply than we realize.

We have all transgressed God's good moral boundaries. And we participate far more than we want to admit in the deceit and violence and idolatry and greed of the world in which we live.

God cannot wipe out evil without wiping us out too. So is there any hope for creatures like us?

[14:44] Well, thankfully, the story of Noah is not only a story of God's just and inescapable judgment. It's also, and perhaps even more, a story of God's promised and provided salvation.

Judgment is coming. That's the first thing we learn from the story of Noah. But the second thing we learn is that salvation is provided.

And the story emphasizes two aspects of God's salvation. First, it emphasizes God's initiative in providing salvation. And then it emphasizes Noah's obedience through which many are saved.

So throughout the story, we see God's initiative to provide salvation. Verses 11 to 13 of chapter 6, God declares to Noah in advance his intention to destroy the world.

But then in verses 14 to 16, he provides Noah with the means of escape. Make yourself an ark. And God doesn't leave it up to Noah to figure out what kind of ark to make or how to build it.

[15:49] He specifies precisely how the ark was to be constructed, just as later on in the book of Exodus, God would specify precisely how the tabernacle was to be constructed, where he would come and meet with his people.

Now, chapter 6, verse 14, 15 says it should be 450 feet long, 300 cubits, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

Now, it's hard for us to imagine Noah building such a massive ark without any modern power tools. It's also hard for us to imagine, and even people who have studied it don't really know, how people in the ancient world built the pyramids in Egypt, the largest of which is 750 feet long and 450 feet high.

Yet, unless those pyramids are evidence of the existence of aliens, somehow or other they did. Now, some scholars suggest that the dimensions are meant to paint a picture, shouldn't necessarily be taken at face value, but regardless, nobody in the ancient world would have been troubled by the dimensions of the ark.

That's a particularly modern concern. In the Gilgamesh epic, one of the other ancient Near Eastern flood stories, the boat is a cube, 180 feet on all sides, which ends up being four times the cubic volume of the biblical ark, far bigger and more unwieldy in the storm.

[17:14] So, the dimensions would not have been a worry back then. What people in the ancient world probably would have noticed is that this is no ordinary boat. There's no rudder, there are no sails, there are no oars, and there are no professional boatsmen or sailors.

In the other ancient stories of the flood, it's not just the hero and his family who go into the boat, but they also bring sailors and a boatsman, professional people who can help them with their skill.

And in fact, the word ark does not normally mean boat, it means something more like a box or a chest or even a coffin. Now, here's the point that we shouldn't miss.

The ark is provided by God. It's not a marvel of human ingenuity. And the ark is preserved by God, by divine grace, not by human skill.

All the way through the story, God, it emphasizes that God is the one who provides salvation.

Chapter 6, verse 18, God says to Noah, I will establish my covenant with you.

[18:32] In other words, God's saying to Noah, I'm promising to preserve you through the flood. I will stick with you and I will not let you go.

And in the rest of the story, God makes good on that promise. Now, look for a moment. Take your bulletin and look for a moment at the middle of the bulletin where it says, Sermon Supplement.

Because there, you will see an outline of the flood story as a whole. Now, when modern people read the story of the flood, they often feel that it's excessively long and unnecessarily repetitive.

That's partly why I didn't begin by reading all three chapters straight through because it sometimes feels like it's hard to stick with it. But it's actually a very carefully organized and unified story.

And the pattern of the story could have been readily memorized and retold in the ancient world even by people who couldn't read or who didn't have access to a written copy of the story.

[19:39] Because the story builds up to a climax and then it goes back down sort of the same way. Right? Just like the ark. Goes up on the flood and then comes down to the land.

Story goes the same way. So throughout chapter seven, so the action builds throughout the first half of the story and each section repeats. That's why there's repeats. Each section repeats or further elaborates on the detail of the previous section.

So that's why there's repetitions. So that, and then the tension gradually builds. God tells Noah, enter the ark. The animals go in two by two along with him. Chapter seven, verse two and three tells us that he brings some extra animals who are clean animals because he's going to use them at the end to offer a sacrifice to God of thanksgiving.

Then in verse 10, the flood begins. And by the end of the chapter, the flood covers everything. But the turning point of the story, which is also structurally right at the center of the story. And that's how these ancient chiasms, that's the technical term for this literary structure, worked.

The middle of the story is the key turning point. It's chapter eight, verse one. But God remembered Noah. Now, when the Bible talks about remembering, it doesn't just mean bringing something to mind.

[20:59] What it means is following through on a previously made promise. God remembered Noah and he followed through on the promise he had made in chapter six to preserve him through the flood and not to leave him alone.

And the whole story hinges on God following through on his promise of salvation. Salvation is from the Lord all the way through.

God remembered Noah and he followed through. The rest of chapter eight, if you look at chapter eight, we see God recreating the world, forming and filling it just as he did in Genesis one.

So God remembered Noah, chapter eight, verse one, and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth and the water subsided. That might remind us of the beginning of Genesis one where the spirit of God, the same word, spirit and wind, same Hebrew word, translated both ways, the spirit of God was hovering over the waters at the beginning of creation.

And here God sends a wind or his spirit over the earth to renew it. In Genesis one, God had separated the waters above and the waters below and the waters in the sea and the dry land.

[22 : 30] And that's what we see in verses two to five. The waters receded, the rain from the heavens was restrained and the waters receded from the earth continually. End of verse five, the tops of the mountains were seen.

Then in verse six to 19, God begins to fill the world with life once again. First with birds, Noah sends forth a raven and then a dove in verse six to 12 and then with animals and human beings in verses 16 to 19.

So the flood is not only destructive, it's also purifying and preparing, God's preparing his whole creation for a new beginning. So throughout the story, we see God's initiative to provide salvation to Noah and Noah's family and ultimately to all of creation.

But there's another theme as well. Along with God's initiative to provide salvation, we also see Noah's obedience through which many find salvation.

At the beginning of the story, chapter six, verse nine, Noah is introduced with three characteristics.

[23 : 48] He was righteous. Now that's a legal term. It means right with God or approved of by God. Then it says he was blameless.

That was a term used to describe ritual offerings or sacrifices that they were whole and without blemish. Noah was whole and complete. He was approved of, right with God, whole and complete. And finally, like Enoch and Adam, Noah is described as one who walked with God. And as the story unfolds, we see Noah embodying these characteristics.

One of the interesting aspects of this story is that through the entire story of the flood, Noah doesn't say a single word. But he always listens to God.

And he faithfully obeys God. Twice, the end of chapter six and then again, chapter seven, verse five, it says, Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

[24 : 56] So we see Noah as an example of faith-filled obedience to God. We also see Noah's character on display toward the end of the story in chapter eight.

Look at chapter eight, beginning at verse six. Now, by this time, Noah has been in the ark for many months. For a long time, things seem to be getting crazier and crazier, floodwaters raining down, everything getting destroyed.

Now they're finally just starting to settle down. The mountaintops are becoming visible. Now, just imagine what your psychological state would be if you were confined to a three-story boat with only one window for several months with only your spouse and your three children and their spouses, countless animals of every sort, and you are responsible for overseeing everything.

Yikes. But here we see Noah. He sends out a raven in verse six.

A week later in verse eight, he sends out a dove. So he's neither cynical nor desperate. He's patiently waiting, actively hoping for the fulfillment of God's promise.

[26 : 18] And then in verse nine, there's this unexpected flourish of detail. When the dove comes back, the dove found no place to set her foot and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth.

So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. That detail is not strictly necessary to the story. But it's a picture of Noah's tender kindness.

Even after managing a zoo for several months, which is probably enough to drive even the most animal-loving person crazy, Noah is still kind to the needs of a little bird.

And the little bird. Proverbs 12, verse 10 says, being kind to the needs of animals is one of the marks of a righteous person. You see, righteousness is embodied not just in big decisions and bold ventures like building an ark, but also in small acts of kindness and steady expressions of patience. Caring for people and even for animals who are vulnerable and hurting. In the end, it's through righteous Noah's faith-filled obedience that many are saved.

[27 : 48] It's not just Noah who's brought safely through the flood. It's his entire family and even the animals that reap the benefits of his obedience. And throughout the Old Testament, we see this pattern.

In the midst of a dark and corrupt world, God raises up a righteous one through whom many others find salvation. Through the obedience of one, many are made righteous.

And yet, what we'll see next week is that even Noah falls short. Just like Adam, Noah and his sons will become corrupted by sin and they will continue to be subject to death.

And we'll see that the salvation that came through Noah still leaves much to be desired. And throughout the Old Testament, that pattern continues.

God raises up Moses. Right? Through Moses, the people of Israel find salvation. They're delivered from slavery in Egypt. And yet, in the middle of the desert, Moses dishonors God.

[29 : 01] And Moses is prohibited from entering the promised land. And then they get into the land and then God raises up David to reign over his people and to deliver them from their enemies. And then David becomes an enemy of God's own people when he commits adultery and murder.

Through the obedience of one, the many are made righteous, but no one quite lives up to that description. Until the coming of Jesus Christ, when we see the fulfillment of that hope.

In the midst of a dark and corrupt world, we see a man who is righteous and blameless, who walks with God and obeys his word, who is bold and brave, who is tender and kind.

And Jesus did not need to build an ark because he came to be the ark. He did not need to build a temple because he came to be the temple.

You see, in his life and ultimately in his death, Jesus himself entered the flood of God's judgment upon corrupt humanity so that all who enter into him might find refuge and salvation.

[30 : 24] salvation. God promised and God provided salvation for Noah, and today God promises and God provides salvation for all who enter into Jesus Christ.

Until the final day of God's judgment comes, the door of the ark is still open. man. Now from the outside, on a nice sunny day, when all seems like it's well in the world, you could look at the ark and say, entering into that seems like entering into death.

Go with Noah into that box, that seems like walking into a coffin. And similarly, many people look at Jesus, and they say, my life seems to be going pretty well, why would I want to surrender to him?

That seems inconvenient and unnecessary. But when you are confronted with the darkness of human nature, and the persistent corruption that infects our human world, when you see the storm clouds of God's approaching judgment, when death rears its ugly head and intrudes upon our pleasant existence, then the ark, then Jesus Christ himself starts to look like the way of salvation. You see, all the sunny days and all the pleasant things of life are expressions of God's kindness and patience, that he doesn't immediately judge us as we deserve, but God's word warns us, do not presume upon God's patience.

[32 : 17] The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance, friend, that includes you. Come to Jesus.

Enter into him today. Find refuge in him. Come into the ark of his saving grace, and don't delay. For those of us who have come to Jesus in faith, rest in his covenant promise.

Look at chapter 7, verse 16. There's another little phrase that we haven't looked at yet, ark, but it's right after Noah and the animals and his family all enter into the ark, and it says, and the Lord shut him in.

In every other flood story from the ancient Near East, the hero shuts the hatch himself. He goes into the boat, and he closes himself in.

He protects himself. But here it is the Lord, who has established his promise to Noah, who also secures him safely within the ark.

[33 : 48] Are you worried that you lack the resolve to persevere as a Christian? Are you anxious that something outside of your control could throw you off the path for all eternity, take comfort in this verse?

The Lord shut him in. Charles Spurgeon has a whole sermon on that one little sentence. You can look it up online. But he says, when God has brought us into union with Jesus, he shuts us in, and we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

The great door of God's covenant faithfulness is shut behind the believer, and he is surrounded by the power and grace of God.

Even as Noah was housed within the strong timbers of the ark, God's omnipotent love has shut us in. So, brother or sister, rest in the security of God's great love to you in Jesus Christ.

Christ, he is upholding you by his love and by his power, and he can keep you. You know, maybe you're facing trials and temptations that seem completely overwhelming.

[35 : 11] Listen to the words of 2 Peter 2. If God preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness with seven others when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.

The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials. If he brought Noah and his family through the flood, he can bring you through whatever seemingly overwhelming trial or temptation that you are currently facing.

And know that on the other side of every earthly trial, no matter how severe, and ultimately on the other side of death itself, the Lord Jesus Christ has promised to make all things new.

just as God did on the other side of the flood. Because Jesus' once-for-all death ended in resurrection, every death that we die, everything that we have to sacrifice in union with Jesus will most assuredly lead to resurrection life as well.

Judgment is coming, but salvation has been provided through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us pray. This morning I want to lead us in two prayers.

[36 : 55] First, a prayer for those who want to turn to Jesus. Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more corrupt than I ever dared to admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared to hope.

Thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved to offer me complete forgiveness. believing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sin and receive you as my Savior and Lord.

Amen. Second, for those who trust in Jesus and who are enduring great trials, Lord Jesus Christ, grant us your assurance that you are behind and before us, that we are surrounded by your faithful love.

Help us, like Noah, to hold fast to your word and to persevere in the obedience of faith. Pour out your Spirit within us that we may be bold and brave, compassionate and kind.

For Jesus' sake, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to close this morning by singing this great song about Jesus, our solid rock, the one in whom we find refuge, the one on whom we stand.

[38 : 42] Let's stand together as we sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.