

Beginning Again

Scripture Text: Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 17, 23; 8:14-16; 9:1, 16

Devotional Reading: Genesis 9:8-17. **Background Scripture:** Genesis 6:5-9:17.

Genesis 6:5-8

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.* ⁶ *The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.* ⁷ *So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them."* ⁸ *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*

Genesis 7:1-5, 17, 23

The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation." ² *Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate,* ³ *and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth.* ⁴ *Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."* ⁵ *And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.*

¹⁷ *For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth.*

²³ *Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.*

Genesis 8:14-16

¹⁴ *By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.* ¹⁵ *Then God said to Noah,* ¹⁶ *"Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.*

Genesis 9:1, 16

¹ *Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.*

¹⁶ *Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth."*

INTRODUCTION

I was young, but I do remember watching the late comedian, Flip Wilson, on television when he made popular the saying, "The devil made me do it!" whenever explaining why he did something wrong. This one-liner was hilarious—believe it, or not—back in the day. It became an instant catch phrase—one that was frequently used thereafter mostly in a comedic way, but, sadly also as a non-joking line of attack by those giving explanation for their aberrant or devious behavior. This phrase never worked, however, in my home when growing up. I was taught that I controlled every thought in my mind and every action that my body did, and every word that came out of my mouth. Ultimately, I was made to be responsible for my actions and therefore could never blame anything I said or did on "the devil." Although, the enemy can lay traps for us, he can never make a child of God carry out any sinful act. [1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." God is so good that He will not let believers experience anything for which He has not prepared them.

He will give every believer the grace and power to endure. Furthermore, endurance will bring its own reward. James 4:7 reads, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil (the Evil One) and he will flee from you." Two commands are given here: 1) submit to God by abandoning our selfish pride, and 2) resist any temptation that

the devil throws our way, and then he will have no choice but to flee.] This spill on self-control is bound to get our Biblical scholars' spiritual juices flowing in the coming week, and we certainly welcome your electronic feedback on the same.

Unfortunately, there are those who buy into the notion that people are helpless beings who cannot control what they think, do, or say. This week's lesson teaches us that this just is not true. In His creating us in His image-as last week's lesson illustrated, God created us as free agents; as rational beings. This means that He allows us to make up in our own minds what we think, do, or say. This arrangement is in itself worth digressing for a moment to discuss. God, in His omnipotence, could have created all of humankind to automatically worship, honor, and adore Him, but He chose not to. He instead gives us the freedom to choose to love Him. Have you ever wondered why?

From a parent's perspective, it would be simply fantastic if we could raise children who never question our decisions for their lives, who never give us a hard time when doing their chores, who never have to justify to us why they do what it is that they do, children who value and appreciate all that we do for them and thank us on a regular basis for our sacrifices, tears, and prayers. But, parents of adult children can tell you that it sometimes takes many years later before their children return to thank them for keeping them on the straight and narrow as a child because it produced character in them. Every parent wants for his/her child to willingly love, obey, trust, and appreciate them. The same holds true with God in His relationship with His children. He wants us to willingly love, obey, trust, and appreciate all that He does for us. He wants these things from us voluntarily, not obligatorily or automatically. He desires for us to love and obey Him because we want to, and not because He could make us-which, by the way, He could if He wanted.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's lesson looks at how mankind purposely withdrew from God and found themselves in a position that is described in Genesis 6:5 as man's being in a state of continual wickedness. How much more evil can 21st Century man be from those described in today's lesson? But, thank God for His promises, and thank God for a way to avoid His eternal wrath through Jesus Christ's primal sacrifice. God promised us in Genesis 9:15 that He would never again destroy all "flesh" (i.e., "both man, and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air [Genesis 6:7]") with flood waters. He gave us the rainbow as a covenant to this promise, and we can always stand firmly on His promises. Hallelujah for this! Where man breaks covenants, God keeps them without fail. Today, may we be reminded that God is holy and demands that His children be holy also. We can repent and entrust our lives to Him right now. We can begin again our walk with God, or invite Him into our hearts for the first time. It is never too late to trust God for salvation. [To "walk" with God describes a close relationship with God and obedience to His commands. Believers are called to "walk" with God daily, and to abide in Him complete. See Galatians 5:16 and 1 John 2:6.]

SITUATION AND GRIEF/AN EVIL WORLD (Genesis 6:5-8)

The evil of the world is described as being very pervasive or all-encompassing. God observed not only the wicked behavior of people, but their thoughts as well. So depraved or corrupt was man that *"that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."*

1. How is the evil of the human race described in Genesis 6:5?

This language—that God regretted creating man—is what theologians call anthropopathic (an'-thro-po-pa'-thic); God is described as displaying human emotions. In verse 6, God's grief shows His sense of passion. He had desired so much from humanity-and was overwhelmingly disappointed.

The usual meaning for "repented" is when someone feels sorrow for sin and decides to change the direction of his life. Due to the pure nature of God, He cannot sin and therefore cannot repent for sins committed since He has none.

2. What does it mean that the Lord "regretted" or was "sorry?" (Genesis 6:6)

Genesis 6:9 says that, *"Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God."* No, Noah was not a perfect man—perfect as in free from sin, but he did have a desire to please God. Noah chose to remain in a close relationship to God in his daily living. Noah's righteous living pleased God. This, obviously, was in deep contrast to how the rest of the population was living during this time. If you had lived during Noah's day, could it be recorded that you, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord?" Morph to present day: Could your walk with God be the cause of your family's being saved from God's wrath—physical and spiritual death?

Because of Noah's favor in God's eyes, there was a new beginning to all of humanity. Life continued through Noah and his family. What if God had not found an honorable person to carry out His orders? Would life on earth have ended then? How faithful are you today to live righteously before God and to be obedient to His commands?

3. How was Noah different from other people of his day? (Genesis 6:8)

THE EARTH DELUGED/FLOODED (Genesis 7:1-5,17,23)

Before the number of animals is given, it is significant to mention that God commanded Noah to bring aboard one of each sex of the selected animals so that they could mate and reproduce after the flood. Procreate. Bring about offspring. This could not have been possible had Noah taken aboard animals of the same sex.

Likewise, Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—could not have replenished the post-flood world had they taken aboard with them three other men instead of their wives. The animals and Noah's sons and wives were given the task of rebuilding society and repopulating the planet. God does all things well!

Getting back to the number of animals taken aboard, God's command to take seven of every clean animal is a new detail (See Genesis 6:19, *"You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you."*). The additional clean animals mentioned in verses 2—3 could have been used for food and for sacrifice once the flood waters subsided.

4. How many animals were to be taken into the ark? (Genesis 7:2,3)

The Ark (Genesis 6:15, 16)

The word "ark" suggests a large chest or barge, not a vessel designed for a sea voyage. It was designed only as a refuge from the Flood that was coming. According to v.15, the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high—which is the equivalent of about 520 railway box cars. This was more than enough room for all of the animals Noah brought on board, and for his family, and food.

5. How big was the ark? (Genesis 6:15,16)

For 40 long days and nights it rained. So great was the flood that *"all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered."* (7:19). They spent five months floating and then another seven months in the mountains of Ararat waiting for the earth to dry. It would be another 110 days before the waters began to recede from the earth (8:3) and over a year before Noah and his family could actually leave the ark.

6. How long did it rain, how long before the waters began to recede, and about how long was Noah and his family in the ark?

EXITING THE ARK (Genesis 8:14-16; 9:1, and 16)

1 Peter 3:15 uses the account of Noah and the Flood as an analogy of Jesus Christ.

Noah preached for 120 years to the people of his day that it was going to rain- pleading for them to come onto the ark. Noah's ark can be likened to the saving ark of safety through Jesus Christ. Christ also preached to unbelievers as Noah did-some of His hearers rejected His message and severed the consequence of eternal hell fire. Noah's cohorts suffered physical and spiritual death as a result of their not heeding Noah's pleas. John 14:15 says, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" Noah was obedient to God's commandments, and as a result became their Old Testament savior.

7. How is the account of Noah and the Flood used in the New Testament?

The very first thing that Noah did after disembarking was to build an altar to the Lord and offer sacrifices to God.

8. What did Noah do immediately after leaving the ark? (Genesis 8:20)

Perhaps this was the very first time a human being witnessed a rainbow. Even if it was not, the rainbow now became a symbol of God's promise never to destroy the world again in this manner.

One important feature to note concerning God's covenant to man is that the covenant encompassed all of creation, not just human beings-for it was "between God and every living creature." Another feature to this covenant is that it was perpetual or "everlasting." This means that it will last until the end of time; it will not be superseded, as was the case with other covenants. Additionally, this covenant was generous, for it was as unconditional as it was undeserved. Lastly, this covenant had a sign and seal: the rainbow.

9. What are some of the features of the covenant that God made after Noah left the ark? (Genesis 9:16)

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 59:19 says, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Satan had generated a flood of sins among people in Noah's time, and they were punished by God with a great, literal flood. It appears that Satan is still very much in the business of stirring up sins among people in our generation. Redeemed believers will be used by the Lord to stand against this flood of evil if they are ready and willing to be used as God's collective standard. As with Noah, they will be delivered and infused with life.

PRACTICAL POINTS

- Even if we are surrounded by utter wickedness, we can still find grace from the Lord (Genesis 6:5-8).
- God always provides a sure way to escape His judgment (Gen. 7:1-5)
- The Lord is merciful, but He will exact absolute judgment where it is needed (VSS 17,23)
- We will not be made to endure trials of afflictions any longer than is necessary (Gen. 8:14-16)
- God's blessing and assurance provide the encouragement we need to go through life and do His will (Gen. 9:1,16)

PRAYER

Dear Father God, how we humans have offended You from the beginning! How shamefully we ourselves have disappointed You! Forgive us, we pray, and give us wisdom and strength and courage to cling to Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.