

THE DIVINE ARK IN THE MODERN DAY FLOOD

Reading Genesis 6:5-7:24

What are your first thoughts on the passage? Share with your neighbour.

As I come to preach, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

1 Introduction

God's creation had a good start in Genesis 1 – God said “very good” when he made humanity “in his image and likeness, and let us rule over creation”. Then we saw last week that **people distanced themselves from God** in the Fall of Genesis 3. Despite all their blessings in Eden. Adam could have chosen good but he chose sin, and humankind has been on the wrong path ever since. So **there followed murder** – Cain, for jealousy of his brother, Lamech of a young man for injuring him....**But how did it come to the flood? How could a loving God destroy the world? And what could it tell us about God, humanity – and what our call is today?**

2 The scope of sin

Sin in the text

As you've heard, by Noah's time **evil was all pervasive** – “God saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that **every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time**” – the earth was “full of violence”.

See how the **heart is the core** cf. Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

This is a description of **humanity living without reference to God**. Far worse than animals who do not kill each other gratuitously. What was it like? **Thomas Hobbes** 17th century philosopher in his “Leviathan” envisaged mankind in a state of nature, without law enforcement “No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” A miserable life!

Are we different today?

That was then. **Is humanity getting better?** Some think so. Even in the 20th century many writers speculated that mankind is getting more intelligent and will eventually create a utopian society. Technology will lead the way to everyone living in peace and harmony.

What do you think of the state of humanity today?(talk to your neighbour for a minute)

The Bible says otherwise. Isaiah says: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away”.

Isn't humanity today just as bad as in Noah's time? **See systematic violence of 20th century** 800,000 Rwandans hacked to death by their countrymen. Hitler's Germans kill 6,000,000 in death camps Pol Pot re-educates fellow countrymen and 1,500,000 die. Think of the muggers who killed the young lawyer in London recently – **they wanted his wallet but took his life.** **Are we, here, in Pembury now, better than them** – or just restrained by the state? Reinhold Niebuhr the theologian says that “The only difference of civilisation and barbarism is same human nature in different circumstances.”

Listen to Jesus - the heart is the problem. Jesus said “from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly”. And us Christians – can we judge? Can we truly say we are immune? I’m not. I have other Gods like pride in my work as an economist – how about you? Paul says “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

3 The response of God’s wrath

Wrath in the text

God is not indifferent to all this. The Bible tells us that sin leads to judgment and punishment; God’s “wrath” underlies the flood. Not a popular doctrine! To quote the famous preacher Martin Lloyd Jones “there is no doctrine that is so generally repugnant to the majority of people than the wrath of God”.

How do you feel when you hear about God’s wrath?(talk to your neighbour for a minute)

Here’s the core - God in Holy – he is completely pure and cannot abide with sin. 1 John 1:5 “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” So wrath is God’s hatred of sin, the utter antagonism of his holiness to sin. What are the characteristics of God’s wrath?

A just and rationally argued case. Evidence “Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence”. **Case** “God saw how corrupt the earth had become.” **Verdict** “So God said to Noah (**witness**), "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.””

Note that humanity is seen as **adult and fully responsible** for their actions at this “Day of Judgement” as they will be on the last day. No good saying “I dunnit society’s to blame”

Punishment in sadness and not anger (God’s wrath is not our petulance) “The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain”

God’s **response of the flood – reversal of creation** to cleanse earth The breath that God had “breathed into man’s nostrils” at creation was removed. Primeval chaos returns as in Genesis 1:2 where “the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep”.

What can we say about God’s wrath today?

God **promises never again to flood the earth** in Ch 8 (really important - we can’t assert all natural catastrophes like the Tsunami are punishment for sin).

The nature of God’s **wrath and judgment remains – but now particularly after death** in the form of judgement Hebrews 9:27 “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment”

Teaching on wrath is mainly by Christ himself who will be the judge John 5:22 “the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son”

Judgment on response to Jesus John 3:18 “whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son”

What is threatened – eternal separation from God – a very miserable place as for the rich man who neglected the beggar Lazarus at his gate then dies in Luke 16 Father Abraham tells him “between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.” while the man himself states “I am in agony in this fire.”

This is as bad as it gets...we now see some light!

4 The blessing of faith

Faith in the text

What do we know **about Noah** – 6:9 “Noah was a **righteous** man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” He never speaks, just **obeys** what God wants “Noah did everything just as God commanded him” But **not “perfectly good”** – 9:21 he gets drunk and exposes himself inadvertently.

Key is faith in Hebrews 11.1 “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” 11.7 “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” Faith is shown by Noah in willingness to follow God’s commands in holy fear – probably suffering ridicule.

Faith today

Like Noah Christians are not by nature “good” as we have already said Ephesians 2 says like all humans we are “by nature objects of wrath.”

But we have faith in Jesus as we are urged in Hebrews 12:2 “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith”

To be like Noah, with active faith we need to develop sensitivity for listening to the Lord’s voice. Sometimes God will call us to do things we never dreamed of. We need to act as well as listen as James says “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” Noah didn’t even have the Bible to follow! This is our challenge. One inspiration for me is **Hudson Taylor, who in the 19th Century founded the inland mission to China** which is commemorated on the plaque up there. Joan is our present day representative of the CIM and its heritage. He prayed to God “to give me some work to do for Him as an outlet for love and gratitude ...then he was ready to hear the voice of his Lord saying, “Who will go for Me to China?” and to reply, “Here am I, send me.”” Same for Werner and Hennie in Kurdistan I’m sure.

What is God calling you to do in active faith?

5 The grace of God

Grace in the text

C. S. Lewis was asked: “What separates Christianity from all other religions?” C.S. Lewis said, “That’s easy. It’s grace.”

God by grace **instructs Noah** precisely how to build the ark. Even the dimensions “450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high”. And details “finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top”. The care of the master craftsman. Then God by grace **saves Noah** and his creatures from flood in the ark – and hence humanity as a whole.

God promises a “covenant” – an agreement to save Noah “Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you”

Grace today

Grace comes through **Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross – he took God’s wrath about sin upon himself despite his innocence** 1 Thess 10 talks of “Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.” He defeated Satan. He is the “Divine Ark” We are saved – not only from judgement but also a pointless life!

Not through our good deeds at all Ephesians 2:8-9 “it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast..” Jesus alone can change our hearts and lead us to repent of our sins.

Not everyone is saved. John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” There is still **an invisible**

flood – taking people to an unfulfilled life and risking eternal separation from God. Those with faith in Jesus, the Divine Ark, are saved – many are not.

Are we sufficiently grateful for what Jesus has done – do we take it too much for granted?

6 The call to tell others

Faith and grace come together in effective evangelism. 2 Peter 2:5 says besides building the Ark, **Noah was active in seeking to save people** as “a preacher of righteousness” He wanted to save them not just from drowning but their miserable way of life “nasty, brutish and short”. But tragically no-one listened.

Jesus as “the Son of Man **came to seek and to save what was lost** (Luke 19:10). As his followers, our call is to help others to faith – into the Divine Ark – give them the Gospel so they may choose to follow Jesus – reversing Adam’s rebellion against God. Like Noah, listen act and obey. For **we must pity those not knowing Jesus** – don’t want them to continue their “empty way of life” as Peter calls it, nor be like the people of the flood going unaware to their doom.

Inspiration - story of Pastor John Harper who went down with the Titanic “Harper (who had a life jacket) was seen swimming frantically to people in the water leading them to Jesus before the hypothermia became fatal....Of the 1528 people that went into the water that night, six were rescued by the lifeboats. One of them was a young man on the debris to whom Harper gave his life jacket to give him time to become a Christian. Four years later, at a survivors meeting, this young man stood up and in tears recounted how John Harper had led him to Christ. Mr. Harper had tried to swim back to help other people, yet because of the intense cold, had grown too weak to swim. His last words before going under in the icy waters were “Believe on the Name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”

7 Conclusion

Let me conclude. The Flood is a **sobering account of a holy God’s response to sin**. And when we realise that God is holy, the question is not: “How could a loving God destroy the world?” The question is not: “How could a loving God allow a person to go to Hell?” Those are the wrong questions. The right question is: “How can a holy God forgive us?”

Sin is still pervasive, but Jesus’ sacrifice has changed everything. He is our “Divine Ark”. When God’s holiness demands judgment, God’s love delivers grace. Romans 8:1 “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” But there is **still a “flood” of an unfulfilled life and judgement after death for those who do not believe**.

Believers have the **task of saving the lost** – as Jesus told us “go and make disciples of all nations” Like God with Noah, Jesus promises “surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – but we have work to do for him **for the sake of the lost**...it needn’t be going to China, although that would be good...it’s to ask your friends on the next Alpha or to the new second service. Help them to choose saving faith in Jesus, the Divine Ark. What they eventually choose is not our responsibility but just ask. A good thing to remember the point is **it’s not about us and our comfort; it’s about him and about them**.

Or are any of you **standing on the outside looking in?** Today, why not get on the ark and be assured that your life and your eternity will be secure, safe, and separated in the Divine Ark, the Lord Jesus Christ. God is calling out today to all who will hear His voice - “Come into the ark!” Will you answer by “entering in today?”

As we come to the final songs, I’d like the ministry team to come forward. Those who may want prayer - those who wish to affirm their faith, maybe for the first time openly,- for all those feeling inspired to save the lost, including those who would love to have the freedom to

Speak freely – maybe like me due to fear of rejection, or because of low self esteem.- and those who want to pray for a loved one to be saved.