

JANUARY 3

Genesis 6, 7, 8, 9

Today you encountered the third of the four major events that dominate the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis: The Flood.

There is a lot of debate about the identity of the 'sons of God' who angered the Lord so much by cohabiting with the daughters of men. Check out Tim Perry's video blogs on tough questions through the Bible to see some good insights on this passage.

This "straw that broke the camel's back" appears from the Genesis account to be the final aggravation that brought down the wrath of God upon a totally degenerate society. Three schools of thought exist as to the identity of those 'sons of God'. The first sees this name as a way of identifying the men who were in the Godly line of Seth - the ones who in Seth's day "*began to call upon the name of the Lord.*" When the last of the godly descendants of Adam married and mated with the ungodly descendants of Cain, all vestiges, according to this view of godliness, were finally lost and the world became fit only for judgment.

The other more spectacular theory identifies the 'sons of God' as angels fallen from heaven with Satan, their leader, whose unnatural lusts for human women produced a race of half-men, half-giants. The exact meaning of the Hebrew word 'nephalim' that occurs in this passage is not known. Some have thought these to be giants. In order to prevent these half human-half demonic creatures from propagating, God took the strong action of destroying the human race, all except for Noah and his sons.

The third view is that the 'Sons of God' were simply the princes and aristocracy intermarrying with common folk. While this view is certainly more plausible, it does not give any insight into the mysterious propagation of the nephalim.

But the main part of this passage involves the third important event of Genesis 1-11, the Flood.

There are three extremely important themes that are developed in The Flood account which demand our notice. The first is the theme of judgment. The simple truth is that God does judge sin! His patience and His longsuffering nature always give men ample time to repent. Some scholars think that the name of Methuselah, which according to some scholars means 'when he is gone, it will come' actually prophecies the frustration of God with the increasing sinfulness of people. What will come? - The flood, that is - the destruction - the judgment. Also, Methuselah lived 969 years - longer than any other human being before or since - more evidence of God's patience - and, oh yes, Methuselah died in the year that the flood began. Note even the extraordinary length of time that would have been necessary for Noah and his sons to build an ark, the dimensions of which were about 450' long, 75' wide, 45' high (that my friends is a big boat!) The length of time that it

would have taken to build it provided even more time for repentance. Just as a matter of comparison, the Mayflower was about 90' long. The ark, about 5 times larger, was the size of the first ship to lay trans-Atlantic cable from the United States to Europe.

But finally the day came when God, not Noah, shut the door and the time for repentance was passed. In the New Testament, in II Peter 3, Peter tells us that God is "longsuffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance", and Paul reminds us in Romans that sinful people consistently misread that longsuffering patience and they abuse it, not understanding that it is always meant to lead us to repentance. Even God's patience has a limit though, and one day, He will finally judge all sin. The flood reminds of that. (*Other references in the NT include: Rom. 2:4; Eccl 8:11; 2 Pet 3:5-9; Mat 24:36-38 "as it will be at the end of time."*)

The second theme that is wonderfully introduced in this passage is introduced with a very simple statement. Noah found favor or grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a man who feared God enough to obey Him - enough to believe and act upon a command to build a boat, a boat big enough to contain more animals than Noah even knew existed, in preparation for a rainstorm, the likes of which the world would never again see, even though it had never rained before. But friend, make no mistake, God's selection of Noah was not based upon the merit of the man. Even Noah was a sinner and as such he deserved to die, God's choice of Noah was solidly founded upon Grace. God's grace, through Noah's faith, is what saved him, exactly in the same way that God's grace meets our faith in the shed blood of Christ and saves us today. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament there is only one way of salvation - by grace through faith, just like Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says. (*"For it is by grace that 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."*)

Third theme - Being the recipient of grace, however, always brings with it the obligation of obedience, and what a wonderful example Noah is for us of faith in action, by obeying the word of God, under the most hostile circumstances that could ever be. Hebrews 11:7 says that "*this faith made him the heir of all to whom righteousness comes by faith.*" I Peter 1 reminds us that just like Noah, we have been chosen by grace unto obedience.

Physical evidence for a universal flood is not compelling enough to convince all historians that this really happened. Sociologists, however, continue to be amazed that nearly every single known culture - no matter how isolated - carries in its oral or written traditions, a flood story. Indiana Jones-type adventurers continue to scour Mt. Ararat for the actual remains of the Ark itself, and from time to time, someone claims to have seen it, touched it, or even returned with a genuine piece of gopher wood. For now, I am content simply to believe in faith that Noah was a real man, that God sent a real flood, and to ponder the great themes of judgment and grace and faith-filled obedience.

Before we look at that account, however, we need to take special note of the covenant that God made with Noah after the flood. This is a critically important concept in the Bible and the word appears for the first time in Scripture in the story of Noah and the flood event of chapter 6. Then it occurs again here in chapter 9. The idea is so important that Moses uses the word seven times in just nine verses. Some theologians talk about a 'covenant of works' that God made with Adam, and they can certainly point to some significant truths that are clearly in the Biblical account. But here with Noah, there is an explicit covenant - a binding treaty between two parties in which promises are made, stipulations are laid down, obligations are spelled out, and a ceremonial sacrifice is made to actually "cut" the covenant. (The Hebrew word for covenant "berith" is derived from the word, which means 'to cut'.)

You will want to add this to a special page in your notebook keeping track of the Covenants of Scripture. The covenant with Noah contains an unconditional promise on the part of God to never again destroy mankind by sending a flood. This, God says, is an everlasting covenant - a covenant He makes with every living creature and its sign is the rainbow - possibly something that had never been seen before the time of Noah and his family when they exited from the Ark.

Well that is plenty for today. This is Mark Ashton reminding you that God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Peace be with you.