

Noah and the Flood

I. INTRODUCTION

Whenever genealogies appear in Scripture, as they did for the first time in last week’s talk, they are meant to signify the passing of time and the unfolding of human history.

The story of man, begun in the first chapters of Genesis, is now going to proceed in a way that will spread out in many directions. What was it like when the family of man began to fill the earth?

We know from the account of Cain and Abel that the human story is going to be marked by violence and tragedy, as well as by faith and hope. Those two men were examples of how differently the descendants of Adam and Eve will respond to God.

Abel loved God; Cain loved himself. Cain murdered his brother, which was the fruition of his rebellion against God. His hard, unyielding heart, revealed first in his inadequate offering to God, turned eventually against his brother.

His departure from the presence of the Lord meant that his descendants would live and develop away from the light of the truth and the covenant God had made with Adam and Eve. They would be characterized by arrogance and violence.

II. ADAM’S DESCENDANTS: FROM SETH TO NOAH

A. Genealogies

Chapter 5 of Genesis lists the names of famous ancestors and traditions about the descendants of Adam. The primary purpose of the genealogies is to bridge the genealogical gap between Adam and Abraham [see also Gen11:10-26].

Adam’s line is traced through Seth, but several names in the series are the same as, or similar to, certain names in Cain’s line [Gen 4:17ff]. So it can be confusing!

There is no mention of Cain, because the text deals only with the descendants of Seth [Sethites], from whom will eventually come the chosen people.

Another purpose of the genealogies is to show that mankind is increasing in numbers in line with God’s commandment recorded in Genesis 1:28: *"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it . . ."*

B. Ages of the Patriarchs

The ages given for the patriarchs are symbolic, not exact.

We can see that as time goes on the ages of the people decrease the further they get from the beginning of human life, that is, the further they get from God.

- There is a process of degeneration at work due to the presence of evil.

Of the patriarchs mentioned in the genealogy of Seth, one stands out among the others. **Enoch** is different from the other patriarchs in three ways:

1. He lives for only 365 years;
2. We are told *“he walked with God,”* that is, he was particularly holy; and, finally,
3. He did not die, because God *“took him”* to himself.

III. ENOCH

From the last chapter, we saw that **Lamech** [the Cainite] was the seventh in line from Adam through Cain (see Gen. 4:19-24). In this chapter, see that the seventh in line from Adam through Seth is a man named **Enoch** (Gen 5: 18-24).

Note: In 5:24-31 that there is also a Lamech in the line of Seth (which can be confusing).

Read: Genesis 5:18-24

[18] When Jared had lived a hundred and sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch.

[19] Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

[20] Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.

[21] When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah.

[22] Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters.

[23] Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

[24] Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Enoch, the seventh in line from Adam through Seth, is of special, but mysterious significance. He lived 365 years, corresponding perfectly to the number of days in

the solar calendar. *“He walked with God,”* signifying holiness and intimacy with God. Enoch is also mentioned in the New Testament [read also Jude 14-15 and Heb. 11:5-6]. He did not die *“for God took him.”*

What is the difference between the two men, Lamech and Enoch? What do you think is the significance of that difference?

Enoch is the first man described as a "prophet" in Scripture. Hebrews tells us that he prophesied judgment on ungodliness. We learn from Old and New Testaments that Enoch did not see death. He was such a friend of God’s that he was "taken up."

It is amazing to see the difference between Enoch and Lamech. By it we are meant to comprehend that although sin entered the human race through Adam and Eve, bringing with it great spiritual and physical consequences, men are still able to respond to God’s grace.

By no means has God given up on all humanity!

Enoch was distinguished in his family by God’s remarkable favour upon him. He represents the power that acknowledging God in family life can have on family members, as they pass on their tradition from generation to generation.

Enoch is the first biblical example of what we call a "saint"- a human being in whom God does an extraordinary work of His grace. He is also the first human to be assumed into heaven. Elijah was another prophet to be taken that way (2 Kings 2:11). He is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus [Luke 3:37].

This reference to Enoch, so early in the Scripture, begins the long and wonderful line of humans, many of whom were flawed, who walked in the friendship of God.

The final scene from Genesis 5, in which **Lamech** [the Sethite] expresses hope for his son, **Noah**, prints indelibly in our minds this picture of the very beginnings of the community of faith.

Even among men who acknowledge God, calling upon His Name and responding to His grace, sometimes heroically, there is still the clear understanding that,

- deliverance from God’s curse is necessary, and
- That things are not as they should be, either in the earth or in the heart of man.

They are waiting patiently for God to act within human history, accomplishing His purposes through human beings.

These chapters perfectly set the stage for the rest of the story of redemption. What we see in outline form here will grow in detail and drama as we wait to see what God has planned for the creation He loves.

IV. BIRTH OF NOAH

Read: Genesis 5:28-32

[28] When Lamech had lived a hundred and eighty-two years, he became the father of a son,

[29] And called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground which the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands."

[30] Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters.

[31] Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died.

[32] After Noah was five hundred years old, Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Noah – a name that means “rest” – was the son of **Lamech** [the Sethite]. The tradition of the Church has often regarded Noah as a figure of Christ – this is an example of typology – see the reasoning below.

The words spoken of Noah, *"Out of the ground which the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands"* would find their true and complete fulfillment in Our Saviour. [See Gal 3:13 and Mt 11:28-29]

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us -- for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree" [Gal 3:13]

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls [Mat 11:28-29]

Jesus is the one who truly has given rest to men and has freed the earth from the curse with which the Lord cursed it.

The Spread of Wickedness

From the very beginning, evil and sin spread side by side with the growth of mankind.

In Genesis Chapter 6, we will watch the further development of man's history, formed out of the two lines of descendants from Cain and Seth.

- How will the violence and pride of Cain's line co-exist with the righteousness of Seth's line?
- Why did God send such a devastating flood upon the earth?
- God has shown Himself to be remarkably patient and unconditionally loving to His human creatures. Will this continue?

We spent a lot of time on the first three chapters of Genesis because of their importance. Now we will begin to pick up the pace. This session will cover three chapters of Genesis, although only chapter six is reprinted here.

Please read Genesis 7 and 8 in your own Bible. Read the text all the way through at least once.

I. SONS OF GOD AND DAUGHTERS OF MEN

Read: Genesis 6: 1-4

[1] When men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them,

[2] the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose.

[3] Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."

[4] The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.

A. Sons of God . . .

Who are these “sons of God . . . and daughters of men” and the Nephilim who intermarry?

The first four verses of Genesis 6 are difficult to interpret conclusively.

There are conflicting explanations, but we will follow the explanation given by St. Augustine and some other Church Fathers e.g., St. John Chrysostom, St Cyril of Alexandria and others.

We know that there were at least two lines of human development from Adam and Eve, one through Seth and one through Cain.

If Seth's descendants were those who called on the name of the Lord, and Cain's were those who lived independently of God, then it is possible that "the sons of God" were male Sethites and the "daughters of men" were female Cainites.

B. Problems of Intermarriage

It appears that intermarriage between the two human communities led to a weakening of goodness on earth.

Good men [Sethites] indiscriminately took as wives the worldly, unbelieving women descended from Cain.

Instead of the faith of the one group lifting up the other, wickedness and evil prevailed. Throughout Scripture there are sober warnings about marriage between people of faith and people of no faith, or those with false religion.

In the history of Israel, one of the greatest dangers the nation faced was the threat presented when Israelites married idolatrous women. Likewise in the New Testament, St. Paul speaks specifically against marriage between a believer and an unbeliever (see 2 Cor. 6:14-16).

Because human nature is frail and prone to sin, a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever introduces the possibility of a weakened commitment to keeping God's covenant.

If the unbeliever is the wife, as it seems to be the case here in Genesis, the danger is even greater, since she is the one who will nurture children in that family. The Catholic Church continues to guide Christians away from mixed marriages (see CCC 1633-34). In the case of early human civilization, it is possible that mixed marriages led to a widespread collapse of righteousness on the earth.

C. Evil Increases

Just as God could look at all His works in the beginning and see that they were "very good," He could look at what man, in his work on earth, had done and see that it was "corrupt." Man's rebellion against God eventually results in violence

against other men and perhaps against the living creatures who were created to help man.

Man's abuse of his freedom grieves God to the heart. It is far removed from his original destiny. Because the evil overcomes the good among men, it must be stopped. God is passing judgment on His wayward sons.

D. Human Lifespan Limited

Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years."

In this passage we are told that God put a limit on man’s lifespan as a punishment for sin.

E. The Nephilim

The Nephilim is an ancient people of colossal height [giants] and fame. They are said to have walked the earth before and after the flood, and their race was propagated by the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men.

Another tradition with roots in both Jewish and Christian antiquity holds that the “sons of God” were fallen angels seduced by the beauty of earthly women.

II. THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN

Read: Genesis 6:5-8

[5] The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[6] And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

[7] So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

The severity of these words shows just how corrupt mankind had become. There is also a lesson here about the absolute sovereignty of God, who has power to wipe mankind off the face of the earth.

God’s original plan when he created man seems to have been a failure - hence his decision [the description of God is anthropomorphic and his decision is couched in very human terms] to destroy what he has made and to start over.

But this is not going to happen; mankind will be saved through the fidelity of one man Noah; and the earth will be populated again after the flood.

For animals to be included in the cleansing of the earth suggests the inseparable relationship between man and the rest of creation. The dominion God had given him has real meaning - when man goes down, so does all the rest of the earth.

This helps us to see clearly how all the elements of creation led up to the creation of man. He was not just one player among many. Without man, the rest has no meaning.

A. Noah: A Righteous Man

[8] But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD

[9] These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God.

[10] And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Noah found favour in God's eyes. He was a righteous man.

Think for a moment what a statement like this represents about the man, Noah. If human society had become so corrupted by wickedness that God wanted to blot man out, what must it have been like for Noah to live righteously in their midst? Read also Heb. 11:7.

“By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household . . .”

It is never easy for a man to live righteously when everyone around him is wicked. It requires self-discipline, courage, and faith.

In Hebrews, Noah is described as one who was warned about events "yet unseen." He built a huge ark in the middle of dry ground. What kind of confidence did he have in the unseen realities? It was profound.

He did not live his life according to what he could see. He exhibited a detachment from the world around him, relying only on God's commands. Quite possibly he had to face ridicule or abuse from people who lived only according to the imaginations of their own hearts.

This is heroic virtue. Truly he was God's friend.

III. THE WORLD SAVED THROUGH NOAH

Gen 6: 11-12 reveals how completely evil had covered the earth. Yet God found one righteous man and planned to save the world, humans and animals, through him.

What does this suggest about God's knowledge of men as distinct individuals (see Matt. 10:29-31)?

One of the truths about God hardest to grasp is that the One who set the stars in the skies, Who put limits on the seas, and Who keeps the entire universe working also knows how many hairs are on our heads. The fact that we are not lost in the cosmos is a staggering reality.

Noah's quiet faithfulness in the midst of great evil was not overlooked. God is aware of each human life. No moment is lost.

Read: Genesis 6:11-22

[11] Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

[12] And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

[13] 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.

[14] Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.

[15] This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

[16] Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and set the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.

[17] For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die.

[18] 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.

[19] 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.

[20] 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 in to you, to keep them alive.

[21] Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them."

[22] Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

B. The Ark of Salvation

The Fathers of the Early Church saw the ark as a figure of the Church. Reading the story of the ark in the light of the New Testament, St. Augustine has this to say:

"God ordered Noah to build an ark in which he and his family would escape from the devastation of the flood. Undoubtedly the ark is a symbol of the City of God on pilgrimage in this world; that is, a symbol of the Church which was saved by the wood on which there hung the Mediator between God and men - Christ Jesus, Himself a man.

Even the measurements of length, height, and breadth of the ark are a symbol of the human body in which He came...

The door open in the side of the ark surely symbolizes the open wound made by the lance in the side of the Crucified – the door by which those who come to him enter in the sense that believers enter the Church by means of the sacraments which issued from that wound." (St. Augustine, De civitate Dei, 15, 26)

- The ark that Noah was to build was going to be the means of salvation for Noah, his family, and the animals taken into it.
- It was going to be roomy and well-stocked with food.
- The door to the ark would be in its side.
- God would make a covenant with everything inside of it.
- It was going to ride through water to safety.

The Flood

I. INTRODUCTION

Read: Genesis Chapter 7

Notice in the first five verses of this chapter the prominent use of the number seven – it is used at least three times. What meaning should that number have in this context?

The number seven should remind us of the hallowing of the seventh day of the first creation, which became a sign of the covenant God made with all creation.

We are to comprehend that God is undertaking a re-creation of the earth and even of man himself, in a sense. He wants to renew the covenant.

God’s unrelenting initiative in seeking to restore man to his original destiny is unequivocal proof of His love for us. The enormity of God’s persistent love should rise up above all the details of man’s early history as the sun rises in the morning sky.

We dare not interpret any of it apart from the illumination of that bright light. Behind, above, beneath, before, and throughout everything is the glorious love of God for mere mortals. “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy Name in all the earth!” (Ps. 8:9)

A. The Waters Cover the earth

[10] And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth . . . on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

God’s intention in sending the Flood is to blot out every living thing except Noah, his family, and the animals in the ark (vss. 4, 21-23). Think about what you have seen in God’s reaction to sin thus far in Genesis. He did not blot out Adam and Eve; He did not blot Cain out. But now, He is blotting out almost all living things. What do you think is the significance of this?

B. Sin Cannot Go Unchecked Forever

As God continues to reveal Himself within man’s history, He shows that although He is patient with sinners, ready to forgive, and tender in His care of them, a time does arrive when, because He is just, He does execute judgment.

Rebellion, wickedness, and evil cannot continue unchecked. This is a truth that will appear again and again through Scripture. The history of Israel is full of episodes of judgment upon sin, after a period of forbearance. Jesus spoke often of “the day of the Lord,” when God calls everyone to account and acts as the just Judge.

The Flood is Scripture’s first warning that man should never mistake God’s patience and mercy as grounds for presumption. If the Lord is slow to punish sin, it isn’t because He winks at it. As St. Peter says,

“First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation.’ They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:3-7)

C. God Is Re-creating the Earth

Notice that the first water mentioned in the Flood comes not from rain but from fountains bursting up from the ground (vs. 11). This water is combined with water from “the windows of heaven” to flood the earth and destroy every living thing [Read: Gen. 1:6-8].

What do you suppose is the significance of this reversal back to waters not being separated by earth?

10. This joining together of the two “waters” is yet another sign that God is re-creating the world to rid it of evil. It is a powerful reminder to men that nature, which is easily taken for granted, doesn’t exist and function on its own but only by the power and will of God. If we count on the sun coming up every day and the waters of the oceans remaining where they are, we must understand that God could return the ordered universe to chaos in the twinkling of an eye.

Summary

1. Over time, and possibly as a result of intermarriage between godly men and ungodly women, great wickedness spread throughout the human community on earth. There was unchecked violence and evil everywhere.
2. God decided to judge this wickedness by sending a great flood to blot out all living things. There was, however, one man who still lived the way God intended men to live-Noah. He found favour in God’s sight.
3. The righteous man, Noah, was to build an ark to preserve some life – that of his family and of the animals God instructed him to carry into it. He obeyed and prepared for the deluge.
4. The earth returned to a time of watery chaos as a result of God’s judgment. Because of language evocative of the first creation story, we recognized in this account that God was re-creating the earth and man’s life in order to cleanse it from the great evil that pervaded it.
5. Noah is a man who was unaffected by the great wickedness around him. He remained faithful to the ways of God. We recognize this as a difficult thing to do, because our human nature, even after baptism, still leans in the direction of sin.

Take the time to examine yourself to see if you are being influenced for bad instead of for good by the people around you. Perhaps you are not being dragged into serious sin, but do others make it easier for you to gossip, to complain, to be dishonest, to be too attached to worldly possessions, to neglect your spiritual life, etc.?

If so, make a plan to strengthen yourself. That should include confession, resolve, self-discipline, and prayer. Ask Noah to pray for you to live as a bright light in your world.

Questions

1. What two things can you tell about Enoch? Gen 5:24, Heb11:5
2. Name Noah’s father and his sons.

3. What warning does God give us in Proverbs 11:21

*“Be assured, an evil man will not go unpunished,
but those who are righteous will be delivered.”*

4. With whom did God share his plan [Gen 6:13] and why? [Gen6:8];

5. What does the ark prefigure [See 1 Peter 3; 21-22]?

“. . . . In the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, . . . a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Preparation for Week #8

Read:

1. Genesis Chapters 8 -10 - RSV Catholic Edition;
2. ***Come and see Catholic Bible Study – Genesis 8-10***
3. The Navarre Bible: Genesis – Chapters 8-10