

GOD'S JUDGMENT AND SALVATION

Genesis 6-7

Lesson 5a

Key Verse: 6:9

"This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God."

As world population increased, sin grew and spread. In the times of Noah corruption and violence reached a climax and the righteous God revealed his wrath in a mighty act of judgment. He destroyed the earth with a flood. He also revealed his love and mercy by saving one man of faith. Because of one man's faith, the human race was preserved. The times of Noah and our times are not so different. Jesus compared his times to the times of Noah in Luke 17:26,27: People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. In this lesson we want to think about how sin spreads, about the importance of one man of faith and the nature of his faith, and about God who judges and saves.

1. The spread of sin (6:1-7)

Adam's disobedience of God's command in chapter 3 erupted in murder in chapter 4. Cain killed his brother Abel. The disease of sin spread like cancer. The godless culture which sprang from Cain's descendants was a technologically advanced culture, but it was morally corrupt. We can see the one thin line of spiritual life in the words at the end of chapter 4, "At that time, men began to call on the name of the Lord." These were the men of Seth's line. Among them was Enoch, who walked with God. And there was Noah. But these men were like small candles burning in a very black night. As people increased on the earth, sin increased and spread.

Chapter 6:1,2 say, "When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful and they married any of them they chose." The writer begins the story of the corruption of the world by talking about marriage. Marriage was instituted by God in the Garden before the Fall. God himself created the high and holy union between man and woman and established the family. He saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and he created the family for man's happiness. But this was not all. He created the family for mission, to love and obey him and do his work in the world. But the marriages described in 6:1-5 were godless. We cannot be positive about who the sons of God and the daughters of men in verse 2 are, but in the context of the Genesis story, it seems reasonable to say that they are the men of Seth's line who bore Adam's and God's image and women who were the godless descendants of Cain. Verse 2 says, "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose." One thing is clear: corruption began when men of God began to leave God out of marriage. Instead of marrying women who pleased God, they married women who pleased themselves. Physical appearance, sexual attraction, romantic love seem to have been their primary criteria in choosing marriage partners. The results of these marriages, from a human point of view, seemed to be good. According to verse 4, the children born of these marriages were strong and handsome and beautiful. The Nephilim (giants) were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to

the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

But verse 3 tells us that God was not pleased by these marriages. Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal (The NAS and the RSV say, flesh); his days will be a hundred and twenty years.' (The 120 years may refer to the time left before the flood, or it may refer to a general shortening of the life span of each man. If the latter, it happened gradually, and did not become really evident until after the time of Abraham.) Although we don't know the exact meaning of this verse, it is clear that God was not happy that man was following his flesh desires rather than following God's Spirit. People were living a first dimensional life--living life on the physical level, ignoring the spiritual side of life completely. Eating and drinking, and marrying are not wrong--they are all joyful human activities; but if people only think about their flesh lives and leave God out, this displeases God very much. It is practical atheism.

The Nephilim were indeed beautiful people, but God sees more than the outward appearance. He sees men's hearts. So verse 5 continues, "The Lord 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 cancer of sin grows first in the heart. It is the heart that is corrupt. Jeremiah said that the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (17:9). Jesus also said, "What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'." (Mk 7:20-23) So God was grieved with what he saw, and his heart was filled with pain. He was sorry that he had created man. God was so hurt. He loved the people he had created, but his love was rejected. The way they were going was the way of destruction.

The cancer of sin had spread so much that radical surgery was needed. The small beginning of disobedience in a seemingly unimportant matter had grown until all mankind was in danger of destruction. Verse 11 says, "Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence." The small sins that had been hidden in the heart erupted in action. Corruption and violence filled the earth. Sin is like this. It starts in the heart; it grows with a small act of disobedience, and continues to grow until a person becomes a slave of sin, and it destroys him like cancer. So verse 6 says, "God was grieved that he had made man on the earth, so he decided to wipe mankind, whom he had created, from the face of the earth. It was his right as Creator. He gave life; he could take it away. But God's grief was comforted by one man, Noah. Noah's name means comfort. He was a comfort to his own father, and he was a comfort to God. Verse 9a says, "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." This means that God extended his grace to Noah.

2. God's covenant with Noah (8-22)

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time. (6:9b) In Chapter 7, God said, "I have found you righteous in this generation." Noah was righteous, not because he was sinless. He was righteous because he believed in God. **First**, he walked with God. this means that he did not just live life on a physical plane (Although he ate and drank and married and had three sons). He had a spiritual life. He spent time with God. **Second**, his righteousness was the righteousness that comes from faith. When God

told him that he would destroy the earth, Noah believed God. And his faith was expressed in obedience to God's word. God trained Noah in faith. He told him to make an ark; then, he told him exactly how to build it; and "Noah did everything just as God had commanded him."(22)

Obedience to God's word was the key to Noah's faith (7:5,9,16). Many people of his time must have thought that Noah was a fool. They must have teased and persecuted him for building such big boat so far away from the ocean. He must have been lonely sometimes. But he did not yield to peer pressure or to his own logic. Rather, his faith grew as he accepted God's training and obeyed his word in great detail. He had a sense of God's mission and tried to warn the people of his time, for Peter calls him a preacher of righteousness (2Pet 2:5). His own family, the people who knew him best, respected him and obeyed him and could be saved with him.

God made a covenant with Noah. This was God's favor. It was a covenant which became God's means of grace not only to Noah and his family, but to all life on the earth. He told Noah to enter the ark, with his family (8 persons) and pairs of all the animals on earth, domestic and wild. Noah, by his obedience, accepted God's gracious covenant. He continued to obey God's word: He stored food in the ark; he called the animals and they came to him, and they entered the ark of salvation with Noah and his family.

God's covenant with Noah was established when he built the ark and entered it. God promised to save him and his family and God did. God's covenant with us is established in Jesus Christ. When I repent of my sin and accept God's forgiveness through Jesus' blood, I am set free from sin and guilt and saved from the destruction of the final judgment.

Because of the faith of one man, Noah, God made a life-line to save the human race and the animal kingdom. In the midst of the destruction, one man's life was preserved and because of him, life did not perish from the earth. God still uses men of faith to bring his redemption and salvation to the world.

May the Lord help us to overcome the tyranny of the times--the materialism that seems to offer an easier, more comfortable life; the worldly pleasures that seem to promise happiness; the small invitations to find excitement in travel or in doing all kinds of activities that promise freedom from boredom and offer temporary relief from meaninglessness. May he raise up a few men who have the faith of Noah, men through whom he can bring his salvation to the world.

3. Judgment and salvation (7:1-24)

This was God's way of salvation. There was no other way. God saved Noah and his family and animal life on the earth by his grace alone. He blessed Noah's obedience. Noah obeyed God; the animals obeyed Noah, and life on the earth was spared. God's one way of salvation in our time is through faith in Jesus.

God is a God of judgment. The flood looks forward to the final judgment. God will surely judge all men. He will judge the earth. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2Co 5:17) Both the Old and New Testaments speak of the "Day of the Lord", the day when the Lord will execute his judgment

on the earth. (2Pet 3:8-13)

God's word to us is also very clear. The world and the things of the world will perish. Only the spiritual treasures in heaven will never fade, spoil or perish. Only what is done for God will last. God calls us to live by faith, in obedience to his word. To do so is like building an ark in the backyard, while everyone else is watching TV or having "fun." Many people live in fear of a nuclear holocaust or of an AIDS epidemic. But God's people must live by faith, knowing that the world is in God's hands. When the time comes for the final judgment, it will come. It will not be an accident. Those who belong to God, who have entered into covenant with him will be saved and will have eternal life.

But God is also a God of salvation. He does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. So he continually extends his hand to a sinful and rebellious people. (2Pe 3:9; Ezk 18:32) He is ready to save anyone who takes his hand in faith.