

Genesis 6:9-9:17

I Noah a Guy

Chances are, we are familiar with the story of Noah and his infamous ark. That familiarity, I have found, limits our understanding of the story. Its popularity, however, is not accidental. What happens in the days of Noah are essential to understanding all of Scripture.

First, we must explore **The Man** (Genesis 6:9-12). The open eight verses portray a dire situation. The world is saturated (pun intended) by Cosmic Evil in the form of the Nephilim (Genesis 6:1-3), Corporate Evil in the form of the “men of renown,” (Genesis 6:4), and Cognitive Evil in the form of man’s thoughts and intentions (Genesis 6:5-8). Such wickedness required God to respond with judgment and wrath.

In contrast to the rest of the world, we are told that Noah is righteous, blameless, and in communion with God. This language is often associated with the wise and the righteous (see, for example, Proverbs 11:5, 13:6). Interestingly, the narrator seems to want us to connect Noah to a new type of Adam. They both “walked” with God, are recipients of God’s promises, are caretakers of animals, fathered three sons, worked the soil, sinned through the fruit of the tree, and fathered a wicked son who was cursed.

Interestingly, the earth is described as being “filled” (Genesis 6:11) with depravity. This word was used to describe the mandate of Adam to “be fruitful” and to “fill” the earth with image bearers (see Genesis 1:28). The original purpose was to fill the earth with those who worship and fear the Lord and, thereby, expand the borders of Eden. Now, however, the world was full of rebels.

This leads to **The Plan** (Genesis 6:13-22). The Lord commands Noah to build an ark due to his choice to judge the earth and its inhabitants through water. Interestingly, the word “ark” is used only one other time outside of this narrative and that is the story of Moses being placed in a basket. Both “arks” are used to save the occupants from destruction by water.

Then comes **The Flood** (Genesis 7:1-8:12). The flooding of the earth is described as coming from above (rain from the sky) and below (the opening of the earth’s fountains). This is, in essence, a reversion of the second day of creation. After the waters filled the earth, “God remembered,” his covenant with Noah and concluded his judgment. The ark settled upon the mountain range of Ararat, a process which took an additional 40 days. Noah first sent out a raven to explore the earth and then sent out a dove. These two birds are clearly intended to be contrasted. Ravens are black while doves are white. Ravens find death while doves find life.

This leads to **The Sacrifice** (Gen. 8:13-22). After living on the ark for about a year, Noah and his family exit offering a sacrifice to God. “Altar” is first found here in the Bible (Gen. 8:20).

So, what is **The Point**? First, consider the theme of NEW CREATION. The story of the Flood is a story of de-creation and re-creation. By flooding the earth, the Lord undoes everything he had created. It is cleansed. As the water recedes, the story of creation is repeated. Notice that “God saw” before both creation and the flood (cf. Genesis 1:31, 6:5). Just as the tree of good and evil was eaten in the garden, the writer suggests people are still eating of its evil fruit before the flood (Genesis 6:5). Most significant is the work of the Spirit/wind (cf. Genesis 1:2, 8:1).

The real connection to creation is the flood itself. Once the water fills the earth, things are back to where they were in Genesis 1:2. What follows is a repeat of the creation story. Light protrudes through the rain clouds and pulls the rain. That is day one. The waters are separated as the water recedes. That is the second day. Land protrudes from the water. That is day 4. This is the pattern until Noah (whose name means “rest”) exits the ark along with the animal kingdom where he plants a garden (or vineyard) and is found naked and not ashamed. More than that, Noah is told to be fruitful and multiple (cf. Gen. 1:28, 9:1). Clearly, then, Noah is a new Adam who is deceived by fruit leading to division among his three sons. By the end of Noah’s story, we are back to where we started.

This is why the second theme is important: JESUS IS THE TRUE AND BETTER NOAH. Notice that in both the Adamic and Noahic story, atonement lies at the center (see Genesis 3:21, 8:20). With Noah, God judges the nations while saving the innocent. At the cross, God saves the nations while judging the innocent. Jesus is a better Adam. He is a better Noah. Is it any accident that the picture we have of Jesus in heaven involves a rainbow (see Revelation 4:3)?

This leads to the third theme: BAPTISM. Water plays a prominent role throughout Scripture. It has both the power of destruction and cleansing. In creation, the earth is saturated with water until the Lord creates land. In the Flood, the Lord judges the wicked and cleanses the land. Moses himself experienced the dangerous waters. By being placed in an “ark” (same word as Noah’s ark), Moses was protected (like Noah) from the dangerous waters. For Moses, the Nile River which the basket protects him from had become a river of blood when Pharaoh drowned the Hebrew children. The Israelites experience the same in the Red Sea. Jesus walked through the same waters in his baptism. In Mark 1:9-11, Noahic hyperlinks are made when “the Spirit like a dove” descended upon Christ.

We too pass through the waters. Water has both the power of destruction and cleansing. Consider the Apostle Peter who connects Baptism to Noah (see 1 Peter 3:18-21) as well as Paul who connects it to Moses (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-2). In baptism, we pass through the waters of judgment cleansed of our sins. We share with Noah, Moses, Israel, and Jesus this divine story of grace. Paul writes, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4)

Without a doubt, my favorite story of baptism regards a wealthy and powerful sinner who came to Christ. The entire congregation joined the pastor and the new convert at the river. The pastor noticed the man still had his wallet in his pocket. “Sir, do you want to take out your wallet?” asked the pastor. “No,” he answered, “it needs to be washed again.” “Sir, are you ready to have all your sins washed away?” asked the pastor. The man shook his head and said, “I pity the fish downstream!”