

## The rain came down!

The following text is Jonathan Green's speaking notes from the gathering held at The Sanctuary Westminster on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007

### Introduction

This evening we are continuing our ongoing series called 'The Story we Find Ourselves In' as we unpack what is often referred to as 'Salvation History'... We spent a good amount of time in Act 1 where we thought about the 'act of creation' and some of the themes we saw emerging which speak to us powerfully in today's world. We saw that creation is 'ongoing'. We then moved on to explore Act 2 of the drama of scripture, which could be titled 'crisis'. For a crisis occurred in the Garden of Eden - an act of independence and disobedience. Today, we still feel the powerful affects of that crisis countless generations later. And in the same way in which creation is ongoing, so too is the 'crisis', it too is ongoing and we feel the affects powerfully. And so this evening we come to the story of Noah and God's judgment on the earth...

Genesis 5 summarizes the family line from Adam and Eve through to Noah. Many years have passed and a lot has happened, the details we know nothing of except to say that these guys lived for a long time and the corruption of humanity had reached an all time high.

We asked the question last time we met: if you created something that went wrong would you try and fix it? Or would you scrap it and start again? Well, that is the question that these 3 chapters in Genesis deal with.

### The Situation

Let's think about the situation... Genesis 6:1-8 tells of a perplexing story of how evil reaches a climax among humankind. Genesis 6:5 says that 'the LORD saw great wickedness in the earth' – every person we are told was 'consumed by wickedness!'

This is bad news! It is the complete opposite situation to the one that God had hoped for. Where humanity was made for good, they had become evil - wicked. So the question is: Fix it or wipe it out?

### And the answer is...

God says in verse 7, I am going to wipe out humankind! For I am grieved that I made them...

This is pretty amazing stuff... has anyone seen the film "War of the Worlds?" Where powerful aliens start destroying humankind... mass devastation... well that is what is going on here, but its not with lasers, God is going to flood the whole world so that every breathing creature will be destroyed!

Well, we have got our answer to our question! The creator is going to scrap it and start again...

### But

There is a glimmer of hope. We read in verse 8: **But** Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

### The story of Noah...

Noah means 'rest'. In Noah, God would bring rest for humankind, but only after a great judgment on all that was wicked.

In verse 9 we are told that Noah walked with God and *stood out* among the wicked people of the earth. He was *blameless*. Noah stood out among a world gone bad! God says in 7:1 – I have found you righteous in this generation.

God's judgment was severe, in a sense it had to be. Everything will be wiped out apart from Noah and his extended family and of course animals. Noah will be like a new Adam, doing what the first Adam had failed to do.

### **The solution was imaginative!**

So we read of God's instruction: An ark was to be built - a very large floating structure that would carry his family and the animals to safety.

6:14, God gives Noah precise instructions for him to carry out so that he and his family may be saved!

Build an ark 450ft long (137.16m) by 75ft wide (22.86m) by 45 ft high (13.716m)

That is a big structure!!!

But it doesn't end there... verse 19: Bring into the ark every kind of animal! Both male and female!!!

Right close your eyes... imagine this project! Imagine you are Noah, what are you thinking?

It not only sounds silly but it must have looked silly – Noah risked looking absolutely absurd – building a boat of great proportion nowhere near water! God gives him instructions and they are a tall order indeed!

So here is a question... *If God spoke to you and asked you to do something like this... what would be your reaction?* Speak to the person next to you for 20 seconds.

### **Play clip from Evan Almighty!**

I am looking forward to watching that film!!! I think the reactions to Evan are probably similar to those in Noah's day. Can you imagine the reaction of his neighbors... surely Noah was a laughing stock... But we are told in 6:22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

### **The waters came down**

We read just a few verses what happened next!!!

7:10 – The floodwaters came... Something else, Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters came! And the result was that all life outside the ark was destroyed.

Time passed, many many days, for 150 days the earth was flooded, but finally the floodwaters subsided and the ground became dry again. It is a wonderful story that you should read sometime, perhaps over the weekend. Suffice to say Noah and his family and the animals were saved and came out of the ark.

### **The Covenant**

So, let us think about this promise that we find in Chapter 9: 1-17.

We are told in 9:1 that God renewed his covenant with Noah and his sons...

9:7 – be fruitful and increase... the language sounds familiar doesn't it. It is the same command given to Adam. Increase in the earth. Well, with 6.5 billion people we have certainly done well.

Let us notice a few things about this covenant: Firstly it was to be an everlasting covenant! Secondly, the entire world of creation is in covenant with God. Lastly, the blessing applies to all mankind. It is intended that all descendant nations shall be fruitful and productive beneficiaries of God's will for life, and we see evidence of this in the blessing-laden character of creation.

### **Rainbows of promise**

Though God is in a sense making a new start with Noah, his purposes for his creation remain what

they always were. And the content of God's covenant with Noah extends to the whole of creation. In chapter 8.21 the Lord says that he will never again curse the ground or destroy every living creature.

The rainbow is a sign of the covenant that God established with all life on earth. God won't destroy humankind again!!!

We see in this story that even though the judgment against sin was be terrible, that God's gracious commitment to his original purposes for creation is shown!

### **Conclusions and challenges**

Water seems to represent a kind of archetypal chaos, and the ancient Jews seemed to realize that if we live apart from our true story as creatures in God's creation, creatures who are free to learn and grow and advance but always needing to respect their limits as creatures in God's creation, if we disconnect from our story and promote ourselves to autonomous, godlike status so we can write our story in our own way, apart from God, apart from moral limits, then a flood of chaos overtakes us.<sup>1</sup>

Like a cup of coffee. When it's in the cup its good, its okay. But when it spills out of its limits, we have a mess! And so human beings get out of control, when we get out of our story we end up in a mess.

Last time I brought a word about getting on with that thing God has made you to do or is calling you to do now...

You know something, I think that what God asks us to do is similar to building an ark. The crisis in our world is ongoing! We all know that. You could say that humankind displays the same kind of wickedness in many different ways.

To live as Christians means that we are to live in a different way, we dance to a different kind of beat... the beat of the kingdom of God and that means that we will sometimes stand out in the crowd. We might risk at times looking absurd... to love those who hurt us... to love the weak... to give away some of our hard earned income to others... so what is your response? Will you do it? Because if you do... if like Noah you obey... you will not regret it! Indeed, it may end up saving your life!!!

**Amen**

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<sup>1</sup> SWFOI