

The Flood
Genesis 6-9
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It is somewhat presumptuous to comment on a motion picture I have not seen but presumptuous I will be. I think it is called the "Prince of Egypt" - the movie studio version of the life of Moses. What I have heard about the film is positive – it is reported to me that while it misses on some of the facts of the story, it is largely a positive portrayal of a very important time in human history.

While I was studying the passage of scripture before us today – The Genesis account of the flood – I wondered how this portion of the Bible would be depicted on the large screen. If the Disney or Dreamworks studios or producers Spielberg or Katzenberg were to make a movie of Noah and the flood, what would it be like? Maybe more precisely I was asking how the screenwriters would shape the story? What would they choose to tell? Well Moses was the writer in this case and so the question is, "What did he choose to include as he retold the what happened so many years before?"

Most stories, told well, begin by introducing the characters and quickly setting a scene in which some problem emerges. Usually the story progresses with the problem getting worse. Then when it appears that all hope is lost – a resolution is found. And finally the story closes with an epilogue where some of the loose ends are tied up.

Like the best stories, this one, in Genesis, is also true – or like they say in some movies, "the story you are about to see is based on actual events". The story begins with verse 9 of chapter 6 by introducing us to Noah. He was a good man, approved by God and liked by his peers – and he had three sons. Now that doesn't seem to be saying much about Noah until you see the kind of society in which he lived.

The story goes on to tell us more about Noah but it does so by showing the contrast to all the others. So we begin by seeing a good man living among evil people.

But even that doesn't seem like much of a story until the next scene when God says, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth." Now we have a plot – what will happen, how will this threat be carried out, is this the end of the human race, will anyone survive?

And God commands Noah to build an "ark" – a floating zoo – to protect Noah, his family, and enough animals to begin life again after the flood. At that point the tension begins to mount because while Noah builds, no one else believes a flood is coming. You can imagine trying to convince people a bomb is about to explode in an office building but they are equally convinced you are wrong or even crazy.

But in spite of the way Noah is ignored or ridiculed he does exactly as the Lord commands. We are rather captured by the development of the character – Noah. His efforts at warning others seem noble but fruitless.

And then it happens - all heaven breaks loose. What was predicted happens. The worst occurs. The earth erupts, the clouds rupture, and water pours out as never before or since. Hurricane Mitch, the floods of China or Sioux Falls, or the latest Tsunami are nothing compared to the devastation brought about by this flood.

You can imagine how a movie might depict it – the crashing sounds, the waves of water, the desperate actions of people in cities, in villages, on farms – the cameras move from New York, to Calcutta, to a village in Peru, to a man walking along a road in Japan. The sound is deafening AND THEN silence – that eerie silence that comes after the most devastating events – that silence that accompanies death. "Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out..."

But the story isn't over – Even as our eyes observe the destruction through the panning cameras, our minds suddenly remember those in the ark – What happened to them? Will they make it? How can they survive on an ark forever? And we pick up some sense of relief when

we see that the rains have stopped, the sun has begun to appear, and a wind is blowing across the flood water and the waters begin to recede.

Then the scene moves into the ark itself and we see an anxious Noah also wondering how they will be saved. He sends out birds to see if they find dry ground. One just flies around, not landing anywhere. Another returns finding nothing. And then a dove returns with an olive leaf indicating that ground had reappeared. And finally one year after they entered the ark, Noah throws off the covering and sees dry ground.

At God's command they all leave that boat – you can imagine the scene as Noah and his family set foot on terra firma once again. The sheer joy. Then imagine as they release the animals – If you've ever watched an animal's exuberance at being freed at last from long confinement – you can picture the running, the jumping.

The comes the epilogue of the story: Noah builds an altar expressing his thanks to God and God makes a covenant with Noah that never again will God flood the whole earth. And God tells Noah to look into the sky to see a rainbow – a symbol of God's promise.

*Now that's the story but "Why?" Why does Moses remind the Israelites of this event? Why is it important to us? To answer that, I want you first to think about the main characters of the story. Who are they? Certainly, **Noah**. Who else? **God**. Who else? I think **the rest of the human race**. So the main characters are humanity, God and Noah.*

But again, why tell the story? There are three themes that jump out at me as I read and re-read this story. And, interestingly enough, they correspond to the three main characters.

The first theme is "judgment." *I am on solid ground when I say judgment is a theme taught by this passage because the apostle Peter said it was. Talking about the judgment that is yet to come when Jesus returns, Peter wrote, "First of all you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is the coming he promised?*

*Ever since our fathers died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. **By these waters also the world of that time was deluged (flooded) and destroyed.** By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:3-7)*

The prior message on this passage (“Would you have died in the Flood?”) focused mostly on why judgment was necessary – because of the wickedness of every human being. Moses wanted his readers and today I want you to be struck with certainty of judgment. Peter said people forget – they forget that judgment did come and it will certainly come again. Jesus said people ignore coming judgment. Speaking of his coming and the judgment that would befall the earth at that time, Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Jesus). For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matthew 24:36-39)

Old Testament scholar Ron Youngblood in an essay on judgment said this of God’s judgment ([The Book of Genesis p99-100](#)):

1. *It is not arbitrary – Divine judgment is always related to human wickedness. In Genesis we are told explicitly why God caused the flood – “God said to Noah, ‘I am going to put an end to all people for the earth is filled with violence because of them.*

A few years ago Lance Morrow, an editorialist with TIME magazine, wrote a piece on evil in the world. Using the upbeat and cheerful former “Today Show” weatherman Willard Scott he wrote: “I think there should be a Dark Willard. In the network’s studio in New York City, Dark Willard would recite the morning’s evil report. The map of the world behind him would be a multicolored... projection. Some parts of the earth, where overnight “good” prevailed would glow with a bright transparency. But much of the map would be speckled and blotched. Over Third World and First World, over cities and plains

and miserable islands would be smudges of evil, ragged blights, storm systems of massacre or famine, murders, black snows. Here and there, a genocide, a true abyss. 'Homo, homini lupus,' Dark Willard would remark. 'That's Latin, guys. Man is a wolf to man.' Dark Willard would...add up the moral evils – the horrors accomplished overnight by man and woman. Anything new among the suffering Kurds? Among the Central American death squads? New hackings in South Africa? Updating on the father who set fire to his eight-year-old son?" (How about the man in Georgia who kept his wife imprisoned for 30 years or the man who shook his baby until he ruined its brain? Or the starvation in Sudan, the infant mortality in Calcutta?) (In Hughes Hebrews – p85-86)

Whether it was before the flood or now – the truth is the same. Man's inhumanity to man runs nearly unabated. The point Moses is making in retelling the story and the point made for us is that judgment for sin is now as certain as was the flood.

- 2. Youngblood went on to say God's judgment is always announced – God warns. In 2 Peter 2:5 it says that Noah proclaimed a message of righteousness or condemnation to the people of his day. The New Testament is filled with such warnings – the Bible could not be clearer that a judgment is coming. You have to distort the entire Bible in order to avoid that obvious warning.*
- 3. God's judgment is preceded by a time for repentance. God waited 120 years before the flood came. We have had nearly 2000 years since the death and resurrection of Christ for people to get the message and turn to God. This is the day of salvation.*
- 4. Fourthly, Youngblood, reminds us – Judgment always results in death. Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death." I was impressed as I read this account of the flood how much emphasis Noah placed on the rising water. Five times in chapter 7 he stresses how extensive the flood was, how deep the water was, how impossible it was for life to continue until he summarized, "Every living thing that moved on the earth perished..."*

*II. But the story of Noah and the flood is not only a lesson on judgment – **it is also a lesson in Grace.** Without a doubt, God is a*

main character in the story. And though God is also a God of judgment the story could have been very short if that is all he is. What is striking in the story is that in the midst of a world of evil God would choose to save anyone. When it says that “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” – this is not an indication that Noah earned God’s grace. Noah had the same corrupt heart that anyone else has – but Noah believed God.

We’ll talk more about Noah in a minute. What I want you to see is that in the midst of God’s judgment, God reached out to save a man and to save a race – the human race. Not only did God look with favor on Noah but in the midst of the judgment (8:1) God remembered Noah – God showed his grace to Noah. And then after the flood by the very initiation of a covenant – God expressed and promised his grace – giving human beings even more time to turn to him. God had every reason to simply end the whole world. To consider it lost and be done with it.

The striking similarities between the creation account in Genesis 1&2 and this account in Genesis 6-9 make clear that what God is doing is re-creating his world. As the world was formed originally out of the chaos of water, so again out of the chaos of water the dry land appears. As God first created plants and animals to multiply on the earth so God preserved animals to again multiply on the earth. God was doing a new thing in place of the old world that was so corrupted. In the midst of the judgment of the flood, God was saving. To the man or woman, like Noah, who will believe God and reach out to him, the ark is available.

As Moses told this story to the Israelites, he could assume they would get the point – THEY were God’s new thing. And Peter would make the same point to us – we are God’s new thing – God’s new creation. In the midst of judgment there is still grace – grace to us.

III. *But I want you to see a third and final theme in the story: **The theme of faith.** Again I refer to the New Testament which substantiates that this theme of faith is central to the telling of the story. Hebrews 11:7 “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he*

condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” Can you identify with Noah’s faith?

Charles Spurgeon stood in awe of Noah.

He wrote that Noah believed God: (Vol 36 p303)

- 1. In the ordinary things of life.*
- 2. In the warning and threatening of God*
- 3. In the improbable if not the impossible*
- 4. Even when he was alone in his faith*
- 5. Even though he waited 120 years.*

Genesis 6:9 says that Noah “walked with God”. Noah was a man who lived with an awareness of the presence of God and in obedience to the will of God. What this term “walked with God” indicates is that Noah was a man who lived this way in the ordinary times of life. He wasn’t a man who had faith only in the crises of life but he lived it out in the everyday stuff of life. It was his habit to “walk with God”.

Noah believed God when God said there would be a flood. “Men do not prepare an ark to escape from a flood unless they believe there will be a flood.” (Spurgeon, Vol. 36 p 303) I find it almost incredible that Noah would do what God asked. A lot of funny sketches have been written about Noah conversing with God over this idea of building an ark in the middle of a desert. But funny as it sounds – It is truly amazing that Noah believed him. Martin Luther said of the birth of Christ that the greatest miracle was not the incarnation but that Mary believed. I feel that way about Noah. Do you believe God when the only thing you have is his word?

Noah believed God when no one else was buying it. Imagine working for 120 years on a project that every person around you said was naïve if not crazy. How does a Muslim man in Sudan go against everything his family stands for and trust in Jesus? How does a woman become a Christian when every one in her family says she has lost her mind to believe such things? Noah’s faith was in God not in popular opinion.

*But maybe most importantly, I want you to see that Noah's faith was active. Hebrews 11:7 "**By faith Noah**, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear **built an ark** to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." Four times in this text it says of Noah that he "did everything just as God commanded him." (6:22; 7:5; 7:9; 7:16) In a men's group to which I once belonged we were studying James 2:14-25. In that text James doesn't use Noah as an example but he could have. James said, "faith without deeds is dead." Faith that doesn't result in a response of obedience to God is not real faith.*

*Noah obeyed God exactly and carefully. Look at the construction of the ark. The detail of the building of the ark and the collecting of the animals was not just to satisfy idle curiosity about what it would have been like BUT the details demonstrated how carefully and exactly Noah obeyed God. To Israel Moses said, "When you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him **with all your heart and with all your soul** according to all I command you today, the Lord your God will restore your captivity and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he has scattered you." Deut 30:2-3 Noah obeyed God with all his heart and all his soul.*

Noah obeyed God at all costs. Look at the opposition he faced in his obedience. His religion wasn't a Sabbath or Sunday experience only. His religion wasn't private. His religion wasn't something Noah only believed in his head. Noah "walked with God" – a daily, dynamic, obedient walk.

*What did Moses want his story readers to learn?
About judgment, grace and faith.
The certainty and severity of judgment.
The wonder and availability of grace.
And the necessity and character of true faith.*

*Judgment is coming – God has said so. Grace is extended to us now.
By faith we live in that grace.*

Do you?