

Genesis – Lesson 7

The Flood

Read Genesis 6:1-13

1. (a) In your opinion, who do you think the “*sons of God*” are in 6:2 (see Job 1:6, Jude 6, and Luke 8:32 for help)? Who do you think the “*Nephilim*” are in 6:4 (see Numbers 13:33 for help)?

The term “*sons of God*” is difficult to ascertain, especially given the fact that this narrative reflects events that occurred many thousands of years ago and *prior to the flood*. Some suggest that this term implies the descendents of Seth who were God-fearing, thus called “sons” of God. However, the use of that term in Job 1:6 seems to imply *supernatural* beings rather than *human* beings (given they have direct access to the presence of God in heaven), and the connection of this term to such passages as Jude 6 and Luke 8 seems to point to fallen angels. It could be that this is a reference to antediluvian spirit beings who (somehow?) procreated with human women, producing a line of evil offspring that became spatially-bound, possessing a physical presence in this world until they are judged (i.e. demons; see Luke 8). The Nephilim are even more difficult to interpret: using the first interpretation given above, one conclusion is the possibility that these are the offspring of the God-fearing descendents of Seth that co-mingle with the offspring of Cain, producing children that did not know God. Another possibility, however, given the second interpretation of the “*sons of God*,” could be the offspring mentioned above as demons, who remained on the earth until the flood and died in it as physical beings.

- (b) What is God doing in his *pronouncement* of 6:3? What does it mean that God “*regretted*” that he had created humanity (in 6:6)?

It is clear in this pronouncement that God is *limiting* the years of humanity to 120. Whether this means 1) that he was limiting the entire human race to 120 years before he killed them all in the flood, or 2) that he was limiting the lifespan of each human being to no more than 120 years is difficult to ascertain (and both may be true). If the first is true, than it means that Noah had about 120 years to build the ark before the flood came. When it says that God “*regretted*” that he had created man, it means that God was grieved over the sinfulness of the human race, not that he now wishes he had *never* created humanity. Surely God would have known, in his omniscience, that humanity would become wicked (see 2a below); this, after all, was the sure result of the Fall. God is not second-guessing himself here, but, as a good and holy Creator, surely grieved over the reality of sin in the world (much the way that Jesus grieved over the death of Lazarus, even though it was *necessary* for his purpose and power to be demonstrated; John 11). This is *not* an example of God “changing his mind” about his purposes, but shows that God is a *personal* being with a *genuine* sense of relationship with his creation who despises sin and its consequences *even though he had purposed sin in the world in order to redeem men from it*.

2. (a) According to 6:5 and 6:11-12, list several facts about humanity that God *observed* at that time.

God saw a number of things about the evil of humanity upon the earth: 1) that the wickedness of humanity was “*great*” (v. 5); 2) that the constant thought of humanity was to evil all the time (v. 5); 3) that the whole earth was “*corrupt*” in the sight of God (v. 11); and 4) that the world was filled with “*violence*” (v. 11). All of this is true about humanity today (in spite of the Flood): the wickedness of man against man is seen constantly in war and bloodshed, human beings now fill their minds with every form of evil all the time, everything is corrupted in that nothing is good and holy anymore, and violence is (obviously!) everywhere.

(b) Name several attributes of Noah that *distinguished* him from others (see also Hebrews 11).

The following attributes of Noah set him apart: 1) he was a “*righteous man*,” meaning that he attempted to know and love the ways of God (v. 9); 2) he was “*blameless*” in his generation, meaning that he had a public character of being upright in his dealings with others (v. 9); 3) he “*walked with God*” (like Enoch!), meaning that he had an intimate fellowship with God (v. 9), and 4) he was a man of faith, meaning that he trusted in God throughout his life (Hebrews 11:7), and built the ark in faith when instructed to do so.

Read Genesis 6:14-7:10.

3. (a) List some of the things for which Noah had to *trust God* during the process of building the ark?

Noah would have had to trust God for: 1) the wisdom and ability to undertake such a project, 2) the materials necessary to build the ark, 3) the courage to stand and preach about the coming judgment (see 4 below), 4) protection from others who might have attacked him in the work, 5) the collection of the animals, 6) a willingness to get aboard with his family when the rains began.

(b) What popular *myth* is dispelled in 7:2-3? Why would God require Noah to bring *seven* pairs of clean animals, but only *one* pair of unclean ones (see 8:20 and 9:3)?

It is clear from 7:2-3 that God intended for *more than two* (2) of every animal to enter the ark; in this case, the text is clear that God desired at least seven (7) pairs of each clean animal to be brought aboard. The necessity of seven pairs was due to: 1) that some of them would be sacrificed after the flood, and 2) some of them would be eaten after the flood. The unclean animals would not be sacrificed or eaten, so their number could be limited.

4. Read Hebrews 11:7, 1 Peter 3:20, and 2 Peter 2:5. What *else* was Noah doing during the time he was building the ark? *Why* is this significant?

It is clear from these passages that Noah was *preaching* about the coming judgment during the time he was building the ark. Peter says that others “*did not obey*” God in these days, implying that Noah was *telling* them about what was to come, and then calls him a “*herald of righteousness*” implying that Noah *preached* about the flood that was coming, calling for men to repent and be spared of the judgment. This is significant because it reminds us that, even in these days when judgment is coming, those who have been selected to be saved must act as *heralds* to others by preaching about this judgment. God *uses* those he purposes to save to preach the message of repentance, which will cause the elect to step forward in faith *and* will judge the rest for their *failure* to heed the warning.

Read Genesis 7:11-8:19.

5. (a) What does it mean in 7:11 when it says that the “*springs of the great deep burst forth*?” What are the “*floodgates of the heavens*?”

The springs of the deep is probably a reference to underground water being let loose as a part of the flood, along with rain from the sky. However, it is also likely (given the *scarring* of the earth’s surface we see today) that the earth itself was opened up and great volcanic explosions also characterized this event. The floodgates of the heavens is probably a reference to the canopy of water that covered the earth, separated to that location by God during day 2 of the creation (see Genesis 1:6-7). This would have fallen to earth in a great deluge of water, raising the water up to mountaintop level (>10,000 feet) in 40 days (a rainfall rate of 125 inches/hour!)

(b) According to 7:17-24, how *extensive* was this flood? Why is this *important*?

It is clear from the text that this flood was *worldwide* in its scope. The height of the water would remove any possibility that this was a *local* flood, and its *purpose* to destroy all life on earth would require it to be global. The idea that this was a localized flood (in order to make the story believable) fails to take into account God's *intention* with it: while he had covered the earth with living creatures of all kinds (including humans), now God intended to *wipe the slate clean*, implying that *no life* anywhere on the planet could be allowed to survive. Noah and his family would be the *only* human life remaining; to assume that this flood was localized overlooks the *global nature of sin* that was being erased by God.

(c) From 7:21-23, what was the *result* of the flood? How does this *relate* to Genesis 2:7?

God destroyed all *land-based* life in the flood; every human, mammal, reptile, bird, and insect was killed in this deluge. The connection to Genesis 2:7 is simple: everything that had the "*breath of life*" in it (i.e. who breathed air above water) was destroyed *as a result of the sin of Adam which had now reached its height*. Adam, as a creature who received the breath of God to become a living being, was the progeny of this great wickedness, thus, everything who (like him) breathed air would die as a result.

(d) Compare 7:11, 24 to 8:3-5, 13-14. How *long* did Noah and his family survive in the ark?

The flood itself began on the 17th day of the 2nd month of the 600th year of Noah's life, and the water fell for 150 days. However, it wasn't until the 27th day of the 2nd month of the 601st year that Noah was able to leave the ark. That means that Noah and his family (and all of the animals) survived for 10 days more than 1 full year on the ark (about 375 days).

6. What did God do to signify his *protection and love* for Noah and his family in 7:16 and 8:1? How is the ark symbolic of the *cross* of Jesus Christ?

First, God closed Noah and his family into the ark, sealing them in against the flood that was about to begin. Then, when the flood was over, God graciously dried the land so that Noah could come out and continue to survive. In both cases, God initiates the salvation of Noah and his family, and his work to protect them through the flood is *symbolic* of the cross of Jesus Christ. In it, God graciously "shuts in" those who are his own, protecting them through the judgment that is to come. When that judgment has passed, those who have been protected by the cross come out into the presence of God and experience a "new earth" made for them by God in his presence for all eternity. The ark is representative of the cross, for both are "lifeboats" through the wrath of God that comes upon those who have rebelled against him.