

## **Genesis 7:1**

**The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.”**

A story of a worldwide catastrophe, wiping out every living creature

- Except one family and the animals they gathered in a large boat
- Hardly seems the basis for a nursery story
- And yet the popularity of the story commonly called ‘Noah’s Ark’ is undiminished
- Even in a culture where Bible stories are way out of fashion
- Perhaps because the popular version now bears little relation to the original
- Which forms a substantial portion of the pre-history we find in Genesis 1-11

One of the things about Genesis, especially the early chapters

- is the strange blend of real people, talking snakes and fruit with special properties
- these are what biblical scholars call aetiological myths
- I tend to avoid the word ‘myth’ because to most people it means something untrue
- and I can only suggest that one of the reasons why Noah’s Ark remains popular
- is the underlying assumption that no one believes that it is true

There has been quite a resurgence of interest in the ancient flood stories in recent years

- the Bible seems to be saying that not only rain but rising waters caused the flood
- was there really a worldwide tidal wave, or does Genesis just refer to ‘known world’
- what about fossils and archaeological evidence?
- is the earth really billions of years old, or are dating methods flawed?
- These are all interesting questions – but we cannot address them here
- Save to say that those who have written off the account of the Genesis flood
- As a myth – the sense that it was historical untrue, were premature in their decision
- For the moment we must content ourselves with the Biblical account

In Genesis, after the account of the creation (chapters 1 and 2)

- comes the account of the fall into sin (chapter 3)
- whatever the picture of eating the fruit from the forbidden tree means
- it results in the breakdown of relationships between the first humans and God
- and between Adam and Eve as a couple – it has lasting effects
- it is also results in jealousy between the two brothers, Cain and Abel (chapter 4)
- and it is not long before the Bible records the first murder, when Cain killed Abel
- the genealogy (chapter 5) is only punctuated by the sonorous refrain
- rather like the tolling of a bell, ‘and then he died’ – a gloomy catalogue of death

The opening verses of chapter 6 are not easy to understand

- but they quite possibly mean that the descendants of the believers
- sons or ‘children’ of God in the sense of having a faithful relationship with God
- marry the sons of men – worldly people who have no place for God in their lives
- the upshot, as we all know, is not a new generation of believers
- but a new generation of unbelievers
- the result was displeasing to God, wickedness abounded
- and God decided to bring judgment, though Noah found favour in God’s eyes
- each of the ensuing sections begins with an act of God

- I The LORD God saw (Genesis 6:5)
- II The LORD said to Noah (Genesis 7:1)
- III God remembered Noah (Genesis 8:1)
- IV God blessed Noah (Genesis 9:1)

- I The LORD God saw (Genesis 6:5)

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 LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth - men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air - for I am grieved that I have made them." But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD.

Genesis 6:5-8

At the very outset of this section of Genesis we discover that 'Noah's Ark'

- is not really a story about a big boat, full of animals
- but is in fact an account of God's judgment upon the world
- it is really no great surprise that people are so quick to write the story off as a fable
- when the same people are very much against any notion of the judgment of God
- but it would be a mistake only to see judgment in negative terms

In the creation account (chapter 1) water is mentioned frequently

- "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water" (1:6)
- God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse
- from the water above it (1:7)
- God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place
- and let dry ground appear" (1:9)

And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:20-21

Such scriptures lead us to the conclusion that the flood which came upon the earth

- was, in effect, a reversal of God's good work of creation
- he was the God who gave mankind the land – notably the garden in Eden
- he is the God who can take this land away because of corruption
- the people in these early chapters who are blessed, 'walk with God'
- whereas Adam and many others like him, 'hid from God'
- But God's judgment is not just negative
- he saw how great man's wickedness had become (he saw the thoughts of his heart)
- Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD (6:8)

Genesis explains why God found Noah to be an exception

- This explanation is the key to understanding the account of the flood

This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.

Genesis 6:8-12

The story of the flood is not only to show why God sent the flood

- But also to show why God saved Noah
- Noah's righteousness is contrasted with the violence of all the people
- The reason God saved Noah was not because he was better than the others
- And certainly not because he was perfect – Noah made mistakes (as Chapter 9 shows)
- But Noah walked with God – that is he believed in him and trusted him
- As his great-grandfather Enoch had done (5:22-24)
- God's deliverance is with those who walk with him and do not corrupt their ways

Noah is listed in the account of the heroes of the faith by the writer to the Hebrews

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.

Hebrews 11:7

Noah a model of the kind of life that finds grace in the sight of God

- The list of specifications for the boat-building and the further instructions
- Are rather similar to the details that will later be given for the tabernacle
- It is unlikely that the ark looked anything like the common pictures
- But that is not really the important part
- Rather that we might appreciate that meticulous care that was taken
- So Genesis can sum up, "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (6:22)

## II The LORD said to Noah (Genesis 7:1)

The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.

The word Hebrew word translated 'ark' is an unusual word

- Our word 'ark' comes from the Latin '*arca*' meaning 'box'
- We have that word in the Bible with regard to the 'Ark of the Covenant'
- Which really means 'Covenant Box'
- The Hebrew word translated 'ark' in Genesis means 'box'
- And is only used in two Bible stories – the story that we call 'Noah's Ark'
- And the story of Moses in the bulrushes, which we typically translate 'basket'

The wooden vessel was just as the name suggests a large box

- Causing one commentator to describe it as a huge, floating coffin
- Even by modern standards the ark was big
- But the key thing about the ark was not that it big (as in the story of Noah)
- Or small (as in the story of Moses)
- But that it was God's instrument of salvation

It was because Noah and his family had been found righteous in that generation

- That God delivered them from judgment
- God never forgets that he had made mankind
- But cannot make that an excuse for not dealing with sin (Isaiah 27:11)

We are not told anything about the relationship of Noah and the people he lived among

- There is a possibility that they simply thought he was mad and ignored him
- Or perhaps, bearing in mind he was engaged in this large building project
- And probably would have been quizzed as to what he was up to
- If he replied that he was building a boat so that he could be saved from God's wrath
- There is a very real possibility that they hated and persecuted him
- Despite his being blameless among them (6:9)
- By his life and his preaching he would have condemned the world

When Jesus spoke about the suddenness of God's judgment in the future

- In that part of Matthew's Gospel sometimes called the 'Little Apocalypse'
- People were simply busy about their everyday affairs

(Jesus said:) "No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 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

Within the Bible the flood speaks of God's judgment

- Isaiah warned the people of coming judgment in these terms (Isaiah 8:7-8)
- And the Lord Jesus spoke of a future judgment, coming suddenly as in Noah's time
- Noah's deliverance is an image of the salvation of the faithful
- When the rest of the world was corrupt and wicked, Noah kept his integrity
- He was a believer, he was devout, he walked, that is, he acted with God
- It is easy to be religious when being religious is fashionable
- But is an evidence of faith and resolution to go against the flow
- To swim against the stream
- Noah was not only a witness to the people of his generation
- But a testimony to the saving grace of God to every future generation

### III God remembered Noah (Genesis 8:1)

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.

Genesis 8:1

The opening verse of Chapter 8 picks up the promise that God made in 6:18

- It is here that God promised to establish his covenant with Noah
- And Noah continues to stand under its benefits because of his obedience
- Noah did everything God commanded him (6:22)
- They went into the ark as they had been commanded (7:5)
- They entered the ark with the animals as they had been commanded (7:9)
- They were in the ark and shut in as God commanded (7:16)

The world at large was corrupt before God in many ways

- All kinds of sin was found among them (6:11)
- The effects of sin in the world had already been noted
- Their relationship with God was broken
- And their relationships with each other were broken
- But God protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5)

Peter explains that salvation through the ark prefigures Christ's saving work

- As it is pictured in baptism

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

1 Peter 3:18-22

Now this is not the easiest passage to understand and apply

- But it is clear that what saved Noah and his family
- Was not the water but the covenant promise of a gracious God
- Which they claimed by obedience – the water being a sign of grace and judgment
- So with us, in baptism it is not the water that saves us
- But the covenant promise of a gracious God, that we claim by obedience
- It is because of his obedience that God remembered Noah
- The Genesis account really does not give the reader the chance to be indifferent
- But to flee from the wrath of God and come under his grace in the ark
- Or to remain outside in the flood

#### IV God blessed Noah (Genesis 9:1)

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.”

Genesis 9:1

The order is significant

- First God made a covenant promise to Noah
- Then Noah obeyed him – and thankful for God’s deliverance he worshipped him

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

Genesis 8:20-22

Then God’s blessing was upon Noah – it is a lesson that we can so easily forget

- We would like to be blessed by God
- But we need to remember that the pattern here includes obedience and worship
- Those who have received God’s mercy are first and foremost thankful
- The world at large is not thankful because they have not received God’s mercy
- Even looking out at the dry land is cause enough to give thanks
- For God’s power came in judgment for a renewal of the earth
- In this passage we find that God repented that he had made mankind
- But we never find him repenting for his redeeming work

The description of God’s blessing and renewal of the covenant is condensed

- But it is marked by a restoration of God’s creation
- The time of Noah is really one of new beginnings
- The visible sign of the establishment of the covenant is the rainbow in the clouds
- It is a covenant that will be renewed many times – with Abraham, with Israel
- With Moses at Sinai, with David – and as we know, through Jesus
- Throughout the Bible God is at work
- Restoring his fellowship with his creation through the mystery of grace and mercy
- Bringing men and women back to himself

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you.”

Genesis 9:8-9

We are now to express our thankfulness, not by burnt-offerings

- but by the sacrifices of praise and the sacrifices of righteousness
- and a desire to walk humbly with God
- claiming our place in the new ark of his salvation – the cross
- and being counted in the company of his people

HP 66 Great is thy faithfulness

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Offering

HP 69 The King of love my Shepherd is

Prayers

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

SF 310 Jesus, we enthrone you

SF 10 All heaven declares

SF 89 Faithful one, so unchanging

(\* We'll do these three in one set using the piano. SF 89 is new, the other two we have done before)

Sermon

SF 596 When I survey the wondrous cross (4 vv. SF version)

Communion

HP 243 Rejoice! The Lord is King

SF 441 Only by grace can we enter

SF 532 The King is among us

SF 87 Exalt the Lord our God

SF 921 Men of faith

SF 1117 Who is there like you?

SF 89 Faithful one, so unchanging

SF 147 (You'll find the music at HP 66) Great is Thy faithfulness