

Genesis chapters 5-8 Adam to the flood

[New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]

Today we continue our series in Genesis, by thinking about chapters 5 to 8. Because we're considering a long section, I'm going to pick out verses rather than read all of it. But I want to encourage you to read through Genesis 5 to 8 sometime during the next week to fill in the gaps. In each chapter I want us to notice important themes. But interestingly, I think that through each of the chapters, we'll see again and again themes of judgement and salvation. Keep your eye out for these as we go through the chapters.

I wonder if you've ever tried to read through the Bible in a year. Although this doesn't somehow make any of us a super Christian or automatically a more holy person, it can be a really good thing to do as it gives us a good overview of what God has to say to us in His word. But reading through the Bible in a year isn't easy. There are some sections which are prone to make me want to give up – I'm thinking about some of Leviticus and Numbers and some of the long lists in Chronicles. One such passage comes in our section for today. Genesis 5 is a long list of names and numbers. But instead of skipping past it to get to more exciting stories about Noah, let's spend a little bit of time thinking about what God might want to teach us from these verses.

As we start chapter 5 let's not miss the fact that God blessed mankind in verse 2.

“He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.”

Don't forget that God is a God who blesses! But we do see a hint of the deterioration that came as a result of sin and man turning away from God. Adam was created in the image and likeness of God. But Seth was made in the likeness of Adam in verse 3. From Seth onwards it seems we are not quite so much in the likeness of God as we should have been. We're in the likeness of our parents and have the same tendencies to go away from God and rebel against Him.

You can read for yourselves about the various characters in this list. I want to focus on Enoch for a few minutes. So let's read verses 18-24.

“Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died. Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

Enoch is different to those who have come before in this list. Of each of the other characters we read that they lived some number of years and then they died. But Enoch didn't just live. He walked with God and pleased Him. And Enoch didn't die. God took him to be with Himself in heaven. Enoch is an important figure in the Bible and teaches us two lessons. These lessons are in the Genesis account but come out more clearly in the New Testament where Enoch is referred to at least twice.

In Hebrews chapter 11, verses 5 and 6, we discover that the reason that God took Enoch to heaven without dying was because of his faith.

“By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Enoch lived by faith, and it was his faith that enabled him to walk closely with God. These verses in Hebrews teach us that it is possible to live a life that pleases God. This is an important thing to notice because, since we left chapter 2 of Genesis, we've seen mankind going on a downward spiral with one failure after another because of sin. We might start to think that the Bible's message is only a gloomy documentation of mankind's failures and sins. Enoch reminds us that it is possible to please God. It is possible to walk with God and enjoy the closeness of that walk. Isn't that good news? But the life that pleases God can only be lived by faith. We'll only please God, by believing that He rewards those that seek Him. Let's just emphasise that challenge to each of us today. Are you seeking God? Are you trying to get to know Him better? Have you read your Bible this week, wanting to get to know Him?

Do I open my Bible expecting that God will reward me by revealing Himself to me as I seek Him? Am I preparing my heart and attitude as I read to be ready to receive whatever God chooses to reveal to me today? What about as I go about my life asking God for direction on some issue or decision? Do I really believe God rewards those who seek Him? Enoch is a reminder that it is possible to please God, but that kind of life comes only by faith, through believing in God and diligently seeking Him. Enoch is also mentioned in Jude's short letter. Listen to what Jude writes in verse 14 and 15 of his letter.

“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

If Hebrews uses Enoch to remind us that it is possible to please God and walk with Him, Jude uses Enoch to remind us that God will judge wrong. We don't read about Enoch making this prophecy of judgement in Genesis. However the prophecy was made in Enoch's day, Jude makes it clear that Enoch warned men about coming judgment. Those who had acted in ungodly ways and spoken in harsh ways about God, would face the judgement of the Lord, when He came in judgement.

Enoch's path is the path to follow. A life lived by faith and fully convinced that God exists and rewards those who seek Him. Cain's family, mentioned in ch.4, ultimately faced judgement at the flood. Enoch avoided death and walked with God and God took him to heaven. That's the assurance we can look forward to if we take Enoch's path. We have confidence that we will be spared the judgment we deserve. This sparing came at the cost of the Lord Jesus, who came and

died in our place. Through faith in Him, we have confidence that we will be with the Lord one day. This might not be like Enoch. We might die and go to be with the Lord. But we might be like Enoch. The glorious hope of the New Testament is that we know the Lord is coming again. And He will take His people to be with Him in heaven. Perhaps it will be our privilege to be in that group of people. But if not, and the Lord allows us to die, like so many names in this list in Genesis 5, we do so with the firm assurance of being “taken” to be with the Lord.

If Enoch warned about coming judgement in Genesis 5, then Genesis 6 describes how that judgement came about. There’s lots of interesting detail in Genesis 6 that we’ll have to pass over for the sake of time today. We’ll not spend time thinking about whether the “sons of God” in verse 2 are angelic beings or descendants of Seth. We’ll not try and discover who the giants of verse 4 are. There are many good commentaries that discuss these matters for any who are interested. Instead, we need to notice two key points in chapter 6. First is that mankind deserved God’s judgement. And the second is that God shows grace. We’re really setting the scene in this chapter for a more complete treatment of these themes in chapters 7 and 8. Let’s read verses 5-7 to see just how bad things had become.

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.””

We’re only a few chapters into the Bible, some 1656 years after the Creation and already we see that mankind is wicked. Not only that, but their hearts continually thought about evil. God had created such perfect conditions for Adam and Eve. But they had sinned, and their relationship with God had been spoilt. As generation followed generation, people got further and further away from God. This was particularly true of Cain’s descendants, but it had evidently influenced Seth’s family too. What a contrast to the holiness of God who had created them. He is right in everything He does. But man had rebelled against Him. And that sin deserved judgement. Verse 11 says that the earth was filled with violence, and verse 12 says that all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. God would step in to judge this sin. Verse 17 says:

“And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.”

What a solemn picture! And yet, what’s striking as we read the Noah story in Genesis, is that the situation is not so different to our own world. According to Paul in Romans 3, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians, that before they were saved, they were “dead in trespasses and sins.” In Noah’s day, judgement arrived, although there was a long pause whilst the ark was being built. In our day, God is not yet judging sin, but is patiently giving mankind opportunity to repent.

This leads me to the second important point to notice in Genesis 6. God shows grace! Verse 8 says,

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

Like Enoch, Noah walked with God. I don’t think the description of Noah in verse 9 as “perfect in his generations” means that he never sinned, but that he was blameless amongst his contemporaries and that his life was characterised by right living before God. Even so, Noah was

not saved from the flood judgment because of his actions, but because God showed him grace, according to verse 8.

Chapter 6 reminds us that sin is a really important problem for mankind. It deserves God's judgement. But chapter 6 also reminds us that God wants to save people from the judgement sin deserves. He did save Noah and his family, as we'll see in chapters 7 and 8. And as we'll see too, He can save you and me too, if we will have faith in Him.

Let's move on to think about Genesis 7-8. If I had asked you before the COVID-19 pandemic what you would think about being locked in with only your family for the best part of a year, then I guess you might have laughed at the idea but had no real concept of what that would be like. How quickly times change! Now we don't even have to imagine. Genesis chapters 7 and 8 continue the account of Noah and the great flood. No matter what you thought of lockdown, you'll soon notice that Noah's "lockdown" experience was very different to the lockdown we experienced. Noah was confined with not just his wife, but also his three sons and their wives. And whereas most of us could pop out to the shops to get more food and for a little relief from the four walls of our home, Noah really was stuck. Not in a house, but on a great huge boat. Did I mention it was full of animals too?

I want us to finish today by thinking about three themes in these two chapters and what we can learn from them. I want us to think about Noah and the gospel, Noah and faithful living, and Noah and challenging circumstances.

The first is to think about Noah and the gospel. Perhaps you'll have sat in church meetings when the preacher used the story of Noah to encourage us to be saved, and trust in the Lord Jesus. That's legitimate because Peter, in 1 Peter chapter 3:18-22, uses Noah and the ark as a picture of becoming a Christian. You can read that chapter when you find a moment this coming week, but in it, Peter writes that just like there was a long period when God was patient whilst Noah built the ark and giving men and women a chance to be saved, so God is now patient with us, giving us a chance to be saved. And just like the ark was the covering for Noah and his family, for us, the way of rescue comes because,

"Christ also suffered once for sins the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God" (1Peter 3:18).

God took sin so seriously in Noah's day that He had to judge sin by totally flooding the world and destroying those who had sinned against Him. But He provided a way of escape, a way to show grace, to any who would come to Him for refuge. God still takes sin seriously today. One day He will judge sin, and all who have rejected God will face the consequences of their sin. Just as in Noah's day the ark was a way of escape, a way for God to show grace to sinful people, so God offers the Lord Jesus as the way of escape today. He was judged for sin, so we don't need to be. All who trust in Christ for salvation are spared the judgement they deserve just like Noah and his family were spared the judgement of God in the flood.

This offer of rescue and escape is time-limited, just as entry to the ark was time-limited in Noah's day. Noah spent 100 years building the ark and preaching righteousness. But there did come a day when he and his family had to go in and God shut the door. Matthew picks up on this in chapter 24:37-39 of his gospel where he records the Lord's words about Jesus' second coming:

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, [people] were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

In Noah's day the people were not prepared for the flood. They were too busy with normal life, eating and drinking and marrying. They missed Noah's warning. Jesus says we shouldn't be like that. We shouldn't be so consumed with the things of life that we don't hear the warning to come to Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life. Jesus says we should be like Noah and his family and by faith take up the rescue He offers.

Noah and his family all went onto the ark as individuals. Even though Noah walked with God, he couldn't save any of the people who lived at the time. They had chance to go onto the ark with Noah but spurned it. When it comes to being right with God, and being spared God's judgement for our sin, we individually need to have faith in God. Ezekiel picks up on this in relation to Noah when he says in chapter 14 verses 14 and 20 that if God sent a famine or a plague,

“Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,” says the Lord God.”

That's a reminder that we are each answerable to God, and unless we each respond in faith to His offer of the Lord Jesus who took our place, like Noah and his family trusted and went into the ark, then we will face the judgement our sins deserve just like the men and women in the times of Noah.

I guess I've probably only scratched the surface of how the story of Noah and the ark is like a picture of the gospel and our salvation. Why not have a think about these chapters during the coming week and see what other parallels you can think of?

Let's move on to my second key theme from these chapters, Noah and faith. Hebrews 11 reminds us that it was by faith that Noah prepared the ark for the saving of his household. Even before the flood Noah was a man who walked with God. So we want to see lessons for us in these verses about how faithful people live. I want, without too much comment, to highlight a few things Noah does in these chapters for us to reflect upon and try to live out in our own circumstances. First, in chapter 7:5 we read that,

“Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him.”

That's great advice. I wonder whether we will do that this week? I guess none of us will be asked to do something like build a great huge boat. But what about the little things? What about when the Lord tells us to be kind to someone this week? Or be honest in some conversation? Or tell someone about the gospel? Or serve someone in some way? Or be pure in your thoughts? Or not to be envious? What about in all the everyday moments of life? Will we be like Noah and do all that the Lord commanded? And maybe for somebody listening there will be some big decision this week. Maybe God does ask you to do something big and scary and challenging. Will you be obedient and do all that He commands?

Next notice in verse 1 of chapter 7 that Noah's faith seems to have benefitted his family. Did you notice that God tells Noah to “Come into the ark, you and all your household”, but then gives the reason, “I have seen that you are righteous.” This seems to suggest that at least in part, Noah's family were blessed because of Noah's righteousness. I know I said before that each of these eight individuals had to go onto the ark themselves, and that is certainly true. I can't save anyone. But my conduct, my righteousness, or lack of it, will have a positive or negative influence on my family. I think we see lots of times through the Scriptures that sometimes families, people groups, and nations are blessed, in non-salvation ways, because of the faithfulness of individuals. What kind of impact are you having on your family? Perhaps sometimes it seems like it's not as much as you might like but keep on going. Keep on living faithfully and who knows how the Lord might use it for good in your family.

The final thing to notice about Noah and faithful living is that after they came out of the ark Noah builds altar and offers sacrifices to God. Faithful people offer God what He deserves. They find reasons to be thankful and find ways to express their thanks to God.

Let's finish off today, thinking about Noah and difficult circumstances. I started off today comparing Noah and the ark to the lock-down, much of the world experienced during COVID-19. That's a bit of a stretch and they are clearly not exactly the same. But Noah was in the ark a long time. Even after the rain stopped it was a long, long time until life returned to normal. What I noticed whilst I was reading through these chapters is that God seems a bit absent. He tells Noah to go in and He tells him to go out, but between those two instructions, nothing about God is mentioned. Chapter 8 starts by reminding us that God remembered Noah and makes the waters subside. But it's not clear that God communicated this to Noah in any way. Perhaps He did. Perhaps God regularly communicated with Noah during the year in the ark. But we don't read about it. I wonder if there is something for us to learn from this?

I wonder if Noah felt perplexed and concerned throughout his stay in the ark? Like I say, perhaps not, we don't know. But perhaps he did. Perhaps he wondered what God was doing. He couldn't see what was happening, and they had been in the ark a long time. But God was acting. Psalm 29:10-11 tells us that,

“The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, and the LORD sits as King forever. The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace.”

During the flood, the Lord sat in judgment over the wicked. He was in control. Just as much as God was judging the wicked, He was giving strength to His people. He was protecting Noah, whether Noah was aware of it or not.

Peter writes something similar in 2 Peter 2 verses 5 & 9 where he says that God didn't spare the ancient world but saved Noah, and this is proof that God delivers the godly out of temptations. So I wonder if the point is that even though Noah may not have been very aware of what was going on during this isolation in the ark, God was still at work. He was still in control. He was still protecting His people. He hadn't abandoned them. And He doesn't abandon us today. There are times when I've been unsure what God is doing. Perhaps you've felt the same. But be encouraged that God is still at work. He is in control! And He is caring for His people, however difficult the days.

May the Lord help us to trust Him in these challenging days and to live by faith, obeying all that the Lord commands.

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