

“BEGINNINGS: Noah and New Beginning”

Genesis 6:1-9:29 (selected verses)

6:5 The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.
7 So the LORD said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—for I regret that I have made them.”
8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.
9 Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.
13 So God said to Noah, “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.
14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood.
18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.
19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.
7:4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”
5 And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.
7 And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood.
12 And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.
18 The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.
24 The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.
8:1 But God remembered Noah and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.
15 Then God said to Noah, **16** “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.
9:9 “I now establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”
12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you:
13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.
20 Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard.
21 When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent.
22 Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside.
23 But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.
24 When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him,
25 he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.”
29 Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

Introduction

Genesis chapters 1 through 3 tell about the awesome goodness of God and his Creation; and then the disobedience of Adam and Eve with continuous consequences in what we call the Fall. Creation and Fall. The rest of the entire Bible is consumed with God’s redemptive plan in offering forgiveness and new beginnings for us human beings.

Today we come to the story of Noah. Who doesn't love the cute plush toys for children with Noah's Ark, animals two by two, and playing the fun part of the story... A new creation, a new start.



For children, of course this is appropriate play. But as a friend of our children's ministry director said, "Our job is to tell R-rated stories for children!" We adults need to hear the full story and hear what God is trying to say about Creation, Fall, Redemption and Faith.

I. God Sees and Knows

The marks of the Fall continued to grow until in Genesis 6 it says, "The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time."

Rev. Dr. Kwasi Kena is a Methodist pastor, missionary in Ghana, and professor at Indiana Wesley Seminary. In the midst of evil violence in school shootings and terrorist attacks, he wrote this poem called *This Brand New Mourning*. "We never know what each new day will bring.

We hope for joy and peace/ Or at least the comfort/ Of predictable routine.
We're never prepared/ For the intrusion of/ Evil/Acted out through/Harm and mayhem.
When death rips life/From our grasp/When horror blurs/Our sight/Have mercy on us, Lord.
Hold our aching souls/Guide us through/Dizzying grief/Listen to our wailing 'Why?'
Be the Comfort we may not even know we need
As we live through this brand new mourning."

God saw that human evil was out of control. People thought evil, imagined evil. "Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." So the Lord was sorry that he had made the human race in the first place; it broke his heart. God said, "I'll get rid of my ruined creation, make a clean sweep... I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—for I regret that I have made them."

An agnostic farmer in upstate New York wrote to the editor of his local newspaper, who was a Christian. He said; "In defiance of your God I plowed my fields this year on Sunday, I disked and fertilized them on Sunday, I planted them on a Sunday, I cultivated them on Sunday, and I reaped them on Sunday. This October I had the biggest crop I've ever had. How do you explain that?" Well, the editor replied: "God doesn't always settle his accounts in October." (Why do people feel the need to write to a newspaper or post on Facebook or blog online such derision toward God and toward believers, anyway?)

Basil Atkinson (1895–1971) was an influential librarian and 20th century writer on theology at the University of Cambridge. He was actively involved with the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union for many years and in the formation of the Inter Varsity Fellowship. He thought about the cost of creating humanity with freedom of choice. “Here we see God’s vulnerability. Here is the pain of creative love. Here is the wounded spirit of the artist whose work is rejected, the broken heart of a lover whose love is not returned. God himself enters the world of brokenness and pain.”

The apostle Peter speaks of Noah twice in his letters to the church. First, that “God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (I Peter 3:20). And, “If God did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment” (II Peter 2:5,9). Oh how the Lord knows in his wisdom and grace how to balance patience and judgment.

It was Christmas Day, December 25th, 1908 in the city of Messina, Sicily. Apparently home to many brash, irreligious people. As an urban legend tells it, a newspaper in Messina printed a parody against God, daring him to make himself known by sending an earthquake. Three days later, on December 28th, the city and the surrounding area were devastated by a terrible quake that killed 84,000 people.



Was this God’s judgment? We don’t know. How and when God brings his judgment isn’t known to us. But throughout the Bible, the Lord acts in his perfect wisdom and judgment toward evil. Jesus even said to his followers as they would face trouble and persecution, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” He is speaking of the judgment of God (Matthew 10:28).

II. God’s Grace at Work

“But Noah found grace and favor in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time,” it says. “And he walked faithfully with God.” Noah was different. God liked what he saw in him. Noah was a good man, a man of integrity in his community. You know the story... God chooses to save Noah and his family. (Think how Baptism is a sign and symbol of being saved through the waters like Noah and the flood, and later, the people of Israel and the Red Sea).

Hebrews 11 in the New Testament defines and recounts Noah's faith. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." It says, "By faith, Noah built a ship in the middle of dry land. He was warned about something he couldn't see, and acted on what he was told. The result? His family was saved. His act of faith drew a sharp line between the evil of the unbelieving world and the rightness of the believing world."

Being a Christian, a follower of Jesus, is all about faith. So much of what Jesus said and did makes no sense to the unfaithful world. The Sermon on the Mount's "beatitudes" are enough to show it. "You're blessed? when you are poor in spirit," blessed? when you're at the end of your rope. You're blessed? when you mourn," blessed? when you've lost what is most dear to you. Blessed? when you're "meek and merciful," when you're content with just who you are - no more, no less, blessed? when you care. Fallen human beings really don't want these things to characterize their lives. They just don't make sense... until you come to know Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Noah and his family were about to embark (I mean, disembark) on a new experience of life. But initially they had to be aware that all they had was provided by the gracious intervention of God. This has ever pointed toward and been true of the greater salvation that we have in Christ. The apostle Paul wrote it this way: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, you are a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

The end of the Noah account is not so wonderful. Drunk, passed out, naked, and then cursing. Noah, after all, was still a fallen human being, as were his sons, their children and so on. Yet the Lord will continue his redemptive plan. The apostle John writes this hope: "Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God" (John 3:19-21).

You and I are like Noah. We live in an increasingly God-denying culture. Yet the Lord seeks and offers to save us. The Day of Judgment will come. When it does, will you only see the face of the Judge? Or will you at the same time see the face of your Savior?

Let us pray together.