

Key Events In Our History – The Universal Flood (Part 1)

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November 15, 2020

Genesis 6 - 9

Some of you may have found the past several weeks somewhat unsettling as COVID-19 infections and deaths have dramatically escalated around the world and especially so in Manitoba where in less than a month we have more than tripled our total number of cases and deaths in less than a month. While that was happening, the regular demands of life continued. A number of you are working in environments where you need to be particularly attentive to the potential presence of COVID-19 and take appropriate precautions. As history unfolds it is comforting to know God remains sovereign and He is interested in us and will care for each of His own.

We can learn a great deal from history, including ancient history. We are fortunate that God saw fit to provide and preserve for us a reliable and trustworthy account of the furthest reaches of history. It is there where we learn in the clearest of language that He created the universe in 6 – 24 hour, or calendar days. The pinnacle of God's creation was the special creation of Adam and Eve. It is little wonder so many people today struggle with identity and suffer from low self-esteem and a diminished sense of belonging when they are told they evolved from monkeys and apes and their existence is the result of blind chance. However, when people realize they aren't the result of chance, but the handiwork of God who placed His imprint upon all humanity when He created Adam and Eve in His own image and that He created them for a purpose, it causes people to sit up straight. When one accepts the truth of God's Word, their view of the person they see in the mirror, changes. It is then they see the image of one whose identity and self-worth is rooted in God. Even though the imprint of God on humanity was marred when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, it wasn't obliterated, it is still there; we are all made in the image of God!

Before we press on to the next key event in our history, pause and reflect on what Eden was like. Adam and Eve communed with God in a perfect environment, surrounded by endless and indescribable beauty. They did not need to watch out for thorns nor thistles, the ground was not cursed, the animals were not estranged from them, nor from one another. There was no suffering, no pain, no death, no sadness, no COVID-19, just harmony and beauty. The centerpiece of course was the presence of God and an intimate relationship with Him. Sadly it was all short lived – Adam and Eve disobeyed God and plunged themselves and their descendants, as well as all of creation into sin. Catastrophic changes occurred in God's creation as harmonious relationships were replaced with alienation which invaded creation, and death became a new norm as many animals became carnivorous and preyed on other animals. But before God expelled Adam and Eve, He gave them a promise that He would provide a way back to Eden. He made it clear in an act filled with symbolic meaning that redemption necessitated the death of an innocent victim as He clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skins. He was pointing forward to the day when

Jesus, His one and only Son, would come to earth and lay down His life at Calvary to provide a way back to Eden. Jesus invites everyone to accept His offer of forgiveness and eternal life. All people need to do is recognize their need for forgiveness and place their faith and trust in Jesus and His sacrifice for their salvation. To gain greater insight into Eden and all that awaits all of God's children, take some time this week to reflectively read through Revelation 21 and 22 which give us a preview of the future. Those 2 chapters form the bookend, if you will, to Genesis 1 and 2. That exercise will lift your spirit and fill you with hope and an incentive to press on even in the midst of earthly struggles and uncertainty.

Genesis 1 – 3 provide us with information essential to correctly interpreting the world we live in. Creation points everyone to the correct starting point for it is the unmistakable evidence that God exists (Rom 1.19 – 21). Scripture also provides us with the indispensable information of cataclysmic change brought about by the Fall. Scripture is the lens through which to examine the evidence we find around us and which validates the Biblical record. The Flood of Noah's day provides more critical information to correctly interpret the world we live in.

The Journey to Destruction

Alienation and the inescapable presence of the sin nature was painfully revealed when Cain killed his brother Abel because God affirmed Abel's sacrifice, but rejected Cain's. Rather than accept God's correction, Cain entrenched his rebellion by rejecting God's counsel. Thereafter, Adam and Eve had another son, whom they named Seth. Additional sons and daughters followed (5.4). Cain, who obviously married one of his sisters, continued in his alienation from God. However, Seth who was also born with a sin nature, chose a God-honoring path. His parents surely told him about Eden and their relationship with God and the promise God had given them. Emerging from these two brothers were two groups of people headed in very different directions. One group, whose lineage is summarized in Genesis 4.17 – 22, patterned their lives after Cain who perpetuated his rebellion against God. The other group patterned their lives after Seth and instead of rebelling, they called upon the Name of the Lord (4.26).

Many skip over the genealogies in the Bible, but don't skip over Genesis 5, for it contains a treasure of information as it details the chronology from Adam to Noah. Why anyone would suggest the precise information in Genesis 5 should be understood in anything other than a straightforward and literal manner, completely baffles me. Many of the same people who dismiss Genesis 5 as literal, would be ecstatic to find a clear chronology of the Egyptian pharaohs rather than need to speculate based on scattered tidbits of information gleaned from fragments of archeological evidence. If you add up the numbers given in Genesis 5 you will discover that Noah was born 1,056 years after creation.

As that first millennium unfolded, humankind chose to turn from God and ignore His counsel just as Cain had done years earlier. Sadly, as time passed the differences in belief and practice between the descendants of Seth and those of Cain were slowly,

but steadily obliterated. The people who once *called on the Name of the Lord* for His guidance and direction, became enticed with the pleasures of sin and yielded to the urge of their sinful nature. The state to which humanity had fallen is summed up in the following verses:

Genesis 6:1–2 (ESV) 6 When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, 2 the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.

Genesis 6:4 (ESV) The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

This decline didn't happen overnight, but was years in the making as the descendants of Seth ignored God and dismissed their God-directed distinctiveness. Tragically, they cast aside their Godly heritage of people who walked with God and instead blindly followed the path to destruction. While these verses don't provide a great amount of detail, the depth of depravity is summed up with the assessment in

Genesis 6:5 (ESV) The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The Lord was patient as He watched the unrestrained escalation of evil which corresponded with their disregard for righteousness. But a tipping point occurred when He would no longer tolerate their unabated rebellion. That point is summed up in the first 2 verses of chapter 6 which focus on an intolerable practice that had become the norm – the intermarriage of the descendants of Seth and those of Cain. Many of you will find notes in your Bibles, or in study guides, suggesting the “*sons of God*” refer to some demonic beings who formed illicit relationships with human women. They contend the product of that relationship was some type of hybrid being that God could not allow to exist. Addressing the fallacies of that popular interpretation goes beyond the scope of this message. It is much more likely, in my opinion, that the *daughters of man*, are none other than the daughters of the ungodly line of Cain, while the *sons of God* are just that, the descendants of the Godly line of Seth. There is nothing demonic about this other than satan and his demonic realm of evil were successful in deceiving those who once *called upon the Name of the Lord*, to rebel against the God of this universe. The *daughters of man* (descendants of Cain) were attractive and *sons of God* (descendants of Seth) decided they would cast aside their distinctiveness as the people of God and His direction for them, and they would do as *they chose* (2).

It takes little reflection to draw parallels between the world in Noah's day and our own. The heartland of the Reformation in Europe bears little evidence of active faith in Jesus Christ today. Towering church buildings, mostly empty, bear testimony to what once was. In North America, the founders of both Canada and our southern neighbor incorporated Biblical truth and Christian values into the fabric of our nations. However, today our country seems more aligned with the world of Noah's day than the values of the Bible. We see it evidenced in widespread immorality, an

assault on truth, a lack of integrity, and a disregard for others. Not only is there a growing disregard for Biblical values in Canada, but even the mention of God has been pushed to the margins of society. Sadly, the Church has not been immune to the escalation of unbelief as multitudes have rejected the faith of their parents and grandparents. The glaring reality of a sharply declining percentage of people who have a meaningful relationship with a local Church is cause for great sorrow. Today the clock is ticking as the years of God's patience are also numbered. While Christians disagree on how the end times will unfold, one thing Biblical Christians agree on is that Jesus is coming back and the words of Jesus serve as a warning to our generation,

Matthew 24:36–39 (ESV) 36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

COVID-19 serves as a beacon to a world where numerous nations were once characterized by people who *called on the Name of the Lord*, but no more. The Flood is a call to all of us to examine ourselves; it is an appeal to ask God to search our hearts and expose unrighteousness, complacency, indifference, and compromised values. The Flood is a call to those who ignore God and His Gospel of salvation, believing as did the multitudes of Noah's Day that they would be just fine on their own. It didn't turn out that way!

God's Patience Ran Out

While the people of Noah's day abandoned God, they failed to observe that they continued to be benefactors of His grace. Despite their unbelief, God's Spirit was active in His care for them.

Genesis 6:3 (ESV) Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.”

However, God set a timeline when that would end. He gave them 120 years to repent and turn from their wickedness. When the 120 years of grace ended they would be faced with an universal flood which would catastrophically destroy *man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens* (7). The pain of what lay ahead grieved God over humanity's choice to forsake Him and continually pursue evil (5-6).

Then, as now, people often mistakenly interpret God's patience and lack of immediate judgement as His approval of their rebellious choices and that there will be no day of reckoning. Rather, it is God giving people opportunity to turn from their sin and turn to Him before it is too late. Sadly, as was the case in Noah's day, rather than reassess their evil and rebellious choices, they further entrenched their wickedness.

God's Provision From Impending Destruction

However, because God remains gracious to the very end, He would provide a means whereby people could be saved from the impending fate of destruction. He would keep the promise He made to Adam and Eve of a way back to Eden. There was only a handful of righteous people left on earth. Among them was Noah who found favor in God's eyes (8). Presumably that number would have included Noah's father, Lamech and grandfather, Methuselah who were still alive when God announced the impending flood, but would die just before it. Some of you may be interested to know that both of them were contemporaries of Adam, both were born before Adam died; a tidbit of information gleaned from the genealogy in Genesis 5. God told Noah He was about to *make an end of all flesh* (13). However, He would provide a means for people to escape the destruction. Noah would embark on a monumental building project – he would build an ark for preservation of himself and his family during the flood, as well as 2 of every kind of animal and bird (14 – 21).

Imagine the task of building the ark, an enormous project even by today's standards, but certainly so without power tools and mechanical equipment. Undoubtedly God provided Noah with far more information on how to build the ark than found in chapter 6. Noah would have had to employ men and assemble materials. Building the ark would have consumed Noah for 120 years. Don't miss the succinct summary of Noah's response to God's will for him.

Genesis 7:5 (ESV) And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

What an example he is to us. Too many times we balk at very small assignments the Lord calls us to, or hesitate using the gifts He has given us. Accepting God's call meant Noah would have to take a very public stand for the Lord. Sometimes we are reluctant to publicly identify with the people of God or to publicly make righteous choices which please the Lord when they conflict with the world's beliefs and choices, but imagine investing 120 years in a project that demonstratively confronted the sinful choices of our neighbors. Considering the faith required to build the ark, it is understandable Noah is included among those stalwarts of the faith in Hebrews 11. Church Swindoll refers to them as *God's Mount Rushmore*.

Hebrews 11:7 (ESV) By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Noah stood out from a corrupt world by his behavior before God's announcement, but did so even more as the countdown to destruction began. Imagine the comments he would have received from the onlookers, the ridicule he likely faced. Many are persuaded Noah built the ark on dry land, perhaps removed by a great distance from any body of water. Many are also persuaded based on Genesis 2.5-6 that there wasn't any rain yet. When asked for an explanation for his project, Noah told the people of the impending flood and pleaded with them to turn from their sin and turn to God.

That's more than speculation since we are told the people didn't obey which implies Noah told them what was going to happen.

1 Peter 3:20 (ESV) because **they formerly did not obey**, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

In the following verse Noah is described as herald, or *preacher of righteousness*.

2 Peter 2:5 (ESV) if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a **herald of righteousness**, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

When the ark was completed and the 120 years came to an end, God signaled to Noah it was time for him and his family to enter the ark. God also directed the animals to come two by two (7.7-9). It is interesting that 7 days would elapse before the flood began (10); perhaps time for Noah and his family with him to reflect as they waited. Lest anyone think for a moment that the account of the Flood is no more than a myth or work of fiction, God very clearly rooted it in history with a number of references pointing out when it happened and how long it lasted,

Genesis 7:11–12 (ESV) 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. 12 And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

The Symbolism Of The Ark

There is a great deal of symbolism found in the Bible and the ark is one of those places.

1. The Ark Was God's Provision

The ark wasn't Noah's idea, it was God's. Even though Noah was a righteous man, he would never have thought about building an ark. Noah surely grieved over the debauchery surrounding him, but it was God who decided that He would destroy life on earth by means of a flood and would provide an ark for safety from that flood.

The ark pictures salvation through Jesus – God's provision which He promised immediately after Adam and Eve's fall. Just as the ark was God's idea, so also is salvation through Jesus. People throughout history have come up with ideas about how they might be at peace with God. All the schemes devised by men have the same characteristic; it is the belief salvation is earned. By contrast, the only way to have a relationship with God is by grace.

2. The Ark Was The Only Means Of Salvation

Noah warned the people about forsaking God and rebelling against Him and the impending flood. He tried to persuade them to walk with God. At first, when it began

to rain the people may have welcomed it. As the rain became more intense and the water began to rise, some may have sought refuge on the higher hills. But in the end, no matter how resourceful the people were, they were doomed to destruction. Only those in the ark would be saved.

Likewise, Jesus is the only way to be saved and get back to Eden – there is no other!

John 14:6 (ESV) Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

3. The Ark Required A Step Of Faith

It took a giant step of faith to build the ark in the first place, but the final step of faith was entering the ark. Once inside, their faith was tested further; they had to wait 7 days for the rain to begin. Perhaps as they waited they heard the shouts of ridicule from the crowds who stood outside and basked in the sunshine. Truth was not decided that day by the vote of the mistaken majority. It was decided by God!

Conclusion

To the person who knows the Lord and is trusting in Jesus for his or her salvation, God’s provision of refuge in the ark is a source of encouragement and comfort. Just as surely as God spared Noah and his family from destruction and cared for them, He will care for and protect all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and His provision for their salvation.

At the same time, the reality of God’s judgement by a flood on humanity makes it abundantly clear that anyone who ignores His invitation to accept salvation from Jesus Christ faces impending and eternal judgement.

Next Sunday, in part 2, I will focus on some of the characteristics of the flood and the cataclysmic change it had on the earth.

May the rearranged version of, **He Will Hold Me Fast**, bless your heart and minister to your soul.

He Will Hold Me Fast sung by **Selah**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unLKmJJPEXk&ab_channel=TheSelahVideos