

Christ Community Covenant Church
Beginnings: "The End of the Beginning"
Pastor Dave Scherrer - April 24, 2016

John Piper in his sermon about the flood said "One of the basic doctrines of Christianity is that history is God's highway to an appointed future." God himself is the state highway commission and the chief engineer and the head foreman on the job. History is not a random path cut through the countryside by people without a compass. It's a highway that leads from creation to consummation, engineered by God who directs everything from his sovereign standpoint into the future. History is going somewhere. God appointed the goal before the foundation of the world, and under his over-arching providence all events serve that goal.

[Two memorial services this week for me – God designed their days and their purposes.]

The Psalm 139:16 says, "***Your eyes saw my unformed body, all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.***" Before you get up tomorrow to make your seemingly small contribution to God's story, he has already written in his book what you will accomplish. And when he writes it down, he is not guessing. According to Isaiah 46:9, 10, God says, "***I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'***" At the beginning of history God saw the end of history. He saw what he aimed to perform, and he knew what had to be done to achieve it, and he decreed that it be: "My counsel shall stand; I will accomplish all my purpose!"

In a very real sense, then, God runs history from the future. He stands, as it were, already at the destination and guides the road crew so that his highway reaches to Zion and not parts unknown. This means that when you want an explanation for some historical event, you don't just look at the past like most historians; you also look to the future. If the ultimate cause of things is running history from the future, then the ultimate explanation of things is found in the future. If the road crew builds a sweeping curve to the west, the ultimate explanation may be that there was a swamp ahead to the east. Let's keep all that in mind as we move to our next passage in our study of Genesis this spring.

We come to the part of our story in the Genesis account of the beginnings of all things with evil increasing. In fact it was all evil all the time.

All evil all the time!

Today we are going to look at God's covenant with Noah. I heard a pastor once comment in a sermon on the flood, "Noah and the ark is *not* a children's story! It is one of the most terrifying and tragic stories of God's wrath in the Bible." That had my attention. Mid-19th century French illustrator and wood engraver, Gustave Dore, captures the mood of the story in his engraving of a huge expanse of empty sea with one lone rock protruding a few feet above the waves. There are three terrified children on the rock, and slipping into the sea are a mother and father trying desperately to push a fourth little baby to safety. On the rock sits a giant tiger. Bodies are floating in the water and overhead circle the exhausted vultures. Whatever else we may say about this story, it is not cute.

Some of us think that this is the most evil time of existence. That the things we are seeing now in the newspapers and on TV and the web couldn't get much worse. The things that are happening to Christians in dangerous places now are horrifying. I agree with this to much an extent. It is certainly and evil time. However when we come to think of sin and its consequence, according to scripture, there is another time that was even more evil. So fallen had the world become that it was, in the eyes of God, beyond redemption. Terrible things were happening and humankind was participating in evil of eternal proportions. We read about some of it in the first part of Genesis 6. I don't want to spend much time here except to make a point of the extent of how fallen and sinful the world had become.

From the reading of Genesis 6 the first few verses it seems as though even the angels (the so called sons of God) and some daughters of men get involved in sexual sin. It seems kind of the stuff of Greek and Roman myths. I'm not sure what to make of it. I have never heard a pastor preach on this passage in 40 years of going to church. However many of the early Christian church writers of the first and second centuries comments on this passage were taken at face value – that evil had so multiplied that the heavens and earth were participating together in sins too evil to describe and all with terrible consequence. Peter seems to be writing of this passage in his letter when he talks of how far Christ's death on the cross reached to save the lost:

1 Pet 3:19-20 For Christ also died for sins...that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which also He went *and made proclamation to the spirits (now) in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah....*

And God is patient and waits for the world, for a nation, for a person to turn around. His ability to continue to love when we would have long written this person off is mind boggling. But remember, I have said many times now in this study that creation of **all things is by Christ and for Christ and through Christ . . . all to the glory of Christ.** And when God judges evil, this too is to the glory of God. None of us could worship a God who winks at evil and injustice and sin and does not uphold His own glory and majesty and righteousness and holiness. And so when evil had grown to eternal proportions God judges the world:

Genesis 1:5-8 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. ⁶The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷So the LORD said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them."

We forget sometimes how bad sin is, in the world and in us

1. There are no private personal sins
2. Every sin is an offence to the cross and to the Savior – "we'll never know how much it cost to see our sin upon that cross"
3. The answer is to repent – to turn from that sin and move toward Christ. If there is unconfessed sin in your life, today is the day to confess and turn back to Christ. Today is the day to trust that God will work it out, that we don't need shortcuts, and that there is no such thing as second best – there is only Christ and Him crucified and death. There is nothing in between.

But then in our study this morning we read this hope! **...But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.** We sing songs about it . . .

Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD

Genesis 6:8-9 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

This is a story of unspeakable evil, the judgement of God and in the midst of that evil consequence, God rescues His beloved humanity made in His image designed to be in fellowship with the Almighty!

So the story is . . .

- Noah found favor in God's eyes
- He was told that God was going to judge the evil world with a flood
- God instructed Noah to build an ark large enough to carry animals to replenish and his extended family



The Egyptian word box - or simply but huge casket



So God has made a promise to Noah and when God promises . . .

If God makes a promise – Take it to the bank!

- He promised it would flood and it did.
- He promised that he would destroy all living life except that redeemed by the ark – and he did
- He promised to save Noah and his family and He did

Chapter 10

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

If you want to do a study of the covenants of God you can use the notes provided in the bulletin . . .

- The Adamic Covenant**
- The Noahic Covenant**
- The Abrahamic Covenant**
- The Palestinian Covenant**
- The Mosaic Covenant**
- The Davidic Covenant**
- The New Covenant**

I want to turn a corner here; I want us to begin to see God’s personal efforts to save. Listen to this from chapter 7:

v12 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. ¹³ On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, ¹⁴ they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every

winged creature. ¹⁵ They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶ And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him . . .

And then it says this amazing thing that is so easily missed. **“Then the LORD shut them in” (v18b)**

Otherwise who would shut them in? Someone righteous would have to stand outside the door and be the savior, because no one in need of salvation could do it for themselves. This is good and deep theology. We need someone outside of ourselves to save us. We cannot do it for ourselves.

Today, we have that Savior. We have an infinitely greater Ark—the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus said it Himself in John 10 (v9) - “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved.”

Christ and the Ark; Salvation promised – Salvation fulfilled . . . Pay attention!

Jesus Christ is our ark, our refuge of salvation promised to us and as I said about God’s promises – you can take that to the bank. Jesus fulfilled that salvation and now we must pay attention here. There is a deep truth of faith right here in this story.

Our faith in Christ to save us is like the faith of Noah that the ark would save him. He began building the ark to save his family 22 years before he had a family. He worked 120 years waiting for the rain he had never seen before came. When there was only a promise, Noah responded in faith. And faith we know is important . . .

Hebrews 11:6-7

Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. 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.

It is interesting I think. Sin is just as much a problem after the flood as before. Did you ever think about that? The flood of judgment did not eradicate sin; the covenant of grace did not guarantee righteousness. If God's purpose was to fill the earth with the glory of his righteousness, then we must conclude one of two things: God is a failure, or God is preparing for something greater in the future. Remember God establishes the road of history from the future. God is not a failure because he is not done saving! Peter writing in the New Testament sees the flood as a foreshadowing of the final judgment with fire (2 Peter 3:5–7), and the ark as a foreshadowing of final salvation (1 Peter 3:20–21), and the days of Noah as typical of the last days before the coming of the Son of Man . . .

Matthew 24:36-39 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son,^[a] 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.

The story of Noah and the flood is incomplete in itself. God still hates sin and no remedy was found. The story cries out for an epilogue.

And there is a final clue in the story about the epilogue to come. It's found in Genesis 8:20. At the end of the flood and before God had made his covenant, "Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man.'" God's gracious covenant with Noah was a response to a pure sacrifice. Is not this, too, a foreshadowing that God, who must find a remedy for sin, will find it in another greater sacrifice, namely, the sacrifice of his Son?