

Chapter 8: Judgment and Salvation

Genesis 6:9–7:24

Is God a God of judgment and wrath, or is he a God of salvation and grace? Whether consciously or unconsciously, we often try to define God exclusively in one of these two categories. If we believe that God is purely a wrathful God, then we will image that God is constantly hiding behind the next corner, spying on us to figure out new reasons to punish us. We will relate to God in fear and resentment that will choke out any love for him. But, if we believe that God is purely a gracious, saving God, then we will imagine that he is somehow obligated to save us. We will relate to God with irreverence and entitlement that will prevent a healthy fear of God.

Instead, the Scriptures testify to a God who would reject the premises of that question. God is not defined by anything other than himself. He is not defined by wrath or by grace. Rather, he defines himself; he is who he is (Ex. 3:14). Furthermore, God insists that his judgment and his salvation necessarily hang together. If God's people do not need to be saved *from* anything, then it is misleading to call God's grace towards his people "salvation." Because God's people desperately need deliverance from the wrath to come, then we look to God to save us from his own judgment. God both judges *and* saves. In response, we look to him in faith to save us by repenting from the sin that he swears to judge.

This paradoxical nature of God is at the heart of the story of the Flood in Genesis 6:9–7:24. Here, we see God judging the world in its total corruption (Gen. 6:5, 11–12) through a Flood that destroys everything on the earth. But in this, we also see God working to save a remnant of his creation to repopulate the world after the its destruction. This remnant includes Noah and his family, and also every kind of bird, animal, and creeping thing. The salvation of God's remnant comes *through* the judgment of the Flood, not apart from it. In this story, we see God for who he truly is. God is neither exclusively a God of wrath, nor exclusively a God of grace, but a righteous God who judges the wicked *and* delights to save his people.

Salvation for a New Creation (Gen. 6:9–22)

The narrator structures the sections within Genesis 6:9–7:24 through two major features. The first feature is a third "generations of" (*tôledôt*) statement: "These are the generations of Noah" (Gen. 6:9). This statement helps us to locate this story within the wider book of Genesis. As with the previous two "generations of" statements (Gen. 2:4, 5:1), we have already met Noah, but now we will focus more closely on the outcome of his story. Previously, we received three pieces of information about Noah: (1) Noah's father Lamech predicted that Noah would bring relief from the curse (Gen. 5:29), (2) Noah has three sons of his own: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 5:32), and (3) Noah found grace in the eyes of Yahweh (Gen. 6:8). The first two verses of the "generations of Noah" will reiterate and expand upon these three ideas.

The second feature is the repetition of the word “all/every/everything” (*kōl*) to signal the complete fulfillment of some aspect of the word of God. Twice, we read that Noah completed “all” that God had commanded him for some aspect of building and preparing the ark (Gen. 6:22, 7:5). Then at the end of Genesis 7, we read that God has done “all” that he promised to do by destroying *everything* through the Flood: “*all* flesh....*all* swarming creatures...*all* mankind. *Everything* on dry land....*every* living thing” (Gen. 7:21–23).

Our first section of this larger passage, then, runs from Genesis 6:9–22, concluding with the phrase that “Noah did this; he did *all* that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22). In this section, God commands the creation of an ark for the purpose of preserving a remnant of creation through the Flood by covenant.

The Righteousness of Noah

To begin, the narrator provides us the backdrop of the situation by contrasting the righteousness of Noah with the total corruption of the earth. Noah is described in three phrases: he is “a righteous man” who is “blameless in his generation” and who “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9).¹ These three descriptions together draw a bright contrast between Noah and the remainder of his generation. The rest of humanity during the days of Noah are all “corrupt in God’s sight,” having filled the earth “with violence” (Gen. 6:11). God counts Noah, on the other hand, as righteous before him (cf. Gen. 7:1). Later on in Genesis, God will also call Abraham “righteous” (Gen. 15:6) and “blameless” (Gen. 17:1). Importantly, God clarifies there that Abraham is counted righteous *because* of his faith (Gen. 15:6) and *in spite of* several blatant sins (e.g., Gen. 12:10–20, 16:1–16, 20:1–18). After the Flood narrative, we will read about some of Noah’s sin as well (Gen. 9:20–26). While we should not downplay the righteousness of Noah (especially in comparison to his contemporaries), we also cannot take these statements as though they mean that Noah is entirely perfect.

Instead, the description of how Noah “walked with God” helps the most to define his spiritual condition. This phrase is identical to the description of Enoch in Genesis 5:22, 24, with a verbal stem that we might translate as “walked continually” or “walked to and fro” to capture the ongoing nature of how he “walked with God.” This is the exact same form of the verb used to describe the way that Yahweh God himself “walked” in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8) to describe a special form of possession. In Genesis 3, Yahweh God’s “walking” described his special ownership of the garden of Eden that qualified him to come as a Judge against Adam’s sin. Here in Genesis 6, we might similarly say that Noah’s “walking with God” suggests that he enjoyed an intimate, personal knowledge of Yahweh, who was his most prized “possession.”²

Rather than teaching the perfection of Noah, then, these comments teach us what the Scriptures proclaim in both the Old and the New Testaments: that righteousness and blamelessness come by faith. To be even more specific, these virtues come by the kind of *living* faith intimately knowing and loveing (i.e., “walking with”) God. God counts those righteous who “cultivate righteousness purely, and from their heart,” even though they are not “in every respect perfect.”³ John Sailhamer points out that “God delivers those who ‘walk with’ him and who do not ‘corrupt his way’” like the rest of Noah’s generation.⁴ God’s standard is not perfection, but sincere faith.

While we know very little about Noah’s three sons at this point, Shem, Ham, and Japheth will become important later when they repopulate the world after the Flood. Until then, Noah alone is the focus of the narrative, not them.⁵ Often in the course of Genesis 6–8, the narrator does not even

name them, only writing about them in relation to their father: “Noah, his wife, his sons, and his sons wives” or “Noah and his sons” (Gen. 6:18; 7:7, 13; 8:16, 18; 9:1, 8). These phrases underscore the fact that every person surviving the Flood is saved through the ark only because of the righteousness, blamelessness, and walking-with-God faith of Noah; they have no claim to salvation on their own.⁶

God Saw That All Flesh Was Corrupt

Sadly, Noah’s faith-wrought righteousness is the exception in a sea of wickedness: “[11] Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. [12] And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (Gen. 6:11–12). Where Noah walks with God, the rest of his generation walks in corruption and violence.

In the previous chapter, we observed that God alone has the authority to *see* good and evil. When human beings disregard the word of God about what is good and evil, and instead *take* the *good* that they *see* for themselves (Gen. 3:6, 6:2), they inevitably commit all kinds of wickedness. When Yahweh looks on a world filled with people who *see* and *take* their own *good*, he sees “that the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Gen. 6:5). This same phrase is repeated twice in Genesis 6:11–12: (1) the earth was corrupt *in God’s sight*, and (2) *God saw* the earth, and behold, it was corrupt. God refuses to abdicate his rightful authority to see (that is, to *judge*) the difference between good and evil, no matter how hard human beings try to usurp it.

The word used for “corrupt” in Genesis 6:11–12 can elsewhere describe a spoiled garment (Jer. 13:7) or a spoiled pot that the potter must destroy and rework into another vessel (Jer. 18:4).⁷ The narrator uses this same verb in a different verbal stem to describe the destruction that God will now bring because of the corruption: “And God said to Noah, ‘I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will *destroy* them with the earth’” (Gen. 6:13). To capture the dual meaning of this verb, we might translate both meanings with the word “ruin,” which can either mean “spoil” or “destroy.”⁸

But what does God mean by saying that “all flesh” has corrupted their way (Gen. 6:12)? As mentioned earlier, this use of the word “all” partially functions to open a bracket in the narrative that will be closed at the end, in Genesis 7:21–23, when God fulfills his word by destroying “all flesh.” So, while the phrase “all flesh” can sometimes refer only to human beings (Jer. 25:31), this passage is deliberately using it in reference to both animals and people (Gen. 6:17, 19; 7:15, 16, 21; 8:17).⁹ It is difficult to know what it would mean for the animals to “corrupt their way on the earth,” but it is possible that this describes a deep, general breakdown in all creation because of human sin. Human sin affects not only the interpersonal relationships between human beings, but every other part of creation as well (cf. Rom. 8:19–23).

Indeed, the Scriptures record several places both where God threatens to send animals as judgment for sin (Lev. 26:22), but also where God actually does send animals in judgment. For example, God sends various animals as plagues against Egypt (Ex. 8:1–32, 10:1–20), fiery serpents against Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness (Num. 21:6), bears against the young men who mocked Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:23–24), lions against both disobedient prophets (1 Kgs. 13:24–28, 20:36) and also the pagans whom the Assyrians resettled in Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:25–26), locusts to decimate the crops of Judah (Joel 1–3), and a great fish to swallow Jonah (Jon. 1:17). In the New Testament, we read that demons can possess pigs, driving them to self-destruction (Mark 5:11–13). If human beings were

created to exercise dominion over animals (Gen. 1:26, 28), then the corruption of animals illustrates just how serious the breakdown of creational norms has become.

The Earth Was Filled with Violence

The narrator identifies the specific sin for which God judges the world: "...and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). God reiterates this to Noah, explaining that he has "determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen. 6:13). Violence was originally the sin of Cain by murdering his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8), and then Cain's descendants inherited and increased Cain's violence as we saw in Lamech, who murdered a weaker young man who had merely struck and wounded him (Gen. 4:23–24). In part, this identification of violence as the main sin for which God sent the Flood helps to bolster the overall sense across Genesis 4–6 the major change that has happened in the world is that the godly sons of Seth have not continued walking in the worship of Seth (Gen. 4:26) and Enoch (Gen. 5:22, 24), but that even they have given themselves to the daughters of Cain (Gen. 6:2, 4) and the ways of Cain by filling the earth with violence (Gen. 6:11).

But even if that speculation is incorrect, this statement reminds us that Cain was banished into exile because he shed innocent blood (Gen. 4:10–12). Later, God will eventually send the people of Judah into exile in Babylon for their innocent bloodshed (2 Kgs. 24:3–4). Innocent bloodshed pollutes the land (Num. 35:33–34), so God must now purify the land through a severe, catastrophic exile: the judgment of the Flood.

Noah As Confidant

Even in light of the extensive praise for Noah as a righteous and blameless man who walks with God, it is still striking to see God confide his plans with Noah. Certainly, Noah would not find himself in such a position if he did not enjoy such intimacy with God.¹⁰ Still, even intimacy with God does not obligate God to confide in Noah in this way. God later admits Abraham into his confidence to reveal the looming destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. But even there, God deliberates with himself about whether he should open his decrees to a mortal: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed by him?" (Gen. 18:17–18). This does not mean that God is having a debate with himself. Instead, God is going out of his way to identify the reasons why he has chosen to reveal this significant event to Abraham in advance.

There is one major difference between when God confides in Noah and when he confides in Abraham. When God reveals his plans to destroy Sodom, Abraham intercedes, pleading to God to spare the city if there are even a small number of righteous people in it (Gen. 18:22–33). In Genesis 6, however, Noah is altogether silent throughout the story of the Flood, so that his first words only come in Genesis 9:25 when he curses Canaan for the sins of Ham.¹¹ The narrator does not draw an explicit contrast between Abraham's mediation and Noah's lack thereof. Rather, the emphases of the text fall on (1) the gracious election of Noah for salvation out of all humankind on the earth (Gen. 6:8), and (2) the absolute obedience of Noah to do everything that God commands him to do in preparation for the Flood (Gen. 6:22), as we will see in the next section.

Life through Death and Covenant

God follows his pronouncement of judgment with a plan: he will destroy the world with a Flood, but save a remnant of Noah and Noah's family through an ark. The construction of the ark serves an obvious practical purpose by allowing Noah, his family, and animals to float out the Flood in order to repopulate the world afterward. Beyond that purpose, the dimensions and description of the ark's construction carry significant symbolic and theological weight as well.

First, God gives the details for the construction of this ark. The ark shall be constructed of gopher wood¹² and covered inside and outside with pitch. The word for this "ark" (*tēbā*) is not the same word that will eventually be used to describe the "ark" (*'ārôn*) of the covenant. Instead, the word *tēbā* appears again in Exodus 2, when Moses's family preserves the life of their infant son by putting him in a basket, that basket is called an "ark" (*tēbā*). Like Noah's ark, Moses's ark is also made waterproof with pitch (Ex. 2:3).¹³ Both for Noah and for Moses, the "ark" will bring them beyond the threat of death to life through water.

This word for "ark" is likely borrowed from a similar Egyptian word that means "chest" or "coffin," and indeed, the dimensions of the ark (300 cubits long x 50 cubits wide by 30 cubits tall; Gen. 6:15) are those of a coffin.¹⁴ It is not only that Noah (and, later, Moses) will be brought through the waters from death to life. More than that, they will do so by floating in safety on a symbol of death. To save their lives, they must die.

Second, God explains the reason why he will spare Noah: his covenant. After stating that he will send the Flood to destroy everything on the earth (Gen. 6:17), God continues, saying, "But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you" (Gen. 6:18). This is the first mention of "covenant" in the Bible.¹⁵ Previously God related to humankind in a general way, accepting those who "do well" by worshiping in faith, and rejecting those who do not (Gen. 4:7). God does not define the nature of this covenant here, so we will wait to comment to the precise nature of the Noachian covenant until we study Genesis 8:20–9:17. For now, we should simply note that a covenant is an agreement or a treaty. In this covenant, God will both make promises to, and put obligations upon, those who enter into covenant with him.

In this case, God promises that he will preserve Noah and his family through the ark. After the Flood, God will establish his covenant not only with Noah, but with every living thing that emerges from the ark to repopulate the world (Gen. 8:20–9:17). Here, God only states that he will make his covenant with Noah, but then he immediately moves on to speaking about the *effect* of the covenant, in stating that Noah's entire family will come aboard the ark along with "every living thing of all flesh...two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you" (Gen. 6:18–19). This group of creatures will include birds, animals, and creeping things, according to their kinds, male and female to reproduce according to their kinds (Gen. 6:20). God commands Noah also to bring food, both for Noah and his family, and for the animals boarding the ark with them (Gen. 6:21). While we do not read explicitly until Genesis 9:9–10 that God's covenant will be with Noah, his offspring after him, and every living creature with him, that scope is implied here in Genesis 6:19–21.

There is another purpose behind this list of people and creatures that will enter into the ark for salvation. The Flood itself will be a de-creation, as we will see later in our exposition. The ark, however, will serve as a sanctuary to preserve a remnant of creation to populate the world after the

Flood. For this reason, the list of creatures is written to reflect the language of Genesis 1, so that God commands Noah to bring every “living thing” (Gen. 6:19; cf. Gen. 1:28), “male and female” (Gen. 6:19; cf. Gen. 1:27), “birds according to their kinds” (Gen. 6:20; cf. Gen. 1:21), “animals according to their kinds” (Gen. 6:20; cf. Gen. 1:25), “every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind” (Gen. 6:20; cf. Gen. 1:24).¹⁶ Furthermore, God instructs Noah to bring “food” for the humans and for the animals (Gen. 6:21), a reference back to God’s abundant provision of “food” in the garden, both for the humans and for the animals (Gen. 1:29–30).¹⁷

In a real way, then, the ark becomes the new garden of Eden, filled with God’s righteous people, all birds, animals, and creeping things, according to their kinds, and plenty of food to eat. God is judging the world, and, as we will see, destroying his creation in entirety. Nevertheless, God preserves one surviving exception. On the ark, God is beginning his creation again through a remnant that will be preserved through the Flood. And in Genesis 6:22 we read that “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.” This statement if *all* that Noah did concludes the section.

Salvation by Atonement (Gen. 7:1–5)

As we read Genesis 7:1–5, Noah has finished building the structure of the ark (Gen. 6:22). But, something significant happens in Genesis 7:1–5 so that the narrator concludes this second section with a nearly identical phrase: “And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him” (Gen. 7:5). By again saying that Noah did *all* that Yahweh had commanded, and not simply that he had completed a single task “as God had commanded” (Gen. 7:9, 16), the use of the important word “all” tells us that Genesis 7:1–5 is a distinct section in its own right. What significant thing is happening here?

First, notice that the narrative shifts from using the word “God” (Gen. 6:9, 11, 12, 13, 22) to using “Yahweh” at Genesis 7:1. “God” declared that he would make a covenant with his people, so his people begin to interact with him by his covenantal name, “Yahweh.” Also, there may be an echo of the change from Genesis 1 to Genesis 2, since in the first chapter we read about how “God” created the heavens and the earth, but in the second chapter, we read about what “Yahweh God” did to establish the first human beings in the garden of Eden.

Second, Yahweh commands Noah to enter into the ark after recognizing again that Noah is “righteous before [Yahweh] in this generation” (Gen. 7:1). With him, Yahweh commands Noah to bring seven pairs of clean animals, along with a pair that is “not clean.” Interestingly, Victor Hamilton points out that the text never calls the other animals by the word later used to describe all that is “unclean,” but he simply calls them “not clean.”¹⁸ While animals that are “not clean” are permitted aboard the ark, the emphasis of the narrative is on the clean animals entering into the ark, along with righteous Noah.

God already commanded Noah to take two of every kind of animal, male and female, for the repopulation of the earth with birds, beasts, and creeping things (Gen. 6:19–20). When, then, does Yahweh now command that Noah should take seven pairs of all clean animals? In fact, the clean animals serve an important purpose once Noah and his family will disembark from the ark: “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20). Since burnt offerings are the sacrifices that make atonement for sin (Lev. 1), Yahweh commands the bringing of these animals to prepare for

what will become an important part of his covenant with his people: atonement. After the Flood, Yahweh will require blood sacrifices to atone for the sin of his people.

Preparing for these burnt offerings is so significant, then, that the spotlight falls on the bringing of these clean animals for an entire major section before we come again to the phrase, “And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him” (Gen. 7:5). Later, this same language will be used to describe how Moses completes everything Yahweh commanded for the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:16–33).¹⁹ And indeed, we have already observed that the ark will serve as a sanctuary to preserve the original creation through the judgment that God pours out on the world through the Flood as a new garden of Eden. The garden of Eden, however, was never simply a beautiful place to live; it was the original tabernacle where God dwelt with his people, the archetype for what the tabernacle and the temple would later imitate.²⁰ The themes and imagery suggest that Noah is not building a mere ship, but a floating tabernacle that will preserve Noah, Noah’s family, and all animals by a covenant that will be cut on the other side of the Flood. Sailhamer writes:

There are important similarities between the account of the building of the ark and two other narratives in the Pentateuch, viz., the account of Creation in Genesis 1 and the building of the tabernacle in Exodus 25–39. Each account has a discernible pattern: God speaks, an action is commanded (imperative/jussive), and the command is carried out according to God’s will. The key to these similarities lies in the observation that each narrative concludes with a divine blessing (Ge 1:28; 9:1; Ex. 39:43) and, in the case of the tabernacle and Noah’s ark, a divinely ordained covenant (Ge 6:8; Ex 34:27). In this regard it is of some importance that later biblical tradition also associated the events of Genesis 1–3 with the making of a divine covenant (e.g., Hos 6:7). Like Moses, Noah followed closely the commands of God and in so doing found salvation and blessing in his covenant.²¹

From this, we understand why all the animals are, at worst, “not clean,” rather than explicitly *unclean*. This is the tabernacle of Yahweh, the means of bringing his people through the judgment so that they may dwell with him. Not everything will be clean, but nothing will be unclean (cf. Rev. 21:27).

Salvation through Judgment (Gen. 7:6–24)

When Noah is 600 years old, God finally sends judgment upon the earth with the great Flood. Noah, his sons, his wife, his sons’ wives, and a sampling of animals escape this judgment inside the ark (Gen. 7:6–9). While Yahweh protects a remnant of his creation, the Flood comes to destroy everyone else. This Flood is not merely judgment by death, but judgment by de-creation, which we see in two major ways.

De-Creation

First, we read that the Flood comes not only from significant rain, but also from the oceans, since the “great deeps” pour forth: “...on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened” (Gen. 7:11). This detail informs us that God’s great work of organizing and taming the watery chaos above the expanse and below the expanse (Gen. 1:6–7) comes apart, so that the waters are no longer separated from the dry land (Gen. 1:9–10). From above

and from below, the waters transgress their boundaries together to engulf the dry land, returning the formless chaos (Gen. 1:2) that God had tamed in the beginning.²²

Second, we read that the waters “prevailed so mightily on the earth” (Gen. 7:19) that

[21] ...all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. [22] Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. [23] He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. (Gen. 7:21–23)

In other words, the creation that once teemed with life and fullness now returns to the “void” emptiness (Gen. 1:2) that God had sought to fill. It was “very good” (Gen. 1:31) for God to form the chaos and to fill the void. Because of the corruption of all flesh on the earth, God now returns the earth to the formless emptiness that it began. All that remains is “Noah...and those who were with him in the ark” (Gen. 7:23).

Two main themes emerge from this passage. First, the description of the Flood as judgment is written to match the sin of the world. Kenneth Mathews, then, points out the numerous verbal links between Genesis 7:21–24 and 6:1–8

The language of our passage, including vv. 21–24, backtracks to 6:1–8, which tells of humanity’s increasing sin and God’s response to destroy the earth: “increased” (*rābab*, vv. 17–18) is reminiscent of how “great” (*rabbā*) man’s wickedness is (6:5); “rose” (*qābar*, vv. 18, 20, 24), rendered “prevailed” (AV, NASB), echoes its noun derivative “heroes” or “strong ones” (*gibbōrīm*; 6:4); and “wiped out” (*māhā*; v. 23) repeats the first condemnation in 6:7. The inclusive language, “all,” “every” and “everything” (*kōl*), imitates the universality and pervasiveness of humanity’s wickedness (6:5). By this linkage the narrative shows the causal relationship between the sin of humanity and the consequent flood that came upon the perverse world.²³

By reusing these words, the narrator demonstrates that the punishment of the Flood fits the crime of humanity’s great sin.²⁴ From another angle, these repeated words also remind us that sin is in itself its own judgment. In this case, the de-creation of the heavens and the earth through the Flood finalized what the deep sin of humankind began by inverting the created order of the world in favor of a warped, destructive world order dominated by the curse. Or, to put this another way, the Flood simply brings about the full de-creational consequences of what the humankind already brought upon itself.

Preservation through Judgment

Second, the Flood illustrates the nature of Noah’s salvation as a preservation through judgment. Noah and his family are not exempted from the Flood, but they experience the Flood from the safety of the ark. Judgment and salvation are not two separate paths, but the same path under different circumstances. In the same way, Jesus himself will secure salvation for his people through the judgment of the cross. It is only after he fully drained the cup of his Father’s wrath by submitting

himself to death for three days that he is vindicated and resurrected from the dead.

This experience of salvation through judgment is not unique to Noah and his family, nor to Jesus. Instead, the experience of salvation through judgment becomes a pattern for all those who follow Christ. We are called to cruciform lives. Our salvation does not come through strength and power, but through weakness (2 Cor. 12:9–10). By sharing in Christ's own sufferings, we become like him in his death and, ultimately, we will partake with him in his resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10–11). The Christian gospel is not a message of prosperity, but of suffering; however, through following Jesus by faith into his sufferings, he promises to bring us safe to the other side so that we will share in his glory forever.

This theology stands behind Peter's eye-brow raising discussion of Noah's flood:

[18] For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, [19] in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, [20] 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. [21] Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, [22] who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. (1 Pet. 3:18–22)

When Peter says that baptism's correspondence to Noah's ark saves us, he is not saying that the waters of baptism can save you any more than the waters of the Flood saved the world. In both cases, the waters are for judgment, and salvation happens by saving people *through* the danger of the waters. Rather, "baptism...now saves you" because of its correspondence to Noah's ark, where "a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water" (1 Pet. 3:20). We pass safely and savingly through the judgment waters of baptism by faith. Our hope is not in a religious ceremony, but in the promise that our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ will preserve us by his power and authority, no matter how many sufferings we endure in this life.

The judgment waters of the Flood, therefore, serve as a type that foreshadows baptism. In the same way, the ark serves as a type of the church, since baptism is the covenant sign that engrafts God's people into the church. Like the ark, God has made the church his new temple (Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:4–5) and the beginning of his new creation (2 Cor. 5:16–21), carrying his remnant people through judgment to safety. The day is coming when Christ will return to judge the world and to purify his sin-stained creation. This time, Christ will not use water, but fire (2 Pet. 3:11–13). As he purifies creation with fire, he will cause all the chaos and sin of the old order to pass away forever by renewing the heavens and the earth so that God can dwell with his people in righteousness forever (Rev. 21:1–5).

Discussion Questions

1. Do you see God primarily as a God of judgment and wrath, or primarily as a God of grace and salvation? How does that affect how you worship him? How does that affect the way you love him?

How does that affect the way you think about your justification and assurance? How does that affect the way you pursue growing in grace by sanctification?

2. Why does God choose to take Noah into his confidence by revealing his plans to destroy the world by a flood? Why does God choose to take us into his confidence by revealing his coming judgment in his word? Does your life reflect the urgency of the coming judgment, in the way that Noah does *all* that God commands him to do?

3. Why does God insist that Noah take sacrificial animals with him on the ark? If God destroys all of creation with a flood, for whose benefit are the sacrifices? Why does God design the ark as a new tabernacle? What does this whole picture tell us about the way that God's church pass through the floods of judgment by faith?

4. How do judgment and salvation hang together? Does either glorify God more than the other? Can one stand apart from the other? Can we fully untangle the glorious purposes of God for judgment and for salvation? Reflect on Romans 11:33–36, especially v. 36: “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Notes

1. The Hebrew word for “generation” (דֹּר) in Genesis 6:9 has no relationship to the Hebrew word used for “These are the *generations* of...” (דֹּרֹתָי) throughout the book of Genesis.

2. For a lexical discussion of the meaning of “walk” (הִלְכָה) in the Hithpael stem, see previous comments on Genesis 3:8 and Genesis 5:22, 24.

3. Calvin, *Genesis*, 251–52. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom01.xii.i.html>>

4. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 124.

5. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Volume 1*, 170.

6. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 298.

7. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Volume 1*, 171.

8. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Volume 1*, 171.

9. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 279.

10. Kidner, *Genesis*, 94.

11. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 280.

12. “Gopher” is a transliteration of the actual Hebrew word *gōpher* that has no connection to the rodent that we call a “gopher.” Scholars are not sure what kind of wood this is.

13. Kidner, *Genesis*, 95.

14. Kidner, *Genesis*, 95.

15. Kidner, *Genesis*, 96.

16. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 369.

17. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Volume 1*, 176.

18. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 287.

19. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 125–26.

20. “There is much here that is reminiscent of Gen. 3. Inside the ark parallels inside the garden; outside the ark parallels outside the garden. Inside there is salvation; outside there is not. Inside there is immunity from

disaster; outside there is inevitable death. The ark is spared; the earth is doomed.” (Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 295.)

21. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 125.

22. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 291.

23. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 379–80.

24. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15, Volume 1*, 172.