

# God Judges With the Flood but Favors Noah

Genesis 5-7

## Focus Verse

“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.’” – Genesis 6:13

- The Cadence of the Curse – Genesis 5
- Sin’s Corruption on the Earth – Genesis 6:1-7:10
- God’s Condemnation through the Flood – Genesis 7:11-24

## Engage

Many people know about Noah and the Flood, a popular Bible story for children. Noah, his family, and all the animals, two by two, inhabit an ark for 40 days and 40 nights as floodwaters rise. However, Noah’s story is not your typical children’s story. Rather than a tale about happy people floating in a boat, the account warns of God’s just judgment on the wickedness of mankind. An account of destruction with a haunting loss of life, it brings pain and sorrow to both God and man. **When you take time to deeply ponder this passage, you come face-to-face with the depth and reality of your own sin.**

The story also highlights God’s grace. One man found favor in the eyes of the Lord. But Noah did not earn that favor. Though he was indeed faithful in seeking God, Noah was spared because God is gracious and rewards those who diligently seek Him. Sin must be judged. God is the only One who fully and perfectly sees and understands the inclinations of people’s hearts. These chapters are hard, sad and yet right. **God alone judges justly but also extends saving grace.**

## The Cadence of the Curse – Genesis 5

Genesis 5 contains one of several genealogical lists in Genesis. A sobering drumbeat echoes through the list of names, a repeated reminder of sin’s universal and inevitable penalty – “and then he died.”<sup>1</sup> As Paul states in Romans 5:14, “... death reigned from the time of Adam ...” **God may delay promised judgment because of His patience and mercy, but each generation lived, then died.**<sup>2</sup> Genesis typically records the families that carried God’s promised offspring forward after listing families that rejected Him. Therefore, Adam’s family line through Seth in Genesis 5 follows Cain’s descendants listed in Genesis 4.

Cain’s descendants focused on worldly success and power. Their legacy mentions neither God nor individual life spans. **Seth’s descendants included people who related to God through grace, obedience and worship.** The ages recorded show the lasting value of each life.

### Seth’s Descendants

This genealogy confronts us with death but also hope. The repeated phrases “he became the father

of” and “other sons and daughters” speak of God’s continued blessing within an increasingly evil generation. **In every generation, God faithfully raises up people to keep the knowledge of Him alive.** The hope of faith and new life shines through the consistent reality of death. Seth’s genealogy includes three prominent men of faith – Enosh, Enoch and Noah.

#### Enosh – 5:9-11

During the time of Enosh, son of Seth and grandson of Adam, “people began to call on the name of the LORD” (Genesis 4:26).

#### Enoch – 5:21-24

Enoch walked faithfully with God for 300 years after the birth of his son, Methuselah, while living amid an evil generation. His faith and obedience pleased God.<sup>3</sup> Jude 1:14 confirms Enoch, son of Jared and father of Methuselah, prophesied coming judgment.<sup>4</sup> Enoch stands apart from the rest of humanity because he did not die. God “took him away” without experiencing the sting of death.

## Noah – 5:28-32

Noah's father, Lamech, unlike the Lamech in Cain's line, honored the Lord. Upon Noah's birth, Lamech declared, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed." The name he chose for his son demonstrated hope in God. In Hebrew, *Noah* means "rest" and suggests comfort.

## Human Longevity

What accounts for such long life spans before the Flood? Some suggest the list names tribes, not individuals. Others interpret the ages as symbolic or legendary. However, there are valid reasons to accept the ages recorded. **Creation stories worldwide**

**portray the first people living extremely long lives.**

As sin's destruction compounds over generations, we expect disease, dietary problems, natural disaster, stress and violence to accelerate physical aging and death.

## Bible Chronology

Bible students have tried to use the ages in genealogies to compute dates for biblical events. **The best way to read these biblical lists is to focus on the key people God used to keep knowledge of Him alive on the earth.** Ten names were selected for the genealogies from Adam to Noah and from Shem to Abraham.<sup>5</sup> Names were likely omitted because symmetry, rather than an exhaustive record, appears to be the aim.

## What Does it Mean to "call on the name of the Lord?"

The phrase "call on the name of the LORD" appears for the first time in Genesis 4:26. At that time, a community began to publicly acknowledge and honor God by seeking His presence. The concept of the "name of the LORD" in Scripture encompasses much more than a word that identifies God. The name of God encompasses the full measure of His inexhaustible character. **To "call on the name of the LORD" implies seeking God through faith, with a desire to know Him.** The theme of calling on the name of the Lord flows throughout Scripture.<sup>6</sup>

Scripture also addresses those who refuse to call on the name of the Lord. Individuals and nations who reject God await His judgment.<sup>7</sup> Psalm 14:4 calls those who never call on the Lord "evildoers." **God has revealed enough about Himself, even in creation, to hold people accountable to acknowledge and seek Him, to call on His name.**<sup>8</sup>

The love and pardon offered by God through His Son, the Savior, makes refusal to call on the name of the Lord even more tragic. Hear God's sorrowful lament: "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations."<sup>9</sup> **Beginning with Enosh, believers have called on the name of the Lord for salvation and daily needs.** The psalmist states, "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."<sup>10</sup>

## Sin's Corruption on the Earth – Genesis 6:1-7:10

Genesis 5 simultaneously records the thread of faith and the reality of death in the generations from Adam to Noah. In Genesis 6, the glaring disparity between the minority of people who honored God and the majority who rejected Him escalates. Human wickedness multiplied along with the earth's population. **The rise of evil not only impacted people but grieved God.**

## God's Judgment on an Evil World – 6:1-7

God determined humanity was ripe for judgment but allowed a 120-year delay before judgment fell. **God is patient, giving time and opportunities for people to repent and call on His name.** 1 Peter 3:20 tells us God waited patiently while Noah built the ark. Even today, God withholds final judgment until the day He

has appointed, allowing His Word and the gospel to spread so people will call on Jesus for salvation. There is a point, however, when God's righteous judgment must fall. In Noah's world, the flood of sin reached God's determined crest, and a physical flood awaited. When judgment looms nearer, God's faithful remnant continue to proclaim His name.

## The sons of God and the daughters of humans– 6:2, 4

These strange and mysterious verses raise questions. **The entire Bible is equally true, but not equally clear.** Various theories attempt to explain the sons of God, daughters of humans and the Nephilim. No explanation completely resolves all the questions or issues that are raised.

The text says that as Adam and Eve's descendants married and had offspring, daughters were born (6:1). These beautiful "daughters of humans" attracted the "sons of God" who married them (6:2). Male offspring from these marriages are called Nephilim, "heroes of old, men of renown" (6:4). They contributed to the rising wickedness of humanity (6:5).

Have you wondered, who were these "sons of God"? Whom did they marry? Three common theories are:

- **An angelic order.** In this view, while the daughters are normal human beings, the sons of God are fallen angels.<sup>11</sup> These fallen angels completely inhabited human flesh to produce corrupted angelic physical offspring with "daughters of humans."
- **Men possessed by evil spirits.** In this view, both the "sons" and the "daughters" are human beings, but the sons are men controlled or possessed by demons. This view avoids the problem with the first view that angels were not created to have sexual relations with humans. These evil men corrupted marriage and family and raised violent children. They drove families to hate God, creation and community.
- **Men from the line of Seth.** In this view, the "sons" and "daughters" represent two genealogical lines of humans. Seth's godly descendants ("sons of God") intermarried with Cain's ungodly descendants ("daughters of humans"), resulting in humanity progressively turning away from God and toward overwhelming wickedness.

### God's regret – 6:5-7

**God's grief over the multiplication of evil among humanity reveals His complete separation from sin.**

Sin infected every human born after Adam – even Noah's family, whom God spared by His grace. The rest of mankind so yielded to sin that "*every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time*" (6:5). God brought judgment in righteous indignation against the evil that reached a point of no return. God would wipe wickedness from the face of the earth. That declaration represented pain and destruction on the entire creation – people, animals, birds and the earth.

When God acts in judgment, He does not violate His heart of compassion and love for mankind. This passage offers a unique look at our great God, who "regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled" (6:6). God did not have second thoughts or change His mind. "God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind."<sup>12</sup> God dealt with the problems of suffering, injustice and destruction caused by sin. He continued to extend grace and beckon people to Himself until every human being was overtaken by evil and wickedness. Only then did His full judgment fall.

As we look at the complete narrative of Noah, the flood and all of history, **God's character reflects the perfect and uncompromised union of His love, grace, mercy and justice.**

**God's people must approach the pain and reality of God's judgment with a heavy heart.** We must not skim past these painful realities. The accounts that describe God's judgment reveal we take sin too lightly. The reality of impending judgment compels us to call people to salvation in Christ.

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### God's Grace to a Blameless Man – 6:8-13

God shines light into the darkness. As God announced His intention to judge the corruption and violence on earth, a beam of light breaks through. "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (6:8). **Noah was not perfect or sinless, but faithful.**<sup>13</sup> Three phrases describe the man God chose to carry forward His plan of redemption.

- **A righteous man** – Noah was declared righteous by God, not by his own merit, but because of God's grace.
- **Blameless among the people of his time** – Noah's wholehearted obedience to God set him apart from other people.
- **He walked faithfully with God** – Noah's daily choices and actions prioritized an intimate relationship with God.

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### God's Plan to Save the Faithful Few – 6:14-7:10

God could have saved the remnant in any way He chose. God seldom accomplishes His plans the way we would. God's stories of unlikely ways of rescue for His people continue throughout Scripture. God's higher thoughts and better ways often seem unthinkable or unimaginable.<sup>14</sup> This same God later chose a condemned and crying baby floating in a basket to deliver His people from Egypt's bondage. He parted the Red Sea for His fleeing people. Humanity's Redeemer was born as a baby in an obscure manger. **God chooses to accomplish His plans in ways that astound us.**

### God instructed Noah how to build the ark – 6:14-22

God gave Noah detailed instructions for the design of the ark. He described the materials and measurements needed to accomplish everything. God also provided Noah the strength, skill and perseverance to accomplish this overwhelming task. Hebrews 11:7 commends Noah's faith in God and his response of "holy fear" in building an ark to save his family. 2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah "a preacher of righteousness." Doubtless, Noah's daily work and words gave witness to His faith in God and warned of the impending destruction.

**God openly described to Noah His plans to destroy all life under the heavens.** Surely, this sobering knowledge hung over every cut of lumber and conversation with his neighbors. God demonstrated His love for Noah as He promised a covenant with him and safe deliverance of his family in the ark. God instructed Noah to bring into the ark two of every living creature and food for the people and animals. God's plan to save Noah and his family demonstrates God's faithful provision and Noah's obedient cooperation. In keeping with God's description of his character, "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (6:22).

### **God told Noah when to enter the ark – 7:1-10**

**God told Noah and his family to enter the ark seven days before a drop of rain fell.** God promised rain for 40 days and nights. Noah's family and the requested animals boarded the ark. Again, "Noah did all that the LORD commanded Him" (7:5). Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark with his family. And just as God promised, after seven days, His floodgates opened upon the earth.

## **The Doctrine of God's Judgment of Believers and Unbelievers**

**God's Word, human history and personal experience reveal that humans cannot stop sinning.** We cannot solve the problem of evil on our own. Sin's damage spreads until God steps in to judge and stop the evil. God promises judgment for both unbelievers and believers. The Bible speaks of many kinds of judgment. The chief kinds of judgment are:

- **evaluative judgment** upon believers to reward their service (Romans 8:1; 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:8)
- **punitive judgment** upon unbelievers for their sins (Acts 17:31; Romans 1:18, 28; 2:1-13; Hebrews 9:27)

**God's judgment establishes true value.** He alone declares what is worthy and good. Christians can know their work on earth matters because God will reward faithful obedience. (See 1 Corinthians 3:14; 15:58; 2 Corinthians 5:10.) God's indwelling Spirit produces works that will stand the test of eternity.

**The Bible describes punitive judgments as dreadful and warns sinners to flee to Jesus Christ.** Punitive judgments will be endured in a conscious condition forever. (See Luke 16:19-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 20:15.) Although God desires none perish, He allows all people to ultimately have what their hearts truly desire. Those who reject Him in this life spend eternity apart from His presence. God makes a way to save all who repent and believe.

**The truth that I will face God as Judge determines how I live.** If I do not believe God is my judge, I can live any way that pleases me. I am accountable only to myself, able to determine what is right for me. But when I know that one day I will stand before my Creator, who knows everything about me, who I am and what I have done, this life matters more. I do not take good things for granted. I measure my thoughts, words and deeds against His standards, not mine. I quickly realize my own efforts can never meet His standards; therefore, I humbly seek the rescue He provides in Christ. I anticipate everlasting life and great reward. I am eager to invite others to this bright and beautiful future. I do not fear my Judge. I love Him.

## **God's Condemnation through the Flood – Genesis 7:11-24**

The Flood stands as a monumental event in human history, given more words in Scripture than Creation or the Fall.

### **The Rain Began – 7:11-16**

**On God's appointed day, the 17th day of the second month, the springs of the great deep and the heavens above opened wide.** The Lord Himself shut the door of the ark, sealing Noah and his family

in safely and ending the opportunity for others to gain entry. Incredible amounts of water were unleashed on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. Imagine the sights and sounds as torrential rain pounded the roof of the ark. Imagine the mix of grief and gratitude Noah and his family felt, knowing they were spared while their neighbors experienced a dreadful death.

The massive loss of human and animal life rightly raises hard questions. **All creation, including plants and animals, suffered the tragic effects of man's**



**original and escalating sin.** The harshness of this scene is difficult to process. Christians do not dismiss God's just judgment lightly, thinking this is what evil people have coming to them. We should rightly understand that this is the judgment we all deserve. We are spared only because Jesus bore God's wrath for us on the Cross.

## The Waters Rose – 7:17-24

**This passage vividly describes the magnitude of the Flood and its destruction.** The waters flooded the earth for 150 days. Faithful Christians who believe in the inerrancy of the original Scriptures agree on God's perfect judgment and yet interpret this passage differently. Two views emerge:

- **Localized** – The original language permits “universality” to mean only the area inhabited in early civilization. Other verses use the language in this way.<sup>15</sup> A local flood seems to resolve some geographical problems but raises other issues.
- **Worldwide** – This sense is conveyed with “every living creature” (7:4), “all the high mountains under the entire heavens” (7:19) and “all living creatures” (8:21). The Flood is later compared to future judgment of the entire world by fire.<sup>16</sup> This view finds support in ancient accounts, such as the Atrahasis Epic and the Gilgamesh Epic, which portray the Flood as universal.<sup>a</sup>

God is faithful and just. He kept His promise to deliver Noah, his family and the remnant of living things, male and female, according to their kinds. **God delivered judgment in His time, in His way and in keeping with His character.** God's own love for humanity and grief over the flood are clearly seen in this passage. We see the depths of God's love most clearly as God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to suffer and die in the place of sinners. The ark pictures Christ. Those who enter into Christ are spared judgment through His sacrifice. Through Jesus, all can receive His righteousness through faith.<sup>17</sup>

This passage loudly warns of the seriousness of rejecting God and His mercy. People deny God and live denying any accountability to Him. There is simply no way to escape accountability before God. He has appointed the judgment of all people to His Son, Jesus.<sup>18</sup> **The Bible teaches that either Jesus will bear your sin for you or you will bear it yourself.** Two absolute truths stand together: God will judge sin and God extends saving grace, a way of rescue through His Son.

<sup>a</sup> See Andrew R., George, trans. & edit., *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Penguin Books, 1999), p. xlv; W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Eisenbrauns, 1999), p. 12

## Take to Heart

### Hold Fast

The fall of humanity brought the curse of sin and death in Genesis 3. The first family experienced sin's deadly damage in Genesis 4. Even God's preserved remnant recorded in Genesis 5 experienced death, except one, Enoch. Genesis 6 and 7 find humanity so ruined by sin that God saved only one family from death in the Flood. Death takes our loved ones. The fear of death grips the world. The death we experience goes far beyond physical death. Our minds and desires are dulled and deadened by sin's hold on us. How do we process so much bad news? God does not withhold hard truth from us. **Without a realistic understanding of the depth of sin's death blow, we will not seek the relief and rescue we desperately need.** If these chapters and truths hit you hard, do not run from the truth. Run to Jesus.

**The darkness of sin cannot extinguish the light of God, His truth and His people.** God preserved people who held onto faith in Him.

They were sinners, like their neighbors, but they called on the name of the Lord, who is worthy to be praised. This life goes by quickly. Our time on earth is short compared with eternity. You are studying the Bible. Even in this lesson, God has revealed sobering truths and reasons for hope. God is turning on the light for you, one that nothing in this world can extinguish. Call on the name of the Lord. He longs to save you, walk with you and sometimes even carry you through this life. He is faithful and calls us to live faithful lives and be accountable to Him, our Creator.

The Flood and Noah's ark are not a children's fable about animals in a boat. The Flood describes the frightening consequences of defying God. It foreshadows the final judgment promised by God.<sup>19</sup> The Flood reminds us that God has prepared a way of escape for those who trust His Son. **The Flood tells a sobering story that wakes us up and offers us hope.**

The reality of evil and God's promised judgment of evil people creates some choices for Christians. One seemingly painless way to process the Flood is to assume an "us/them" mentality about the world. God has His people and Satan has his. The thinking from that point of view is, "If I end up on the right team, I win, and 'they' lose. I insulate and isolate myself as best I can to avoid the downward descent of culture. I long for the good guys to win, and soon." But there is a better and correct way: "When I think about the Flood, I realize that I deserve to be in the water, not the boat. **I cannot be proud to be among the rescued, because nothing in me deserves rescue.** I can speak only words of worship and gratitude to the One who rescued me, just because He loved me. I can offer only compassion for those who are caught in sin's trap. I will risk

discomfort and reach beyond myself to offer rescue and relief to others, because I understand their great need." How will God enlarge your heart and vision through this sobering lesson?

Noah measured and hammered on the ark knowing he lived in the final generation before God's judgment fell. We live today, closer to Jesus' return than ever before. While only God knows the exact day marked on His calendar, we, too, live in a generation poised for God's judgment. Jesus compares the days preceding His return to these days of Noah.<sup>20</sup> We witness evil practices and abnormal corruption accelerating today. Rebellion against God, sexual sin without restraint, satanic cults, and family collapse trouble us. Knowing God's promises of judgment are true, what urgency is God awakening in you? **How actively are you loving and**

**serving God, your neighbors and your enemies?**

God's final judgment will forever separate those who trust Jesus Christ from those who reject Him. Just as God provided a way of safety for Noah in the ark, God has provided deliverance in Christ. Have you, like Noah, experienced God's favor and His provision of rescue from judgment? **Are you willing to live, along with your family, in the minority in your culture as a voice of truth and hope that speaks of God's deliverance through Jesus Christ?** Are you watching and living in expectancy of the Lord's return at any moment? Do you recognize the reality of God's justice and judgment enough to reach out to others to encourage them to walk with God? Live in the light of Jesus' soon return and coming judgment.

Check out these footnoted references for further study of God's Word in this week's lesson.

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| 1: <b>All die:</b> Ecclesiastes 9:2; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:15  | 11: <b>Fallen angels:</b> Job 1:6; 2:1; Jude 1:6-7  |
| 2: <b>Life span:</b> Psalm 90:4-10; James 4:14  | 12: <b>Unchanging, holy God:</b> Numbers 23:19  |
| 3: <b>Enoch pleased God:</b> Hebrews 11:5   | 13: <b>Noah's faith:</b> Hebrews 11:7   |
| 4: <b>Enoch prophesied:</b> Jude 1:14-15  | 14: <b>God's ways not ours:</b> Isaiah 55:8   |
| 5: <b>Genealogies:</b> Genesis 5; 11  | 15: <b>All defined as part:</b> Genesis 41:57; Deuteronomy 2:25; 1 Kings 18:10                |
| 6: <b>The name of the Lord:</b> Genesis 12:8; Joel 2:32; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 1:2 | 16: <b>The Flood compared to judged by fire:</b> Matthew 24:39; Luke 17:26-27; 2 Peter 3:5-10 |
| 7: <b>Await judgment:</b> Psalm 79:6; Isaiah 66:4   | 17: <b>God's love:</b> John 3:16-18; Romans 5:8   |
| 8: <b>Accountable to seek Him:</b> Romans 1:18-20   | 18: <b>Jesus, the Righteous Judge:</b> 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Revelation 6:10                      |
| 9: <b>Obstinate people:</b> Isaiah 65:2   | 19: <b>The final judgment:</b> Romans 2:16  |
| 10: <b>Lord is near:</b> Psalm 145:18   | 20: <b>Days of Noah:</b> Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27                                      |