

SIN CORRUPTS

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 6:9-22

Context: If Adam and Eve had hoped their firstborn son, Cain, would be the promised Seed to defeat the serpent, their hopes were crushed when Cain murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy. Grieving the loss of Abel, Adam and Eve had another son, Seth—a son in Adam’s likeness. Unlike Cain’s descendants, who lived however they pleased, Seth’s descendants walked with God and hoped for reprieve from the curse of sin. While sin and violence corrupted humankind, Noah, whose name means rest, was a righteous man who followed God. God would soon enact righteous judgment against sin on the whole earth, but God showed grace to Noah.

Key Concept: Sin corrupts and must be judged, but God saves those who fear and obey Him.

DAILY READINGS

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| ☐ Day 1: Genesis 5:1-32 | ☐ Day 4: Genesis 9:1-17 |
| ☐ Day 2: Genesis 6:1–7:24 | ☐ Day 5: Genesis 9:18-29 |
| ☐ Day 3: Genesis 8:1-22 | ☐ Day 6: Psalm 53 |

Sin corrupts every aspect of God's good creation (Genesis 6:9-13).

⁹ These are the family records of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth. ¹³ Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth."

Noah Alone Was Righteous

After Cain killed Abel and was cursed as a wanderer, Adam and Eve gave birth to Seth. Genesis 5 recounts the generations after that ending with Noah. The beginning of Genesis 6 previews the wickedness that had spread on the earth (v. 5) and how God was ready to press the restart button (v. 7), except that He favored Noah (v. 8).

Moses, the writer of Genesis, started this section with "these are the family records of Noah" (v. 9). These words were used earlier in describing the line of Adam (5:1) as well as the records of the beginning of the heavens and the earth (2:4). It is considered a *toledot* section, meaning "generation," sections that start with "these are the records of." Moses used these *toledot* sections throughout Genesis as headings to highlight the history of the generations of those that had come before and how God used them and was faithful to them. Moses wrote Genesis while the

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*"God is no robot. . . . Our God is incomparably affected by, even pained by, the sinner's rebellion. Rather, his feelings and actions toward men, such as judgment or forgiveness, are always inherently consistent with his essential person and just and gracious resolve."*¹

—Kenneth A. Mathews

Israelites were wandering in the desert. He wanted to give them the history of their people as well as show them how God continued to be with His people and to lead them to give the Israelites assurance and hope.

Moses transitioned to Noah's character, describing it in three ways: he was "a righteous man," he was "blameless among his contemporaries," and he "walked with God." These descriptors reveal Noah as one who followed and trusted God. He was righteous and blameless, not perfect like Christ, but he reflected a heart willing to submit to and obey God in faith. Compared to those around him, "among his contemporaries," Noah was righteous before God. "The statement that 'Noah was a righteous man' is the first mention of righteousness in the Bible and sets the standard that righteousness comes by faith."² The assertion that he "walked with God" puts him in the same standing as Enoch, one who walked with God and did not die but was taken by God (Gen. 5:22-24). Noah's family line of three sons is then mentioned to set the stage for the covenant God was about to establish with His people, starting with Noah and his sons.

How can you live blamelessly in a world that does not value what God values?

The World Was Corrupt and Full of Wickedness

In contrast to Noah, Moses described the world as "corrupt" and "filled with wickedness" (6:11), sometimes translated as violence. "'Violence' denotes any antisocial, unneighborly activity. Very often it involves the use of brute force, but it may just be the exploitation of the weak by the powerful or the poor by the rich (e.g., Amos 6:1-3), or the naive by

the clever (Prov 16:29).”³ Humanity was to fill the earth (Gen. 1:28), but instead, violence had filled the earth—wickedness of all kinds. Moses then used the word “corrupt” two more times in verse 12. This word could also mean “ruined” and describes a corruptness beyond words where “every creature,” literally “all flesh,” “had corrupted its way on the earth.”

We don’t know exactly what this looked like, but we can imagine a world of recklessness and chaos, without order, without rules, where everyone and everything simply looked out for themselves no matter the cost. God is the opposite of chaos and disorder. We are reminded that rules and order, right and wrong, have a place in this world so that it may function, and things are in balance for God’s glory and our good. But the good that God created had been ruined and corrupted, and God had to change what was happening.

God then told Noah it was time to “end” it all, to “destroy” everything (6:13) because there simply was too much wickedness on the earth. Noah could hear God and God would speak to him because he walked with God. Noah was privy to God’s plan as a confidant and friend. Humanity had made its choice to cave in to sin. The appropriate response for a holy God was to destroy the wickedness and violence and all that surrounded it. The destruction God would bring against the earth was a de-creation, a return to the “watery depths” (1:2) in order to start over with Noah and his family and the animals with him.

Moses used the same Hebrew word in verse 12 for “corrupt” that he used in verse 13 for “destroy,” which could also mean “ruin.” So from verses 11-13, if we substitute the word “ruin,” it would say, “Now the earth was ruined in God’s sight. . . . God saw how

THEOLOGY Connection

GOD: There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

ruined the earth was, for every creature had ruined its way. . . . [T]herefore I am going to ruin them.” As one commentator states, “The choice of the same word to describe both the earth’s condition and the intended action of God must be deliberate. God’s decision is to destroy what is virtually self-destroyed or self-destroying already.”⁴ Humanity had turned what God created as good into something wicked; the goodness of creation was corrupted and ruined, so God had to step in to return it to the goodness He intended.

In what ways can you still see the effects of humankind’s sin on the created order?

God judges sin but saves those who fear and obey Him (Genesis 6:14-22).

¹⁴ “Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside. ¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. ¹⁶ You are to make a roof, finishing the sides of the ark to within eighteen inches of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks. ¹⁷ Understand that I am bringing a flood—floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives. ¹⁹ You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of everything—from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds—will come to you so that you

can keep them alive. ²¹ **Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.”**
²² **And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.**

A Holy, Good God Destroys Evil

God continued by telling Noah the specifics on how to build an ark (Gen. 6:14-16). The Hebrew word for “ark” in this instance only appears in two events in the Bible: here for a boat and also for the basket that Moses was placed into by his mother to go down the river. Both uses describe a vessel of deliverance through the waters. Moses saw in his own story how God was gracious to His people in salvation. And the ark Noah built would be a giant vessel unfathomable by ancient standards. (Note that the word for ark here in these two instances is different than the word for ark in the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle.)

Many images and constructions of the ark can be seen today through an Internet search. Basic descriptors of the ark include its being made of gopher wood, a wood from an unknown tree, possibly cypress or fir, with rooms, a roof, a door, and three levels. It was the length of one-and-a-half football fields, and some theorize it took Noah and his sons about 75 to 100 years to build.

God then told Noah that He would destroy the earth through a flood (v. 17). The phrase “Understand that I” (v. 17) in the CSB in Hebrew has the personal pronoun repeated: literally, “And I, behold I,” or, “I myself.” “The repetition of the personal pronoun makes it perfectly clear that God is author of the flood.”⁵ This wouldn’t be just a random natural occurrence. God, as He always is, was in charge, and He wanted Noah

to understand that He was the One doing this for a purpose. God was “bringing a flood” to “destroy every creature” and “everything on earth will perish” (v. 17) according to His will.

It is of the nature and character of a good God to destroy evil, but God did so with much patience. In rabbinic literature, the “Jewish Pirke Aboth (5:2) comments that God waited ten generations, from Adam to Noah, to unleash his judgment.”⁶ Peter also mentions how God “patiently waited in the days of Noah” (1 Pet. 3:20) before the floodwaters came. God will wait patiently for His people to return to Him, but at a certain point, a just and holy God will administer justice. Sometimes we understand that thieves and murderers should go to jail, but we don’t understand how God could destroy the earth and all that is in it. But we should remember that all evil should have its just consequence. If not now, then later. The cost and punishment for evil must be paid.

God Establishes His Covenant with Those Who Are Righteous

Whenever God seems to hold out the heavy hand of His holiness and justice, He also holds out a hand of grace. Like in Adam and Eve’s situation, God had already orchestrated a rescue plan, and He continued to watch over them outside of Eden. Here, He placed His grace on Noah and his family. God told of the destruction through a flood, yet He added a “but” (v. 18), a however, an assertion of grace. God told Noah that He would “establish [His] covenant” (v. 18) with him. This is the first time the word “covenant” is used in the Bible, but it is not the last. Our understanding of covenant will help us understand the Bible more

as God's covenant(s) with His people will be a major theme throughout.

A covenant is an agreed upon partnership between two parties. It's similar to a contract but is relational in nature—like a marriage covenant, where both parties agree to uphold their promises and vows. Here, God began to establish His covenant, giving Noah instructions for getting his family and two of every living creature into the ark that he was to build (v. 20) and every kind of food (v. 21), which probably included every kind of plant, revealing that life would begin again. God's plan for humanity to rule and subdue the earth would start over with these plants and animals. God would do what He set out to do in the beginning, and He is faithful to accomplish that according to His will.

Years later, after the floodwaters receded, God promised with a sign of the rainbow that He will never again destroy the earth through a catastrophic flood (Gen. 9:8-17). This is the beginning of a series of covenants God made with one person or a group of people that affects all humanity, some conditional and some unconditional. These covenants are the relational agreements and partnerships God makes with His people. But many of these old covenants leave humanity lacking because we are unable to shake off our sin. We cannot measure up to God's holiness. But this eventually leads to the new covenant we see later in Scripture that will be established through Jesus, the Messiah, and sealed by the Holy Spirit, giving us forgiveness of sin, a restored eternal relationship with the Father, and eternal salvation as children of God and co-heirs with Christ. This new covenant is the covenant that God initiates and fulfills through His Son, one where all we need to do is trust in Jesus.

How have you experienced the blessings of faithful obedience in your life?

Obedient Faith Is Characteristic of the Righteous

The final verse in this selected passage is the climactic focus of the event. Noah did what God told him. He obeyed. “He did everything that God commanded him” (6:22). This is reflective of Noah’s character as seen earlier when Moses called him righteous and blameless. We can assume he didn’t complain. He didn’t make excuses. He didn’t pause. He didn’t wonder. He didn’t make his own plans. Even in the craziness of the idea, and despite what others may have thought of him, he began building a giant boat and doing what God commanded. In this whole narrative of the flood from chapter 6 to the receding of the water and the sign of the rainbow through 9:17, no words of Noah are mentioned. God spoke, and Noah listened. That’s why the author of Hebrews listed him in the “hall of faith,” a list of people who faithfully followed God in the Old Testament Scriptures. Noah “by faith . . . built an ark . . . and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Heb. 11:7).

It would be easy to think that Noah audibly heard from God and thus was impacted by his encounter and could not have disobeyed. But there are other moments in the Bible when God shows up in a mighty way, yet when God spoke, individuals still were hesitant. Sarah laughed (Gen. 18:9-15). Moses at the burning bush gave God excuses (Ex. 4:10-13). Gideon wanted a sign first (Judg. 6:36-40). Jeremiah said he was too young (Jer. 1:4-10). Noah could’ve been like these individuals, but characteristic of his righteousness, he obeyed everything God told him to do. Obedience shows our

faith, love, and reverence for Him. God desires our obedience for there are good and bad consequences for obeying and disobeying, respectively. As the world would come to understand, the flood was coming because of their disobedience. But salvation from that destruction for Noah and his family and two of every animal would come from Noah's obedience.

While building the boat, we can imagine Noah's family being heckled by those around him. Moses didn't say so, but Peter said that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:5); some translations say "herald." Whether in words or just through his actions, Noah brought a message and publicly proclaimed the truthfulness of God to those around him. By building a giant ark, he sent a message of warning and rebuke against the evil of his day and testified to the faithfulness of God to save a remnant of those who would follow and obey God. Though they may have heard Noah's preaching, they did not listen, so when the floods came, they were caught unaware.

Our Obedience Is Insufficient on Our Own

Moses saw similarities between Adam and Noah. What Adam failed to do, God called Noah to do. For 40 days of flooding and 150 days of surging waters (Gen. 7:17-24), God de-created, destroying the earth, and with 150 days of the water receding (8:1-5), God re-created, starting again with Noah and his family. Noah was to be like a new Adam. But unfortunately, he was too much like Adam. Both initially walked with God. Both were given the blessings of the created world around them to subdue and rule. Both were to work the soil and take care of the animals. But both sinned through a fruit, Adam by eating what

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*"Jesus expects ceaseless vigilance of his followers, for the final climax of human history will suddenly come on ordinary life. In the human condition massive distress and normal life patterns coexist. For the believer the former point to the end; the latter warn of its unexpectedness."*⁷

—D. A. Carson

GOSPEL Connection

As with Noah and the flood, a final judgment for sin is coming when God will condemn unrepentant sinners to eternal death and hell, but all those who repent and believe in Jesus will be saved, being found in Him—their Savior from the judgment to come.

was forbidden and Noah drunk with wine (9:21). And both ended up with a cursed son. Though God started again with Noah and humanity, still we were insufficient in our righteousness and succumbed to temptation and evil. Ultimately, we can't save ourselves. A divine second Adam, one from heaven, a life-giving spirit (1 Cor. 15:45-47), is needed. This is Jesus. We are insufficient without Him.

While on earth, Jesus recalled and used the events of Noah and the flood as an illustration of how His future return will come as a surprise to those who aren't watchful.

For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. They didn't know until the flood came and swept them all away. This is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be. (Matt. 24:38-39)

Sin continues to be a stronghold in our lives if we allow it. Yet because of Jesus's sacrifice on the cross, we are brought to new life through the power of His blood and resurrection. Jesus redeems us and restores us before the Father. God judges sin, but for those who place their faith in Christ Jesus, they will be saved. The choices we make today to trust in Christ or not to will affect our end. Destruction will come for the wicked and restoration for the faithful. God is patient in waiting for us to turn toward Him, but He is also holy and just and will allow evil to be victorious.

While we wait for the Lord, how should we fight against apathy toward sin?



HEAD

What are some ways we can be preachers of righteousness in our fallen world?



HEART

How does it make you feel to know that apart from Christ, the human heart's every inclination is to sin?



HANDS

Whom can you encourage this week to walk with God in faithful obedience?

Notes

References

1. Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 344.
2. R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 134.
3. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 171.
4. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Ch. 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 278.
5. Wenham, 174.
6. Mathews, 363.
7. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 509.