Genesis: *Noah's Ark*
Genesis 6:9-22

As we resume our journey through Genesis, we have come to a watershed event…pun intended. The great flood as recorded in Genesis 6-9 serves as the central event in the entire book of Genesis. According to God's self-revelation, the world-wide flood was a consequence of human evil—an evil that became so pervasive that God looked upon the earth and discerned that the intentions of man's heart was only evil continually. That is, with one notable exception. God looked upon Noah, the son of Lamech, the distant son of Seth, the son of Adam…and Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. That's where we left off last week, so let us stand and read Genesis 6:9-22: **9** These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. **10** And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
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. **13** 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. **14** Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. **15** This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. **16** Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. **17** For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. **18** 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. **19** And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. **20** Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. **21** Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." **22** Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

My message will fall under three subheadings: 1) Myth or History? 2) The Judgment and Covenant of God; and 3) Noah's Decision.

<u>I. Myth or History?</u>

Whenever we get to the story of Noah and the great flood, we immediately run into the skepticism of our age. The prevailing voices of popular science and the secularists are quick to mock the story of Noah and dismiss it for any number of reasons. They don't believe that Noah could build an ark that could survive a flood with all types of animals on board over the course of 10 months; 2) they don't believe the ark was large enough to host as many pairs of animals as would be required, nor do they believe there was any way for those animals to be gathered and placed in the ark; and 3) they dismiss the claim that there was ever a cataclysmic flood that wiped out life on earth. Not only is the flood story set aside, but the entire narrative of Genesis is dismissed due to the prevailing assumption that the universe came into existence on its own, that life happened by accident, and that natural, impersonal processes over billions of years led to life and personhood as we find it today. I've already dealt with my views on creation in the first few messages of this series, but you may find it interesting that the Apostle Peter seemed to look through time in anticipation of this very question we are facing this morning. Consider the Apostle's prophecy in 2 Peter 3:3-7:

[3] …scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." [5] For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

Peter predicts that in the "last days," scoffers will dismiss the creation of the world and the great flood story of the world by insisting that "all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." The Apostle goes on to emphasize that they will "deliberately overlook" the evidence and testimony of God's work in creation and God's devastating judgment of the ancient world through the deluge. I find that prophecy to be incredibly accurate in describing the hour in which we live. Why?

Some of you know that those committed to Darwinian evolution insist upon a concept called *uniformitarianism*. Uniformitarianism insists that "the present is the key to the past," which is to say that the naturally observable world now tells the story of how the natural world has always been. This assumption of a consistent environment along with consistent natural laws and processes such as the rate of sedimentation, erosion, contraction, radio-activity, volcanic activity, glaciation, diastrophism and other actions of natural forces—plus billions of years—is critical for the theory of evolution to be feasible. In other words, those who summarily reject God's hand in creation and the testimony of God's horrific judgment through the great flood as recorded in Genesis 6-9 are those who insist on believing that "all things are continuing as they were from the beginning"—which is essentially uniformitarianism.

So, without getting too deep into the weeds, we are left with these two camps as predicted by Peter: 1) we are either scoffers who "deliberately overlook" God's hand in creation and God's judgment in the flood; or 2) we are those who believe God's self-revelation that God created the heavens and the earth and that as the earth was once formed from the waters, so God also judged the world through the great deluge as recorded here in the story of Noah.

Now, I know you don't like being forced into one camp or the other, and maybe you live in the camp of "I don't know and I don't care." If that be the case, I invite you to rest your eyes for a minute. But for those who do care, we are left with this essential tension: uniformitarianism, or a catastrophic event. The Bible claims there was a catastrophic flood. The Darwinians say there was no such thing and that as we observe nature today, so has it always been from the beginning.

Clearly the great flood as recorded in Genesis 6-9 is completely contradictory to the assumption of uniformity. The narrative that we find in Genesis 6-9 is unapologetically *extraordinary*, not ordinary. The great flood is cataclysmic, catastrophic, and unlike anything that we find "normally" in the processes of nature. And, it's precisely because we've never seen anything like a worldwide flood that many of us struggle to believe that a catastrophe of that scale and devastation could ever happen. I get it…it's hard to imagine the mountains covered by the sea and all life on the planet destroyed. Like some of you, I spent many years doubting the authenticity of this story. However, as I've learned many times over the years, we often

underestimate the authority of scripture. We also forget how brilliant people have been digging into the claims of scripture for hundreds of years in every field of study. You would be amazed at the immense amount of material, research, and exploration that has been published on this subject. I've spent quite a bit of time reading about the evidence for and against the flood, and I won't drag you through too many details. Even so, let me share a few things worthy of some thoughtful consideration.

First of all, the claim that there was a major flood throughout most, if not the whole planet, within the past 7000-10000[1] years seems likely if for no other reason than this: just about every ancient people group in antiquity had a flood story. According to Charles Berlitz in his book entitled, *The Lost Ship of Noah*, "There are over 600 variations of the flood legend among the ancient nations and tribes and the story has been told through the millennia in all quarters of the globe."[2] In his commentary on Genesis, James Boice includes the "flood traditions table"[3] (show table) which documents over 200 tribes and people groups from Middle and East Africa, the Pacific Islands, the Far East, Europe and Asia, Hellenic Cultures, North America, Central America, and South America.

Think about it: That all of these ancient nations and tribes remember a story of when the earth was flooded with very few survivors is hardly a coincidence. Granted, the stories all differ in the gods and the names and the size of the boat, but we cannot ignore what the ancients all remember: there was a world-wide flood that was absolutely devastating. How is it that so many ancient people groups have this story? There are only two possible answers. We might first be inclined to think that descendants of all these tribes around the world witnessed the worldwide flood, but that seems unlikely given the scope and magnitude of the destruction, and that would be contrary to the witness of scripture. The other possibility is that every tribe and nation comes from one family that actually lived through the flood, and thus this story has been universally passed down from the sons of Noah to every corner of the globe.

There is also a tremendous amount of geological evidence pointing to an extermination event that led to the death of millions of animals and humans. Islands that were once occupied were buried in the depths of the sea; rivers that once existed disappeared; and animals that once roamed the earth were never to be seen again. Bones from whales have been found in the Himalayas, seashells and fossils of sea creatures are regularly discovered near the top of Mount Ararat, and we can find saltwater lines on various mountains even to this day.

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[1] Given that the earliest human writings in existence are said to be dated to 3500 B.C., and they include flood stories, it is reasonable to assume those stories are only a few generations from the events said to have taken place. That is certainly a guess, but we would have no reason to believe those stories originated much earlier. In fact, Berlitz tells of the excavation of ancient Ur in the late 1920's. He chose to dig a shaft straight down through the ruins of that city. According to his report, they found layer upon layer of artifacts dating back to thousands of years B.C., but then came to ten feet of pure mud. He drilled through it and then found more layers of artifacts. His wife and team were convinced that the ten feet of mud (twenty-five feet of mud in other areas of the region) bore witness to the deluge that covered the ancient city, and then later a new city was built on top of the old one. See Berlitz, 130-131.
[2] Charles Berlitz, *The Lost Ship of Noah* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1987) 110.
[3] James Boice, *Genesis Vol. 1*(Grand Rapids: Baker,1998) 357-358.

We also can observe that the planet was once universally tropical, with the evidence of warm water coral and warm weather animals and plants found in Siberia, Alaska, and even the poles themselves. Then, at some point in history, millions of those animals in the northern territories were suddenly destroyed. For example, myriads of wooly mammoths in northern Siberia were drowned and then covered in mud, some were even frozen solid in water with the elephant grass still fresh in their mouths, their stomach contents perfectly preserved, and much of the hair still on their bodies (show pic of mammoth).[4]

The geological evidence suggests that thousands of elephants, rhinos, and other warm-weather animals lived in Siberia in antiquity, feeding on plants that only grow in warm weather; but then, as a consequence of some catastrophic event, thousands of those creatures died suddenly, many were covered in mud or frozen in water, and the climate changed quickly and dramatically. The climate in Siberia today remains inhospitable to almost all animals and plants to this day; though we know from the fossil record that the climate in Siberia was once tropical. These observations do not support the assumption of uniformity.

What we observe with the mammoth deposits in Siberia are similar to the hippopotamus beds of Sicily, the horse beds of France, along with countless other examples. All suggest a quick death by drowning and/or an almost instant burial in mud (or frozen in water), which is the only reason that we have these massive graves full of bones and fossils at all[5].

By the way, because your pastor is a redneck, I can tell you from experience that the carcasses of animals that die in the wild do not ever fossilize. If you were to hit a deer with your car on the way home from church and that deer died in your backyard, you would be able to observe that in a matter of a few months, there would be nothing remaining of that deer in your back yard but a skull or a few bones. Let those bones set out there in your yard for another 5 years, there will be nothing left whatsoever. This observation is universally true everywhere in the world, and the same rule applies to fish, whales, sharks and all sea creatures that die by natural causes in their environments as well. As Henry Morris observes, "Some kind of catastrophic condition is nearly always necessary for the burial and preservation of fossils. Nothing comparable to the tremendous fossiliferous beds of fish, mammals, reptiles, etc., that are found in many places around the world is being formed today." [6]

Clearly the principle of uniformity cannot give an account for what we find all over the world; but, a massive deluge that covered most, if not all, the earth would better account for the massive amounts of death, the change of climate, high water lines on mountains, and many other observations that simply do not align with the Darwinian commitment to uniformity.

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[4] https://scontent.fmkc1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t39.30808-6/518384708_122098029458945780_2969745327834234062_n.jpg?_nc_cat=102&ccb=1-7&_nc_sid=aa7b47&_nc_ohc=78et3FrDn_UQ7kNvwHrZkXO&_nc_oc=Adnu7VP1xVj23sZ322hzUzGnN46roFL6u290Kze8KLGdC3PXD5k4wZnyJLXL-olnaJBXpvVUgZvWMe783IPvWLbb&_nc_zt=23&_nc_ht=scontent.fmkc1-1.fna&_nc_gid=zF7MdRF5Ln6cFBGWSvggTA&oh=00_AfZRuAyo_e9SRiaLP4GxoRG3HkkzOIPTw8TAhbI7XTWdeA&oe=68CFC469

[5] Animals that die naturally and lay on the ground or even on the bottom of the ocean do not fossilize…ever.

[6] Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1961) 203.

So, am I saying that the account of Noah and the ark is history? Yes, because 1) this story is clearly written as history with a timeline and very specific details in the revealed Word of God which is the authority of our faith; 2) Jesus referenced Noah and the flood as an historical event that definitely took place in Matthew 24:37-38; and 3) it seems to me that an objective geological investigation of the fossil beds that is *not committed to uniformity* would anticipate an extraordinary story about an unprecedented catastrophic event(s) that wiped out millions of animals and people while changing climates and even land masses in the process. The story of the flood in Genesis provides better answers for the world as we find it as compared to the modern assumption of uniformitarianism which does not provide answers and yet "deliberately overlooks" the overwhelming evidence of God's work in creation as well as the evidence for a catastrophic flood. If you would like to read further on the subject, I would refer you to the classic work by Henry Morris entitled *The Bible and Modern Science*; or, for a more technical and thorough treatment, you might pick up *The Genesis Flood* by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris[7]. As always, when positing my opinion, which is what I've done thus far, I encourage you to do your own reading and to consider the evidence. OK, let's move on to my second subheading…

<u>II. The Judgement and Covenant of God</u>

We spent last week unpacking the deplorable condition of corruption and violence that God observed upon the earth and in the hearts of men. As we return to the text, the condition is restated in vss. 11-12: Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. As always, we must observe the repetition. Repetition in the Bible always points to emphasis, and this point is redundantly clear: God saw that the earth was *entirely* corrupt. Now, we know that since the Fall, sin has been corrupting the souls of men because that's what sin does. We are left with the perception, however, that due to the sons of God engaging with the daughters of man, the sin and violence upon the earth has increased to an unprecedented and unacceptable level. Dr. Kent Hughes interprets this emphasis on violence and corruption as the result of the earth becoming demonized by the fallen angels referenced in early verses of chapter six.[8] That is certainly a possible explanation for as to why God chooses this particular moment in history to destroy life on earth. The text does not provide any further details or explanation for how God came to His decision, but we do get a very clear description of the decision that God makes in vs. 13: 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.

The judgment of God is declared to Noah. All of flesh will be destroyed. Man is filled with violence, and so man shall come to a violent end. From the earth man was made, by means of the earth man shall come to his end.

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[7] These are older books, but then most of my library consists of older books, so my apologies for not quoting more contemporary resources. I have not heard anything of late that would challenge what I have written. With more and more fossil bed discoveries, the case for uniformity will continue to be challenged.
[8] Kent Hughes, *Genesis* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004) 131.

But note that God has made another decision as well. Immediately upon His declaration that all flesh will perish, God then goes on to give very specific direction to Noah: 14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 16 Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17 For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

God reveals a way for Noah and his family to escape the coming deluge: Noah is to build an ark.

God then goes on to explain His plan: 18 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. 19 And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. 20 Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. 21 Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them."

God determines to establish a covenant with Noah. This is the first time in the Bible that we hear the Hebrew word *berit*, which we translate to mean "covenant," a term that we will reflect upon many times in the book of Genesis. In the Bible, a covenant is a binding agreement or promise made between two or more parties, usually God and humanity, establishing a formal relationship with specific conditions and mutual obligations. That said, not all biblical covenants are alike. There are often conditions and expectations associated with a covenant; but, in this instance, God establishes a covenant with Noah because Noah has already found favor in God's eyes. Because of Noah's faithfulness, God promises that Noah, his sons, Noah's wife and the wives of his sons will all come into the ark and be saved from the coming deluge. Furthermore, by the covenant established through Noah, two of every kind of living flesh will also be brought in and saved from destruction. Through this covenant that God establishes with Noah, God demonstrates His mercy and His faithfulness to the promise that He made to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, that a descendant of Adam would one day rise up as a Redeemer. The promise made in the Garden at the beginning of creation is now expressed in the covenant that God has established with Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Seth, the Son of Adam as all of creation is soon to be ravaged by the justice of God.

We'll get deeper into the construction of the ark, the animals, and many of the details surrounding the flood in my next message; but for now, I want to close with a little reflection on Noah's decision.

III. Noah's Decision

Let's take a minute to put ourselves in the ancient sandals of Noah. You just learned that God has determined to destroy all flesh on earth through a massive flood, but God has also determined to provide a way for you and your family to pass through the waters and to be saved. The way of your salvation comes in the form of a command: Noah, build an ark.

Now, let's think about how Noah is processing this moment in his life. Noah has heard the Word of the Lord, and Noah has a decision to make, right? Noah can believe God, build the ark, and be saved along with his entire family; or, Noah can ignore God, go about his life as though God doesn't exist, convincing himself that even if there is a God, the God Noah wants to believe in would never destroy violent, corrupt men deserving of justice. Does that sound familiar?

Church, don't miss this moment because Noah is our representative, and this story points to the Gospel. Just as God determines to unleash justice upon the primeval world but then provides a way of salvation through His unmerited mercy (the ark) for His chosen one, Noah, so we learn in the New Testament that the day of judgment is coming for all souls corrupted by sin. God has already promised to destroy the world with fire and His wrath will fall upon all who have sinned against God's law; but God, because of His tremendous love for His creation (Eph. 2:4), has created a way for sinful souls to be saved from the coming judgment…through placing our faith in the sacrificial atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In each instance, both with Noah and in the Gospel, after God declares His intentions for judgment and extends the Way of salvation, the human has a decision to make: does he have faith in what God has said and take a step of faith in obedience to what God said, or does he not.

So, let's think about what faith looks like for Noah? Upon hearing this proclamation from God, we could imagine 21st century Noah saying something like: "LORD, I believe in you! I believe you are a great and glorious God and that you are perfectly righteous in your judgments! LORD, I'm going to set up a little synagogue right here and invite all my family and friends to come and worship you and tell you how awesome you are. Yes sir, GOD, we are going to have classes and small group meetings to study everything you said about the dimensions of the ark." But would any of that qualified as faith had Noah not *built* the ark?

Can you feel that tension? God's unmerited, saving grace is giving Noah the command and opportunity to build an ark. Apart from this command from God, Noah would simply perish with the rest of humanity in the flood, along with his whole family. God is gracious in his election of Noah, and God is gracious in making a way of salvation. But if Noah is to be saved from the coming deluge, he must not only believe what God said--he will also need to demonstrate his faith by building the ark as God commanded. And this is what we read in vs. 22: Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. Noah responded in faith.

Now, I know what you are thinking: God didn't need Noah to build an ark. God could have snapped his finger and provided the ark fully constructed with air conditioning and indoor plumbing! So why command Noah to build the ark? Here's why: because grace must be received by faith, and faith is always more than intellectual assent and good intentions. Faith is expressed through obedience.

There's also another piece to this puzzle that we often overlook. The faithful obedience of Noah is not just about Noah. God will work through Noah's obedience to rescue countless animals and

Noah's family. We should never forget that our faith and obedience to God is never just about our own salvation. God is working out His plan through our faithful obedience in ways that affect our families, our church, countless other souls and all of God's creation in ways that we may never know.

I cannot help but think that the Apostle James was thinking about Noah when he writes in James 2:17-18: Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. **18** But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Noah will demonstrate his faith by receiving the Word of God and acting upon the Word of God…that is, after all, what faith requires. Now, to be clear, even though Noah has work to do, Noah will not be remembered as righteous in Hebrews 11 because of his work: he will be remembered as righteous because of his faith! But how do we know that Noah had faith? Because Noah built the ark!

I would invite you to chew on that nugget as we close out our time together. God's judgment is coming for sinners; but in God's mercy, He has given us THE way of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to Father except through me." Jesus is the "ark" that will carry us through the coming judgment of God, but just like Noah, we have been called to respond with FAITH. So what does faith look like for you?

Jesus said to those He came to save, "Follow me." I suspect that means our faith will be demonstrated by our following, just as Noah's faith was made evident by his obedience to build the ark. Pray about that and ask God to show you what saving faith looks like, that we might be those who live by faith. We'll explore that tension further in the weeks to come.

For now, take seriously the judgments of God, and be grateful that God has made a way for our salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord, amen? Will you pray with me?