

Rob Mathis

Sermon: Noah, Life is Too Short to Follow the Crowd!

Sunday, August 6, 2023

This summer we have been going through a wonderful sermon series. So far, we have heard teachings from Job, Ecclesiastes, Amos, and Proverbs in the Old Testament and Matthew, Luke and James in the New.

Today we are going to delve into Genesis Chapter 6 and take a new look at the very ancient story of a man named Noah, his family, and the biggest, most cataclysmic physical event in the history of the world-the flooding of the earth.

Feel free to open your Bibles to the 6th chapter of Genesis and read along from verses 9 to 22. I am reading from the New International Version:

⁹ This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. ¹⁰ Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ So make yourself an ark of cypress^[a] wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. ¹⁵ This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.^[b] ¹⁶ Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit^[c] high all around.^[d] Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷ I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has 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—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹ You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

²² Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

A few things should jump out at us right up front;

First; In Chapter 6 Noah is described as righteous, blameless, and faithful. At the end, as we just read, Noah is said to have obeyed God's directions just as he was told to.

Second, basically the rest of humanity, outside of Noah's immediate family, is described repeatedly as corrupt and violent. The writer, Moses, here is using a common literary device; he is comparing all the rest of the world, and showing the absolutely wicked state of things, while simultaneously contrasting these people with Noah and by association, his family. Noah becomes God's man to do His will in that time.

Third, we must all be struck by the impossibility of the calling on Noah's life here; Noah is directed to take pairs of animals into the ark, with an underlying plan to feed and care for these animals and ensure they are brought thru the flood alive and in good health. And it all starts with the building of a massive ship; estimated to be

about 510 feet long, 51 feet tall and 85 feet wide. A ship this large could carry 450 standard semi-trailers full of cargo. That is enough room for over 100,000 sheep alone!

But, before we go on,

Let's take a deeper look at what Noah's calling might have really looked like, building a monstrous boat, gathering up at least two of every kind of animal, and preparing for a massive flood; all right in front of a doubting world!

****Insert Short Video Clip of Evan Almighty****

Folks; in my preparation for this sermon I have spent a considerable amount of time reading through these passages of Scripture; checking various translations, reading several commentaries, scientific articles, and journals. I even consulted Hollywood!

One thing is for certain; there is no agreement among anybody about this whole story of Noah, the ark, the deluge and so on. Was it a world-wide cataclysmic event that completely overwhelmed all the earth? Or something more localized? For every scientist out there who doubts how the whole world could be flooded, there are other scientists who see evidence for a catastrophic, world-wide event that brought cataclysm to the earth in grand fashion. I do know this, and you will too, after this sermon;

Noah, the ark, and the flood are discussed in great detail not only in Genesis 6 to Genesis 9, but also, we find mention of Noah in I Chronicles 1, Isaiah 54, Ezekiel 14, and in various Psalms within the Hebrew Testament. Argue as one might, what is most interesting is that the ancient Hebrew words used to describe Noah's flood are only used in conjunction with those events; marbul mayim. Hebrew scholars, including Jewish historians, clearly hold that this wording means, "A mighty deluge by waters." Lesser events are discussed in the Old Testament, but the writers never discussed these with the same wording as for the Great Flood.

And, in the New Testament Jesus Himself refers to Noah and to the Great Flood. He does so as fact, warning that just as in the days of Noah, so shall it be before He returns! In both 1 and 2 Peter we see the Apostle Peter clearly talk about a historical Noah and an historical flood, using these as clear warnings, similar to Jesus, for those living on the earth. Intriguingly, the Greek word used singularly to describe the Great Flood in Matthew, and 1st and 2nd Peter is kataclusmos. Sound familiar? It is the word that gives us cataclysm today. By the way, these writers used other words for the parting of the Red Sea in the OT, and for other local water events, such as the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. But all of these writers specifically chose to describe Noah's Flood in words unique in all of Scripture to that set of events.

But at the end of the day, I believe God's purpose and intent for inspiring Moses to write these passages is much less about science, or even the finer points of argument about Hebrew and Greek, and so much more about teaching we humans how essential it is to know and obey His Word; **The Apostle Paul said in II Timothy 3:16-17 ¹⁶ All**

Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God^[a] (that should be you and me) may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. So, in a nutshell, God inspired the story of Noah, the flood, and the ark to get our attention and help us to sit up and take note of His purposes and will for all humankind!

So, let me tell you my take; nowhere do I find in the Bible that it says we cannot have different views and opinions on a whole lot of things that the Bible talks about. Instead, let's laser focus on what is foundational to our faith by looking at a story from Paul the Apostle's life;

Paul was imprisoned (we read about this particular incident in Acts 16:31) with Silas, his missionary traveling companion, in the jail at Thyatira (now called Akhisar, and located in Western Turkey.) They had cast a demon out of a woman, and it angered the people that made money off of her. During the night the two were worshipping God in the jail and an angel struck the place so that all their

shackles fell off and the doors were opened. The jailer found this in the morning and was going to kill himself because he surmised that everyone had fled. But they had not. He saw the powerful hand of God and fell down and asked what he had to do to be saved. **Paul and Silas' response; "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved!"**

That is the essence of what we live for; what we preach; what we are about. We can find every reason under the sun to argue about politics, religion, economics, archeology, geology, and this or that scientific view. But at the end of the day the only thing that really matters is what we do or do not do with Jesus Christ Himself.

So, let's go back briefly to our sources in the early part of the Book of Genesis:

God's creation started out beautiful, perfect, incredible in every way. God called His creation of the earth and animals, "Good". He called His creation of humanity, "very good".

Then Adam and Eve rebelled. They allowed Satan to twist the truth and they themselves twisted the truth, and so all of humanity began a long, dark descending separation from intimacy with God. A descent

that, counter to the lie of the devil that humans would not die, lead to death.

As time passed (apparently about 1500 years or so) and generations went by, there were more and more people on the earth. Genesis 6:5 says that God saw how great people's wickedness on the earth had gotten. In fact, the description of the lead up to the flood used the same basic terminology as was used in Creation in Genesis 1-2; only in reverse. In Genesis 1 God saw that it was "good"; in Genesis 6:5 "the Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become." The separation of the waters below and above that is described in creation now collapses into a great flood (Genesis 7:11), the dry ground that had appeared now disappears back under the waters, destroying all life outside of the ark; life that had been created back in Genesis 1. This is the great start over; and just as the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:2, now God sends a wind (Hebrew for spirit) over the earth, and the recreation begins as the waters recede and the animals emerge out of the ark (Genesis 8:1-22).

This start over is profound beyond anything humans can imagine. What God has done, completely apart from humanity, is set in motion deliverance from the darkness, brokenness, and decay of this world. And this plan was set in motion as soon as the devil convinced humans to rebel. Genesis 3 says that there will be enmity between the “the serpent” and the woman and her offspring and his. The offspring of the woman is Jesus, the serpent is the devil, and so from earliest times God had His plan to save humanity.

Truthfully, the fall, the degradation of humanity, the destruction of all but 8 humans, was paving the way for Jesus Christ to do the most incredible redo of all. **And believe it or not, all of what has happened, is happening and will happen is firmly in the hands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

And that is where I want to focus the remainder of our time this morning. You see, I don't think there is hardly a New Testament book that does not point to the return of Jesus Christ for His Church and the end of time as we know it. **All of history is preparing for the finality of the rule of Jesus Christ! And we are admonished, encouraged,**

and challenged to be ready! Because whether scientists, theologians, or anyone else says otherwise, the end is coming! No one knows when. But Jesus Himself did say it would come as “a thief in the night”, (See Revelation 16:15, Matthew 24:43 and I Thessalonians 5:2), when all the world is “marrying and being given in marriage, eating and drinking”; in other words, much of humanity, like in Noah’s day, will sadly, be twiddling their thumbs and ignoring the signs! We, as His people, the ones He calls His own, must get ready! The time for embracing sin, disobeying God’s laws, and fiddling around are finished!

As we wrap up for this morning, let us ask:

What Can We Learn from Noah?

The story of Noah and the Flood is one of judgement and salvation; of obedience and disobedience. In an era of overwhelming wickedness, Noah set himself apart by living righteously. Noah was likely mocked for building a giant boat when no flood was yet seen upon the earth – but he did not worry about what other people thought. He simply responded to God’s commands with a willing heart and willing hands. God rewarded him for his righteousness and obedience, saving both him and his family from destruction.

The story of the Flood also demonstrates both the gravity of God’s justice and the promise of His salvation. Every sin we commit grieves God, and His justice demands judgement for that sin. Just as God provided salvation for Noah and his family when His judgement was brought upon the world, so also does God provide salvation for each of His followers through Christ. And that my friends is the absolute essence of what this life is about. All of life in the

universe is awaiting the return of Jesus Christ and the return to God's complete order for the world.