

Genesis Chapter 6 -- the Story of Noah -- Barrowby Family Service 20/01/11

(SLIDE)

Perhaps not a good Family Service choice after all. Tend to have a rosy picture of Noah and his animals – and we buy our young children small toy arks to play with. Yet we are talking about something far worse than the Haiti or Pakistan earthquakes, or the Indonesian tsunami or the Australian floods. The flood of Noah dwarfs all these natural disasters combined. Yet we make light of it!

Introduction

Raises quite a few questions of historicity which we ought to briefly deal with. Is this just a parable with basic religious truth. - or was there some kind of flood? And if we are accept there was a flood -- then, of what kind? When the Bible speaks of a worldwide flood, was it the world as then known -- ie the Mesopotamian Valley -- the cradle of civilisation. Or are we speaking of a planet wide catastrophe.?

I think many orthodox scholars opt for a limited flood -- like Australia at present, and with Noah taking local domesticated and sacrificial animals aboard. For one thing there's not currently enough water on the planet to flood to a height of 7 m beyond the top of the mountains.

On the other hand, those who advocate a planet wide flood, do raise some intriguing questions from the rocks and the fossil evidence. They argue that the world was very different before the flood. It was such a cataclysmic event that present-day high mountains and continents would not have existed and were themselves part of the result of the flood (SLIDE)

They point to evidence such as this -- the so-called peristratic trees found around the world. (Explain -- fossilised trees passing through many different layers of rock -- which could not happen if this rock was created over hundreds of millions of years) Also the fossil evidence in itself -- to create a fossil requires a living creature be covered with silt as soon as it dies -- otherwise the bones would have time to scatter. What happened for all these fossils to be found in rock stratas around the world?

Fascinating, but enough -- leave you to ponder further on that and let's look at the actual message.

1. Sin -- and Judgment (SLIDE)

We see, only a few chapters into the Bible -- with the story of Adam and Eve in chapter 3, we see how people decided to leave God's path and to go their own way. The Bible calls that decision sin, and in our reading today we see how far

from God sin will take us. (6:5) "the Lord saw how bad the people on earth were and that everything they thought and planned was evil." It's the nature of sin that it always gets worse. It grows like a cancer - left unchecked, sin will destroy us. So we can understand why God is so upset. It's hard to let someone you love make bad choices. God had given us the ability to choose between good and evil and it seems we so often preferred evil.

Some people think that God is waiting, just waiting to catch them doing something wrong, as if he enjoys punishing people. But it's interesting that his first emotion here is not satisfaction or even anger. Rather its pain and grief -- verse 6. "He was very sorry that he had made man..", - it broke his heart. That's what sin does to the heart of God - and as we've already seen with Adam and Eve, sin brings horrible consequences which eventually force God to act -- like a potter who starts again with a lump of clay that is misshapen. *(In Genesis we learn not only was the universe created as a personal universe -- it's also a moral universe.)*

2. Faith (SLIDE)

Yet all was not lost. There was one who had faith in God. Strong enough faith to believe him and obey him -- and to do a ridiculous thing and build this large boat. I would say this was impressive faith -- when everyone around him was mocking him -- for 120 years if we go by the biblical timescale.

God won't ask you to build a boat -- because he has promised not to flood the world again. But each Christian is required to walk by faith, when it's sometimes difficult and when those people of no faith, (or at least of faith in other things), make fun of you.

Noah is mentioned in the New Testament book of Hebrews -- in that big list of people who had great faith in God. And those people -- there were by no means perfect -- which you see in the story of Noah -- when later, he gets stone drunk. (But can you blame him - after a year locked in with his family !!)

But they were saved because of their faith.

As we are -- as St Paul writes -- "God counts our faith as goodness" Jesus died for our sins so that our faith in him would save us.

3. A New Beginning (SLIDE)

That's what we see in the end of the story. (Expand).

And when any person turns to Christ, & puts their faith, their life in his hands -- then it's like we have a new start walking with God.