



THUS I ESTABLISH MY
COVENANT WITH YOU:
NEVER AGAIN SHALL
ALL FLESH BE CUT
OFF BY THE WATERS
OF THE FLOOD;
NEVER AGAIN SHALL
THERE BE A FLOOD TO
DESTROY THE EARTH.

GENESIS 9:11

GRACE

IN THE ARK

DATE

January 18 & 19

WEEK

3 of 4

KEY VERSE

Genesis 9:11

SETTING THE STAGE

In Genesis 6, we are told that creation was in dire need of a “reset.” As we learned last week in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve introduced sin into this world, and since then it has spread across all of humanity (*Romans 5:12*). We see this in Genesis 4 with the first murder, as Cain kills Abel. Eight generations later, we see Lamech kill a man and even boast about it (*Genesis 4:23-24*). Then we get to chapter 6 and we are told that the sons of God were marrying the daughters of men (*Genesis 6:1-4*). Interpretations vary on those 4 complex verses ranging from the intermarriage of pagan, tyrant kings with God’s people, to the intermarriage of fallen angels with humanity. Regardless of the interpretation, we know that it was a detestable thing and it broke the heart of God. We are told in Genesis 6:5-6, “⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” When we read that passage, it initially seems harsh. Did the Father truly regret making people in His own image? Did God make a mistake in His creation? Kenneth Matthews explains: “God’s response of grief over the making of humanity, however, is not remorse in the sense of sorrow over a mistaken creation; our verse shows that God’s pain has its source in the perversion of human sin. The making of ‘man’ is no error; it is what ‘man’ has made of himself.”¹

God’s heart was broken over the sin of mankind. Sin grieves our God (*Ephesians 4:30*) not only because it robs Him of the glory that He is due, but it also robs us of the joy that He designed us to walk in. Because of this, God chose to hit the reset button through the flood. In one fierce storm, the likes of which will never be seen again, God blotted out nearly all the life on this earth. However, if you know the story, He did not blot out **ALL** living things. *Continued on page 24 >*

LESSON OUTLINE

1. God Offers Grace Before Judgment
2. God’s Grace Has a Time Limit
3. God’s Grace Gives Us a New Beginning

THINGS TO KNOW

- We all need the greater ark, Jesus Christ to save us from the flood of God’s wrath and deliver us to a new beginning.

GRACE

IN THE ARK

Setting the Stage, continued > Because of His great mercy and grace, God preserved a remnant through one faithful servant, Noah (*Genesis 6:8*). As we journey through this story today, we will see that God’s grace was extravagant, even in the midst of His righteous and terrifying judgment.

Introduction

Have you ever hit your wits’ end with technology? For many, technological advancements have been life’s greatest blessing, but also life’s greatest curse. John Tudor put it this way, “Technology makes it possible for people to gain control over everything, except technology.”² Technology is hard to get a handle on! Have you ever been working hard on your computer, and then at the worst time it begins to lag? Maybe you’ve been in the middle of an episode of your favorite show when abruptly the TV screen freezes up. Or perhaps you have been frustrated to discover that your router is suddenly not delivering the Wi-Fi connection it should. We have all had those moments where our home technology

is not operating the way it should and there is no clear way to repair it. However, sometimes we notice there is a magical “reset” button that allows us to start over. With one simple push of that button, the device resets and removes all of our problems, and in return, it gives us a fresh start.



Exposition

GENESIS 6:13-19 NKJV “And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. ¹⁵ And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

¹⁶ You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷ And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go 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.”



Noah is introduced in Genesis as a man that found favor in God’s eyes. The Lord informed him of His plan to flood all of creation as a consequence for humanity’s sin. However, God also tells Noah that he and his family will be spared through the construction of an unprecedented ark. In a baffling decree, Noah is commanded to build an enormous sea vessel in the middle of the desert. It is difficult to fathom how much faith it must have taken for



¹ *The New American Commentary, Volume 1A*, p. 343.

² John Tudor, IT History Society, ithistory.org/quotes/john_tudor.

Noah to accept such an overwhelming task. Noah invested many years and resources into this ark's construction. It is fair to speculate that Noah received lots of criticism and mockery along the way. This was not a subtle DIY project that he was doing at home. He was building a 3-deck ship that was over 440 feet long, 73 feet wide, and 44 feet high. It would have yielded a displacement of 43,000 tons and provided approximately 95,700 square feet of deck area. ³

Undoubtedly, Noah withstood many personal attacks that questioned his mental well-being. Why did the ark have to be so large? More than protecting Noah and his seven family members, God told Noah that the ark would be used to protect the animals of the earth. Noah is appointed ship-maker, captain, and zookeeper all at once. He is told that at the appointed time, God will lead two of every kind of creature into this boat to ensure the future repopulation of the earth. But the truth is even with all those animals, there was still room to fit more people on that large of a boat. And I believe more could have boarded it because of our first point today.

We all need the greater ark, Jesus Christ, to save us from the flood of God's wrath and deliver us to a new beginning.

1. GOD OFFERS GRACE BEFORE JUDGMENT

In 2 Peter 2:5 it says Noah was a "herald of righteousness." This means Noah was not just a ship-maker; he was also a preacher! God used those years of construction as a time where Noah proclaimed God's righteous plan to his neighbors. I do believe Noah explained the ship's purpose. Noah surely told them that God was angry and that He was going to pour out His wrath through a world-wide flood. He must have pointed to that massive ark under construction as God's visible offer of salvation. Nonetheless, only the eight people in Noah's family ended up boarding the boat as passengers. This means no one believed his story. No one repented. No one asked to be on that boat with him before the storm.

This story translates into modern times quite well. Tragically, every single day people ignore their own Noah and their own ark. God sends "Noahs" our way all the time. Sometimes they are friends, family members, or colleagues. Other times they are preachers or missionaries. They may take on different titles, but they all are used by God as His "heralds," proclaiming His truth into our lives. They point to God's coming judgment, but they also point to an ark as a means of salvation. What is our ark? It is the finished work of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, we can be protected from the wrath of God that is to come and we are offered a new life filled with hope, just like Noah.

Noah's friends and neighbors were given ample time to think about and accept his offer. This too is the case in our own lives. In fact, Peter says Jesus has not returned yet because He is giving us additional time to get on "our ark" (2 Peter 3:9). But sadly, many ignore the messengers and take the patience of Jesus Christ lightly. Unfortunately, the story of the flood tells us that the decision has devastating consequences. The story of Noah reminds us that the window of opportunity will eventually come to a close.

Did you know that this Hebrew word for ark (teba) only occurs in the Flood narrative and in Exodus 2:3,5, where it is the "basket" in which the infant Moses is placed in by his mother? Both Noah and Moses were saved from drowning through an "ark." ⁴

GENESIS 7:11-16 NKJV "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. ¹² And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³ On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark – ¹⁴ they and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and

³ Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 282.

⁴ Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 280.

every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. ¹⁵ And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which is the breath of life. ¹⁶ So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.”

After years of construction, God fulfilled this tragic promise. Most commentators believe the flood waters came for 40 days and 40 nights. But the water did not just come from the “top-down,” it came from the “bottom-up” as well (*Genesis 7:11*). Fountains of the earth began to gush with water and the earth began to accumulate water at a rate never seen before, or since. Water topped even the highest of the mountains (*Genesis 7:20*) and there was no salvation available apart from the ark. People on the outside quickly learned our second point:

2. GOD’S GRACE HAS A TIME LIMIT

God generously gave years for people to heed Noah’s warnings. God had been patient for generations in the past, however, the day came where His warnings were over. Instead of hearing about God’s wrath, people began to witness it for themselves. And God’s last word to them was not in the form of a sentence. It came through the form of divine action: He shut the ark’s door (*Genesis 7:7*).

Why would God Himself shut the door? That is a great question that has captured the imagination of many scholars for centuries. While the Bible does not explicitly answer that question, I believe it could be in part for two practical reasons.

“The expression, ‘And the Lord shut him in,’ beautifully shows God’s fatherly touch, at the very brink of judgment. The same care that saw this matter through carries our salvation to its conclusion.” ⁴

First, God shut the door to protect those who were inside. God promised Noah and his family salvation through the ark. And when God begins a project, He always sees it through to completion (*Philippians 1:6*). His personal presence, sealing the door was a powerful reminder to Noah that God was on the boat with them. He was showing Noah that He would hold fast to His promise. In the same way, God follows through with His promise of salvation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:13-14, ¹³ *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.* When we step into our ark, by grace and through faith in Jesus Christ, God likewise shuts the door to our hearts. He seals it with the presence of His Holy Spirit, reminding us that He is with us in the future storms of this life and that our salvation is safe and secure. Nothing can break through and rob us of the salvation that we have accepted from Him through faith. God’s hand moving that door is a beautiful reminder to Noah, and to us, that our salvation and our future is in good hands.

Secondly, God shut the door because time was up. I can only imagine the horror of what Noah must have watched. Jesus says just days before the flood, people were eating, drinking, marrying, and celebrating (*Matthew 24:38*). They were caught completely off guard by the raging storm. Undoubtedly, they must have run to that boat in desperation when they saw the waters begin to rise. But they could not enter the ark because God’s grace had a time limit. They now believed Noah’s warnings, but it was simply too late. Why is that? Because faith is the key to opening up the door to salvation. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (*Hebrews 11:6*). When we die or when Christ returns (whichever comes first), the door to our own ark will likewise be closed. Why is that the case? Because there will no longer be room for faith. We will see the reality of our judgment with our own eyes just as Noah’s

⁴ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, page 98.

peers did. And like Noah's friends, many will grieve because they did not accept the clear invitation when it was presented (*Luke 13:25, Revelation 1:7*). They ignored the warnings and decided to take their own chances. Have you entered your ark? Have you accepted Jesus' invitation to salvation by grace and through faith? The door is open now, but the Biblical truth is that it could shut at any time.

So, God shuts the door and the rain begins to devastate the earth. For 40 days and 40 nights, the heavens are opened and creation experiences torrential downpour. Finally, after those 40 days, God closed the heavens but water continued to rise for 150 days (*Genesis 7:24*). As the water finally started to peak, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (*Genesis 8:4*). On that mountain, Noah's family had to wait seven more months for the water to recede fully. In total, they spent a little over a year on that ark together. But on that final day, God told Noah to get off the boat and gave him the same instructions He gave our first parents, Adam and Eve, "be fruitful and multiply" (*Genesis 8:17*). From there, He spoke with Noah and re-established a relationship with humanity.

GENESIS 9:8-17 NKJV *"Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: ⁹ 'And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your]descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. ¹¹ Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' ¹² And God said: 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: ¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.'"*

Noah hears from the Lord and receives wonderful news for all of the generations to come. God establishes the Noahic Covenant and communicates our final point.

3. GOD'S GRACE GIVES US A NEW BEGINNING

The ark did not just protect Noah from death, it delivered him to a brand-new life! On that mountain, God set up a covenant with Noah, establishing a new agreement not just with him personally, but with all of creation for the future. God unconditionally promises that He will never send another flood to destroy all life on this earth again. God did not communicate any rules or stipulations to that agreement, He simply offered a sign to prove His intentions. What is the sign? A beautiful rainbow. Warren Wiersbe explains this interesting choice.

"Rainbows are caused by sunlight filtering through the water in the air, each drop becoming a prism to release the colors hidden in the white light of the sun. Their lovely colors speak to us of what Peter called the 'manifold grace of God' (1 Peter 4:10). The Greek word translated 'manifold' means 'various, many-colored, variegated.' The rainbow reminds us of God's gracious covenant and the 'many-colored' grace of God ... A bow in an instrument of war, but God has transformed it into a picture of His grace and faithfulness, a guarantee of peace. God could certainly turn the bow of judgment upon us, because we've broken His law and deserve judgment. But He has turned the bow toward heaven and taken the punishment for us Himself!" ⁵

Read Luke 13:22-30 and notice the parallels to the story of the Flood. Jesus explains the door of salvation is open today but will be closed one day.

The rainbow reminded Noah, and reminds us, that we can have a new life through the grace of God. This is made available to us through Jesus Christ and His triumphant victory over death. Just like a victorious warrior armed with a bow, Jesus Christ fought the battle against sin and death and won on our behalf. Because of that, we too are offered a new covenant with God that requires no conditions. All we have to do is follow Noah's example, and say yes to God's invitation through faith. And when we do, we no longer have to fear the flood waters of God's wrath, but instead we can begin a new life with a new purpose, just like Noah.

For those that have been believers a long time or just a few years there is an invitation for us as well. Do you need a fresh start today? Do you need to push the "reset" button? Have you found yourself going through the motions, caught up in the world? Do you need to trust God today with whatever circumstance you are facing? Do you need to be reminded that God is present and calling you in? In the words of C.S. Lewis, "Come further up, further in."

THE HEBREW WORD, "QESET"
IS USED FOR BOTH RAINBOWS
AND THE BOW OF A WEAPON.
"BUT HERE IN WHAT IS NOTHING
LESS THAN A RADICAL
REINTERPRETATION OF DIVINE
POWER, THE BOW CEASES TO
FUNCTION AS A SYMBOL OF
COMBAT AND IS NOW A SYMBOL
OF PEACE AND WELL-BEING."⁶

⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary Volume 1*, p. 47.

⁶ Victor Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 317.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

God was patient with His people for generations. Yet, the people continued to ignore God and go down their own path. The people intentionally rejected God's warning time and time again. This is not unlike what happens today in big and small ways.

We live in a culture where people ignore and reject God on a daily basis in a variety of ways. Perhaps you have done that in the past or currently are in the present. It is not too late for you, a friend or a family member. It is imperative that we learn from Noah's example and follow his footsteps in faith. We too must heed the warning of God's coming wrath, accept His offer of salvation, and then enjoy a fresh start through covenant with Him.

God's grace in the ark is the same grace He offers to us today. The ark was a symbol of salvation for Noah and his family. The cross of Jesus Christ represents our salvation in that Jesus took all of our sin and punishment upon Himself on the cross to the point of death and then burial. But in just three days the grace of God shined forth not in the form of a rainbow this time, but in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus conquered death. Jesus paid the price. Jesus did that for you. If you have that relationship with Jesus Christ already, celebrate that victory.

If you do not have that relationship or are in doubt of that relationship, there is no better time than now to settle that in your heart once and for all. Let His Story impact Your Story. It is as easy as ABC:

A - Admit you have sinned. Tell God you are sorry for your sins and ask Him to forgive you.

B - Believe Jesus is God's sinless Son. John 3:16 says *For this is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.* Jesus never sinned, so He did not deserve the punishment for sin: death. Even though He never sinned, Jesus volunteered to take the punishment for your sins and for mine. He died on a cross and was buried. But death was not the end of the story. Three days after He died, Jesus rose and walked in newness of life!

C - Choose to make Jesus the Lord and Savior of your life. Ask Jesus to become your Lord and your Savior. Ask Him to teach you to live His way in your thoughts, words, and actions.