

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## Back to the beginning: Noah before the Flood - Genesis 6:1-7:9

Throughout the UK, and in much of Europe, special ceremonies were held on 28 July 2014 - the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. Since then, this part of world history has also been remembered in various other ways. One way has been to show the kind of lives people lived in that early part of the twentieth century in order to answer the questions, "What was the world like, and how did people live, in those days?" The idea about this series 'Back to the Beginning' is very much along these lines of enquiry. Just what was the world like, and how did people live, in those early days of man's history upon earth? Scripture gives us the true history of this world. Genesis, the book of beginnings, is the record of man's earliest history.

The first part of this series covered Genesis 1-5 and was broadcast in late 2013 and early 2014. Today's talk, on Genesis 6:1-7:9, introduces the second part of the series, which consists of four talks about the world of Noah's lifetime, before, during, and after, the Flood - from about 5,000 to 4,000 years ago.

Noah was the last person in the line of the godly generations before the great worldwide Flood wiped out the whole of mankind (except for Noah's own immediate family). There was Adam (Genesis 5:4), Abel, Seth (Genesis 5:6-8), Enos (Genesis 5:9-11), Cainan (Genesis 5:12-14), Mahalalel (Genesis 5:15-17), Jared (Genesis 5:18-20), Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24), Methuselah (Genesis 5:25-27), Lamech (Genesis 5:28-31) and finally Noah (Genesis 5:32). As was mentioned in the first series of talks, the repeated "he died" commentary in Genesis 5 about each one of Adam's descendants show that they all, without exception, inherited his sinful nature.

Romans 5:12-14 (English Standard Version) gives the sober truth of this serious matter. *"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned - for indeed sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam ...."*

If this was the case for the men of faith, what does the Scripture say about the rest of mankind in those early days? For Cain went away from the presence of the LORD. Genesis 6:5, says *"that they became so wicked and their every intention so evil that the LORD regretted that He had ever made man. His heart was filled with grief."*

But this was not all, as we find by reading Genesis 6:5 in the context of Genesis 6:1-7. *"When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.' The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"*

It appears that those described as *"the sons of God"* in Genesis 6:2 and Genesis 6:4 were actually fallen angels. We would call them demons. (The idea of people being demon-possessed should not surprise us. The Gospels frequently record that the Lord encountered such people during His ministry.) There were drastic results when demons entered men in Noah's time:

- First of all, God curtailed the lives of men with the pronouncement, *"My Spirit shall not always strive with man"*, Genesis 6:3 (King James (Authorised) Version). They were restricted to a lifespan of a mere 120 years in comparison to 969 years, the average lifespan of Adam's generations listed in Genesis 5:1-32, Enoch excepted.
- Secondly, their children became giants, called the Nephilim. Such grotesque human beings were also found after the Flood in Canaan when Moses sent the spies to spy out the land, see Numbers 13:33.

- Thirdly, the world became a most dreadful place in which to live. *“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”,* Genesis 6:11-12 (English Standard Version). Therefore, God determined a more severe and lasting form of judgment. *“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’”,* Genesis 6:13. The entire world of mankind, along with the animal life (over which Adam had been given dominion), was condemned to perish in the Flood. *“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”,* Genesis 6:17. The divine verdict is made very clear, *“And Jehovah repented that he had made Man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy Man, whom I have created, from the earth - from man to cattle, to creeping things, and to fowl of the heavens; for I repent that I have made them”,* Genesis 6:6-7 (JN Darby Translation).

Yes, it took only about 1,600 years of mankind's history to reach this point - judgment from God. However, there was one person who was different! *“But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD .... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God”,* Genesis 6:8-9 (English Standard Version). When he was born, Noah's father recognised that he would be a godly person. *“Lamech ... fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, ‘Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands’”,* Genesis 5:29-30. (Noah means “rest” and perhaps Lamech was prophesying of the new world order after the Flood.)

Noah must have learned piety from his father, Lamech, and his grandfather, Methuselah. Methuselah would have told him about his great grandfather, Enoch. Enoch did not die. Instead, he had the unique experience of being translated directly to heaven. *“[He] was not, for God took him”,* Genesis 5:24. He had walked with God for 300 years after Methuselah was born to him at the age of 65. Hebrews 11:5-6 is God's testimony of Enoch. *“By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”* The statement, *“having pleased God”,* is the Septuagint rendering of *“walked with God”* in Genesis 5:22-24.

Noah is described as being a righteous man. That means he lived according to God's standards of right and wrong. There wasn't anything about his lifestyle that men, or God, could point to as being wrong or unsatisfactory. He was blameless in a corrupt world and a sinful world, in which men resisted the correcting activities of the Spirit of God. Like his great grandfather, he walked with God, Genesis 6:9. Ezekiel 14:14 and Ezekiel 14:20 ranks him alongside Job and Daniel as outstanding men of righteousness.

How did Noah gain such a good commendation from God? We find the answer in Hebrews 11:7 *“By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”* The way in which he became righteous was by faith, the same way as Enoch was regarded by God as being righteous. Then as Noah walked with God, God explained to him the action that He was going to take with respect to the wickedness in the world. *“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’”,* Genesis 6:13.

Noah believed God and set about to build the Ark so that he and his family would be saved from the destruction of the Flood. To survive the Flood, the Ark had to be built exactly to God's specifications, and in accordance with His word. *“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. 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”,* Genesis 6:14-16.

Noah's Ark is often misrepresented in children's Bible stories and the like. But this leads to a perception that the whole incident is one which need not be taken seriously and that it's rather a nice story that lacks reality. But the Ark was a massive, super-tanker-like structure, some 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high with plenty of accommodation for the animals and their feedstock! Essentially, it was designed to float and be water-tight to survive the extreme storms of the Flood, which it did. It was God's provision of salvation for anyone who believed. But only the few, Noah's family, did! The rest of mankind perished in the Flood. Sadly, in today's world, it's also true that most people reject the escape from judgment provided in the Gospel of salvation!

In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah is called *“a preacher of righteousness.”* This was a difficult job for no one responded to the message and repented. Perhaps he preached the message of repentance and correct living during most of his adult life. He certainly preached it all of the time whilst he constructed the Ark. Genesis 5:32 seems to suggest that the world deteriorated after Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, were born. He reached 500 years old before he

fathered them. Then it took him 100 years to construct the Ark - a 100 years of faithfulness to God's word! He preached because God had revealed the coming judgment to him. *"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"*, Genesis 6:17. 1 Peter 3:20 describes this period of Noah's witness in remarkable terms. It was the time when men did not obey, even though God's patience waited so long for them to truly repent.

The real test of Noah's faith in God's word came when he had finished building the Ark. Please read Genesis 6:18-7:9 after this broadcast to see what I mean. Notice in Genesis 6:20 that he relied upon God's promise to bring the animals to the Ark - he did not have to round them up! Notice, too, the emphasis placed on doing everything down to the last detail, *"Noah did all that God had commanded him"* in Genesis 6:22 is repeated in Genesis 7:5. Likewise, to be saved today from the Great White Throne judgment (see Revelation 20:11-15), God must be obeyed. He commands all people everywhere to repent (see Acts 17:30) and to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from their sins.

I started my talk by referring to the present commemorations of World War I. It's generally accepted that we look back to learn the lessons which history would teach us. With respect to Noah and the Flood, men do not heed that lesson of history very well, if at all! 2 Peter 3:2-8 (American Standard Version) admonishes us to *"remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."*

Geologists dismiss the idea of this worldwide catastrophe but the fossil records are witness to it. Despite the plain evidence of God's word, men hide behind such sciences as an excuse for being wilfully ignorant of the true history of the world. Here Peter is warning of another judgment facing mankind, which will be brought about when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to *"judge the world in righteousness"*, see Acts 17:31, which tells us that God has given a guarantee that it will happen by raising Jesus out from among the dead. The clear and unmistakable evidence of judgment to come is found: first, in the Genesis account of Noah's Flood (see Genesis 6:1-9:29); and secondly, in the resurrection of Christ. Yes, people neglect the Gospel warnings to their eternal peril. But, just as in Noah's time there was a way of salvation, so today there's a more blessed way of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, you and your household"*, Acts 16:31. *"How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? ... [Furthermore,] if anyone go[es] on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. ... For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Hebrews 2:3 with Hebrews 10:26-27 and Hebrews 10:30-31).

A sensible question to ask at this point is, "How near is judgment day?" Or, put another way, "When is Christ likely to return?" We know that people do scoff as 2 Peter 3:4 predicted. So we know that Christ's coming draws near. But we also have His own prophecy, *"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all"*, Luke 17:26-27.

At first sight, the Lord appears to stating the obvious - that He'll come at a time when people are completely unprepared because they're taken up with the everyday things of life upon earth. But there's more to it than that. It will be just like it was in Noah's time, that is, when the world is full of evil, violence and corruption. And that's what we find in today's world. I recently heard a diplomatic expert being asked on BBC Radio to list all of the current wars and places of civil unrest in the world. What was staggering was that it took about five minutes for that person to eventually arrive at the most prominent wars in the globe! Add to that fact that there's a lot of ungodliness and unrighteousness practised even in western civilised societies. The conclusion can only be that *"the coming of the Lord is at hand"*, James 5:8.

The challenge for you and me is, 'Where do I stand in relation to the salvation from judgment which is available by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?' Only eight people were saved in the Ark. Peter writes that the message of judgment that Noah preached before the Flood fits into a recurring theme in the Bible. Time and time again God forewarns of coming judgment because of the sin and wickedness of men. *"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly*

*distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment", 2 Peter 2:4-9.*

Noah was one of the few godly people living in the immediate antediluvian world. Can you begin to imagine the ridicule and mocking he received whilst building the Ark upon dry land? But,

- He remained faithful to the word of God concerning those things which were to come.
- He feared God and lived in a righteous way.
- He taught his family the way of faith; and we must do the same. Although there's no fear of God or thought of life-beyond-the-grave in today's world, Christians must remain faithful to the message of the Gospel.

Finally, there's real value, and safety, in being godly like Noah. In 1 Peter 3:20-22, the salvation of Noah's family through the Flood is likened to Christian baptism. That means there is protection throughout life from the evils of this world for all believers who take this practical step and place themselves under the Lordship of Christ.

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