

## TUTORIAL

## 1.19

# God punishes the world, but saves Noah

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.  
The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are:  
***Genesis 5:1-32, 6:1-22, 7:1-24.***

## Last time

We listened to God's account of the sad life of Cain, Adam and Eve's first son. God had provided a way for humans to approach Him in the post-fall context. When, having rejected Cain's self-styled approach, God accepted his brother Abel's offering made on God's terms and in faith. Cain murdered his brother in jealous rage. God avenged Abel's death with a curse on Cain. Adam and Eve had another son, and two human lines emerge on earth: Cain's, materialistic and indifferent to God; and Seth's, worshippers of the Lord.

## 10 generations come and go on earth

In Genesis 5 God continues the Story of His interaction with man by recording some details of the 10 generations from Adam, through Seth and on to Noah. The family line that came to God on His terms. The record of each generational head gives the number of years they lived, their sons, and concludes with the statement "and then he died". Death was now part of life on earth. The race of God's image-bearers were all now born with death and sin as part of their being, their lives...and their end. Now, left to himself, it would be separation...from God, from physical life and the body in death, and endless separation and punishment in eternity.

In the generational record, one man - the 7th after Adam – is singled out. (Genesis 5:21-24) Twice in the brief notes, it says that he "lived" or "walked in close fellowship with God." So not only is there the possibility of an approach to God He can accept – if by faith, on His terms – but even a close relationship is available. This is an exciting confirmation for us, who were created specifically for that! A later reference in God's Narrative shed's more light on Enoch's life and his role of God's storyteller to the people of his time. He warns them - without effect - that God would punish them for the evil things they were saying and doing. A fascinating mention is made in the Narrative of the fact

that Enoch did not physically die, simply stating that “one day he disappeared because God took him”.

## **God decides to destroy a world that has become corrupted**

We now come to a part of God’s Story that is no doubt familiar to us – often extracted from the overall Narrative with the focus put on “Noah and the ark”. But this is, indeed, God’s Account of who He is, revealed against the backdrop of real-life events in His interaction with man. Already, only 10 generations after the turning away - the Fall - almost all the people had no interest in God or fear of His judgment. They are writing their own stories. A later reference in the Narrative sheds light and explains that - not at all unlike our culture - they were mainly interested in entertainment...the latest event, avoiding boredom, having fun. With God’s Enemy working overtime to distract and deceive their already corrupted hearts and minds, they refused to respond to the truth that God’s Spirit was offering to them; through their surroundings telling them God’s Creative Narrative or through His messenger, His chosen storyteller, Noah.

Evil, it says, (Genesis 6:5 and 11) was rampant. People’s hearts, their imaginations, the things that consumed their thoughts were “consistently and totally evil”. It’s a sobering fact that God knew their innermost thoughts and motivations. As we’ve noted, His understanding and insights are universal and exhaustive. Nothing escapes His observation, and therefore His just assessment. The text (Genesis 6:6,7) says that God was sorry he’d put these people on the earth. One English version of the Narrative puts it that “it broke his heart” to see what the race of His image-bearers had become. God is revealing to us the depth of feeling that leads to his decision that he’s going to wipe this human race from the earth and destroy the lesser beings He had originally put under their (our) oversight and care.

## **God determines He’ll save Noah and his family**

As God looks at this hopeless, pathetic, evil race, there is one exception. One man and his family. A *righteous* man who is *blameless* and *walking in close fellowship* with God, the Narrative says (Genesis 6:8-10) And that’s all it takes for God to determine that He’ll make a way to save Noah and his family from the coming universal destruction. Not because Noah had somehow earned it. In fact, all he’d earned as a member of Adam’s lost race and by his own sin, was destruction, separation. But God is always looking for an opportunity to do this amazing thing that is so unique to Him – He extends grace. (“extends” – an awkward verb) Noah has approached him in faith, on God’s terms, humbly relating to God in real life ways, and so God gladly, eagerly, graciously puts His plan into place.

## **God’s plan and their participation**

He tells Noah that a boat is to be built. He gives him precise dimensions and specs. He explains that a devastating universal flood is coming, that will destroy life and cover the earth. (Genesis 6:13 -17) God wants Noah to engage his intellect, to understand, to participate. As we've noted before, God gives real responsibilities with genuine opportunities to be involved in what He's about. There's real work for Noah and, no doubt, for his sons. Any past experience will be valuable. Skills will be utilised. They will need to bring discipline and commitment to complete the enormous project.

But they'd be entirely out of their depth ☺ if they tried to design the boat that's needed. They can't begin to imagine the scale of the destruction coming. Nor can they picture the scope of God's plan to preserve them and other life. They need His guidance. He has to provide the plan for this boat, this rescue capsule made from cypress wood and tar, (traditionally called an "ark"). As we know, it's His Story, after all. There's to be only one door, one entry, one way to safety. God is demonstrating again that any approach to Him must be on His terms alone. Any hope that we, His lost human race, have is by the way that He alone provides for us. And Noah simply took God at His word, believed Him despite not having seen rain, much less a flood. Later in God's Narrative, this would be used to describe real faith. Faith like this goes against our human tendency to go our own way, to work things out for ourselves. It is not in conflict with reason, but neither does it rest on our reason, on tangible, empirical evidence. It is accepting that God knows. That He is always right, always righteous, always gracious.

## **God saves everyone in the boat from the destruction**

So we know the story. Before it began to rain, a week before in fact, when God told them it was time, the family entered through the one door and took with the animals as God had said they should. (Genesis 7:4-10) Then – a small but incredibly significant detail is added: God says that He, the Lord, the personal caring Father, "closed the door behind them". He was ensuring their safety, personally. He was shutting out the destruction. And when it came, as it did, of course, those outside were shut out from safety. There was no negotiating, no further appeal, no ritual they could perform, no service they could give, no prayer they could offer, no sacrifice they could make, no approach they could attempt... The time when people could agree with God's assessment of them and their evil, acknowledge their need of Him and turn to Him for help – in other words, to *repent* - those days were done.

God's grace doesn't ever run out, but His righteousness means that He won't forever overlook sin. It has to be paid for. Justice has to be done. And it was done. God's indignant power was released in the form of water, from the sky, from the earth...flooding, swirling down in sheets and torrents, filling,

consuming, drowning forests, digging canyons, changing the landscape forever, altering the crust of the planet, laying down layers of sediment, an entire fossil record to be read - or misread - millennia later. Until everything was covered. Only the still surface of the waterlogged planet to be seen with one small boat floating in all that great expanse. (Genesis 7:17-24) No one outside the boat left alive. No one inside the boat harmed.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. Describe some of the prevailing assumptions in our society about death. Also, think about any movies you know of over the last few years that relate to the after-life.  
What do you think might be the underlying purpose or message behind what is packaged as entertainment?
2. As you listen to the Biblical account of human history and the number of generations recorded since creation, how do you account for the commonly accepted and very different picture most of science sees in the fossil records? How important do you feel it is for believers to be informed with facts to respond to challenges or even genuine questions that might come? What part, if any, do you think a convincing short-earth argument has in someone coming to faith?
3. The lesson makes the point that God graciously warned people through Noah of their impending doom. With that picture in mind, consider briefly any varying levels of responsibility we might have today to people who have opportunity to hear, in contrast to those who have no way of knowing the terrible realities they face as a result of their sin.



## ACTIVITIES

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1. Of the many theories about the origins of “Homo sapiens” the very shortest time span any of them posits is at least 50,000 years – about 9 times the Genesis account – and then only as a sub-branch of millions of years of primate evolution. Read the Wikipedia page about “Human Evolution.”