

## Genesis 6 The Flood: Prolog and Building the Ark

4/24/2001 7:38 AM

### Overview

“The generations of Noah” extends from 6:9 to the end of ch 9; 10:1 introduces the generations of the sons of Noah.

The section is chiastically structured, around 8:1, “God remembered Noah.” Basic sections:

Noah’s Sons in their Moral Environment	6:9-11	9:18-29
Divine Observations and Monologue to Noah	6:12-21	8:21-9:17
Noah’s Obedience	6:22	8:18-20
Divine Monologue to Noah	7:1-4	8:15-17
Noah and the Animals	7:5-16	8:6-14
Actions by the Waters	7:17-24	8:1b-5
God Remembered Noah	8:1a	

The whole section is too long to survey in advance. We will proceed serially through the section, and comment on the correspondences mainly on the way out.

### 6:9-11, Noah’s Sons in their Moral Environment

v.10 recalls the birth of Noah’s sons, known already from 5:32. On either side, we have a moral comment. These comments contrast

- Noah’s righteousness in 6:9 with
- The corruption of the world in 6:11.

These pick up the concluding characters in vv. 1-4, 2-8. The spirit parentage of the proud giants of 4 enables them to promulgate the violence of 11, while God’s grace to Noah in the midst of pervasive wickedness in 8 leads to his righteousness in 9. This is a very intricate linking device between the end of one *toledot* section and the beginning of the next.

Both are described from two points of view: God’s and man’s.

### 9, Noah’s Righteousness

6:9 offers a summary statement with two amplifications. Summary: “Noah was a just man,” *cadiq*, “righteous.” This must be assessed from two perspectives, the human perspective and the divine perspective.

- “Perfect in his generations,” that is, among the successive generations of people who were born during his life. We know from the dates in ch. 5 that while lives were greatly extended, the age at birth was comparable to what it is today. Thus each individual’s life would span many generations, not only his own. As successive generations of parents have their children, they would point to Noah as a righteous man.
- “Noah walked with God,” like Enoch (5:22,24). Some people can maintain an illusion of righteousness before man, “but God looketh on the heart,” 1 Sam 16:7.

### **11, The World's Corruption**

Here is the same twofold analysis, of how the earth appeared to God, and what it was like for those who lived in it:

- Corrupt in God's sight. The word is used 3x (here, v.12, and Ezek 20:44) for moral corruption, and 3x in a literal sense, the effect of swarms of flies (Exod 8:20), the rotting of a waistband that has been buried by a river (Jer 13:7), or the collapse of an earthen vessel on the potter's wheel (Jer 18:4).
  - They no doubt gloried in their advanced culture, inherited from the descendants of Cain: city architecture, metalworking, music, tentmaking (ch. 4), and strengthened by the superhuman strain that was introduced into the line from the sons of God (ch. 6).
  - But in God's eyes, these accomplishments took them far from what he intended them to be. Morally, they were infested with vermin, rotten, misshapen. Cf. Isa 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags ; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."
- Filled with violence, something that even they must have recognized. The strength of the offspring of the sons of God allowed them to terrorize others. Men lived driven by selfishness and assertion.

### **10, Noah's Sons**

Into this corrupt society, with their father as the only glimmer of light, were born Noah's sons. What must they have thought of their father, different as he was from all around him?

- Did they come home from school with dirty words and disrespectful thoughts?
- Did they call him "outdated" and complain that he didn't understand them?
- Did they complain that he was overly strict with them?

Parents, we are called to be like Noah and stand against the culture of our time. Children, don't make their job difficult for them; love and respect them for their distinctive stand, recognizing how it turned out for Noah. Because he was righteous, he spared not only himself but them as well.

### **Summary**

This emphasis on the two-sided nature of true righteousness is pervasive in Scripture. Two examples:

1. Like Samuel (1 Sam 2:26) and our Lord (Luke 2:52), Noah found favor both with God and also with man, an example that we must seek to emulate (Rom 14:17,18).
2. Abraham was justified both by works (James 2:21, in the sight of men) and by faith (Rom 4:1-3, first class condition); likewise Rahab (works, James 2:25; faith, Heb 11:31).

Let us always seek to maintain both levels of purity and holiness.

## 6:12-22, First Execution Paragraph

The history develops through two of what Longacre calls “execution paragraphs,” that is, a statement of what will be done followed by a description of the doing of it. In this case, the statement in each case is a command by the Lord, while the execution is Noah’s obedience.

- The first is the command to build the ark and stock it with food (12-21), executed in 22.
- The second is the command to enter the ark and bring the animals (7:1-4), executed in 7:5-16 (drawn out as we near the peak of the action).

### **12-21, Divine Observation and Commands to Noah**

The main point of this section is God’s commands to build (14-16) and stock (21) the ark. This command is motivated in two ways, with two different audiences in view.

1. For Noah’s sake, God motivates the commands with promises of judgment (13, 17) and salvation (18-20). Notice the alternation: promise, command, promise, command.
2. For our sake, God goes back behind the promises of judgment to explain that they are the result of man’s sin (12).

*There are three kinds of repetition in the promises and commands.*

1. *Promises and commands alternate, abab. God motivates his commands with promises. He commands Noah to build the ark because he is promising a flood.*
2. *There is variation in length: two one-verse summary members (first promise, then command) surround two longer detailed ones (again, one of each type). Thus we have aBAb.*
3. *Finally, note the themes: Judgment, Salvation, Judgment and Salvation, Salvation.*

God’s gracious purpose to spare Noah is accompanied with a prophecy of judgment, for two purposes (Calvin):

1. confirm him in his righteous commitment to the Lord
2. motivate him to build the ark: “Noah ... moved with fear” (Heb 11:7) in building the ark.

So we ought to learn to treasure both aspects of God’s promise, that of judgment as well as salvation, that we may more zealously flee from sin and cleave to him.

Calvin: “For so long as life was promised to him on earth, never would he have been so intent as he ought, in the building of the ark; but, being alarmed by the judgment of God, he earnestly embraces the promise of life given unto him. ... No labor is now troublesome or difficult to him; nor is he broken down by long fatigue. For the spur of God’s anger pierces him too sharply to allow him to sleep in carnal delights, or to faint under temptations, or to be delayed in his course by vain hope: he rather stirs himself up, both to flee from sin, and to seek a remedy.”

Note that Heb 11:7 describes this fear as a key aspect of Noah’s faith.

### **12, The Observation**

God observes two details about the earth:

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1. The earth is corrupt, as we saw already in v.11.
2. The source of this corruption: people's conduct. They are the ones responsible for marring God's beautiful creation.

*Application:* This is the heart of a Christian view of ecology. We are responsible for caring for the world God has given us, not because it is the "mother goddess," nor out of enlightened self interest to avoid poisoning our own nest, but because we love him and honor what he has made.

### *13, First Promise (Judgment)*

God begins simply with the promise of judgment. Only in the longer section does he expand to the promise of salvation. His declaration of judgment, though tragic, is exalted in its fairness and equity. Each clause of this verse emphasizes these characteristics. Truly, the Judge of all the earth shall do right (Gen 18:25).

**The end of all flesh.**—This is an allusion to v.3, where God set a fixed period of 120 years before his wrath would fall, "for that" man, even bred with the sons of God, "is flesh." Having set this deadline, God now announces his purpose to his servant. God's fairness: he set a period, and did not act precipitously, but in a measured fashion.

**For the earth is filled with violence through them.**—The reason God gives has two important characteristics, both reflecting on the fairness of his judgment.

1. It is based on the manward perspective on the sin (violence), not the godward one (corruption). When God's judgment falls, he makes the reason for it clear in terms that people can understand.
2. It is their fault. Their neglect of him and pursuit of their own purposes is the only reason for this judgment.

**I will destroy them.**—Not the same word as in v.7. Rather, this is another form of the word translated "corrupt" in vv. 11,12. Thus it again emphasizes the intrinsic justice of God's dealings with men. They have spoiled the world; he will spoil them. They ruined the world; he will ruin them. It is not unreasonable for him to do this; it is only bringing their own deeds back on their own heads.

*Application:* God's judgments are sure and just. He is never capricious, nor is he like a parent who overlooks offenses. We should fear to offend him, and rejoice that he will set things right.

### *14-16, First Command (Build the Ark)*

The first command is to build the ark. Augustine attempted an elaborate allegory comparing the ark and its proportions to the body of Christ, and the door in the side to the spear wound. More to the point is that God proposes to deliver Noah from the judgment, and his commands to Noah are directed to that end.

- Cf. Deut 10:13, "the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good." God does not command our conduct to tease us or oppress us, but "for [our] good," that he might spare us the ills that come upon unbelievers.
- Cf. Exod 15:26, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his

statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I [am] the LORD that healeth thee.”

“Pitch it with pitch”: This is the first occurrence in the Bible of a very common verb, which in almost every other case is translated not “pitch,” but “atone.” The text illustrates the meaning of this verb as “cover over,” and reminds us of the distinction between the OT provision for sin (a temporary hiding of it from God’s eyes) and the NT provision (paying off the debt once and for all by the blood of the Lord Jesus).

### *17-20, Second Promise (Judgment and Salvation)*

The promise extends that of v.13 in two ways.

1. It details how the world will be destroyed. Perhaps Noah could have concluded this from the nature of the device that he has just been instructed to build, but God makes it unambiguous.
2. It promises deliverance for Noah and representative animals.

This latter topic takes the form of establishing God’s covenant. This topic requires a closer look. In particular, what covenant is in view here?

- The covenant that Scofield thinks is made in ch. 9? But Hebrew has a distinctive idiom for making a covenant. This idiom is *not* used here. The language rather suggests that God is confirming an existing covenant.
- Does God already have a covenant with Noah? It is strange that we are told nothing of it.
- Compare the similar language in 17:21. There God tells Abraham that of his two sons, Isaac is the one who will inherit the covenant promises made to Abraham. Thus this expression can refer to the renewal with one person of a covenant previously established with another.

To whom have promises been made so far? The only option is Adam, in 1:28-30. So here, Noah is told that he inherits this promise, which the old theologians call “the covenant of creation.” And indeed, after the flood, God explicitly renews the promises to Adam (see table).

The creation emphasis is clearly seen in the echoes of Gen 1 in 19-20:

- “male and female”
- “after their kind”
- the order “fowl, cattle, creeping thing”

In fact, as the third column shows, this covenant motivates this section. The terms of this covenant concern

- his own fruitfulness
- his dominion over the animals
- food.

God provides for the preservation of Noah’s seed, the preservation of animals over whom he may subsequently have dominion, and (in 21), the food.

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The first two of these are phrased as promises rather than commands. Right now, the command is to build the ark and stock it with food, which Noah obeys in 6:22. The entry of Noah, his family, and the animals is simply foretold at this point. It becomes a command in 7:1-3, and Noah obeys it in 7:5 (summary), 9, 16 (detail).

*Application:* Think of Heb 6:16-18. God’s counsel is sure and sovereign, and we ought to be able to take comfort in that. But sometimes our faith grows weak. To encourage us, he makes explicit promises, such as those to Adam and Noah, unveiling his counsel and making it explicit for our encouragement. How great and loving our God is, that he not only purposes our eternal well-being, but is pleased to reveal it to us for our encouragement here and now!

### 21, Second Command (Stock the Ark)

The final command is to stock the ark that was commanded to be built in 14-16. The wording, “take thou unto thee,” recalls 3:6.

- There the woman “took” food unlawfully, and was excluded from the tree of life.
- Here, God authorizes, and in fact commands, Noah to “take” food, in support of his mission (end of the previous verse) “to keep them alive.”

To Adam (1:28-30)	Noah (9:1-4)	Noah (6:18-21)
28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,	9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.	18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.
and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.	2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth [upon] the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.	19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every [sort] shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep [them] alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every [sort] shall come unto thee, to keep [them] alive.
29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which [is] the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein [there is] life, [I have given] every green herb for meat: and it was so.	3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. 4 But flesh with the life thereof, [which is] the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.	21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather [it] to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.



## **22, Noah's Obedience**

What a tremendous amount of work is subsumed under these few words! Designing the ark, gathering the materials, assembling it, and filling it with food. The important thing is the completeness of Noah's obedience. Consider the discouragements to which he is liable.

- The size of the task is immense. He must stop farming to build the ark, yet he must also collect food enough for his family and for the animals for their year-long voyage, and for the time it will take for crops to grow again after the flood. From 6:32; 6:3, 13, we expect that this work may have taken most of the 120 years. Calvin: "He might therefore have suspected that God was mocking him."
- Consider the tremendous logging operation Noah must have undertaken to build the ark. Think of the opposition he must have faced from the "green party" of his day.
- By constructing the ark, he was announcing that all would die except he and his family. How the world misunderstands such a claim! They think it amounts to a claim of personal superiority.
- We have already seen how violent the age was. Who can doubt that his work was frequently interrupted not only by mocking words, but by vandalism and physical disturbance?

In spite of these challenges, he "did ... according to all that God commanded him."

The NT invites us to meditate more closely on the time covered by this single verse.

- 1 Pet 3:18-20 describes the time "while the ark was a preparing." During this time Christ is said to have preached to the spirits who are now in prison as a result of their disobedience to that preaching. But how did Christ preach during that time?
- 2 Pet 2:5 describes Noah as "a preacher of righteousness." Like the other prophets (1 Pet 1:11), he had "the Spirit of Christ ... in" him.

Far from shirking the work or retreating in fear from the persecution he faced, he uses it as an opportunity to proclaim the Lord's justice and grace. Peter says the people were "disobedient." This implies that Christ through Noah commanded them to repent. Surely, God would have made room for them in the ark as well. But with the exception of his family, they all turned a deaf ear.

*Application:* Consider God's commands to us in the light of Noah's experience.

- They may seem severe, requiring a complete dedication of our lives. He does not ask us to make small modifications in our behavior. He calls on us to present our bodies as living sacrifices. Do not think that we can follow him and serve ourselves at the same time.
- They are for our good. Had Noah not obeyed, he would have perished miserably. God requires our complete devotion, not to annoy us, but to spare us and bring us life.
- By our steadfastness, we like Noah will be preachers of righteousness. Words are cheap, but the world will see and honor our steadfast commitment to obey God.