

Genesis 6:15-7:5

Last time we began our study of the toldot of Noah. This section extends from Gen 6:9 through 9:17.

To review last week, I began with a discussion of God's judgement to use as a lens to view this narrative. In brief,

1. The Bible teaches that all calamity, all natural and human disasters, are the result of sin. Noah's time was characterized by evil, violence, corruption, and willful rebellion. It was the most evil time to date.
2. In the course of history, God sometimes superimposes special judgements in response to egregious evil activity. Beyond the general curse brought upon nature and mankind, there are times when God lowers the hammer against a family, a people, a city, or nation. Here in Gen 6, the sin of the world is so egregious that God takes special action against the whole earth.
3. However, before such a special judgment, God always gives fair warning. He gave Noah's generation warning. He gave the Northern kingdom and Southern Kingdom warning. Jesus gave his generation warning regarding the destruction of Jerusalem.
4. Before special judgment, God is extraordinarily patient. He is long suffering and gives people time to rethink their ways and repent. In Gen 6:3, the Lord said, *"My Spirit will not contend with^[a] humans forever, for they are mortal^[b]; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.* No matter which way you interpret Gen 6:3, whether the 120 years referred to limiting man's lifespan or was a prophetic reference to the flood, God gave this generation ample time to repent. And so this is the pattern throughout the Bible, man is evil, and God gives him mercy and time to repent before facing special superimposed judgement.
5. When the iniquity is full or complete, God then steps in and brings judgment. This idea has three implications
 - a. There is a fullness of sin which brings its own penalty. In other words, sin can reach a point where its penalty can no longer be delayed. There is a measure which passes endurance, and the hammer then falls.
 - b. Therefore the greatest sin is sinning without restraint. In other words. To be on a path of continual unrepentant sin hastens the day of "full measure" that triggers a reckoning with Divine judgement.
 - c. Therefore God limits sins, either by limiting our power to do so, cutting off our time here on earth prematurely, or by Providential control.
6. The greatest calamity and Judgment of all is coming in the future at the time of the Tribulation (see Dan 8:23-25).
7. Therefore the two main messages of the Bible are, God punishes and judges sin, and God mercifully provides a path of forgiveness and redemption.

The World before the Flood, vs 9-12

Vs 9, *This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.*

We noted the verse says three things about Noah,

1. *He was a righteous man*, indicating his status with God.
2. *He was blameless*, indicating his status with the outside world.
3. *He walked faithfully with God*, indicating his relationship to God.

Vs 10, *Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.* We will discuss these three when we get to chapter 9 and 10.

Vs 11-12, *Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. (vs 12) God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.*

These two verses expand on verse 5 and tell us again of the character of the age in which Noah lived. We noted the word *corrupt* refers partly to the unnatural marriages and relationships of the fallen angels and the daughters of men, but also to the whole state of the earth at that time. The amplified states the earth was *depraved and putrid* in God's sight. Vs 12 goes on to say *all the people on earth had corrupted their ways*, which means Noah was the only exception. We are not sure of his family but we assume they were saved because of their association with him. The word *violence* refers to the general disposition of people. They were angry and acted upon it. Then God pivots and directs his attention to Noah and commands him to build an Ark in verses 13-14.

The Command to build the Ark, vs 13-22,

Vs 13-14, *So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. (vs 14) So make yourself an ark of cypress^[c] wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.*

We then noted the three phrases about the ark in verse 14,

1. *Make yourself an ark of cypress wood.* We noted the word for *ark* was an Egyptian word that referred to a box. This word is used here and in reference to the much smaller ark the parents of Moses used to hide Moses in the reeds of the Nile river (Ex 2:3-5). We noted the similarity between the small ark in which Moses was placed and the large ark that Noah is asked to build. In both cases, the ark saved the two men from drowning; and through the ark, Noah brought deliverance to humanity while Moses would bring deliverance to Israel. The second key word here is *cypress wood* (other translations have *gopher wood*). The problem is there is no such thing as gopher wood so we have no idea what type of wood this was. Translators inserted cypress because it is present in the Middle east and would be a good boat building wood, but we have no idea what type of wood was used.

2. *Make rooms in it.* The Hebrew word for rooms is nest, like a bird's nest. In other words, Noah was to construct a box with many rooms that would serve as nests for the animals to reside there.
3. *And coat it with pitch inside and out.* The word for coat means a covering. It is the same root word used for atonement. There is a correlation because the covering of the outside of the ark with pitch saved the inhabitants from the judgement of the water, just as we are saved by the covering of Christ's blood, thus from the judgement of God's wrath.

So now we come to verse 15 and 16 which give more specific directions as to how to make the ark.

Vs 15, *This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.*

Verse 15 gives the ark dimensions. A cubit is about 18 inches, so the ark is 450 ft long, 75 ft wide, and 45 ft high. For those of you who are mathematically inclined, that is about 1,500,000 cubic ft, or 95,700 sq feet based on three stories. It could carry about 43,000 tons which is the equivalent of 550 railroad livestock cars.

Vs 16, *Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit^[a] high all around. [b] Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle, and upper decks.*

Verse 16 gives us some additional construction details. The ark had a roof with a circumferential window allowing for light and ventilation measuring one cubit between the roof and the side planking, as well a door on the side, with three decks (with presumably 15 ft between them). All these instructions were given for the reason found in verse 17,

Vs 17a, *I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth.*

God is going to do a new thing, He will bring a flood. There had never been a flood before because there had never been rain before. This was a new concept to Noah. We know the earth was watered by springs, rivers, and high ground water (see Gen 2:6) and one can suppose Noah could imagine these sources running over, but the idea of water from the sky was a foreign concept. The Hebrew word for flood is mabul and has a definite article in front of it meaning, The Flood. This term is only used here. The Greek NT word for the flood is kataklysmos (from which we get cataclysm) and is only used in reference to this flood.

Vs 17b, *to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.*

Verse 17 tells us this will be a universal event that will destroy all surface life (note fish are not mentioned). Man lived where air was breathed and so corrupted that space or environment. He could not touch the world under the sea, so this realm was spared.

Vs 18a, *But I will establish my covenant with you,*

This verse introduces the Noahic Covenant. We have previously seen the Edenic Covenant (1:28-31, 2:16-17), the Adamic Covenant (Gen 3:14-19), and now we are introduced to the Noahic Covenant which will be further developed in chapter 9. Note this is the first time God uses the word Covenant.

Vs 18b, *and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.*

Verse 18b tells us who is to go into the ark; it is Noah and his family. This verse also introduces another biblical concept known as blessing by association. The focus of these verses is on Noah, and though we have no knowledge of the spiritual condition of Noah's family, they are included in God's provision and deliverance for him. God is so merciful he saved 7 other people because of their association with him. This is principle that flows through scripture. Abraham's servants are blessed because he is blessed. Lot's family is spared because he is spared. Potiphar is blessed because Joseph is in his house. So never underestimate the positive influence you have on your family, your co-workers, and your neighbors.

Vs 19, *You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.*

Verse 19 now tells us God didn't want to destroy all the animal kingdom for He knew they were innocent victims of man's corruption and sinfulness. God wanted to repopulate the earth with animals for righteous Noah to have dominion. So he tells Noah to take male and female pairs of every living creature and load them on the ark. Much has been said about how this came about. I think we can say God brought the animals to Noah. How many animal pairs were there? I have no idea—but will give you a resource for further research, arkencounter.com.

Vs 20, *Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.*

Verse 20 tells us what type of living creatures Noah was to take: we note birds, every kind of animal, and every kind of creature that moves along the ground. This is a pretty broad taxonomy, and includes any creature that lived on the ground.

Vs 21, *You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.*

Verse 21 tells Noah he is to collect enough food for all the animals and for him and his family. At this point of history all life still had a vegetarian diet. It is feasible that some of these animals may have entered a state of hibernation to conserve food, but we are not told.

Vs 22, *Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*

This section concludes with a commentary on Noah's character. He *did everything the Lord commanded him*. This commendation will be repeated three more times in the narrative; 7:5, 7:9, and 7:16. The NT also mentions Noah's obedience; see Lk 17:26-27, 1 P 3:20, and 2 P 2:5.

The Command to Enter the Ark, Gen 7:1-5.

Vs 1, *The Lord then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you, and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.*

Note eight people were to enter the ark, Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives. The reason they were to be saved was because Noah was righteous. Like verse 18b, God blesses Noah's family because of their association with him.

Vs 2, *Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate,*

In addition to his family, Noah was to take seven pairs of every clean animal, a male and its mate. Now remember this command was given before the Mosaic law and specifically before Leviticus 11 where an extensive list was given as to what was clean and unclean. We know Abel had brought an animal sacrifice to God, and though Noah was 10 generations removed from Abel there must have been some sense as to what type of animal God wanted sacrificed. Noah is instructed to take seven pairs of clean animals for these would be necessary for sacrifice after the flood was over (see Gen 8:20).

Noah was also to take one pair (male and female) of all the unclean animals.

Vs 3, *and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth.*

Note Noah is to take seven pairs of each bird. Why the seven pairs of birds? Certainly some would be used for sacrifice but I can't find another satisfactory answer.

Vs 4, *Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."*

Note this command was given *seven days* before the flood was to start, so obviously Noah wouldn't be able to collect all these animals and birds in seven days. God would have brought them to him.

Also note this is the first mention of rain. This was a phenomenon that Noah would have no reference for. It was to last 40 days and 40 nights, and its purpose was to *wipe from the face of the earth every living creature* God had made.

Vs 5, *And Noah did all that the Lord commanded him.*

This section closes with a testimony to Noah's obedience and faithfulness. Gen 6:3 tells us it was 120 years earlier that God had foretold this event. How long Noah spent building the ark is a matter of dispute but most authorities estimate 75 to 100 years. Think of the derision, the mocking, the thoughts of others as Noah continued with construction. Yet he remained faithful. He persevered. Heb 11:7 says, *By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.*

To conclude, the ark is a wonderful picture of our salvation in Christ (from Weirsbe)

1. God planned the ark. It was not conceived of by man. It was the means of Noah's salvation just as God in his infinite wisdom planned our salvation through the death of Christ.
2. Entering the ark through the one door was the only way of salvation. There were no other means. Christ used this same picture in Jn 10:9 *yes I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved* (also see Acts 4:12).
3. The ark was made of wood; something living had to die to provide for salvation, just as Christ died for us.
4. The ark was covered with pitch. The word for covering is the same root word used for atonement. There is a correlation because the covering of the outside of the ark with pitch saved the inhabitants from the judgement of water, just as we are saved from the judgement of our sins by the covering of Christ's blood.
5. God called Noah and his family into the ark (7:1), just as we are called into God's family through Christ (see Rm 8:29).
6. God shut the door to the ark and secured Noah and his family (see Gen 7:16), just as we are secured in our salvation. Jn 10:28-29, *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.* ²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all[☞]; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*
7. The ark not only saved mankind, but also the creatures within it; just as Christ will someday release nature from sin's curse (see Rm 8:20-22).
8. 1 P 3:18-22 connects the resurrection of Christ with the ark and the flood. As Noah was saved by faith, and entered into a new life after going through the flood, so we enter a new life through faith and acknowledge that change through baptism (see 2 Cor 5:17).