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Genesis: “A Modern Day Noah”

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Genesis 6 - 9

Mooga! While we've been tromping and preaching, working, (and bumping!) our way around Kenya, you've been tromping your way through Genesis.

To many people it seems ridiculous or presumptuous that we live in a moral universe, that is, one concerned with right and wrong, Genesis tells a different story. The foundation of our universe is not laid on inert and nonliving matter. Dead rocks have no concern with right conduct. But God, the personal source of our universe, does have concern!

In creation, we are a reflection of God's image, giving us the ability to see between good and evil, and that image also gives us the ability to choose. If you read Genesis 3 & 4 you saw the terrible consequences of Adam and Eve's choice of disobedience, and the basic reality of life, death, and sin.

But this week, some new themes have come in, as we've read in the Genesis Flood: judgment, mercy, and salvation.

Genesis 5 & 6 set the scene: *“The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”*

First truth: **God is not unmoved.** God is always concerned with righteousness, because He's concerned with us, and God's way is the best, most healthy, most fulfilling, fully human way to live! *8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.* And thus it makes sense that God saw Noah, who walked upright (and alone!) in his generation. Second, **God is a God who sees.** God warns Noah of the coming judgment and instructs him to build an Ark: a great boat in which his family and animal life might be preserved. It took 120 years to complete the task: building, caulking, and preaching. Animals found their way to the Ark, and God Himself sealed the door. The flood came, and Noah and his family were deposited in a new world, much the same as you and I enter into a new life when we live in Christ—not following our own evil human desires anymore, but living rather for the will of God.

The Floodwaters show us it is a moral universe. God is concerned about right and wrong: yours, mine, and the rest of society's. (2 Peter 3:3-10).

Did the flood happen? Many people see this as a myth revealing religious truth only. Many believe a flood really did happen in a limited way—local rather than worldwide, just happening in the Fertile Crescent Valley of the Middle East. Uniformitarianism is the assumption that everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. So before you eliminate off-hand the idea of universal flood, be sure you've addressed the uniformitarianism in your approach, because others

have argued convincingly for a universal flood.

A couple other interesting parts of the story: The Ark was made from gopher wood, which many scholars believe is cypress, used in shipbuilding by the Phoenicians. It was 300 x 50 x 30 cubits, which (if you take the smallest measurements of a cubit), would be about 450' long, 75' wide, and 45' high. It had 3 decks, and a displacement capacity of 43,300 tons. When everyone entered the ark, God himself shut the door to insure safety against the flood. Jesus mentions the Flood, Noah, and the Ark, comparing Noah's days to "*the coming of the Son of Man*".

Archeologists have discovered a number of flood stories among the nations in the ancient world. Sumerian and Babylonian stories have survived, though the stories and themes are very different.

It wasn't just a rainstorm. Genesis 7:11 says "*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. 12 The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.*"

Some of my thoughts and takeaways from the story: Is God unfair? Does God change His mind? Or is it enough for me to believe that any form of salvation is more than gracious of God? In Noah's story there's but one means of salvation, just as we Christ-followers claim a Gospel that God provided the way of Christ... One for all of us on this Ark we call planet Earth. And **we may not have an Ark today, but we have Jesus Christ** as our Ark. Some other thoughts comparing the Ark with Jesus today:

The size of the Ark was great, and sufficient. (So is Jesus).

- For all kinds of creatures; for all kinds of sinners.
- There is room enough in heaven for you.

The Ark was a safe refuge. (So is Jesus).

- There was pitch inside and out
- Though your world is flooding, though your world is stormy, though you feel adrift, due to your own sins or the sin of the world.
- Jesus is such a refuge as that. In Him, you have a place you can go, when there is nowhere else to turn.

The Ark had one window and only one door

- Imagine giraffes and puppies You may have to adjust your stiff neck and bow down before you'll fit in this door of salvation.
- It was for the amazingly fast gazelle or even the cheetah; or you may be slow and go exactly where you want, like the elephant.
- "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved"

I love Mark's Great Commission from Jesus. Jesus said "Preach the Gospel to every creature." So the question for us today is: Are you in for this ride, or aren't you?

Those of us who went to Kenya met a modern day Noah, who has build and is still working on an Ark for some people in Kenya. Her name is Dr. Ann Gatobu. Here's some of her story as I know it:

- She grew up in the village we visited and worked with. She carried water to her home from the river every day, got her chores done, so she could read before darkness set in.
- She graduated, went to university, and eventually married Harun, and attended Iliff Theological School in Denver, while serving churches in western Nebraska.

- In 2001— Ann was visiting her village and asked around about friends of hers from growing up. So many had died from the deadly disease of AIDS, she didn't know what to do; but many of those people left children.
- In 2004—Starting with 5 orphans, from western Nebraska UMCs, she and Harun decided that they would try to support 5 of those orphans; but after talking to her mother and the women's group, they were able to identify 45 kids. God had much bigger plans.
- SHE BUILT AN ARK of salvation and hope for these kids: The Mwaki Children, guardians, the women's group at Emmanuel Methodist Church.
- Helping women earn money to support more orphans.
- An occasional Health Clinic that served almost 1,000 people last week.
- VBS for almost 300 children, & the Fowcus Kenya Center.

As I look at Ann as a modern day Noah, I learn a few more things: Your actions affect your life. Your actions affect this church. Your actions affect your current community. Your actions affect your "home tribe." Like Noah, you may feel like you are alone in your generation, but truly you're not. We need more righteous people through whom God can work to save our world.

When the problems of the whole world seem too big to surmount, then start with your tribe... For Ann the AIDS issue in Africa was huge, but she zeroed in on some children in her Meru village. And when you step out in faith, you never know what room you are giving for God to work. God has much bigger plans than we do...

We need more modern day Noah's like Ann Gatobu... How about you?
With God's guidance, what Ark will you build?

STUDY GUIDE FOR GENESIS 11-15

DAY 1 — Genesis 11

1. From reading Genesis Chapter 10, what 2 things did God cause to happen to those who were building the tower?
2. How were Shem and Terah similar as fathers but different than the other fathers listed in Genesis Chapter 11?
3. How were Nimrod and Cain similar?
4. Which human characters that we have studied in Genesis Chapter 11, and also from the first 10 chapters of Genesis have been:
 - The most disobedient?
 - The most patient?
 - The one with the most self pity?
 - The most humble?
 - The most proud?
 - The most naïve?

DAY 2 — Genesis 12

1. Have you ever had to give up something very near and dear to you, in hopes that you'd attain something even better in the end? What happened and did your sacrifice pay off?
2. Has there ever been a time where you wanted to go one direction, but God steered you in another, or perhaps you sensed that God clearly wanted you down another path? Did you heed His calling and if so, what did that obedience require? When you look back on the situation now, can you see why the Lord directed you that way?
3. Where was Abram when he first heard from the Lord God? What did God ask Abram to do, and how did Abram respond?
4. What blessings did God promise to Abram (Gen 12:1-3)?
5. Read Hebrews 11:8-12. What challenges could have hindered Abram from obeying God? In light of Genesis 11:30, how do you think the promise to make him a nation (give him descendants) could have seemed to Abram?
6. Look at a Bible lands map, and trace the journey that God led Abram through and where was this Promised Land situated (described in Gen 12:4-8). As the Lord leads, how does He begin to clarify His promise to Abram?
7. As obedient as Abram was to God by leaving all his creature comforts and heading to parts unknown, the Bible is clear that Abram didn't 'earn' his salvation or God's favor through his works of obedience. In fact, what does Joshua 24:2-4 tell us about Abram and the environment that he lived in when God first called out to him? What attributes or

characteristics of God do we see so clearly here, and how does this continue to hold true for us today (c.f. Romans 5:6-8)?

8. As famine set upon the land, Abram entered Egypt, bringing along with him his family, the people and their possessions. What did he ask his wife Sarai to do as he was about to enter the land, and what was the result for Abram because of this (v.16)? What do you make of Abram's thoughts and actions here? As in the example of Noah (Gen. 9:21), what warning should we take away from this account?

DAY 3 — Genesis 13

1. As Lot's uncle, Abram had the right to decide which way he and Lot would each go. What do you think motivated him to relinquish that right and let Lot decide instead? What do you think motivated Lot's decision?
2. If you were faced with similar decisions as Abram and Lot, what do you think you would do, and why?
3. How did God respond to Abram's dealings with Lot? How did Abram respond to God?

DAY 4 — Genesis 14

1. Who was Melchizedek, and why is he significant? (see also Psalm 110:1-4; Heb. 7:1-7). His genealogy is deliberately left out (even though Genesis is full of genealogies). He is a mysterious figure "without father or mother", and as such foreshadows the eternal nature Jesus Christ, who is said to be a king and a "*priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*".
2. Why did Abram refuse the king of Sodom's offer? What does this tell us about Abram's character?

DAY 5 — Genesis 15

1. Why might Abram have been afraid (v.1), and how does God comfort him?
2. Why (and how) does Abram question God (v.2-3)? How does God respond to Abraham's anxiety (v.4-5)?
3. How does Abram respond to God's promise of an offspring? Why was his response so remarkable? (cf. Rom. 4:18-22).
4. What does Abram's example teach us about faith and about God's response to faith? (cf. Romans 4:1-5,13-25; Galatians 3:6-9). Faith is the basis of intimate relationship with God, just as Abram had, since without faith, it is impossible to please God (cf. Heb 11:6).
5. How does God respond to Abram's question in v.8?
6. What is the meaning of the ritual performed in v.9-21? (cf. Jer. 34:8-20) To drive home the certainty of His promise, God made a covenant with Abram. A covenant was the most binding/unbreakable of agreements. Establishing a covenant required shedding of blood, symbolizing the death of the covenant-breaker (see Heb. 9:16-21). The parties making the covenant would walk together through the pieces, saying in effect: "May what has been done to these animals be done to me, if I break this covenant."
7. What is the significance of the fact that God (manifested through the smoking firepot) passed alone through the pieces of the animals, without Abram (v.17)? It meant that God alone was responsible for fulfillment of the terms of the covenant. That is, God Himself would take on the curse of the covenant. This points forward to the New Covenant in Christ's blood.
8. Spend some time reflecting on what it means to live by faith in your daily life. Are you trusting fully in God, fully persuaded that He will do all that He has promised? Are there promises that you're having a hard time trusting Him to keep? Commit your uncertainties, fears and anxieties in these areas to Him in prayer, and learn to place your trust fully in Him.