



05

SESSION FIVE

The Creator Destroys and Redeems

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session we see how God responds to the rebelliousness of humanity. He grieves over the wickedness of the world even as He pronounces judgment on it. But in this righteous judgment, God shows favor to Noah and his family, saving them from a great flood and then commissioning them to fulfill His good intentions for humanity. Like Noah, we are saved from God's judgment and called to obey God as His redeemed people.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 6:5-22; 9:1-11

THE POINT

God judges sin and provides salvation to those who trust in Him.

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Review the following information with students: So far in our study of Genesis, we've seen how God created the heavens and the earth, then moved on to His most precious creation—human beings made in His image. We watched how Adam and Eve sinned by choosing not to believe and trust the goodness of God's Word. We saw how sin became an epidemic, not something that could be quarantined in the hearts of our first parents. It was a sickness that spread to their children, and as it spread, it began to manifest itself in increasingly wicked ways.

As sin spread through the world, the human response to sin began to change. We went from shame to indifference to boasting. When Adam sinned, his response was: "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:10). Adam's response was shame and hiding. When Cain sinned and the Lord asked him where his brother Abel was, he replied: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9). Cain's response was indifference.

Then, in Genesis 4:23-24, we see Lamech, the great great great grandson of Cain. After committing murder, his response was to celebrate his wickedness with song: "Lamech said to his wives: 'Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.'" Lamech's response was boasting and entitlement.

- **Invite students to call out examples in our culture today where someone in the news has responded to their own wrongdoing in one of these three ways: shame, indifference, or boasting.**
- **Which of these seems to be the most common response to sin? Which is the appropriate response? Explain.**

Option 2

Invite students to identify physical features or personality traits they've inherited or have adapted from their parents. Remind students that all people inherited the problem of sin from Adam. But we have hope. Even though sin entered the world through one man, salvation also entered through one man—Jesus Christ.

- **Do you believe the work of Christ can overcome the sin in your life? Why or why not?**
- **How different would the world be if everyone lived each day knowing that Christ has given us victory over sin? Explain.**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

God judges sin and provides salvation to those who trust in Him.

CHARACTERS

- **The Triune God:** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Noah and his family:** descendent of Adam through the line of Seth; a good and righteous man; father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth
- **The peoples of the earth**

PLOT

After the spread of sin and seeing how it led to one brother murdering another, the story continues to unfold by introducing us to one of the most well-known characters in the Bible—Noah. Now, most people in our culture, even if they haven't set foot inside a church, are familiar with the basic story line of Noah. For them, that would include an ark, pairs of animals, a colossal flood, and so forth. While these are certainly elements that come up in the story, what if there is more to it than that? What else can we learn about this event? What is God communicating about Himself through this time in history? What do we learn about ourselves through this? What does Noah have to do with Jesus?

Questions like these, and several others, are what take us to the story of Noah in this session. As we approach what may be somewhat of a familiar story, however, it would be helpful if you come to this story with fresh eyes and fresh ears, believing that there is perhaps more to it than we know.

TIMELINE

NOAH

Judgment and graciousness are found in the flood.

TOWER OF BABEL

Humanity's pride is relentless in seeking praise for itself; but God's glory will never be dethroned.

THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM

God establishes a covenant with Abraham.

GOD JUDGES WICKEDNESS

Sin spread wide and sin spread deep. By the time we get to Genesis 6, we may be wondering what God thinks about this situation and what He will do about it.

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." (Gen 6:5-7)

Every thought was nothing but evil, we read. Imagine that kind of a world—a place where in every thought and deed people were in essence shouting at God: "I don't trust You! I don't believe You! I defy You!" Such is the essence of sin—a faithless defiance of God the Creator.

God's reaction was one of sorrow and grief. Consider the weight of the statement in verse 6. The Lord was grieved. He felt anguish in His heart. That word "grieved" in Hebrew means "toil, languish, agony, to be injured in feeling."

How can this word be used in connection with God? How can an infinitely powerful God who lacks in nothing be in toil, languish, or agony? How could He be injured in any way? The basis for this grief is love—love for the people He created. It's why, after reading in Genesis 3:7 about Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, God didn't simply step in and destroy them and the world in Genesis 3:8. He judged, but He judged with patience, longing to be in relationship again with His people.

- **This account in Genesis isn't the only time that God was grieved by His people. Challenge students to identify some other instances recorded in Scripture where God was grieved. How did He respond?**
- **What are some things that might grieve God today? In what ways does He still show patience to His people today? (p. 34, PSG)**

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

For the first time in the Bible, the Lord regretted something that He had made. However, His regret did not stem from something He had done wrong, but rather what humanity was doing wrong. The fact that people had become totally preoccupied with evil grieved Him in His heart, much as Israel's sin would later grieve Him (Ps. 78:40-41; Isa. 63:10).¹

God could have destroyed the world and all its inhabitants, but instead He chose to purge creation of its great wickedness. Yet, He would save one family. He chose not to give up on all humanity, not to turn His back and start over completely. Even though He knew Noah and his descendants would again disappoint Him, defy Him, and walk in faithlessness, God decided to preserve this remnant. Why? Because like a father who will not stop loving his children no matter how often they disobey, God bound His heart to His people.

What this simply means is that God loved us. He didn't have to love us, and He didn't need to, but in His great love, He extended grace to us. He is our Father, and He has tied His own joys with our joys, and He tied His own pains with our pains.

The flood story is certainly one of judgment—the declaration of a holy and righteous Judge against all that is evil. And yet, it is also one of grief—the tears of a loving Father who will not give up on His people.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

God's Glory

The glory of God is His manifest work, the way He represents His perfect character through His activity. It also refers to His excellent reputation and is given as one of the reasons we are to praise His name. Another sense of the word is the inherent beauty of God, the unbearable brightness and beauty of His being as He radiates His own attributes and characteristics for all to witness. The Scriptures speak of humanity as having “fallen short” of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) because we have rejected the purpose for which God created us—to glorify Him.

GOD PROVIDES A WAY OF ESCAPE

We've seen that God was grieved by the sin of the world, and in His holy judgment, He decided to wipe everything off the face of the earth and start again. But here is where the story takes a turn. God demonstrated His commitment to humanity by choosing to preserve a righteous man's family.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 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. 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. 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. 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. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. (Gen 6:8-22)

Take a look at verse 8 and then verse 18. Noah alone found favor in God's eyes, right? But then notice how it says that God would establish His covenant not with Noah alone but also with those who belong to him. Watch the progression: Noah received God's favor, was declared righteous, and then his family benefited from his righteousness. The same truth is reiterated in Genesis 7:1: "Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation." Noah found favor. Noah was the only righteous one, yet Noah's family was saved.

There are two truths here we must not miss. First, grace precedes righteousness. It's no accident that the text specifies Noah receiving favor from the Lord before being declared righteous. Grace came first. It wasn't that Noah obeyed and that's why he was saved. It was that Noah received grace, and that's why he obeyed.

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

Through the story of the flood, we see the introduction to the gospel as salvation through judgment. What does this mean? While the entire world was looking up at God and rejecting Him, telling Him that they didn't trust Him, just as their parents before them did, Noah was building an ark. He was demonstrating with his life that he believed God. He had faith that God was going to do what He had said. And the waters of judgment did come.

Here's what I mean by salvation through judgment. The same water that swallowed everyone who didn't believe in the word of God actually lifted Noah up. As the waters increased, everyone else was pressed down and crushed. But at the same time, Noah and his family were lifted up and saved. The waters of judgment actually saved him; it was salvation through judgment. And Peter confirmed this for us later in the Bible: "when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water" (1 Pet. 3:20).

TIMELINE

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Abraham's faith is tested when commanded to sacrifice his son.

ABRAHAM'S HEIRS RECEIVE THE PROMISE

The promise of the covenant is passed to Abraham's descendants.

JACOB AND ESAU

Family dysfunction erupts between parents and sons for the birthright blessing.

The second truth is that the covenant God made with Noah benefited the members of his family. The righteousness of Noah was the foundation of the preservation of the rest of his family.

CHRIST CONNECTION

In the story of Noah, we see a pattern for how God is going to offer ultimate salvation. Jesus is the One in whom God was truly pleased, the One God truly favored. Though all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, though none are righteous, not even one, God offers us salvation based on the sole person of Jesus and His righteousness.

Remember, Noah's family was saved not on the basis of their righteousness but on the basis of Noah's righteousness. They were saved because they belonged to Noah. Likewise, we're not saved by our own works but by the work of Jesus alone, and we're saved only if we belong to Him.

However, where Noah could only save seven members of his family, God has given to Jesus people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. The family of Jesus will be so much larger than the family of Noah.

Just as Noah spent his life in faith building an ark while the world rejected his message (Heb. 11; 2 Pet. 2), we should spend our lives faithfully telling people about the coming judgment and the good news of salvation God has made possible for us through Jesus Christ. Just as Noah's story ends with a reaffirmation of God's covenant and a commissioning to follow God in obedience, so also our salvation is not an end in itself but what precedes our own obedience. God has commissioned us not only to be fruitful and multiply but also to take the good news of His merciful love to the rest of the world.

- **What does it mean to be commissioned to do something? Invite students to identify different ways people today are commissioned to carry out certain tasks, then share the following definition from *Merriam-Webster*: Commission: an act of entrusting or giving authority²**
- **Compare this definition to Matthew 28:19-20. List the actions all believers have been commissioned to carry out: make disciples, baptize, teach.**

GOING FURTHER WITH THE STORY

For more of the story, read God's commissioning of Noah's family in Genesis 9:1-11. Compare this passage with the original mandate God gave to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:26-28, pointing out any similarities and differences.

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **The Bible tells us that God grieved before His judgment took place. What does this tell us about His character and how He views sin in our lives?** *At the very least, it tells us that God is not a dispassionate judge waiting to punish us every time we mess up, but a loving Father who disciplines those He loves.*
- **Why is it important for us to recognize that God's grace must precede our obedience?** *If we think that obedience comes before grace, or that grace is the reward for being obedient, then we will have a works-based view of Christianity. On the other hand, if grace comes before obedience, we affirm with the Bible that we are incapable of rescuing ourselves, and that God's unmerited grace and mercy are actually what produce within us an obedient heart.*
- **What lessons can we learn from Noah's example of faithfulness?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **Noah is described in the New Testament as a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). In what ways does our mission to call people to repentance and faith resemble Noah's example?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION

10-15 MINUTES



HEAD

This session helps us to begin to see how and why it is important for God's grace and love to coexist with His judgment and righteous anger. Both of these characteristics are necessary, and together they reveal something deep to us about God's character.

- **Why is it important to stress both the grace and judgment of God when dealing with sin?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **What would happen if you had one without the other?** *Either an unforgiving judge or a morally passive god who simply sweeps sin under the rug. Both of these fail to accurately represent the God of the Bible.*



HEART

Not only should our hearts be grieved over the fact that sin almost led, justifiably, to the entire destruction of the human race, but they should also be grieved over the fact that the God who judges sin also grieves because of sin's presence in our hearts. This was true not only back then, but even now. God is still grieved at the sight of the rebelliousness within us.

- **When was the last time you felt heartbroken over the sin in a friend's life? In your own life?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How does the truth that God is grieved by our sin influence the way you deal with personal sin and temptation?** *Answers to this question will vary.*



HANDS

In a similar way that Noah was obedient to God, we too should follow in his footsteps. And as God commissioned Noah and his family, we too are commissioned with the task of preaching the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus. The flood didn't stop the sin-infected hearts of men from spreading—it was never meant to. Only the cross is capable of that type of healing, and that is the message we have been called to share.

- **What are some positive characteristics of Noah that we can emulate as we seek to live on mission for God?** *Answers to this question will vary.*
- **How has this session challenged you to be more faithful in sharing the gospel with others?** *Answers to this question will vary.*

► ADDITIONAL INFO

SOURCES

1. Robert D. Bergen, *HCSB Study Bible* (Nashville: B&H, 2010).
2. "Commission," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* [online], [cited 30 March 2014]. Available from the Internet: www.merriam-webster.com.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- Leader Training Videos
- One Conversations
- Midweek Studies
- Circular Timeline Poster
- App (for both leader and student)



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at
GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit
MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject