

Genesis 5 through 10: Noah and the Flood

Okay kids snuggle up with your favorite translation of the Bible, mine is the New Revised Standard Version, buckle up for we are going to cover six chapters in one sitting. With our six chapters we will be covering many family names, a collection of animals, an old man building an ark, a great flood, the sending out of birds, dry land and most important of all a rainbow.

Heads up. The chapters under discussion should not be focused on the great flood, or Noah building an ark, nor his age, but the change brought forth by God creating the possibility for a new creation. I was also reminded in my research; these chapters were written by “P” the priestly family and “J” the Yahwist family and their stories were intertwined and combined with mythologies from other cultures.

ARE YOU READY?

Genesis 5:1-32

I was reminded on many occasions that “the Bible is not the Word of God, but you can find the Word of God in the Bible. Chapter five continues a genealogy that began in chapter four. In short, this parade of names is a disaster narrative following the offspring of Adam. I do not see these names being “inspired” by God to be recorded. Historians salivate over lists of names; I merely get headaches.

Among the list appears the name of Noah. When Noah enters the story, we know nothing about him.

Genesis 6:1-22 Pre-Flood Wickedness

Our main subject is God “sees” the wickedness of humankind. God's seeing motivates the decision to “blot out” the earth and its inhabitants. God also “sees” Noah's righteousness, and God's plan proceeds.

Genesis 6:1-8 Why the flood must occur

God was fed up with all the boundaries of human decency being abused. God does not appear as an angry judge but as a grieving parent. God reaches two conclusions; humankind is hopeless, yet God will stick with us, sustaining us to the end.

You can read when God “sees” beautiful women being used for wild sex without their permission. Sexual assaults by strangers. These crimes of passion made God regret ever creating humans. One commentator parallels the pain of God to an earlier Genesis story referring to the pain of childbirth and the pain of farmers when the soil would no longer bear good fruit.

Genesis 6:9-10 Noah's place in the family tree

Noah was the sole child of Adam's family tree to survive. Like Enoch, Cain's son, Noah walked with God. It takes a person of faith, strong wholesome convictions to be capable of walking with God.

Genesis 6:11-22 God decides and preparations are made

In these verses God is the speaker, the designer and coordinator of the action. Even the Earth is corrupt, and God has plans to make it good again.

God tells Noah to build an ark, and how to erect it and Noah asks no questions. God provides no reason for the building and Noah just obeys. That my friends is the miracle.

When you and I obey, covenant, a promise is made between us and God. This covenant is what gives us hope.

The Bible gives no firm answer to why humans suffer.

Genesis 7:1-24

The reading is easy, animals board the ark, rain is coming in seven days, it will last forty days and nights, and it came.

The entering of the ark reminded me of a solemn occasion like entering a synagogue or a church or a Buddhist temple.

Genesis 8:1-22

Again, another easy read. The Flood gives us many avenues for reflection about life. Why was the habitat damaged?

Survival is an act of God who remembers the righteousness of Noah. Following Noah sending out the Raven and three Doves to test the dryness of the land. The third Dove does return with a olive branch. Finally, the fourth one is sent out and never returns. Eureka, we have dry land.

Following all the work Noah and his family did for God they built an altar to God. Me, I'd build myself a cabin overlooking a lake. What would you build?

Does the number forty hit your funny bone? Moses spent forty years in the wilderness. Jesus was tempted for forty days. This is story telling at its best.

Every culture has its flood story. Much of our Bible's flood story came from the Gilgamesh Epic and Atrahasis story. The Gilgamesh Epic was referring to a severe flood that took place in the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates River about 3000 B.C.E.

Incorporated into our flood story was the Atrahasis story the world's oldest flood myth occurring in the 18th century B.C.E. In this tale a great flood was sent by the gods to destroy noisy humans. Sherri reminded me that some of our early writings involved a "great grapevine" of storytelling. Just think of all the flood stories occurring now in our country.

Genesis 9:1-28 Written by the "P" Priestly family

Like all floods they subside. This is not a new Eden, just a new garden. New life continues. This new creation is just a different garden to care for. Sorry to report, this flood has not cleansed the world of sin.

God reported that a flood will never come again. Humanity has not changed but God has.

The rainbow sign is established. The bow is a promise to create. God is no longer in pursuit of the enemy. The bow is at rest, sabbath. In the Hebrew the bow was always used as a weapon, now the rainbow is one of hope.

Genesis 10:1-32 Generations of the sons of Noah or "table of nations"

Not much to say here, only more names to read. It has been reported that genealogies arise in times of crisis when people lose a sense of identity in the world. The list here is neither complete nor accurate. H. Gunkle writes, "list of Noah's offspring is naive and childish because it reveals a limited historical and geographic perspective in relation to the larger world."

Sidebar; The sons of Noah's names differ

J Yahwist Shem Japheth Canan

P Priestly Shem Ham Japeth

Like many parts in the Bible, I do not take the words literally, but I take them seriously.

Grow in faith,

Dennis Siebert