

Reading Genesis & Exodus as Christian Scripture for the Church Today
Diocese of Chichester Online Book Group for The Year of the Old Testament 2023
Session 6: Genesis 6-9 - Noah (17/5/23)

What is the big picture of chapters 3-6? How do these chapters fit in?
 What are the major themes of this section?
 What would you say about the motif of waters / flood in the Bible?
 How does this section relate to the rest of Scripture? What other passages does this draw on / what passages draw on this?
 As ever: how do we relate this to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ?
 How would you preach or teach this today? Applications? Implications?

The literary artistry of these chapters, skilfully told, pace, repetition (e.g. the hustle and bustle of the flood, and the monotony of waiting for the waters to recede), sound patterns (e.g. water ms and bs!), word play, echoes, details included or omitted etc.

6:1-8 actually part of “the family history of Adam” from 5:1-6:8.

Wenham: 6:1-8 a chiasm ABCBA with v7, The LORD says, “I shall wipe out” central

6v1 – “increasing in number” – in obedience to the command of 1:28, although now of course in a fallen world, east of Eden

(Link back to the genealogy of chapter 5 – sons, here especially daughters)

Cf. other flood stories

6v2 – Three main options on the identity of these “sons of God / of the gods”

(1) (fallen) angels / demons / spirits / members of the divine council, the “gods” / rulers of the nations? Job 1:6, the sons of God present themselves before the LORD and Satan comes with them; Ps 29:1; 82:1, 6 – the heavenly court; 89:6-7; Dt – angels seem to eat in Genesis 18? So could they have sexual relationships? – or maybe demon possessed men cf. the snake in the garden - in Ugaritic literature, “sons of God” refers to members of the divine pantheon – mythologies of sexual relations between humans and the gods in Greek, Egyptian, Ugaritic, Hurrian and Mesopotamian literature with heroes as the offspring. Gilgamesh the product of such a union.

(2) Some kind of superior men, kings, rulers, heroes etc. – dynastic rulers - Ps 82; cf. the Davidic king as the Son of God 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7

Is the sin polygamy? Rape?

If human beings (the women and their fathers?) consented to these sexual relationships, it makes more sense for humanity to be judged for them

(3) the godly / covenant line of Seth, who intermarry with the godless descendants of Cain – Israel as God’s son Ex 4:22; Dt 14:1 – religious separation of Israel from the nations later Wenham: “The “angel” interpretation is at once the oldest view and that of most modern commentators. It is assumed in the earliest Jewish exegesis (e.g., the books of 1 Enoch 6:2ff; Jubilees 5:1), LXX, Philo (De Gigant 2:358), Josephus (Ant. 1.31) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QapGen 2:1; CD 2:17-19). The NT (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 6, 7) and the earliest Christian writers (e.g., Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen) also take this line.” (p139) Angels seem to be male in the Bible and seem to be particularly interested in women

1 Cor 11:10, women to dress modestly on account of the angels – Tertullian relates that to this text

An echo of the fall: seeing it was good, desiring, taking – cf. Eve and the fruit

Seeing and taking a woman – cf. Sarai in Egypt 12:10-20; 2 Sam 11 – David and Bathsheba

Themes of attempts to gain a forbidden status, as in Eden, the desire to be like god! – a desire to be like the sons of God ? gain immortality – cf. Babel

Polemic against other religions / fertility cults and cultic prostitution?

Laws against the transgressing of boundaries / prohibited mixing (e.g. Lev 19:19; Dt 22:9-11; Lev 20:16; Dt 7:3)

6v4 – Nephilim – only other biblical reference Num 13:33, the report on the inhabitants of the Promised Land – giants? Greek gigantes, the product of union of earth and heaven – heroes / “warriors”, also Nimrod 10:8-9; The word “Nephilim” may be related to the word “fall” - Ezekiel 32:20-28 “warriors” connected to “fall”, in battle and then to Sheol

6v3 – cf. 3:22 – an attempt at immortality? Limited lifespan a suitable punishment - contend / strive / protect / remain / abide a hapax legomenon

Note the longer lives recorded in Genesis 11 and later! A 120-year period of grace before the flood? A slow acting curse, gradually implemented?

6v2, 5: The sons of God see that the daughters are good but the LORD sees the thoughts are evil – God seeing Gen 1 esp. v31; 6:12; 29:31; Ex 2:25; 3:4; 4:31 – Again, as in creation and the fall, seeing, evaluating, making a right judgement and response

6v5 – Total Depravity – not that we act as wickedly as we might, but that the fall affects every aspect of our natures, none of our actions is perfectly righteous – Romans 14:23

Noah – the comforter, giver of rest / relief (5v29) – “Noah” may also play on the word “regret” (6v6) – 6v6 has three words in common with 5v29. Wenham: “Lamek’s hopes for consolation by Noah correspond to the creator’s disappointment with his creation.” (p144) (1 Enoch 106:18 relates Noah’s name to nouah, remnant – also Ecclesiasticus 44:17-19)

6v6f - Anthropomorphic language – that is, in human terms, accommodated to our understanding, from a human perspective / in human terms

The classical doctrine of God as blessed (happy), timelessly eternal, impassable, immutable and omniscient. This may sound like an evasion of the plain meaning of this text, but other texts teach or imply the classical doctrine (Num 23:19 – God is not a man that he should change his mind) so either we admit the Word of God contradicts itself or we find some kind of harmonisation

Augustine: “The anger of God is not a disturbing emotion of His mind, but a judgment by which punishment is inflicted upon sin. His thought and reconsideration also are the unchangeable reason which changes things; for He does not, like man, repent of anything He has done, because in all matters His decision is as inflexible as His prescience is certain. But if Scripture were not to use such expressions as the above, it would not familiarly insinuate itself into the minds of all classes of men, whom it seeks access to for their good, that it may alarm the proud, arouse the careless, exercise the inquisitive, and satisfy the intelligent; and

this it could not do, did it not first stoop, and in a manner descend, to them where they lie.”
(*City of God* 15.25)

Calvin on God’s repentance and anger, *Institutes* I. xvii.12-13, FB vol 1, pp225f

Calvin: “For who even of slight intelligence does not understand that, as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to “lisp” in speaking to us? Thus such forms of speaking do not so much clearly express what God is like as accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity. To do this he must descend far beneath his loftiness.” *Institutes* I. Xiii. 1 FB p121. See also *Commentary on Genesis* 6v6, p248f

6v7-8 – an undoing of creation / de-creation – the world will go back to a watery chaos with wind / breath / spirit over the waters – sin will lead to death (2:17; Romans 6:23)

6v8 – favour, grace (though it may sound like merit in the following section!)

6:9-9:29 – 6v9 the repeated section marker in Genesis – “This is the family history...” cf. 10:1

The flood story naturally falls into a chiasmic (there and back again) structure as Noah enters and leaves the ark, the waters rise and fall – See Wenham p156-8 – 10 sections plus introduction and conclusion – central verse 8:1: “God remembered Noah”, the turning point of the flood

The numbers are also arranged in a chiasm:

7 days of waiting for flood (7:4)

7 days of waiting for flood (7:10)

40 days of flood (7:17a)

150 days of water triumphing (7:24)

150 days of water waning (8:3)

40 days wait (8:6)

7 days wait (8:10)

7 days wait (8:12)

Cf. Other ancient flood stories e.g. in the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh Tablet 11 (quoted at length in Wenham pp159-162)

Wenham p163f for points in common between the Mesopotamian and biblical accounts

Striking similarities e.g. the sending out of ravens and doves

But also major differences e.g. humanity has multiplied and is destroyed by the gods for being too noisy! - the gods scared by the flood they can’t control - disagreement amongst the gods – “the gods “crowding like flies around the sacrifice”, greedily jostling for places at the open-air barbecue”, hungry after not being fed during the flood! (Wenham, p165) – these gods capricious and weak – Enlil is surprised that Utnapishtim has survived the flood, whereas the LORD saves Noah

Did the Genesis writer know these stories (or early oral versions of them), or vice versa?

Is Genesis partly polemic against them (as the creation account seemed to be)? One sovereign God who is not fearful, irritable, ignorant or jealous

Noah not a king as in other stories – Noah not deified nor made immortal - Noah as a model of greatness: the “ordinary” believing obedient recipient of grace not heroic exploits!

“exactly as the LORD commanded him” 6:22; 7:5, 16. Noah never speaks in the flood narrative! Contrast Utnapishtim, more detail of his actions etc. (Wenham, p165f)

6v9 – Noah sinlessly perfect? righteous / innocent / upright = a good man 7:1; Job 1:1, 8 - “blameless”, whole, complete, a person of integrity, without blemish, Job 12:4; Gen 17:1 (Abraham told to be blameless and walk before God); Dt 18:13, irreproachable; – walking with God, cf. Enoch 5:22, 24. Wenham: “The narrative thus places great emphasis on Noah’s righteousness, at least during the flood itself. But it would be too crude to say that the story portrays Noah as earning his salvation by good works.” (p206)

6v11-13- God sees (v12) and evaluated – cf. creation 1:31 – this is not good! – the earth is ruined, spoiled

Humans and animals were to fill the earth 1:22, 28, but people have filled it with violence (v11)

6v13 – God is going to ruin the earth which humans have already ruined – the punishment fits the crime

Noah had to spend a long time building the ark – did he do it on dry land? The scorn of his neighbours?

Why these details of the ark? (Not a blueprint on how to build an ark!)

6v15 – the ark was a huge box about 135m long, 22m broad, 13m deep (Wenham, p173)

Obedience to God’s specific requirements for the ark

The ark (like the world) has three levels (6v16) (heavens, earth, water under the earth), male and female of every creature – a new world - The ark a seed / microcosm of a new creation

Augustine says that the ark represents the church, saved through the wood of the cross. He thinks the ark has the same dimensions as a human being. That the door represents the wound in Christ’s side etc. (*City of God* 15.26)

Noah as a new Adam – a new head of creation, fresh start for planet earth (foreshadows Abraham)

“Ark” only used here in the OT and in Ex 2:3, 5 for Moses’ basket / “ark” – both covered in pitch to preserve life from the waters – cf. Moses a New Noah – cf. Flood & Exodus, Red Sea Crossing – judgement (death) and salvation through the waters

The ark like the tabernacle? Exodus will similarly go in to great detail on the building of the tabernacle - Cf. tabernacle (30x10 cubits) and courtyard (100x50 cubits) dimensions – the decks the same height as the tabernacle and three sections on each deck the same size as the tabernacle courtyard

8v13 – the same word for the covering of the ark is used for the covering of the tabernacle Ex 26:14; 35:11

Wenham: the parallels with Ex 25-31 “suggest that both ark and tabernacle were seen as sanctuary for the righteous” (p172)

The Lord is present with his people in the ark / tabernacle and preserves them there – connection to sacrifice at tabernacle and after the flood

(Noah's ark and the ark of the covenant different words in Hebrew but both wooden objects overlaid inside and out according to God's instructions)

Cyprian: "It is as possible for a man to be saved outside the Church as it was for a man to be saved outside the ark of Noah (*De Unitate Ecclesiae*, 6, C.S.E.L. 214)

Chrysostom: "The story of the flood is a mystery and the details are types of the future. The ark is the Church, Noah is Christ; the dove the Holy Spirit, the olive branch the divine philanthropy." *Hom. Laz. 6* (P. G. XLVIII 1037-1038).

Asterius, *Sermon on Psalm 6*, (P.G. XL, 448B-D): Jesus stayed a while in the tomb as Noah had stayed in the ark

Salvation through wood and water? Exodus 15:25; Elisha and the axe 2 Kings 6; The cross, water from Jesus' side, John 19:34

The world was baptised by the flood and cleansed from sin

Some key (round) numbers? Some of which echo some of the ages of the people.

150 days

600th year of Noah – a very specific date – 40 + 7 days into the year

300 years

50 years

350 the dimensions of the ark

Noah a human ark – he bares humanity in himself

7s

40 days – cf. 40 days in the Bible – Moses' 40 days on Sinai Ex 24:18 - 40 years in the desert – Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness

6v18 - Household salvation?! Where Noah's family righteous / believers too?

6V18 – the first use of the key word "covenant"

Noah, like Israel later, is in covenant with God

6v19f – later the righteous Joseph will "keep alive, preserve" his family 45:7; 50:20

7v11f – See Wenham on p179f for the precise dates given for the flood e.g. the flood is announced 7:4 on Sunday 10/2/600 and Noah leaves the ark 8:14 on Wednesday 27/2/601. No other event in Genesis is dated.

Does the ark stop travelling on a Friday so as to keep the sabbath?!

8 persons (1 Peter 3:20), the 8th day, the day after the Sabbath, Sunday, the first day of the new week, resurrection / new creation day (Justin, *Dial. CXXXVIII*, 1-2).

7v16 – In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim shuts the door. Here the LORD shuts Noah in, emphasising that the LORD is keeping Noah safe. Noah is not saved (ultimately) by his own efforts, wisdom or skill etc.

cf. Exodus – God’s people shut in safety in the ark, shut up in their houses of the Passover in obedience to God’s command as judgement comes - waters of judgement and salvation
Arrival at the mountain (Ararat / Sinai), establishment of a covenant, 40 days and 40 nights, instructions to build (ark / tabernacle) - sacrifice

8v1 – the central turning point verse: is God forgetful? – remembers him for good, calls him to mind so as to act to save him – cf. Abraham 19:29; Rachel 30:22, Exodus 2:24; 6:5

8v1 - Wind / spirit / breath – cf. spirit at creation 1:2 – Exodus 14:21

8v3 – The waters receded – the same phrase is used of the Red Sea Ex 14:26, 28 and the Jordan Joshua 4:18

8v4 – The ark comes to rest (Noah = 5:29) – the dove finds no resting place, no Noah outside the ark, so she returns to the rest / Noah she knows 8v9. (cf. 9v21, a soothing, restful sacrifice.)

8v8 - The word “dove” sounds like “Noah”. The dove as Noah’s pet? Represents him? Like other clean sacrificial animals representing Israel (Hos 7:11; 11:11). When the dove leaves the ark, it is time for Noah to leave too

Righteous Noah (like God) cares for the animals 8:1; Prov 12:10; Ex 23:4-5; Dt 25:4

9v1 – a repetition of the blessing on Adam 1:28, a New Creation, a fresh start for planet earth

9v1ff - God as the giver and lord of life, the lord

Humanity unique within creation (9:5)

Human beings to be God’s agent of judgement in exercising dominion (9:5f)

9v13 - God hangs up his war bow in the heavens (the arrow points towards heaven! God the Son will face the wrath of God) – God will not make war against humanity again – rainbow as a “reminder” to God (9v15; recall 8v1, God remembers Noah) – a covenant memorial – cf. the Lord’s Supper, the covenant sign which pleads the blood, asking God to remember his mercy

cf. sabbath and circumcision are both covenant signs Gen 17:11; Ex 31:13-17

Isaiah 54:8-9 – God’s promise to Noah recalled

9v20 - A new garden – God planted a garden (2:8), Noah plants a vineyard - a new fall

Soil – Noah is Adamic

A tragic-comic episode

A fall story? Taking, eating / drinking the fruit, a change of state, nakedness, shame, covering
The sinfulness / weakness of Noah – Noah is not The Serpent Crusher – we look to the New and Better Noah who brings in the true New Creation and gives ultimate rest (Despite his greatness, Noah dies just like other human beings – 9:29)

9v20ff - Who is blamed in this narrative? Did Noah know the effect the wine would have?

Ham’s shameful action (v22); Shem and Japheth’s honourable action

“uncovering nakedness” can refer to sexual relations – Leviticus 18:11, 20, 21– did Ham commit incest with Noah’s wife? Cf. Reuben punished for sleeping with his father’s

concubine - Gen 35:22; 49:3-4; Absalom and his father's concubines 2 Sam 16:20-23 – homosexual rape?

(cf. Lot's daughters who get him drunk so as to have sexual relations with him – Genesis 19v30ff)

Literal nakedness needs to be covered up (v22); the covering of Adam and Eve – garment representing authority? Joseph's robe

Cf. the judgement on the serpent (9v25) – a usurping of the authority of the father – cf. the authority of God – the importance of honouring parents – a shame culture

9v25 - Why is Canaan cursed not Ham? – cf. Ex 20: 5-6; 34:6–7; Ezekiel 18

9v25 – the Canaanites eventually become subject to the Israelites

9v27 – the inclusion of the Gentile nations in the people of God as the *sensus plenior*?

Other mentions of / allusion to the Flood / Noah in the rest of the Bible

Ezekiel 14:14, 20 – Noah, Job and Daniel as righteous

Jesus' baptism – God speaks - water – dove – animals - New Creation (Mark 1:9-13)

Hebrews 11:7 – faith in the unseen things to come, holy fear, condemned the world

1 Peter 3:18-21 - Only a few (8) saved through water, which symbolises baptism

2 Peter 2:4f – Noah a preacher of righteousness / justice

2 Peter 3:3-9 – the world destroyed by water, a warning of the judgement to come

As it was in the days of Noah... - Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:3-27 - that judgement and salvation pictures the judgement and salvation to come at the coming of the Son of Man

For further reading:

Jean Daneilou SJ, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* – Book 2, pages 69-112 consider Noah and the Flood – The flood, baptism and judgement in Holy Scripture and the Fathers – and The Alexandrians and the Allegory of the Ark

Augustine, *City of God*, book 15

Theopolis Institute Essay: 'Noah: Man of the Soil' Donald Linnemeyer

<https://theopolisinstitute.com/noah-man-of-the-soil/> - you could also search their website for "Noah" / "Genesis" etc.