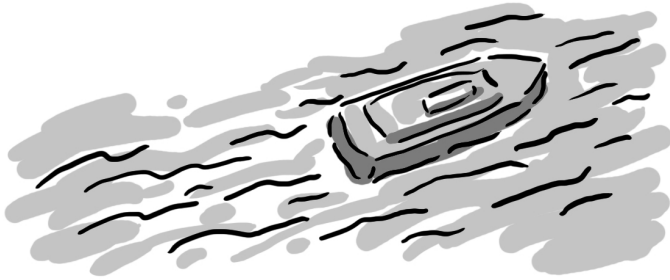


Destruction *and* Renewal



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 5:32–9:29.*

Memory Text: “The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth” (*Genesis 9:16*).

“Have you heard the latest about Noah, that religious fanatic?”

“Noah, pious Noah?”

“Well, pious Noah’s piety has made him mad. Says water is going to drop out of the sky.”

“Water from the sky?”

“Says it’s going to create a flood and kill all life on earth, except those who go into the ark.”

“The ark?”

“It’s a thing that floats on water, like a boat. Says only those who get into it will survive the rain. He’s building it now. Says water is going to be God’s judgment upon us for all our sins. Please, we’re not all that bad, are we?”

“Water from the sky . . . ? Why would a decent guy like him make up something so crazy?”

“Because he *is* crazy. And such a legalist. Doesn’t he know how we’re saved by faith alone? And standards, standards, standards—he’s always griping about standards.”

“Noah’s a bit intense, but he’s basically an honest, upright guy.”

“Fine, but why should we believe in something that has never happened before? The scientists say it isn’t feasible; the philosophers say it violates natural law. Water rises from the earth each morning as a mist; it doesn’t drop out of the sky, right?”

“Right . . . I guess.”

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 4.*

“For All Flesh Is Come Before Me”

Adam and Eve had children after Cain and Abel, including Seth (*Gen. 5:4*), whose line of descent outlines the history of the pre-Flood patriarchs loyal to God. Noah was of this branch (*vss. 28, 29*).

Read Genesis 6:1-13. What kind of picture does it present about the state of unregenerate humanity? In what ways might we see not only our age but even ourselves in here?

Though some commentators suggest that the designation “sons of God” (*Gen. 6:2*) refers to heavenly beings, context and content indicate a reference to the descendants of Seth. The “daughters of men” (the “men” who multiplied in verse 1) would then designate the posterity of Cain. The “sons of God,” representing the line of faith, contracted marriages with unbelievers and succumbed to the danger of such alliances.

In these verses, the wickedness of humankind could not be stated more emphatically. Notice the words *every*, *only*, and *continually* (*vs. 5*). The Hebrew word translated “imagination” is derived from the verb earlier rendered by “to form” (*Gen. 2:7*) and here indicates “deliberation” and “action.” In the Old Testament the word *heart* describes the complete inner life of a human being, as it is the seat of emotion, will, and understanding. The words *corrupt* and *violence* in verses 11 through 13 expand the picture of verse 5.

How do Genesis 6:6, 7 depict God’s sorrow for what was taking place?

After describing the human heart, the author turns to the grief and the affliction of the heart of God. Moses describes the Lord in terms that human readers can understand. God is not some far-off abstract idea or unbending principle; like us, He is portrayed as characterized by will, open to the tragedy of sin and prayer and weeping over human guilt. These words give us a feeling for how difficult it is to explain or even understand the introduction and great increase of sin.

Compare Genesis 6:6 with Matthew 23:37. What do both tell us about how “emotionally” tied the Lord is with this world? What other verses show this tie (for instance, John 3:16)? How does this help you better understand God’s ties to you individually?

Noah and the Gospel of Grace *(Gen. 6:8-22)*

Read Genesis 6:8. Notice: Noah finds “grace” in the eyes of the Lord (the first time the word *grace* appears in the Bible). Grace is God’s unmerited favor poured out upon unworthy sinners (*Rom. 4:14-16; Eph. 2:5, 8; 2 Tim. 1:9*).

Read what Scripture says about the character and life of Noah. *Gen. 6:9, 22; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5*. Why, considering the kind of person Noah was, did he need God’s grace? See also *Gen. 9:20, 21; Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8*.

Noah, a sinner like the rest of us, nevertheless revealed a life of faith and obedience. This is best seen in the fact that he obeyed the command of the Lord to build the ark.

Read Genesis 6:22 and 7:5. What do these verses tell us about how true, saving faith—the kind of faith that not only builds the ark but gets into it, as well—is manifested in the life of a believer?

In the midst of a violent, corrupt world, the Lord has this man, Noah, whose faith was most clearly made manifest by his works. This is a crucial point that all people who love the Lord and the great promises of salvation through grace alone, by faith in Jesus, must remember. Noah could have had all the faith possible, but had he not acted on that faith and obeyed the Lord’s commands, he and his family would have been swept away with the rest of the world in the Flood (*see Heb. 11:7*). That should be a great object lesson for all of us who, day by day, claim the righteousness of Jesus for us as the only hope of our salvation: A faith that isn’t manifested in obedience isn’t really faith at all.

Look at your life during the past week: How has your faith been manifested in your works? What works revealed a decisive lack of faith on your part? What changes do you need to make?

The Flood (*Gen. 7:1-16*)

What does the reference to “clean” and “unclean” animals imply about the knowledge Noah already possessed on this matter? *Gen. 7:2, 3, 8; 8:20.*

The fact that God distinguished “clean” and “unclean” animals *long* before the difference was explicitly stated in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 presupposes the clear knowledge of the distinction between “clean” and “unclean” animals from earliest times, certainly long before the Jewish nation was established.

Read Genesis 7:7-24. What evidence can you find in these texts that shows that the whole world rather than just a small, local section was destroyed by the Flood? Compare *Gen. 7:19* with *Dan. 7:27, Job 28:24.*

The Deluge covered the earth, and the world returned to the conditions that existed before God had prepared a habitable globe (*Gen. 1:2*), with the exception of Noah and those with him in the ark. The repeated biblical statements, “the waters prevailed . . . increased greatly upon the earth . . . prevailed exceedingly . . . fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered . . .” (*Gen. 7:18-20*), indicate a worldwide catastrophe. The words regarding the extent of those killed, contrasted with only Noah and those in the ark remaining alive, also testifies to the worldwide extent of the Flood. The universality of the Flood is further attested to by the worldwide distribution of Flood legends and the global distribution of fossil remains. In short, the texts are very clear that the Flood was worldwide, as opposed to some mere local event. This point is important because many Christians, influenced by some scientists who claim that there was no worldwide Flood, make the Flood only a local event, despite the clear testimony of the Scriptures to the contrary.

Have you ever had an animal that you had to put to sleep? How does that analogy help us understand what was happening here and how God must have felt about this act of destroying so much of the “good” world He had created? What “good” in your own life must you jealously guard lest it turns into “only evil continually” (*Gen. 6:5*) and becomes something that must be destroyed?

The Lost Generation

If you read the Genesis account of Noah and the Flood by itself, you'll notice that nowhere does it teach that anyone else was even offered an opportunity to get into the ark. It sounds as if it were to be built only for Noah, his family, and the animals (*Gen. 6:13-22*). Other verses, New Testament verses, vaguely hint at something else (*Heb. 11:7, 1 Pet. 3:20, 2 Pet. 2:5*). Ellen White, of course, is very clear that Noah's work on the boat was to be a witness to the world of what was coming and that Noah "entreated them to seek a refuge while it might be found."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 97. Considering all that we know about the Lord and His desire for the salvation of all humanity (*1 Tim. 2:3, 4*), it's not surprising that God was offering people a chance to be saved.

It says a lot, however, about the degenerate character of that generation that only Noah's family, and the animals, got on the boat. After all, it would have taken humility and the willingness to face the scorn of the majority to have sided with Noah. It would have meant being unpopular. It would have meant having faith in something that you didn't fully understand. It would have meant admitting you're in a situation in which you can't save yourself but must depend upon God. These are hardly the attributes one would expect to find in such an evil generation.

Compare what it meant for those in Noah's generation to have sided with Noah and what it means to make a stand for Christ and all His commandments today. What parallels exist?

The good news in all this is that God is always offering people a way out, always offering people a chance to get on the ark. The same Jesus we see weeping over Jerusalem is the same Jesus who surely was pleading through Noah for people to repent; it's, of course, the same Jesus who is pleading with us today, as well, who is calling us to get into the ark before people are swept away and taken away in the final judgment (*see Matt. 24:38-41*).

What factors work against you staying faithful to Jesus? What have you found is the best defense against the forces that would turn you away from Him and the truth for this time? What practical things can you do to avoid or at least alleviate, as much as possible, these factors?

Covenant and Renewal

How did Noah express his dedication, homage, and gratitude to God upon leaving the ark? *Gen. 8:20.*

“Here was a lesson for all succeeding generations. Noah had come forth upon a desolate earth, but before preparing a house for himself he built an altar to God. His stock of cattle was small, and had been preserved at great expense; yet he cheerfully gave a part to the Lord as an acknowledgment that all was His. In like manner it should be our first care to render our freewill offerings to God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 106.

How did God respond to Noah’s devotion and worship? Write out the response, paraphrasing it in your own words. What is God saying here? *Vss. 21, 22.*

The divine response is stated in human terms. God had destroyed the world because “every imagination” of the thoughts of the human heart was evil (*Gen. 6:5*); that same idea, about humanity’s evil, is restated here, even after the Flood. The Lord is expressing the sad fact that even despite the Flood, humanity wasn’t in and of itself going to change for the good. What’s fascinating is that from the way the text is written, it appears that God’s resolve not to destroy the earth again comes in response to the sacrifice offered by Noah. This blood sacrifice is linked with the promise; it’s not the goodness of humanity, obviously, but what’s in the sacrifice that leads to the new promise. God’s going to spare them a flood despite themselves. In some ways this reflects the same principles found in the gospel: God saves not because of ourselves but only because of mercy and grace toward us.

Read Genesis 9:8-19. What’s promised here? Who is included in this covenant? What can we learn from this about the *new covenant* promise of salvation we have in Jesus? What are the similarities, what are the differences? Compare *Gen. 9:12* with *17:7, Ps. 105:10, Heb. 13:20.*

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 90–104.

“Many at first appeared to receive the warning; yet they did not turn to God with true repentance. They were unwilling to renounce their sins. During the time that elapsed before the coming of the Flood, their faith was tested, and they failed to endure the trial. Overcome by the prevailing unbelief, they finally joined their former associates in rejecting the solemn message. Some were deeply convicted, and would have heeded the words of warning; but there were so many to jest and ridicule, that they partook of the same spirit, resisted the invitations of mercy, and were soon among the boldest and most defiant scoffers; for none are so reckless and go to such lengths in sin as do those who have once had light, but have resisted the convicting Spirit of God.

“The men of that generation were not all, in the fullest acceptation of the term, idolaters. Many professed to be worshipers of God. They claimed that their idols were representations of the Deity, and that through them the people could obtain a clearer conception of the divine Being. This class were foremost in rejecting the preaching of Noah. As they endeavored to represent God by material objects, their minds were blinded to His majesty and power; they ceased to realize the holiness of His character, or the sacred, unchanging nature of His requirements. As sin became general, it appeared less and less sinful, and they finally declared that the divine law was no longer in force; that it was contrary to the character of God to punish transgression; and they denied that His judgments were to be visited upon the earth. Had the men of that generation obeyed the divine law, they would have recognized the voice of God in the warning of His servant; but their minds had become so blinded by rejection of light that they really believed Noah’s message to be a delusion.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 95, 96.

Discussion Question:

Have people in the class place themselves in the mind of someone who lived in Noah’s time and have them give all the reasons why they shouldn’t believe in the Flood. What lessons can we learn from their thinking, not only for ourselves and our own faith but about how we can understand the thinking of others who don’t take our warnings about the end of time seriously?

The Idol's Musician

by CHARLOTTE ISHKANIAN

Sangum is a Global Mission pioneer in western India. One day he met Eknath, an old man who was sick with typhoid. Sangum nodded to the *tara*, a traditional two-stringed musical instrument, standing in the corner and asked Eknath whether he played it.

"I play the *tara* for the idols and to earn a living," Eknath said. He explained that he plays the *tara*, and people stop and listen. Then they give him a few coins, enough to feed his family. But recently he had been too sick to play.

Sangum smiled and said, "I worship the living God, and He can heal you. If you will permit me, I will pray to my God and ask Him to heal you." Eknath nodded, and Sangum prayed. When Sangum ended his prayer, Eknath smiled and said he was tired of taking expensive medicines. Sangum offered to teach him how to live a better life. He also offered to teach him about the living God.

Eknath agreed, and Sangum began studying the Bible with him. Eknath was thrilled to learn of a God who cared about him. Several months later Eknath was baptized. Now he goes from village to village with Sangum, playing his *tara*. When the people gather to listen, he no longer tells them about the idols; he tells them about the living God who hears his prayers and who healed him.

Since Eknath found Jesus as his Lord, one hundred people in his area have joined the Adventist church. Many of these have come because they have seen the difference in Eknath's life. They ask him what has happened to change him, and he shares his experience with Jesus. Today a church stands in Eknath's village, testimony to God's transforming love.

Eknath loves to share God's message with others who have not yet heard. "I want to capture many more villages for the kingdom of God," he says.

Without our mission offerings, the work of Global Mission pioneers such as Sangum would not be possible. Thank you for your faithful offerings.



EKNATH KAZARE (left) with his *tara*. He lives in Naigaon, India. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of Mission.