The Ark

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0:00] And there's a portion of several short readings from Genesis 6 and 7 we'll do this morning.! And so if you have a Bible, please do turn there. It's also the whole bigger text is printed in the! There's Bibles at the back and upstairs. If you'd like to grab one, feel very free. And I'm going to invite David to come and read Scripture for us. So we're reading from Genesis 6 and 7. I'm reading from Genesis 6 verse 11 to verse 16 first of all. Let's hear God's Word.

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. And then in chapter 7 verses 1 through 5, 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. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth. Forty days and forty nights and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.
[2:38] And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him. And then in verses 11 through 17 of that same chapter, may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may second month on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened, and rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark. They, and every beast according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, every winged creature.

They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh, in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female, of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him, and the Lord shut him in. The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. This is the Word of God, and to His name be the praise and the glory.
In our work through Genesis 4 to 11, we've come to the flood story. So, let's ask this morning, what does the flood story teach us? What is the writer, what does God want us to know from this story? Three things that it teaches us. One, that this is history. Secondly, that there is a cosmic crime. And finally, that there's an ark. So, first, from the flood story, the first thing I want you to know is that this is history. So, if you look at the text, you have verses like 7-1, go into the ark, you and all your household know. I've seen that you're a righteous man. Or 6-19, just before that, every living thing of all the flesh, bring two of every kind into the ark alive with you. So, here you've got the makeup of the story that everybody knows, the popular story of Noah. And you can immediately, I think, probably, I don't know if you do what I do, but I immediately think of a cartoon Noah, and a bunch of cartoon animals, and a cartoon boat written, drawn into all the children's Bibles and all the TV shows you've ever seen. And so, the danger there is that this story, as soon as you read it, you think of it like that. You file it in the cabinet next to fairy tales.

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And it's not really the story the way that we might picture it in a popular imagination. And the question that immediately arises for the modern world is, did this happen? Is this a fairy tale? And I just want to say one brief thing about that this morning, and that's that the Bible is far from the only ancient record of the flood story. And if the Bible was the only one, we would believe it regardless, but it's important to know that there are many, many, many accounts of the flood story from the ancient Near East, the most famous of which is probably the Epic of Gilgamesh. And so, we have multiple copies of this as old as 1800 BC. And in this, it's a Babylonian story of a man named Utnapishtim. I knew I would struggle to pronounce that. And he is, in the story, warned of a coming flood. And he builds a boat, and he gathers animals in the boat, and his wife, and his family, and the flood comes upon the world. And at the end of the story, he goes to the top of a mountain and offers a sacrifice to the Babylonian gods. Now, the parallels are undeniable. There's nobody in the evangelical world or outside it that tries to deny that there are other flood stories, other flood accounts. And I can give you a long list of them from the Akkadian people group, or in Sumerian, or other Babylonian accounts that are even different. One of the most famous other ones is the Sumerian king list. And this dates as far back as 2000 BC. And it's inscribed in stone. And it's just, it's like an Excel spreadsheet.
[7:14] It's a record of kings, a list of kings. And then all of a sudden, it breaks up the list of kings and says, and in those days, the great flood encompassed the world. And I'll give you one more. You can get on a train today if you want, and you can go down to the British Museum in London and find a tablet called the Imago Mundi, which is a Babylonian map, very old. And in it, most scholars believe that on this Babylonian, not from Israel, not from the people of God in the Old Testament, no, this Babylonian map, there is a marker for the ark that survived the flood on the map. Now, of course, you cannot go find that ark today. It was made of wood. But there is a map from the ancient world that says at one time you could have. You see, and the point to say is that in the ancient Near East, the flood story was a corporate memory. And you can go one of two ways with this. You could say, well, did the Bible just participate in all the other mythologies of the ancient world and copy some story? But the answer is no. Look, if a catastrophe like the flood really did happen, then what you would expect fully is to go into the ancient world and find other people talking about it. And that's what we find. And that's because the flood story actually happened. And in the Bible, you're reading the accurate account from God's perspective of what truly happened in the flood story. And that means that the question we have to come to today is, if this is history, and what we're reading about in Genesis 6 and 7 is history, then we have to turn and say, well, if this happened, what does it mean for me? What does it mean? What is God saying in the flood? What does it mean for my life? And I think the answer to that question is rather surprising. Martin Lloyd-Jones was a well-known preacher in London, the Welsh preacher in the 20th century. And he is well-known for this quote that you have heard in this pulpit before, to be sure. But I do think this captures the meaning of the flood story. He says, I've often had the occasion to ask people, are you a Christian? And I've very often been given the answer, well, I'm trying to be. Now, the moment a person says that to me, I know that they are not yet a Christian. They are still thinking in terms of themselves. They are thinking of it as something that they have to do. But a Christian is a person who has stopped trying and who has started trusting. Trusting not in what they must do for God, but in what God has already done for them.

Now, that is the meaning of the flood story, that God has already done it. And the flood story is actually the gospel story. So, let's use the rest of our time to see that. Secondly, this story is about a cosmic crime that takes place. There's a tricky translation choice in chapter 6, verse 13. And in the ESV Bibles we have in the room, it is footnoted. The alternative translation is footnoted. And in verse 13, it says, God says to Noah, I've determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence. Now, we ended last week by saying the earth was totally corrupt. It was so full of violence.
It was a post-apocalyptic setting. That's kind of the best way we can imagine it, that everyone was corrupted. The people that had once worshiped God did no more. And so, there was injustice and blood all throughout the land. But here, God says, I've determined to make an end of all flesh. And we say, well, we see here for the first time in the Bible, really, the God of judgment, the God of just judgment coming. But that footnote is very helpful because it says that another way to translate this is, the end of all flesh has come up before me. And that's very important. And I think that's the proper way to translate this text because what is it saying? The end of all flesh has come up before

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me. He's talking there of a fragrance. And if you know the rest of the Bible, you'll know that when offerings were given, they were fragrant. They created a smell. And this language has been used already in the Bible. And it was used in Genesis 4 when Cain murdered Abel. And God came down and said, something, a smell has come up before me. And what is it? He says, the blood of your brother, Abel, has come up to heaven. In other words, what is he saying? He's saying, the flood is coming. Just judgment is coming because I have heard the cry of injustice in the world. He's saying, it's come up to me. It's been raised up to me. And so, sometimes we can come and think, as soon as I get to a page that talks about God's judgment in the Bible, I think, isn't God just hampering human freedom with
His judgmentalism? And actually, what we see instead is that God gives the flood because the cries of injustice has heaped and heaped and heaped and come up before Him like a great mountain, that there is blood in the land. And so, we talked about this last time, but there's a way of talking about God's judgment that the Bible uses all the time. And it's really this. It's that God is giving us what we desire and what we've asked for. We saw last week that it said the world was corrupt and the land was corrupt and the people were corrupt. And so, God gave centuries and centuries of patience, but then He gave the people the corruption they asked for. And so, we read in the Bible, God desires that none would perish. God desires that every person would come and follow Him. And yet, He says at the same time here, the cry of injustice is coming up from the land. And that's the reason that we have a chorus line of pronouncements of God throughout this passage about bringing just judgment to this land of violence.
Now, we've got an issue, I think, in the contemporary world where we think about this, how we think about this. We spoke about it a little bit last week, but to add slightly more nuance to it, when we think about God's judgment, we can often offer a double complaint. And you'll have seen this in media or on the internet or in popular spaces. We think of God's judgment and we say something like, when I read the Bible, I just want to say, how could God be so judgmental? Or if we think about our own lives and the sins that we struggle with, we say, but how could God be so judgmental? I want the God of mercy. But then we look out and we read the news of great wicked and injustice in the world, of people having genocide committed against them. And we say, how long, O Lord? When are you going to act? When are you going to bring justice into the land? And you see, it's a double complaint. It's on the one hand, why are you so judgmental? On the other hand, when are you going to actually do something about all the problems? And people will attack God from both directions. And what we actually have in the
[14:11] Bible is the God of just judgment, a God of justice. Because justice is never against love. Without justice, it would only be chaos. And at the same time, a God of radical mercy and radical patience that appears before us here in the chorus line of this chapter, Him saying that I'm going to blot out, I'm going to corrupt the wickedness that is in the land. Now, in the New Testament, there is a pattern that grows and gathers based off this passage. The flood, the flood is the beginning of what the Bible calls the day of the Lord, a day of justice that God would bring into the world.

And what the day of the Lord in different patterns weaving all the way to the end of the Bible means is that there is coming a moment where all sin will be exposed, where all justice will be required. That's the day of the Lord concept in the Bible. And Jesus, in the New Testament, takes the flood story to talk about the day of the Lord. And I want you to listen to what He says about it.
In Matthew 24, Jesus exegetes. He explains Genesis 6 and 7. And this is what He says, As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark.
And they were totally unaware until the flood came and swept them away. Now, okay, if you think about that carefully, Jesus says, in the day before the flood came, people were eating and drinking and getting married and having relationships. And you say, that sounds fine. That sounds pretty good. Eating, drinking, getting married, having relationships. There's nothing wrong with that. What is He saying? What is He talking about?
[15:54] He said, and then the flood came. And He says, so it will be when I return. He's likening that to His day of reckoning, His day of coming. And what we're seeing is two different faces in this passage of the same refusal of God.

God, the one face is visible. It's violence in all the land. It's obvious to see. It's a world that looks like something, as I mentioned last week, of Paul Potter, Hitler, that's being described here, a land of

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utter violence. But at the same time, Jesus picks up on it and says, there's another face, another way of looking at God that brings about the flood. And He's talking here about respectable apathy. And He's saying that on the one hand, you can see visible violence that brings in the right, just judgment of God. On the other hand, He says, you can also get so caught up in eating and drinking and marrying and having relationships that you never think about God one time in your life.
And you commit what's being reckoned here as the great cosmic crime of respectable apathy. I just think about it like this. Imagine a poor single mother who works two jobs. And she's come out of a cycle of poverty in her own family. And she just wants to give her son a better life just to get out of the situation they're in. And so she works two jobs. She sleeps two hours in between them, six days a week. She ages herself 10 years for every year that she works.
And she's losing her life literally, physically, spiritually, emotionally, in every way to get her son out of the cycle of poverty. And it works. And, you know, she saves every penny she can, and she sends him to university. And this young man, he gets a great job. He becomes a respectable citizen. By all measure of polite society, he is a good guy. And, you know, this guy even, he, you know, he takes out his neighbor's rubbish. He cuts their lawn. He gives money away to the poor. [17:56] He's a good person. And he never one time calls his mother in his adult life. He never answers her phone calls. He, he, he never, he doesn't go home at Christmas.

And you say, this is a good person, respectable. And yet you can see how egregious it would be that his mother would have done everything for him, and yet he, he won't even pick up the phone to call her. And so Jesus is saying, so it is with our relationship to God that we take the gifts and have rejected the giver. And in the flood story, what we're reading about is an account where God has said, I have, I have pursued this people for thousands of years and been so patient. And they have every single time said, we don't want you. We don't want you. And whether it's by this visible act of public violence or by simply respectable apathy, the just judge says, I'm actually going to give you what you've asked for, separation from me, distance from me. Now that's the bad news, that there's a flood, that there's a just judge of all the earth. But then there's also good news here, and that's, there's, that there's an ark. And so thirdly, finally, there's an ark. And we learn about that. Noah and his sons and his wives and their sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.
Now it's so striking in this passage that the ark and the instructions about how to build it, how many animals to bring, all that kind of stuff takes up three quarters of all the text, of all the ink. And the flood itself only gets just a few verses right there at the very end.
So the writer Moses is clearly trying to get us to put our eyes on the way through the judgment, the way through the flood, not on the flood itself. That's where he's trying to draw us into. And so let's do that. Just give me a few minutes together. Let's do this together and watch the details, watch the details in the text. And the details are so important. So the first one is in chapter 6, verse 14. And he says, make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Ark. It should strike you if you'd never read the story before, but we all have. If you'd never read the story before, it should strike you that it says, make yourself an ark. Why? This is a special word in the Hebrew text. It's not Hebrew at all. It's an Egyptian word. And Moses grew up in Egypt. And so here he's borrowing a word from the land of Egypt. And in Egypt, this word for ark was a word that described in Egypt a box in temples where Egyptian polytheists would go and try to meet with a god. And so it's a shrine box that gets used, a place of meeting with the divine. That's the word that Moses picks here to describe the ark.
And then just after that, you read the rest of the description of the ark and you say, wait a minute, what's missing here? There are no sails. There is no command to have oars, and you would have oars in an ancient boat. There's no rudder on this boat. And you realize he's chosen the word ark, which is a space of a holy meeting place in the ancient person's language. And there's no sails. There's no rudder. Noah is no ship captain. This is not even really a boat. It can float, but it's actually more of a box floating on the water. And this is not a boat at all. What is this? Noah's not in control of this vessel. And then the third detail to notice is right after that, it says, make rooms in the ark, and then this word, cover it inside and outside with pitch. And the word, the verb cover it and the word pitch are the same word. So it says something more like this, cover it on the outside and inside with a covering. And it's so important. I know that that's a simple thing, but the reason it's so important is because that word cover is the word atonement in the Old Testament.
And so he literally says something like, atone, cover it, atone for it with an atonement, with an atonement covering. And you might remember that there's not only an ark that floats on the waters, there's an ark of the covenant in the temple later in Israel's history. And the covering of that ark of

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the covenant is called by the same thing, and it's the place of atonement. It's the place, what is atonement? Atonement is where you become at one with God, atonement. And how do you do it? [22:39] You've got to have a covering. You've got to have something cover over your sin to become one with God. And so when he enters this vessel that's not a boat at all, but actually a holy place, a place of meeting with God, it says that in it he's covered with an atonement covering. You see, Noah brought his sin into the ark, but it was covered. But it was covered. And then just after that, boy, there's so many here. Verses 15 to 16, this is how you are to make it. The length, the breadth, the height, then the door, and then first, second, and third levels. This is the same order of instructions that are given for Solomon's temple later in the Bible. It comes in exactly the same order. The length, breadth, height, the door, everything is almost identical. And you can start to get a picture for what's happening here. I'll just mention seven pairs of clean animals. Why? Because you need clean animals if you're entering into what kind of a space? A temple. And here what we have is the fact that

Noah's not been given a ship, a boat. He's not a captain of his own destiny. Noah has been brought into the refuge of an ark, and the ark is the temple of God. And he's gone in to meet with God in the presence of God with seven pairs of clean animals for sacrifice with an atonement covering the roof of the ark and saying, Noah, you're a sinner just like everybody else. But when you step into the ark, your sins are covered. I have made myself one with you. A couple more examples of the intricacies of this passage. Think about this language. Where have you heard this language before? Chapter 6, verse 20. Chapter 7, verse 14. Bring the animals two by two according to their kinds. And where does that come from? That comes from Genesis 1. And then right after that in chapter 7, verse 11 to 17, the fountains from below burst. The fountains from above burst. And in Genesis 1, God had taken the waters underneath the earth and put them in their place. And He'd taken the waters above the earth and put them in their place. But now the waters above and below are all bursting.

And He's saying, this is undoing Genesis 1. And yet He's taking every type of animal and a representation of humanity, forgiving their sins, and putting them inside this holy place, this temple, this little garden of Eden. And it's almost like when you move home and you pack up all your boxes and, you know, how much stuff do you lose? We always lose stuff when we move. And God is saying, I'm taking a representative of everything that exists in creation and packing it up and putting inside this safety net, this box, this refuge. Because the judge waters, decreation is going to happen on the land, but I will bring about new creation from it. Salvation by judgment. And He's packing Noah, this second Adam, this new priest with his wife, this new Eve, and all the animals, the Garden of Eden all over again. And He's saying, we're going to start over. And I'm going to save this world. I'm going to bring about justice ultimately in the land and deliver you into a new creation. And so we'll finish with this. There is a haunting, beautiful, and tender phrase in this passage. It's in chapter 7, verse 16.

And it's this. It says, the Lord shut him in. So Noah went into the ark, and it's the Lord that came and shut the door, not Noah. What do we learn?

[26:23] This story tells us that there is a reality to the idea that we have committed cosmic treason against God, both in the things that we've done and in the way we've been apathetic towards the great giver, that we've ignored Him. And when the waters of justice that we deserve come into this world in the day of the Lord, there is only one way through. There is only one way through, and it's this. And this is the shock of the passage. This is the shock of the passage. The God of justice who will deliver justice by way of the flood is at the same time the God of love and mercy who provides the way through the storm. That the God who brings the flood is the God who says, but I will give you the means to be delivered from the flood. And the means is the ark, the temple, the place of hiding in the refuge of God's presence. And when you come to the New Testament, Peter in 1 Peter 3, he likens Noah's ark in the floodwaters to baptism. And he said that when you, like Lauren did today, say, I trust in Jesus Christ, I believe in Jesus, you step inside His refuge, it means that the floodwaters have already come upon you, and you are safe in Him. You are protected by Him. What does the

New Testament tells us? It tells us Jesus Christ is the ark. Jesus Christ came and said, I am the temple. The ark is a temple. And Jesus said in John chapter 2, I am the temple, the place to meet with God. And there's only one other time where the same word is used for ark in the first five books of the Bible, and that's when Moses was fleeing Pharaoh. Pharaoh was killing, murdering all the

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little boys of Egypt, all the Jewish boys. And what does the text tell us? It says that Moses was placed by his mother in an ark, a refuge, a safety net. Jesus Christ is the mediator of all safety. And it's Him that took Moses through the floodwaters and took Noah through the floodwaters. And in the gospel promises to do the same thing for you. Jesus Christ is the ark. He is the refuge. Even more than that, what does Jesus say?

He says, my blood is the atonement covering for your sins. And in the ark, Moses, Noah found an atonement, a covering for his sins. And Jesus Christ is that covering. This was always pointing forward to Him. Romans 3.25 calls Jesus the covering, the very word that corresponds to the Old Testament word for atonement. And the twist, of course, is this, that Jesus is the ark. He's your safety. He's your refuge. You step in Him by faith, and you are protected from all the judgment waters.

And at the same time, that's because Jesus Christ is the one that drowned. At the cross, at the cross, when you come by faith and see Christ upon the cross, you see in Him the one in whom you can have safety forever, in whom love has been provided a way through all injustice. And at the same time, that's because at the cross, you see His blood being spilled, being poured, that He received the due justice of our works. He was flooded. He was drowned. He even calls in the New Testament the cross, His baptism, that He's going to be drowned in the waters of the cross.

Who may enter as we prepare to come to the table? Back to Lloyd-Jones. Lloyd-Jones asked the question, are you a Christian? And He said, if somebody, if you say, if you say, if you're saying in your heart today, well, I'm trying to be, I want to be, I wish I were better than I am, then you don't yet understand the gospel. And the flood story is telling you the gospel. And it's saying this, stop trying and start trusting. He has already done it. Jesus Christ entered the floodwaters on your behalf. You're safe forever. And so if you come today to this table by faith in Him, you can know that He is your refuge.

[30:28] The Lord shut the door. He put Noah in and shut the door. And you come today not on the strength of your faith even, but knowing that God has hidden you in Christ, that He has put you inside the ark that is Jesus Christ, and He will hold you and protect you forever. I imagine, I think about a small child, small child, again, illustrations from my life, a small child in the midst of a thunderstorm in the middle of the night with lightning raining down. And that child wakes up in the middle of night and they're scared to death. And they run to their parents' bedroom and they jump in their parents' bed. And they just want their parents to pull the covers over them and to, you know, wrap their arms around them and to say, everything's going to be okay. Noah did not have to be brave.

He did not have to be strong. He did not have to understand the whole picture. He simply had to get inside the covering. And God did it all. God saved him. God brought him through the waters. And Jesus Christ does the same for you. He is the only refuge. He is the only way through. He is the door.

So I invite you today, maybe for the first time or for the thousandth, to come and believe in Him, trust in Him. Today is the day to trust in Him. He is your refuge. Let us pray. Father, we pray that you would give us faith now as we come to the table of the one who has already experienced the floodwaters, Christ, our sure and steady anchor. So we bring these words to worship to you now, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

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