

“The Flood” (Genesis: In The Beginning – Pt. 3) (Genesis 6:5-8)

- **The Dove**

- You might not love this rainy weather, but it’s perfect for today’s message! In week 3 of *Genesis* we’re looking at *The Flood*. Here’s a picture to get us started: **(Pic 1)** in Rome, they found tombs from early Christianity with lots of art carved in the stonework. One of the repeated images is relevant to our story: *a dove with an olive branch*. Apparently, it was a popular symbol for early Christians. Today, it’s become a universal symbol of peace even in non-religious spaces—do you know how that happened? Believe it or not, an artist named *Pablo Picasso* is responsible: in the late 1940’s and 50’s, after WWII, nations organized events like the *Global Peace Congress*, and they commissioned Picasso to create a design. He eventually landed on this symbol from Genesis **(Pic 2)**. In fact, his daughter was born the day before the first event and he named her *Paloma*, which means *dove*—and *she* went on to design famous jewelry collections that incorporate *olive leaves*, true story! We’ll return to the dove later, but *let’s start with prayer*.

- **The Downward Spiral**

- So, Genesis 6-9, *Noah’s Ark*. Easy story, right? Just a bunch of cute zoo animals floating on a biblical cruise ship with smiling Noah and his family—rainbows, doves, bright colored paintings for kids’ nurseries, right? *Maybe...not so much*. This is a dark story from a dark time of history—a real low point in the Biblical narrative. But, as always, it’s ultimately about a God who brings light out of darkness, redemption out of chaos. One theologian said, **“The Gospel is bad news before it is good news.” (Frederick Buechner)** We’ll see that exemplified in the Flood. I hope today, you’ll see this story like you never have before. Let’s open God’s Word and let it speak.
- Do you remember what we covered so far? Do you remember *how great* things began in Gen. 1-2? A very good God, a very good creation, a very special creature called *human* that bears the very image of God, made to walk face-to-face with God in a Garden of Delight! Then sin enters the story and you get the Fall in Gen. 3.

Now, look at how bad things got by Ch. 6: ***“The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. So the Lord was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. And the Lord said, ‘I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.’” (6:5-7 NLT)***

- How did we get from Paradise Garden to this?! Once humans followed the Deceiver and rebelled against God, there’s a vicious, downward spiral. Do you know what comes immediately after the first sin? *The first murder*, in Gen. 4—Cain and Abel, *brother against brother!* Even though humans left Eden, God doesn’t stop meeting them. God tries to shepherd Cain, He warns him not to let sin rule over him—but Cain kills his younger brother in cold blood. Something’s gone horribly wrong. Cain, in his exile, founds a civilization that’s defined by violence—his descendent, Lamech, arrogantly boasts about killing. And the section ends by saying, ***“At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.” (Gen. 4:26)*** It sounds like a positive development, but it’s a reminder of how far they’ve come from Eden—no more face-to-face intimacy walking with God—now people have to cry out for God, because such a distance has grown between us.
- In Gen. 5 there’s a genealogy from Adam to Noah. Noah’s father names him and says, ***“He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.” (Gen. 5:29)*** We learn in this chapter that out of all Adam’s descendants, only Enoch “walked with God”—like Adam and Eve did in the Garden. Down the line, Noah is the only other character in Genesis who gets this description: ***“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord...he walked faithfully with God.” (Gen. 6:8-9)*** A little bright spot in a very dark world.
- If all this isn’t bad enough, Gen. 6 paints the picture even darker: it sounds like Sci-Fi, but truth is often stranger than fiction. We’re told that other spiritual beings seemingly joined the Serpent in rebellion. They went to earth and decided it would be a good idea to procreate with the women, leading to creatures called “Nephilim,”

which means *fallen ones*, giants its size and evil—so now, you’ve got super-human demon-hybrids walking the earth, founding civilizations, spreading darkness—the antithesis of God’s image-bearers. It raises plenty of questions, but the first point to grasp to understand the Flood is simply this: **Things started really, really good, but they got really, really bad, because both human beings and spiritual beings rebelled against the Creator.**

- **The De-Creation**

- In the beginning, God blessed humans and told them to be fruitful and multiply—now you have humans multiplying evil and chaos across the earth. This is the point at which God moves to do something about it: **“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.” (6:5)**

His heart is broken, He decides to wipe everything out, to go back to square 1. And here’s the 2nd point to understand the Flood: **After the Creation story in the beginning, the Flood is a story of De-Creation, to make way for a New Creation.** In Gen. 1-2, God’s Spirit (which also means *breath* or *wind*) hovers over the void, over the dark and chaotic waters. He then brings order to make way for life—separating earth and skies and waters and land. He makes a habitat where abundant life can flourish. Now that sin has ruined it and evil is spreading unchecked, the only way to move forward is to start again. The floodgates burst open from the ground and the sky, the land is completely covered with water, everything is washed away and washed clean. It’s like God removes His sustaining boundaries and allows everything to return to its pre-creation state—it’s the exact reversal of Genesis 1, it’s a de-creation.

- God confronts and eliminates evil, because in the end that’s what goodness *must* do, but He doesn’t allow evil to stop His plan: He preserves a *remnant*, the only person and his family who still walk with God, so they can start over. He tells Noah to build an Ark, *and Noah obeys*, in spite of all human logic. Now get this: we hear “Noah’s Ark” and we picture a boat, but the Biblical descriptions of the Ark actually signify something like *the Tabernacle* (the sacred tent where God would one day meet with Israel) and it also points back to Eden. God preserves a sacred-space

in the midst of the de-creation, He makes a refuge to preserve life in the midst of judgement so His image-bearers can continue to carry out His will.

- **The (first) Second Adam**

- And that brings us to the 3rd and final big point to understand the Flood: ***In this story, Noah functions as a second-Adam.*** Before the flood, Noah walked with God. Before the Fall, Adam walked with God. After the flood, Noah is described as “a man of the soil,” *just like Adam*. Once Noah and his family get off the Ark, God repeats the same blessing to them that He gave to Adam and Eve: ***“Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth,’ (Gen. 9:1).*** He then makes a covenant with Noah’s descendants and every living thing that as long as the earth lasts, He will never destroy all life again—from this new beginning, a new plan of redemption is going to unfold. God establishes the rainbow as His sign of peace over the world. It’s actually a “war bow,” like a bow and arrow, hanging in the sky—some say this bow is pointing *upward* toward the heavens, because going forward, God is planning to take the ultimate judgement *upon Himself*.

- **The Return to Rest**

- All of this comes together when you look at Noah’s name. Do you remember what his father said about him, that Noah would bring *comfort*? ***The name Noah, in Hebrew Noach, means comfort or rest.*** *Noah means rest.* While humanity is spiraling out of control, God is working to bring back the order and rest that was in the Beginning. What was Day 7 about? It was God and humanity *resting* and *reigning* in creation. What happened after the fall? Humanity toiled and struggled to survive. In Noah’s story, when the floodwaters finally subside, and the new beginning come, do you know what the Scripture says? The Ark *came to rest* on the mountain, where the new world could begin. When Noah waits there to see if it’s safe to leave the Ark yet, he sends out a *dove* to search for dry land, and do you know what the Scripture says? The dove was looking for *a place to rest*. *Noach*. Through it all, God is working to bring His beloved creation *back to Day 7, back to Eden, back to Rest*. Because God is *good*, and no matter how much evil tries to stop it, *God is fiercely committed to His plan and God will see it through*.

- **The New Creation**

- So, how about this dove that we started with **(Pic 3)**. There's a very big thread here that goes all the way to the New Testament. Where do we see a dove, descending and landing on something in the water? *The Baptism of Jesus!* **"After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him."** (Matt. 3:16) John the Baptist testified, **"He who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The One you see the Spirit descending and resting on—He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'"** (John 1:33)
- You see, all of this, from the beginning, was God preparing the way for His *greatest work*. Noah was like the first Adam: he walked with God, but he was still infected by sin like every other human after the fall, and the story of sin continues with Noah's descendants. The Flood dealt with the wickedness of that time and prevented evil from exponentially spreading. But the Flood didn't deal with sin in the human heart. The prophets spoke of a time when God would make a *New Covenant* and give us a *New Heart*. To do that, we needed the *Second Adam who came from heaven*, the Son of God, who was totally free from sin, to come and free us.
 - At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus went under the waters of baptism *to show us that He was going to take the flood of judgment for all our sin upon Himself*. He rose up from the waters *to show us that He was going to rise up and free us from death*. And the Holy Spirit rested on Him like a dove *to show us that He Himself was the beginning of the New Creation*. He founded His Church, a New Covenant people, a New Temple, to be like an Ark that gives this world a refuge from evil and judgement. And now we get to join Him in seeking His Kingdom to restore the *holy rest* Creation was made for. Today, we have the foretaste, one day, we'll have the fullness.
- I've said it every week so far and I have to say it again today: ***This story is our story***. But we have to accept the bad stuff too. What God saw in humans before the flood, He still sees in us today: even after the flood when God started again with Noah, He said, ***"...every inclination of the human heart is evil from***

childhood...” (Gen. 8:21) If you accept this story, you can’t just say humans are “basically good,” prone to make mistakes and occasionally, become truly wicked. You have to accept God’s diagnosis: He sees *everything* and when He looks into the human heart, He knows that we are bent and broken, fallen in sin, fallen from glory, and we need to be saved if we are ever going to get back to paradise.

- No matter what you think about yourself, you are no more *and* no less in need of salvation than the very best *and* the very worst person you know. And you will be lost in the floodwaters of judgement unless you join your life to the Savior. He’s the only One with the power to not only rescue us in His Ark but also give us a brand-new heart that beats for Heaven. Will you agree with God’s prognosis? Will you repent and believe His Gospel? Will you share it with the world? Will you accept that His story is your story? If you do, guess what? That Heavenly Dove will come and *rest—and remain*—on you, just like Jesus. *Come Holy Spirit! Let us pray.*