

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Genesis Lesson 8 (6:1-22): Some Summary Thoughts:

Just as Chapters 4 & 5 show how one-on-one violent treatment occurred as man moved away from God, following chapters multiply the consequences of such attitudes and behavior to show a community out of control. As chapter 6 opens, the picture is of a society so inept with social injustice and violent treatment for each other, that only a violent response by God can correct a society bent on self-destruction.

Enigma in the opening scene: Gen 6:1-4 presents a development in the history of man's march away from God that is very difficult to comprehend. We read that the sons of God intermarry with the daughters of man, resulting in heroic warriors. Various interpretations exist; however, the most consistent use throughout Scripture for the term “*sons of God*” is that it refers to divine beings (see Job 1:6; 2:1; Psalms 29:1; 89:6 [7]; Daniel 3:25; cf. Psalm 82:1). The suggestion appears to be that intermarriage is occurring between divine beings and human beings. Just what one should make of all this, I leave to your imaginations.

The second narrative is much clearer. Evil, consisting of social injustice and violent treatment of one another, now completely fills the earth (6:5, 11-13). God is preparing to respond with violence also, but the fascinating point is that His response is not out of His anger. Rather, Scripture tells us that it is rooted in *grief*! (6:6-7). Humans, God's pride and joy, have become His sorrow and regret. The evil heart of man (6:5) troubles the heart of God (6:6). In effect, God has a major “heart problem” with man – a problem that He will provide a remedy for much later – a problem that in the final analysis will require purification/cleansing – a cleansing by blood (see Heb 9:14; 10:22), not simply by reprogramming. Man's heart failure is so great at this point in God's story that He acts in judgment/grief (6:6-7); but, in mercy, saves a faithful remnant (6:8).

- The text shows us that the God we worship is so fully engaged in His creation that He can be *hurt* by human sin.
- Thus, the flood confronts us, not with a stern and distant judge, but with a grieving and pained parent. But, lest we misunderstand God's compassion, we need to remember that God's sorrow remains firmly linked to His resolute commitment to bring creation in line with His eternal purposes. The flood that is about to come is an eternal reminder that God will not abandon His creation to its own self-destructive violence.

“Righteousness”: God “wills” that we live in a *right relationship* with Him. **Noah** exemplifies “*righteous*” character. Significantly, Noah is the first person in the Bible who is *speechless* and *listens to God*. In contrast to Cain who *questioned and denied* (4:9), Noah “*heard God and did.*” (6:22). He trusts God's Word and carries out God's commands; or, perhaps more accurately, puts his trust or “faith” in *God's Promises*.

Covenant Defined: In 6:18, we encounter the first mention of “covenant” in Scripture. God declares to Noah, “*6:17... Everything on the earth will die. 38 But I will establish my covenant with you...*” As used in Scripture, “**covenant**” is a **relationship based on promise or sworn oath**. Context shows that a covenant relationship, is intended to be a union – a union where two or more become one; where the union is one-in-common, i.e., a “common union” or “communion” – where assets are shared, mutual protection is provided, selfless love holding the other partner's interest higher than one's own is offered, and mutual surrender of the “self” to each other takes place. It involves the giving of “vows” (promises) to each other. It is meant to be kept. We will look at the details of this “covenant” more fully in a future lesson.

“Covenant” will become God's teaching tool throughout His Story with a primary purpose being to draw us to Him:

- To teach us to trust once again in Him (“*believe*”) and be one with Him,
- To humble our prideful nature (our heart) so He can refill us with Himself, His love, His blessedness, His life.
- Through covenant, we learn of God's person, power, provision, and promise for man; and man's path back to God. In Covenant, a primary objective is a transformed heart in man.

In chapter 6, God is starting over. However, He covenants never to destroy the whole earth in such a fashion again. The prophet Isaiah describes this covenant as God's “*Covenant of peace*” which stems from God's steadfast love – a covenant that will not be removed (Isa 54:9-10). In Genesis 6-9, we encounter our God who brings His creation back from the brink of chaos (triggered by human rebellion) by His process of re-creation. This is the God who promises in the New Testament to make all things new in a “*new creation*” (2 Cor 5:17). The present creation, battered and bloody by human sin (Romans 8) can and will experience the gracious transformation of an all-powerful God who refuses to let sin and evil be the final word!