

What If I Don't Repent?
Genesis 6:9-15
Revelation 7:9-16
8th of the Great Themes in the Bible
Archibald Wallace

Whenever we come to the stories in the Bible of those before Abraham, many roll their eyes or smile knowingly, saying in their inner brains –these are just myths, they never really happened—it's just some holy man trying to give reason to why we are here and what it all means. When I was in Seminary, much of the first 11 Chapters of Genesis was treated by many theologians as myth, not true, but a good story. The last 30 years has seen a shift toward acceptance of the stories as factually based. Archeologists tell us that once the Black Sea area was populated, that it was a small fresh water lake, but the eruption of Santorini, a volcano in the Aegean created a tsunami wave that pushed the Mediterranean into the Black Sea, destroying the civilizations that lived there, changing the fresh water lake into a salt water lake, burying a river that flowed through the area, and obliterating all life. At the same time the ensuing rains and floods struck the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, burying the land under 65 feet of water. The Bible tells us one man was warned of this coming disaster, and this one man built an ark, and he and his family, and the animals of his area survived and began again.

Time-wise, the volcanic eruption, the tsunami, and the sinking of the land under the Black Sea fits the timing of the age of the story of Noah in the Bible, and if we date back earlier from Noah as the Bible gives us the ancestors of Noah, we can come to an Adam –first man of the clan, at a time and in a general area that fits.

I accept the Biblical narrative as true as it relates to Adam and his progeny, but obviously, there were humans long before Adam, this man of God, this man where our story begins.

Today, we are going to look at another Theme that runs through the Bible from beginning to end. It is theme of judgment, and it answers the question of what will, better, what does happen to us, if we don't turn to God, if we don't walk with God.

Our first reading today is from Genesis 6:9-15. It is a part of the story of Noah, who probably lived in the foothills of present day eastern Turkey or western Iraq. Noah was a direct descendant of Adam and is described in the Bible as a man of God, a man who walked faithfully with God, meaning he walked daily with God and talked daily with God – Noah had a close personal relationship with God, close to what God had set up in the beginning with his ancestor Adam.

Sp, let us listen for God's word in Genesis 6 about this man Noah:

- 9 This is the account of Noah and his family.
 Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.
- 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japeth.
- 11 Now the earth was corrupt and full of violence.
- 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become -- for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.
- 13 So God said to Noah, "I am going too put an end to all people—for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth
- 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood: Make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out
- 15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 300 hundred cubits long (450 feet), fifty cubits wide (75 feet), and 30 cubits high (45 feet)..

16 Make a roof for it leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.

17 I am going to bring floodwaters upon the earth to destroy all life under the heavens. Every creature that has the breath of life in it! Everything on earth will perish.

After more instructions God ends by declaring

18 But I will establish my covenant with you. And you will enter the ark, you and your sons, and your wife and your sons wives.

22 Noah did everything, just as God commanded him.

THE WORD OF THE LORD!

Noah was a good man, a just man, a man who walked with God, a man who did it the way God intended for all of His creatures to do it from the beginning. But the earth was a mess. The earth did not walk with God. The earth did not know God. The earth was wicked and violent. We saw a glimpse of this violence in the chapters before Genesis 6. There, Cain killed his brother Abel over nothing—a personal pique—God liked his brother's offering better than God liked Cain's. Then, Cain protested when God asked about Abel, showing what was in his heart, when he said: "Am I my brother's keeper? How do I know where he is?"

Later, at Mt Sinai, God will answer Cain about Abel and tell us we are our brother's keeper; it's at the core of who the people of God are supposed to do—loving our neighbors. Before the story of Cain and Abel is out of our minds, we read of Cain's descendant Lamech—Noah's father—he was a killer and an avenger of wrongs done to him—a violent man. But Noah was not.

And when another 50 to 55 years went by after Noah's birth, God said enough, God was grieved because the great experiment of choosing a people, of asking them to walk with him had gone the wrong way. Those with a choice to make in every age chose themselves and rejected God. The order of creation was gone. The disorder that followed produced violence. My way, not yours, they thought. My way, or I'll get even. My way, or death to you. Killing was OK, or so the corrupt thought and acted. Hating was OK. Getting even and revenge were OK.

Then God said, enough! And from this we get the Theme we're looking at today. Not something new—we read of it in the Adam and Eve and the serpent story, God judged them and punished them, but didn't give up on Adam or Eve. Then we turned the page and read of it with Cain and Abel and the next page told us of Lamech: God judged each of them, evaluated them, weighed their acts, and separated those who said no to God, who walked in their own way, who loved self, first last and always, who would not change and were thus, not redeemable, and in the judgment, they had to go.

All of this leads to the question of what happens if I don't walk with God, what happens if I don't repent? Here is the answer, in the first few words of Genesis, God says clearly, there will be a judgment day for each of you, so if you choose not to walk with me, then there will be a permanent separation from me, an eternal separation. For the people of Noah's time, it was a flood, water out of control, symbolizing the chaos of pre-creation returning, overwhelming, removing them and ending everything forever.

This concept of judgment is at the core of Jesus' call to all to repent, repent before it's too late. Repent to avoid the eternal separation from God! Yield now in your stubbornness about living just for

yourself. Reach out and take God's hand. Let Christ come into your lives and dwell there. Make God a part of your life. Reach out to your neighbor. Because the day is coming when each of us will be judged. This theme of judgment is all across the Old Testament God judged Adam and Eve for eating the forbidden fruit. God judged Cain for killing Abel. God judged Moses for not trusting God completely and giving in to the whiny Israelites' cry for water. God judged King Saul for consulting a medium. God judged David for putting Bathsheba's husband on the front lines to be killed in battle, so he could have his wife. God judged Israel for turning its back upon God and later, Judah for doing the same.

Judgment is the counter-balance to our having the freedom to choose God or to reject God. Judgment is God's balance scale used to determine if we have followed God or not. Not all judgment, where the person judged is found guilty, results in death, but all brings some form of punishment. But for those who say no and never change, the judgment brings death, permanent separation from God.

In the New Testament the theme of judgment continues. Jesus, in John 9, tells the Pharisees he was sent into the world because of God's judgment of the world, that it was spiritually blind, and needed light and a rescue.. His words in John 9: 39 are:

"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who think they see, will realize how blind they are."

Judgment! God placing a life, or a thought, or a deed, or a way of life, or a whole life on his scales of justice. On one side he places our relationship with Him, how good it is, how strong it is, whether we accept Him or not, whether we are obedient to Him or not, whether we walk with Him or not and to the other side he places your acts, your deeds, your words and the level of your worship of self. We cannot win that balancing on our own, on our own merit. Thankfully, we don't have to. Because Christ has come for us, lived for us, died for us and risen for us, if we believe in him, we can add him to our side of the scales, where he will take all of our denials of God off the scale, so that it sits empty when our time for judgment comes.

Judgment! It is coming, for each of us, and with Christ on our side, we will not be found wanting. How do we get Christ on our side? Accept him as Lord and savior and live as Noah did, walking daily and faithfully with God.

Our second reading from Revelation 7 paints a picture of that day in the future when God's final judgment is coming. This reading also answers the question that is the title of today's sermon. Let's listen for God's words for us again.

Revelation 7 describes what happens at the end of time. Seals 4, 5 and 6 have been opened. Judgment has been visited on the earth. Revelation 6:16 describes the chaos of judgment, where all the kings of the earth, all the princes, all the generals, all the rich, all the mighty and everyone else who has not been rescued is in hiding from the wrath and judgment of God, and just before the final verdict, angels of the Lord stop everything, so God's chosen can be sealed and protected and gathered. 144,000 are sealed, then the judgment continues. Now verse 9:

- 9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.
- 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:
 Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne
 And to the Lamb.
- 11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying,

Amen! Peace and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power
and strength, be unto our God, for ever and evr.

- 12 Then one of the elders asked me, These in white robes—who are they and
where did they come from?
- 14 I answered, “Sir you (will have to tell me).”
And he said, “They are they who have come out of (survived) the great
Tribulation (of the second coming),, they have washed their robes and made
them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- 15 Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his
temple, and he who sits on the throne, will shelter them with his presence.
- 16 Never again will they hunger (for spiritual food), never again will they thirst (For
the waters of life). The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat.
- 17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, he will lead
them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their
eyes.”

This is a picture of the few who will be rescued and saved at the time Christ comes again, the time called the tribulation, the time of God’s final judgment of all the earth. The rest, not saved, will be in hiding, awaiting the wrath of God’s judgment, that occurs when the seventh seal is opened and the 7th trumpet sounds. Then they will be destroyed, forever. Forever!

So, back to this theme of judgment. It is coming for all of us—at death or in the tribulation when Christ comes again, and we will have to answer God’s question—did you choose well? Did you choose Christ, the one I sent to you? Or, did you choose to live your own way, to walk your own walk, to turn your back upon God? The wrath and the spiritual death are sure, if we do not repent!

It doesn’t have to be this way for any of us. You can speak up today, you can claim Christ’s great gift of life today. I call on each one hearing my voice today to “Decide now! Even if you have already made this commitment somewhere long ago in the past, come now. Renew your vows. I will meet you here at the front before the cross. Come! I will wait for you. So, is God waiting!

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