

Lesson 4
A New Beginning
Noah's ark from Genesis 6–9

The Jesus Storybook Bible - pgs. 38-47

The account of Noah and the flood is filled with many puzzling details that can easily absorb time and energy. We should not ignore such issues; nevertheless, we must be careful not to be distracted from discovering the overall teaching of the narrative.

First, we learn here of the seriousness of sin. We read in Genesis 6:5 – 7, “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become. . . . So the Lord said, ‘I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created.’ ” One of the main points of the entire flood narrative is that God cannot tolerate evil.

Second, we learn here of the interior nature of sin. Genesis 6:5 says, “Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.” Sin is primarily a matter of the heart. If we focus too much on behavioral violations, we will miss the internal forms of sin. Sin is first a matter of attitude and motives, and it can influence and grow even before it has broken out into behavior.

Third, we learn here of the grievousness of sin. Verse 6 says that God was “deeply troubled.” This is the ultimate reason that sin is sin. It troubles or “grieves” God.

Fourth, we learn of the universality of sin. Notice that there are no exceptions in the human race with regard to sin. All humankind is wicked. All have hearts whose thoughts are “all” evil, and who deserve to be destroyed. If we take 6:7 seriously — that all mankind deserved to be “wip[ed] from . . . the earth” — how do we understand 6:8? In other words, why does Noah find “favor in the eyes of the Lord”? It is normal for readers to see verse 9 (that Noah was a “righteous man, blameless . . . he walked faithfully with God”) as the cause of verse 8. But such a reading fails to take into account the emphatic nature of 6:5 – 7 about the universality of sin and judgment, which would include Noah and his family.

So why then did Noah escape the flood? The Hebrew word that the NIV translates “favor” in verse 8 is the main Old Testament word for “grace” — *chen*. Grace is always unmerited — or it would not be grace. But the verse itself also gives us a broad hint about why Noah escaped. It does not say “Noah earned or won favor in the eyes of the Lord,” but “Noah found favor.”

To “find” something is to discover it, to come upon it. What is the difference between finding \$10 and earning \$10? When you find \$10, it has come to you freely, without regard to your work or behavior. In the same way, to find God’s blessing is not the same as to earn it. Verse 8 is the cause of verse 9, not vice versa.

Noah walked with God because he found grace/favor with God. He did not find grace/favor because of his walk. This is one of the themes of the entire Bible — that God accepts and saves us by grace alone. Here in early Genesis, that theme takes the form of God’s preservation of a godly line, a godly people, through his continual, gracious, intervention.

Memory Verse

Genesis 6:5

"The Lord saw that the human heart was only evil."

***Lesson taken from *The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum*, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas.

If you do not have a copy of The Jesus Storybook Bible, we will have them for purchase in Cranmer Hall for \$10.