

After the Flood, All the Colors Come Out

By Jared K. Wilson

And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. — Genesis 8:11

Here is one of the simpler but more beautiful pictures we receive in the account of Noah and the great flood. It is the first sign of the re-starting of God's creative process. The land emerges out of the waters in an echo of the creation event, where God separated the land from the water. It is a "reboot," if you will. And a foreshadow. It is a foreshadow of the day still to come—future from us—when Christ will return and judge the living and the dead, and the wicked will be condemned (Luke 17:25-27). But God will remember his children who have trusted in his Son and who have been declared righteous by their trust. And his plan isn't simply to evacuate them off the cursed earth into heaven but to bring a flood of heaven, a flood of glory, to the earth and restore it. He will vanquish the curse. The flood of sin will be dried up, and peace and justice will reign. And so will we. In a restored creation.

We need to remember this gospel hope of a restored body and a restored creation through the work of Christ. We need to remember it every day because life is not easy. And God keeps calling us into difficult circumstances, into times of suffering and hardship.

When we go through something difficult, that is typically when we begin to question whether God is actually good, whether he's actually remembered us, whether he even cares, if we're even saved!

But we have to remember his character and his designs—that he is love and that he is gracious and that his plan for us is to deliver us from evil and death—we have to remember this *especially* when we are most tempted to doubt it!

Sometimes, like Noah in those latter stages, we look around and see only the raging torrent. No horizon. Simply the gray seas meeting the gray skies. And we feel lost, adrift, hopelessly tossed about on the endless current of murky chaos. We are looking for a big sign, perhaps, a big deliverance. In the meantime, however, we get a glimpse. Something to look at that doesn't at first strike us as much to look at.

The dove with the leaf in her mouth is a pretty image. As it flies over the flooded earth with just this tiny shred of evidence of something new bursting forth, we have also a reminder of God's holiness, of his power. The image of the dove is one of hope but also a reminder of curse. We see in the entirety of the story of Noah's flood, in fact, that—as C. S. Lewis says of Aslan in the Narnia stories—"he is not safe, but he is good."

Like God did Noah, he may call us into a long obedience in a dark direction. He calls us to give up our lives and abandon ourselves to his sovereignty. But to run from the fearful God is to run into a terrible disaster of eternal proportions. I am always moved by this from *The Silver Chair*:

Anyway, [Jill] had seen its lips move this time, and the voice was not like a man's. It was deeper, wilder, and stronger; a sort of heavy, golden voice. It did not make her any less frightened than she had been before, but it made her frightened in rather a different way.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the lion.

"I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the lion.

"May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

"Will you promise not to—do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer. "Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.

The image of the dove with the olive leaf in her mouth is now an iconic religious image. It reminds us of God's holiness and his power and his purity. But in doing so, it also becomes a picture of salvation. Of hope. Of restoration. Noah saw it, and he *knew* the waters were subsiding.

When the flood waters come up around us, then, whatever they might be, we ought to be remembering God's creative purpose. So often we have our eyes set on the wrong things—or at least, the lesser things. We suffer, and we want simply to feel better, which is not a bad thing to want! But do we want more than that to be sanctified? Do we say to God, "Nevertheless, not my will be done, but yours"? Fearing the flood God calls us to, do we seek other streams that don't even exist?

When we think of the things we hope for, that we even trust God for, we are typically setting our sights pretty low, even when we think we are waiting on a miracle. A financial break. The right job. Success. Comfort. When all along God is calling us to remember not his material blessings but his creative purpose—specifically in his Son.

The dove with the leaf in her mouth, like the ark itself, is a shadow cast by the cross of Christ, where we see definitively that God is not safe, but he is good! That the judgment and wrath he must pour out for guilty sinners can make sinners clean, make them righteous, make them forgiven and justified and eternally free. *That's* what we look to in times of terror, in times of hardship, in all times! If you think God has forgotten you, look to the cross. As Augustine says, "If you are ever tempted to hold yourself cheap, value yourself by the price which was paid for you."

The cross stands as eternal proof that God loves sinners. It stands as eternal proof that no matter how deep the waters get, even if they drown us—our condemnation has been taken by Christ and removed forever.

In 2 Chronicles 20, the great armies of the Moabites and the Ammonites are marching in battle toward the children of Israel, quickly descending to lay waste to God's people and destroy them and all they hold dear. And it says King Jehosaphat was afraid. And the people of God all gathered together to figure out what they were going to do. Because their enemies were quickly rising against them, like a flood they could not escape from. And King Jehosaphat stands in the middle of the assembled cities and offers this desperate, faithful prayer:

"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.' And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom

you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy—behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. . . .
(vv.6-12)

And then he adds at the end:

“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (v.12)

We don't know what to do, but our eyes are on you. I'm thinking that is a prayer Noah could have *Amen'd* heartily. Maybe you could too.

If overwhelmed, look to the cross. The vision comes back to you like the dove with an olive leaf in her mouth. The waters that threaten you have subsided, conquered by their Master. You see the wrath is over, and the blessings have begun.

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Question: "Did the Bible copy the Flood account from other myths and legends?"

Answer: It is true that the Genesis flood account shares many striking similarities with the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic, and with the Babylonian Atrahasis epic, for that matter. In fact, literally hundreds of flood traditions have been preserved all over the world, with traditions abounding in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, as well as both of the Americas, and the Genesis account shares similarities with most of them. Of the flood traditions which have survived to the present time, about 95% describe a global cataclysmic deluge, 88% tell of a favored family of humans saved from drowning to reestablish the human race after the deluge, 66% say the family was forewarned of the coming cataclysm, 66% blame the wickedness of man for the deluge, and 70% record a boat as being the means by which the chosen family (and animals) survived the flood. More than one third of these traditions mention birds being sent out from the boat.

Since every culture has descended directly from the flood's survivors, it is logical that stories of this traumatic event are both abundant and universal, having been passed down from generation to generation. This is certainly the case. Many of these traditions are remarkably consistent, considering the relative isolation of the cultures, the length of time that has elapsed since the flood, and the human tendency to embellish, exaggerate, and distort stories over time. The Babylonian and biblical accounts of the flood appear to represent different retellings of an essentially identical flood tradition.

Skeptics want to imagine that there was, in fact, no flood and that the Bible's flood account was borrowed from a Babylonian myth. The evidence seems to suggest otherwise: there was, in fact, a catastrophic worldwide deluge, and the veracity of the biblical account is attested to by numerous other similar ancient accounts. In addition to abundant historical evidence, there is a wealth of physical proof in favor of the flood's historicity. The flood of Noah's day was most certainly a real historical event, and the biblical account of what happened is trustworthy.

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Question: "How was the flood in the time of Noah just?"

Answer: The global flood of Noah's day was the direct judgment of a just God. The Bible says the flood wiped out "people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds"—everything that breathed air (Genesis 7:23). Some people today are offended by the flood story, saying it is proof of God's injustice, arbitrariness, or just plain meanness. They accuse the Bible of promoting a temperamental God who judges indiscriminately and say that only a bully would drown everyone, including children and all those innocent animals.

Such attacks on the character of God are nothing new. As long as there have been sinners in the world, there have been charges that God is unjust. Consider Adam's subtle shifting of blame. When asked about eating the forbidden fruit, Adam said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit" (Genesis 3:12). That is, it was the woman's fault, and God's, since He made the woman. But blaming God did not mitigate Adam's sin. And calling God "unjust" for sending the flood will not lessen ours.

The flood of Noah's day has many counterparts in history. God judged the people of Canaan with a command to wipe them out (Deuteronomy 20:16–18). He similarly judged Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh (Nahum 1:14), and Tyre (Ezekiel 26:4). And the final judgment before the Great White Throne will result in all the wicked from all time being cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11–15). The plain message of the Bible is that God does judge sin, whether by an invading army, by fire and brimstone, or by a catastrophic global flood.

The flood was just because God commanded it (and God is just). "The LORD is upright . . . and there is no wickedness in him" (Psalm 92:15). "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of [God's] throne" (Psalm 89:14). God always does what is right. His decrees and judgments are always just. If He decreed that the whole world be flooded, then He was just in doing so, no matter what human skeptics say. It is not surprising that we tend to define *justice* in a way that will benefit ourselves.

The flood was just because mankind was evil. "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" (Genesis 6:5). We cannot fully imagine the extent of the wickedness of that day. We have never seen the like. The evil was "great," and *every* thought of everyone's heart was *only evil continually*. There was no goodness in the world; every person was wholly corrupted. There was nothing within them that was *not* evil. The people of Noah's day were not dabblers in sin; they had taken the plunge, and *everything* they did was an abomination.

The text provides some clues as to the extent of the evil before the flood. One problem was the rampant violence: "The earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence" (Genesis 6:11). The descendants of Cain, the first murderer, were abounding in bloodshed. Another evil among the antediluvians was occult sexuality. Genesis 6:1–4 mentions the Nephilim, "heroes of old, men of renown" who were the products of a union between fallen angels and human woman. The demons who participated in this sin are currently in "chains of darkness . . . reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). The people who participated—and the Nephilim themselves—were destroyed in the flood. The

biblical description of pre-flood humanity is that they had become totally hardened and beyond repentance. Things were so bad that “the Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled” (Genesis 6:6).

But what about the children who drowned? The fact is that sin affects *all* of society, not just those who intentionally engage in evil. When a society promotes abortion, babies die as a result. When a father or mother begins taking meth, their children will suffer as a result. And, in the case of Noah’s generation, when a culture gives itself over to violence and aberrant sexuality, the children suffered. Humanity brought the flood upon themselves and upon their own children.

The flood was just because *all* sin is a capital offense. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). We should not be shocked that God swept away the world’s population with the flood; we should be shocked that He hasn’t done something similar to us! Sinners tend to have a light view of sin, but all sin is worthy of death. We take God’s mercy for granted, as if we deserve it, but we complain about God’s justice as if it’s somehow unfair, as if we *don’t* deserve it.

The flood was just because the Creator has the right to do as He pleases with His creation. As the potter can do whatever he wants with the clay on his wheel, so God has the right to do as He pleases with the work of His own hands. “The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths” (Psalm 135:6).

Here is the most amazing part of the flood story: “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8). God’s grace extended into His damaged, sin-stained creation and preserved one man and his family. In so doing, God preserved the whole human race through the godly line of Seth. And, in bringing the animals into the ark, God also preserved the rest of His creation. So, God’s judgment was not a total annihilation; it was a reset.

As always, God’s judgment in Noah’s time was accompanied by grace. The Lord is a “compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. *Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished*” (Exodus 34:6–7, emphasis added). God would rather the wicked repent and live (Ezekiel 18:23). God delayed judgment on the Amorites for four hundred years (Genesis 15:16). God would have spared Sodom for the sake of even ten righteous people dwelling there (Genesis 18:32). But, eventually, His judgment must fall.

It took Noah up to a hundred years to build the ark. We can assume that, if other people had wanted to board the ark and be saved, they could have done so. But that would have required faith. Once God shut the door, it was too late; they had lost their chance (Genesis 7:16). The point is that God never sends judgment without prior warning. As commentator Matthew Henry said, “None are punished by the justice of God, but those who hate to be reformed by the grace of God.”

The global flood of Noah’s day was a just punishment of sin. Those who say the flood was unjust probably don’t like the idea of judgment to begin with. The story of Noah is a vivid reminder that, like it or not, there is another judgment coming: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:37). Are you ready, or will you be swept away?

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Question: "Was Noah's flood global or local?"

Answer: The biblical passages regarding the flood make it clear that it was global. Genesis 7:11 states that "all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened." Genesis 1:6-7 and 2:6 tell us that the pre-flood environment was much different from that which we experience today. Based on these and other biblical descriptions, it is reasonably speculated that at one time the earth was covered by some kind of water canopy. This canopy could have been a vapor canopy, or it might have consisted of rings, somewhat like Saturn's ice rings. This, in combination with a layer of water underground, released upon the land (Genesis 2:6) would have resulted in a global flood.

The clearest verses that show the extent of the flood are Genesis 7:19-23. Regarding the waters, "They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished"birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark."

In the above passage, we not only find the word "all" being used repeatedly, but we also find "all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered," "the waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet," and "every living thing that moved on the earth perished." These descriptions clearly describe a universal flood covering the whole earth. Also, if the flood was localized, why did God instruct Noah to build an ark instead of merely telling Noah to move and causing the animals to migrate? And why did He instruct Noah to build an ark large enough to house all of the different kinds of land animals found on the earth? If the flood was not global, there would have been no need for an ark.

Peter also describes the universality of the flood in 2 Peter 3:6-7, where he states, "By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." In these verses Peter compares the "universal" coming judgment to the flood of Noah's time and states that the world that existed then was flooded with water. Further, many biblical writers accepted the historicity of the worldwide flood (Isaiah 54:9; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 11:7). Lastly, the Lord Jesus Christ believed in the universal flood and took it as the type of the coming destruction of the world when He returns (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27).

There are many extra-biblical evidences that point to a worldwide catastrophe such as a global flood. There are vast fossil graveyards found on every continent and large amounts of coal deposits that would require the rapid covering of vast quantities of vegetation. Oceanic fossils are found upon mountain tops around the world. Cultures in all parts of the world have some form of flood legend. All of these facts and many others are evidence of a global flood.

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**Question: "What is the Noahic Covenant?"**

Answer: The Noahic Covenant, found in Genesis 9:8-17, is the promise that God made to Noah and his descendants after the flood which destroyed the world. The Noahic Covenant has several distinguishing features. First, it is an unconditional covenant. Second, it was made to Noah and all his descendants as well as "every living creature" and the earth in general (Genesis 9:8-10). Third, it was sealed with a sign, the rainbow.

The Noahic Covenant is an unconditional covenant because it does not depend upon anything Noah or his descendants had to do to fulfill the covenant. The promise is based upon God's faithfulness alone. Because of God's faithfulness to always do what He says He will do, we can know today with certainty that there will never be another worldwide flood as there was in the days of Noah, no matter how wicked mankind becomes. Neither the wickedness nor the righteousness of mankind affects this unconditional covenant. There is no "condition" under which God will renege on His promise. This does not mean that God will never again destroy the earth, however. He has promised to one day destroy the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10, 11; Revelation 20:9, 21:1) in the terrible events known as the "day of the Lord."

After the flood God promised that He would never again send a worldwide flood to destroy the earth as an act of His divine judgment for sin. As a sign to remind Noah and his descendants of His covenantal promise, God "set the rainbow in the cloud" (Genesis 9:12-13). Just as circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, the rainbow is the sign of the Noahic Covenant. The lesson to us is that when we see a rainbow we should always be reminded of God's faithfulness and His amazing grace. We should also be reminded that our God is a holy and righteous God who has a holy hatred for sin and who will not allow sin to go unpunished forever. Also, just as God provided a way for Noah and his family to be saved in the ark, He also has provided a way for us to be saved through Jesus Christ. Noah and his family were saved from the wrath of God that came in the flood, just as those who are in Christ are saved from the "wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

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Who Are the Sons of God in Genesis 6

By William F. Cook

By The interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4 is difficult and controversial. The debate centers on the interpretation of the phrase “sons of God.” Who are they? The crucial question concerns whether the phrase refers to human beings or to spiritual beings (demons).

The full passage reads:

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

Option 1: Sons of God = Sons of Seth

One view understands the “sons of God” as descendants of Seth. In this interpretation, Seth’s godly descendants were intoxicated by the beauty of women descended from Cain, thus marrying those who’d rejected God and leading to greater wickedness.

The strongest evidence for this position is found in Genesis 4–5, which describe two lines of descent from Adam: one through Cain and the other through Seth. In the Old Testament, God’s covenant people are sometimes referred to as God’s sons (Deut. 14:1; Jer. 3:19), though the precise phrase “sons of God” is never used of them. If the Sethite view is correct, this could explain why God later forbade the Israelites from marrying Canaanite women (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3).

The phrase ‘sons of God’ is clearly used elsewhere of angelic hosts in God’s heavenly court.

Option 2: Sons of God = Fallen Angels

The oldest, and likely the most widely held, interpretation is that the “sons of God” are fallen angels (demons). This was the interpretation most favored in ancient Judaism and the early church (cf. 1 Pet. 3:19–20; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). The phrase “sons of God” is clearly used elsewhere of angelic hosts in God’s heavenly court (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Moreover, the narrator seems to contrast “man” and “the daughters of man” with the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1–2.

This position is not without difficulties, however, most substantial of which is the idea of fallen angels having physical relations with women. Scripture gives instances of angels engaging in

human activities such as eating (Gen. 18:1–2, 8; 19:1, 5), but surely sexual intercourse is a step beyond! Jesus makes a similar point in Matthew 22:30: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

Which Is Right?

Despite the obvious difficulties of the second interpretation, I believe the evidence points slightly in its favor, mainly because both Peter and Jude seem to have held to it.

In 1 Peter 3:18–22, Peter refers to spirits in prison because they disobeyed in Noah’s day (1 Pet. 3:19–20). Though disputed, the word “spirits” most likely refers to evil spirits (cf. Matt. 8:16; 12:45; Luke 4:36; 10:20; Acts 19:12–16). The connection of these spirits with Noah’s day points strongly to Genesis 6. That these “spirits in prison” are fallen angels is further confirmed by similar passages in 2 Peter and Jude.

In 2 Peter 2:4–10, for example, the apostle cites three Old Testament examples of God’s judgment as a warning to false teachers. First are the fallen angels who are chained and awaiting final judgment (2 Pet. 2:4). The second and third examples are the flood in Noah’s day (2 Pet. 2:5; cf. Gen. 6–8) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pet. 2:6; Gen. 19). Given that the second and third examples not only come from Genesis but are also listed in chronological order, it makes sense to see the first example as also coming from Genesis. (Genesis 6:1–4 comes right before the flood narrative, after all.) Since angels are spiritual beings, Peter’s reference to their being “chained” refers not to physical chains, but rather to a limitation of their activity—presumably to prevent them from indulging in such wickedness again.

Jude, like Peter, provides three Old Testament examples of God’s judgment (Jude 5–7). Unlike Peter, he doesn’t mention the flood and doesn’t place them in chronological order. Still, Jude 6 parallels 2 Peter 2:4 and appears to be an allusion to Genesis 6:1–4. These angels demonstrated sinful pride by abandoning their position of authority and leaving their proper dwelling. They’re now being “kept in eternal chains” until the Day of Judgment. The comparison with the men of Sodom and Gomorrah in Jude 7 (“*just as Sodom and Gomorrah . . . likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire*”) implies that this was also the angels’ sin in Jude 6.

How Is This Possible?

Admittedly, these passages don’t provide a definitive answer as to how spiritual beings could have sexual relations with women. But in light of examples we see in the New Testament, it seems best to assume that these evil spirits took possession of the bodies of wicked men and used them for their own sinful purposes.

The New Testament gives us clear examples of demons—and even Satan himself—indwelling human beings and causing them to act in horrific ways. For instance, the Gadarene demoniac behaves in an uncontrollable manner with superhuman strength (Mark 5:1–20). Separating the

actions of the man from the actions of the demons is, in such cases, nearly impossible. Judas also behaved in a manner that made him culpable for his sin, though John makes it clear that Satan had entered him (John 13:27).

Of course, I may be wrong, and the Sethite interpretation may be correct after all. I certainly grant that the ancient view seems strange to our modern ears. But since Peter and Jude both appear to have held it, it seems to me the best interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4. Regardless of which interpretation is correct, though, the main point is plain: humanity was falling deeper and deeper into sin and running farther and farther away from God.

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Question: "Why did God accept Abel's offering but reject Cain's offering? Why did Cain then kill Abel?"

Answer: The stories of the first act of worship in human history and the first murder are recorded in Genesis chapter 4. The act of worship—Cain’s and Abel’s offerings—follows the account of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, their disobedience to God, and the entrance of sin into the human race. Death, the judgment pronounced upon them by God, soon made its entrance in the first family.

Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, “in the course of time” brought offerings to the Lord (Genesis 4:3). Without doubt, they were doing this because God had revealed to them the necessity of a sacrifice. Some wonder how Cain and Abel were supposed to know *what* to sacrifice. The answer is that God must have instructed them concerning the details of acceptable worship, although those instructions are not included in the Genesis narrative.

Abel was a shepherd, and his offering to the Lord was “the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock” (Genesis 4:4, NLT). Cain was a farmer, and his offering was “some of his crops” (Genesis 4:4, NLT). The most evident difference between the two sacrifices is that Abel’s offering was an animal (blood) sacrifice, and Cain’s was a vegetable (bloodless) sacrifice. There may be an additional implication that, while Abel brought “the best portions,” Cain simply brought some of his ordinary crops. Scripture does not give an indication, however, that either of these differences factored into God’s acceptance of Abel and rejection of Cain.

What we know for sure is that “the LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor” (Genesis 4:4–5). We also know that God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). There was something in Cain’s motivation and heart attitude, and possibly something in his performance, that made his offering unacceptable to God. It was obviously something that he was aware of and could remedy, since God tells him after the fact, “You will be accepted if you do what is right” (Genesis 4:7, NLT).

Abel, on the other hand, had the proper motivation, the proper procedure, and the proper relationship with God. That relationship was based on faith: “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did” (Hebrews 11:4). Ever since the beginning, people must come to God in faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), and faith is evidently what Cain lacked.

In Jude 1:11, we read, “They have taken the way of Cain,” a description that refers to lawless men. This may mean that they, like Cain, disobediendly devised their own ways of worship, and they did not come to God by faith. Cain’s offering, while acceptable in his own eyes, was not acceptable to the Lord. In some way, Cain had perverted God’s prescribed form of worship, and his heart was not right. He grew jealous of Abel, and he selfishly nursed his wounded pride. Rather than repent at God’s rebuke, Cain became angry, and later, in the field, he killed Abel and brought judgment upon himself (Genesis 4:8).

The apostle John gives us more insight into Cain’s heart: “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the

evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:12). Those who belong to the evil one will have evil actions, and those with evil actions will naturally hate those with righteous actions. The evil in Cain's heart was further revealed when the Lord asked him, "Where is your brother Abel?" to which Cain replied, "I don't know. . . . Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). In this response Cain tells a stone-cold lie and shows an amazing level of insolence.

When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He became the substitutionary atonement for our sins. The blood of Christ "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). Both Abel and Christ were slain by wicked men. But, as the theologian Erasmus commented, "The blood of Abel cried for vengeance; that of Christ for remission."

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Question: "Why did God send the flood when He knew sin would continue after the flood?"

Answer: We find the setting for God's judgment in the flood in Genesis 6:1–7: "When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.'

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

"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. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.'"

Apparently, the most significant reason that God chose to bring about the flood is that the corruption of man's heart completely dominated humanity in the days of Noah. God certainly knew that sending the flood would not (and did not) fix the sin problem in man's heart; after the flood, God observes that "every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood" (Genesis 8:21). In the same statement, God also says, "Never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."

So God sent the flood because of the evil on the earth at Noah's time but thereafter promised not to send such a flood again—in spite of the fact that evil was still present. If God knew that evil would not be eradicated with the flood, why did He send the flood in the first place? We will look at three answers:

One way to answer why God sent the flood when He knew that evil would continue is to interpret mankind's sin in the time of Noah as something unique and significantly more severe than what we see in the world today. Indeed, Genesis 6:5 tells us that "every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." This is a powerful indictment of the condition of the human heart: not only does Scripture say that the thoughts of man's heart were purely, exclusively evil, but that his heart was *always* like this. However much we may complain about the condition of our world today, we probably should not compare our current situation to that of Noah, simply because the evil in his day appears to have reached unimaginable levels. There was something unusually evil about the heart of man in the days of Noah, and the Lord knew the best course of action was to simply start over. This approach is surely somewhat speculative, but it is at least consistent with what we read elsewhere in Scripture about who God is.

Another possibility as to why God sent the flood when He knew that evil would continue takes a cue from the "sons of God" and "Nephilim" references in Genesis 6:2 and 4. Although Bible scholars are divided over exactly who the sons of God and Nephilim were, the Bible is clear that their descendants were characterized by some particularly extreme form of evil. Moreover, in Genesis 6:3 it seems that the Lord's response to the actions of the sons of God is the first actual reference

to the flood: by saying that “[man’s] days will be a hundred and twenty years,” God effectively begins the countdown for the onset of the judgment. This suggests that the flood was God’s direct response to the actions of the sons of God and the Nephilim.

Another possible answer for why God sent the flood when He knew that evil would continue is somewhat more general. First Corinthians 10:11 tells us that the stories in the Old Testament are useful as more than historical records: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.” In the story of the flood is an example for us to heed. Jesus draws a parallel between the story of the flood and today in Matthew 24:37–39: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” The historical flood of Noah’s day, therefore, stands as a symbol of God’s coming judgment. Just as Noah’s contemporaries failed to understand their impending doom, many of our own contemporaries will be swept away in God’s judgment without ever comprehending their need for a Savior. The flood functions as a warning to those who would presume upon God’s mercy in continuing their disobedience; the flood calls all to repentance.

God sent the flood to judge the world at that time of heinous, continual, worldwide sin. Yes, He knew that the flood would not eradicate the sin problem and that mankind would remain sinful after the flood. But God was not done dealing with sin. He sent His Son into the world to disarm the powers of evil and make “a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15). Because of Christ, the new heaven and new earth are promised (Revelation 21:1), and “no longer will there be any curse” (Revelation 22:3).

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