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## GOD'S WARNINGS

Genesis 7:1-24

By

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Genesis Lesson 17

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Genesis 7:1-24

A woman who works for the IRS in Utah has the job of communicating with delinquent taxpayers. On one occasion she called Anchorage and was patched through to a ham operator in the Aleutian Islands. Two hours later the ham operator raised the taxpayer's home base and from there reached him at sea with his fishing fleet. After the woman identified herself as being with the IRS in Utah, there was a long pause. Then over the static from somewhere in the North Pacific came: "Ha! Ha! Come and get me!" (*Reader's Digest* [10/82].)

Like that tax-dodger, a lot of people think that judgment will never happen. Some may be able to dodge the IRS. But no one can dodge God's day of reckoning. But people look around and see the wicked literally getting away with murder. The unrighteous often seem to fare pretty well in this life. And so people mistakenly conclude that judgment will never happen. They mistake God's patience and grace in delaying the day of judgment to mean that it will never take place and that they can sin without consequence. But the familiar story of the flood is given to warn us:

Because God's judgment on the earth is a fact,  
we must take the means of escape He has provided.

Unfortunately, the story of Noah and the great flood is often regarded as a fairy tale, not as fact. But it is in the Bible to show that...

1. God's judgment on the earth is a fact.
  - A. The flood is the past example of the fact of God's judgment on the whole earth.

At no other point in history has God's judgment on the earth been as severe and widespread as it was at the flood. At various times God has judged individuals, groups, and even whole nations. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed when God rained fire and

brimstone on them. God ordered Israel to destroy the Canaanites because of their sin. Israel itself was judged by the Babylonian captivity. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 because of rejecting the Messiah. There are many more examples in the Bible. But no other judgment in history was as widespread and severe as that of the flood. As such, the flood stands as *the* past example, bar none, of the fact of God's judgment on the whole earth. Just as He judged the whole earth with the flood, so He will judge the whole earth in the end times, and none will escape.

I am going to take more of a biblical rather than a scientific approach. For our purposes, let's look at three points:

(1) *The flood was historical.* While there are some difficult problems to consider, I think we must take the biblical account at face value. The text clearly presents this as an eyewitness, historical account, not as a parable or fairy tale. For example, the precise date (7:11), as Derek Kidner states, "has the mark of a plain fact well remembered; and this is borne out by the further careful notes of time in the story" (*Genesis* [IVP], p. 90). While the miraculous is obviously present (especially in the way God gathered the animals to Noah), there is nothing mythical about it.

Also, the New Testament clearly interprets the flood as historical. Both the apostle Peter and the Lord Jesus refer to it as an example of the way people in the end times will scoff at God's judgment (2 Pet. 2:5; 3:3-10; Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27). Either Jesus was mistaken; or He was deceptively using something He knew not to be true as if it were true; or He knew what He was talking about when He referred to Noah and the flood as historically true.

Outside of the Bible, there is the widespread evidence of flood stories in many cultures. While there are variations in the stories, as would be expected over thousands of years, the wide distribution of these stories from every continent of the world points to a common source (see Tim LaHaye and John Morris, *The Ark on Ararat* [Thomas Nelson], pp. 233-239).

Geologically, there is debate even among Christian scholars about the evidence for a worldwide flood. Some, such as the late Bernard Ramm, argue for a localized flood because they see a

number of scientific problems with a universal flood. But there are many lines of geologic evidence which may point to a universal flood and which are not easy to explain in any other way. I cannot deal with the technical aspects of it here, but refer you to John Whitcomb and Henry Morris's *The Genesis Flood* (Baker, 518 pp.) if you want more detail.

Just over a century ago, the German scholar, C. F. Keil, put the scientific issue in focus when he wrote, "However impossible, therefore, scientific men may declare it to be for them to conceive of a universal flood of such a height and duration in accordance with the known laws of nature, this inability on their part does not justify any one in questioning the possibility of such an event being produced by the omnipotence of God" (Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* [Eerdmans], 1:146-147).

But, biblically the evidence for the flood as historically true is incontrovertible. Culturally, there is a massive body of independent traditions which points to a common historical event as their source. Geologically, evidence does not definitely prove the flood, but neither does it disprove it. And there is much evidence that supports the flood.

(2) *The flood was universal.* Not only was the flood an actual historical event; it was also universal, or worldwide. While I am inclined toward Whitcomb and Morris's scientific arguments, I am not basing this point on geology, but on the Bible. I think the biblical evidence is clear that the flood was worldwide in scope.

For one thing, the language of the text could not be stronger in describing a flood of universal proportions. While the words "all" and "every" are sometimes used in a relative sense in the Bible, Genesis 7 uses deliberately strong, repetitive language to describe the extent of the flood. In verses 2 and 3 God says that Noah must take some of every kind of animal "to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth." That would not be necessary if the flood were only local. In verse 4, God tells Noah that He is about to blot out every living thing that He has made. Why have Noah go to all the bother of building an ark of this size if the flood was merely local? The animals could just as easily have fled the area (along with Noah and his family) and returned afterward.

Verses 11 and 12 say that the source of the flood was not only 40 days and nights of rain, but also the breaking up of the great deep. This points to massive changes in the oceans and subterranean vaults of the earth, and describes much more water than that of a local flood. Verses 19 and 20 say that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered to a depth of 15 cubits (about 23 feet, perhaps the draft of the loaded ark). (The mountains on earth before the flood were not necessarily the same as afterwards; see Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 266-270).

Then there is the time which it took for the flood waters to abate. The water prevailed upon the earth for 150 days (7:24). This means that it took 110 days after the rain stopped for the water to recede enough for the ark to touch down on Mount Ararat (8:3, 4). It took another ten weeks for the water level to go down enough for the tops of other mountains to become visible (8:5). All told, it was just over a year before it was safe for Noah and those on the ark to disembark (8:14-15). No local flood would require that much time to subside.

Verses 21 and 22 say that all animals in whose nostrils were the breath of life died. Verse 23 sums it up by saying that God blotted out every living thing from the land "from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky ... and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark." How much more plainly could you say it?

In addition, Genesis 8 implies that Noah and those with him in the ark were the only living creatures on earth after the flood (esp. 8:1, 15-17). God's promise not to destroy the earth in this manner again (8:21-22; 9:15-16) would not be true if the flood was merely local, because there have been many severe local floods in history. Genesis 9:19 and 10:32 state that the whole earth was repopulated from Noah's three sons. So the biblical evidence that the flood was universal is overwhelming. (See Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* [Baker], pp. 199-203, 683-685, for much more biblical support.)

Thus the flood was both historical and universal. There's a third fact to observe:

(3) *The flood came suddenly, but not without warning.* God had been warning that evil world for almost 1,000 years. Enoch preached against the ungodliness of his day. He named his son Methuselah, which means, "when he is dead, it [judgment] will come." As a testimony of God's grace and patience, Methuselah lived 969 years, longer than any other human being. Finally he died in the year of the flood. But God's warnings were ignored.

Noah's ark was finally finished after 120 years. People watched as the animals migrated toward the ark, two by two. Can't you hear the people hooting, "Hey, everyone, Noah's finally getting ready to sail!" Remember, there wasn't a drop of rain yet. The ark sat there on dry ground. The day of the flood dawned just as every other day had. Then God closed the door of the ark, the rain began, and the earth quaked as the deeps were opened. Judgment came suddenly, but not without warning.

Why is this important? It's important because the flood is the one great historical example of God's future judgment for the whole earth.

B. God's future judgment will be historical, universal, and will come suddenly, but not without warning.

Just as none escaped the judgment of the flood, so none will escape God's coming judgment. In the flood, every person on the face of the earth had to come to terms with God, either by accepting His means of escape (the ark), or by perishing in the flood. In the coming judgment, all will appear before God's bar of justice. Those who are protected by God's means of escape, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be protected from that judgment. Those who have not trusted in Christ will be condemned.

It will be a *historical* event: God "has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

It will be *universal*: He will judge "the world"--every person who has ever lived. Those who have taken refuge in Christ will be spared, but all who are outside of Christ will appear before the Great White Throne, where those whose names are not written in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

It will be *sudden, but not without warning*. There is the warning of the Scriptures. Even many who do not read the Bible know the story of the flood, which serves as a warning to them. But over and over Jesus and others in the Bible warn of the certainty of the coming judgment.

There is the warning of those who live godly lives. Surely Noah's life served notice on that ungodly generation that their lives were not pleasing to the Lord. His obedience in the face of an almost impossible task which took 120 years stood as a testimony that they needed to repent. Even the march of the animals to the ark, obedient to their Creator's command, bore witness to that generation that God was about to do something significant.

There is the warning of our own advancing mortality. Those in Noah's day lived much longer than we do, but they all had one thing in common with us: they all died. As George Bernard Shaw observed, "The statistics on death are quite impressive: one out of one people die." We look in the mirror each day and see new wrinkles and increasing gray hair (or lack thereof). Our muscles and joints ache over things that used not to phase us. Our eyesight dims. We can't hear quite as well. And I forget the last thing--oh, yes, we start to forget things. These are all warning signs that death is ahead, when we must face eternity.

Then suddenly, after all these warnings, a day will dawn for each of us that will not start any differently than any other day. But before that day is over, we will be face to face with God. Either Jesus Christ will have returned to judge the earth, or we will die and stand before God. Are you ready for that day? The Book of Revelation clearly shows that the world will be prospering right up to the final hour when judgment falls. People will be living in luxury and sensuality. Then, in one day, in one hour, God's judgment will fall (Rev. 18:8, 10, 17, 19). To be ready, ...

2. We must take the means of escape God has provided.

The story of the flood shows us that before He brings judgment,

A. God graciously provides a means of escape from His judgment.

Noah didn't think up the idea of the ark himself. Clearly, the ark was God's initiative. He revealed it to Noah. He designed it and gave him the directions he needed. No human plan would have saved Noah or anyone else. They could have climbed the highest mountains; the flood went 20 feet over the tops of those mountains. There was no means of escape except the means God provided, and it was sufficient.

God's grace is seen in not closing the door until the last possible moment. The people watched Noah working for 120 years. They watched the animals streaming in from all parts of the globe. They watched Noah and his family board the ark. The door was still open for any to come aboard. Nobody did. They watched as the Lord shut the door (Gen. 7:16). The rain started. It was too late.

Even though the door was open until the last possible moment, there is a sense in which those outside the ark had sealed their own doom years before the flood. There are very few deathbed conversions. A person fixes his mind in unbelief so that he can continue in his sinful ways. He deliberately ignores warning after warning. Perhaps he thinks that when he has one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel, he will repent. But by then it's too late. God has closed the door of salvation.

In reference to the last minute conversion of the thief on the cross, one of the Puritans wisely observed, "We have one account of a deathbed repentance in order that no man need despair; we have only one, in order that no man may presume." God's grace does have a limit. We cannot go on and on in our sin, ignoring God's gracious warnings, without consequence. Today is the day of salvation!

B. We must take God's means of escape.

There was *only one means of escape* provided by God. It was not especially fancy or inviting: A great big box daubed with pitch. A luxury liner like the Queen Mary might have attracted a few more. A good advertising campaign, along with a few shows on board may have drummed up a bit more interest.

And there was *only one door*. The proud lions and the lowly lizards all entered the same way. It was very narrow and restrictive.

Some of Noah's neighbors may have said, "All that matters is that a person is sincere and tries to do the best he can. Noah's way is just too confining." They perished in the flood. Others urged tolerance. They said, "Noah's message is too judgmental. We need to preach love, not judgment." They perished in the flood.

It wasn't enough to *know about* the ark. Many in Noah's day knew about the ark, but they never got on board and they perished in the flood. It wasn't enough to *admire* the ark. Many marveled at the size of the ark, but they never got on board and they perished. It wasn't enough to *intend to get on board* the ark some day. There were some who had good intentions, but they were just too busy; they were lost in the flood. Others said, "I don't want to *give up my business*, it's just beginning to turn a healthy profit." They perished in the flood. Others said, "I'll get on board *when my mate decides to come*." But their mate never decided; they perished in the flood. The only ones who were saved were those who got on board the ark before the flood.

God has ordained one means of salvation from the judgment to come: The Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for sinners. Whether you're wealthy or poor, moral or immoral, educated or uneducated, there is only one way to heaven, the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. He is the only means of salvation God has provided.

### Conclusion

The question is, *Have you gotten on board?* That will be the only issue when God's day of judgment comes suddenly. Are you trusting fully in Jesus Christ as your only hope of deliverance from God's wrath? Have you left your sin, left your busy pursuits, left your business, left anything that hinders you, and come to Christ who alone can save you from the wrath to come? That is the only question which matters in the day of judgment.

God invited Noah and his family aboard the ark with the words, "Enter the ark" (7:1). The KJV puts it, "Come into the ark ...." That's His invitation to you today. God has not yet closed the door of salvation. At the end of the Bible, after warning of the judgment to come, God's final appeal is, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of

life without cost" (Rev. 22:17). But lest you put it off, the Bible goes on in the next to the last verse to warn, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly'" (Rev. 22:20). The Lord Jesus is coming to judge the earth; He invites you to come aboard before He comes to close the door. Come to Christ now!

### Discussion Questions

1. Do we under-emphasize God's judgment? How can we properly emphasize it without sounding like "hellfire and damnation"? (Or should we sound like that?)
2. How can we tactfully warn our friends and loved ones of judgment without being judgmental?
3. How would you answer a critic who said that you were being an obscurantist to believe the biblical record of the flood when there is not overwhelming scientific proof?
4. How would you answer a critic who complained that God was not fair to drown people thousands of miles from the ark who probably had no opportunity to get on board?

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