Welcome to BSF’s three-week study of Noah! We hope God speaks to you through His Word and your group discussion.

Here’s how the Bible study works:

Week One

- Read and answer the questions for the assigned passage each day.
- Discuss your answers with your small group at the end of the week.
- Listen to a podcast teaching on the week’s passage.
- Read the notes with the passage’s historical background and life application.

Week Two and Three

- Repeat!

We hope you enjoy using this four-fold approach to exploring God’s Word in community with others.

Thanks for choosing to study Noah with Bible Study Fellowship!

For more information visit bsfinternational.org
So God said to Noah, 'I am going to 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.'

Genesis 6:13
Day 1

1. Use this space to record how you have seen God's activity during the week. (How has He provided, answered, comforted, reconciled, guided, etc.?)

2. What from the notes, lecture, group sharing or personal study impacted you most in the past week?

Day 2 – Genesis 5

Adam's descendants from Seth through Noah are summarized.

3. What do you learn from the repeated phrases about God and mankind?

4. What stands out to you about Enoch? (See Hebrews 11:5-6; Jude 1:14-15.)

5. a. What does it mean to walk faithfully with God?

   b. How would you describe your walk with God?

6. How does this chapter inform your thinking about life, death and the afterlife?
Day 3 – Genesis 6-7

The Lord decreed judgment for evil but favored Noah.

7. Describe the world at that time and the Lord's response.

8. How did Noah find favor in the eyes of the Lord?

9. a. What do you learn about Noah and his character?

   b. What would need to change in your life for you to have a reputation like Noah's?

Day 4 – Genesis 6-7

The Lord commanded Noah to build and fill the ark.

10. What stands out in God's instructions, warning and promises to Noah?

11. a. What do these verses say about Noah's response to God?

   b. What is your response to God's instructions, warnings and promises concerning judgment and salvation?
12. What is God asking you to do at this time in your life? How are you responding?

**Day 5 – Genesis 7**

Every living thing died except those in the ark.

13. What stands out to you about God's judgment? What questions does God's judgment raise for you?

14. What does the flood teach you about faith in God's Word and God's faithfulness to His Word?

15. How is the flood an encouragement to some and a warning to others? Which is it to you?

16. How does this passage impact the way you interact with others?

**Day 6 – Genesis 5-7**

17. What do you learn from these chapters about God's patience and mercy before judgment?

18. Homiletics for group and administrative leaders: Genesis 5-7
Focus Verse

“So God said to Noah, ‘I am going to 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.’ ” – Genesis 6:13

- The Cadence of the Curse – Genesis 5
- Sin’s Corruption on the Earth – Genesis 6:1-7:10
- God’s Condemnation through the Flood – Genesis 7:11-24

Engage

Many people know about Noah and the Flood, a popular Bible story for children. Noah, his family, and all the animals, two by two, inhabit an ark for 40 days and 40 nights as floodwaters rise. However, Noah’s story is not your typical children’s story. Rather than a tale about happy people floating in a boat, the account warns of God’s just judgment on the wickedness of mankind. An account of destruction with a haunting loss of life, it brings pain and sorrow to both God and man. **When you take time to deeply ponder this passage, you come face-to-face with the depth and reality of your own sin.**

The story also highlights God’s grace. One man found favor in the eyes of the Lord. But Noah did not earn that favor. Though he was indeed faithful in seeking God, Noah was spared because God is gracious and rewards those who diligently seek Him. Sin must be judged. God is the only One who fully and perfectly sees and understands the inclinations of people’s hearts. **These chapters are hard, sad and yet right. God alone judges justly but also extends saving grace.**
The Cadence of the Curse – Genesis 5

Genesis 5 contains one of several genealogical lists in Genesis. A sobering drumbeat echoes through the list of names, a repeated reminder of sin’s universal and inevitable penalty – “and then he died.” As Paul states in Romans 5:14, “... death reigned from the time of Adam ....” God may delay promised judgment because of His patience and mercy, but each generation lived, then died. Genesis typically records the families that carried God’s promised offspring forward after listing families that rejected Him. Therefore, Adam’s family line through Seth in Genesis 5 follows Cain’s descendants listed in Genesis 4.

Cain’s descendants focused on worldly success and power. Their legacy mentions neither God nor individual life spans. Seth’s descendants included people who related to God through grace, obedience and worship. The ages recorded show the lasting value of each life.

Seth’s Descendants

This genealogy confronts us with death but also hope. The repeated phrases “he became the father of” and “other sons and daughters” speak of God’s continued blessing within an increasingly evil generation. In every generation, God faithfully raises up people to keep the knowledge of Him alive. The hope of faith and new life shines through the consistent reality of death. Seth’s genealogy includes three prominent men of faith – Enosh, Enoch and Noah.

Enosh – 5:9-11

During the time of Enosh, son of Seth and grandson of Adam, “people began to call on the name of the LORD” (Genesis 4:26).
Enoch – 5:21-24

Enoch walked faithfully with God for 300 years after the birth of his son, Methuselah, while living amid an evil generation. His faith and obedience pleased God. Jude 1:14 confirms Enoch, son of Jared and father of Methuselah, prophesied coming judgment. Enoch stands apart from the rest of humanity because he did not die. God “took him away” without experiencing the sting of death.

Noah – 5:28-32

Noah’s father, Lamech, unlike the Lamech in Cain’s line, honored the Lord. Upon Noah’s birth, Lamech declared, “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.” The name he chose for his son demonstrated hope in God. In Hebrew, Noah means “rest” and suggests comfort.

Human Longevity

What accounts for such long life spans before the Flood? Some suggest the list names tribes, not individuals. Others interpret the ages as symbolic or legendary. However, there are valid reasons to accept the ages recorded. Creation stories worldwide portray the first people living extremely long lives. As sin’s destruction compounds over generations, we expect disease, dietary problems, natural disasters, stress and violence to accelerate physical aging and death.

Bible Chronology

Bible students have tried to use the ages in genealogies to compute dates for biblical events. The best way to read these biblical lists is to focus on the key people God used to keep knowledge of Him alive on the earth. Ten names were selected for the genealogies from Adam to Noah and from Shem to Abraham. Names were likely omitted because symmetry, rather than an exhaustive record, appears to be the aim.

What Does it Mean to “call on the name of the LORD?”

The phrase “call on the name of the LORD” appears for the first time in Genesis 4:26. At that time, a community began to publicly acknowledge and honor God by seeking His presence. The concept of the “name of the LORD” in Scripture encompasses much more than a word that identifies God. The name of God encompasses the full measure of His inexhaustible character. To “call on the name of the LORD” implies seeking God through faith, with a desire to know Him. The theme of calling on the name of the Lord flows throughout Scripture.

Scripture also addresses those who refuse to call on the name of the Lord. Individuals and nations who reject God await His judgment. Psalm 14:4 calls those who never call on the Lord “evildoers.” God has revealed enough about Himself, even in creation, to hold people accountable to acknowledge and seek Him, to call on His name.

The love and pardon offered by God through His Son, the Savior, makes refusal to call on the name of the Lord even more tragic. Hear God’s sorrowful lament: “All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations.” Beginning with Enosh, believers have called on the name of the Lord for salvation and daily needs. The psalmist states, “The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”

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Sin’s Corruption on the Earth – Genesis 6:1-7:10

Genesis 5 simultaneously records the thread of faith and the reality of death in the generations from Adam to Noah. In Genesis 6, the glaring disparity between the minority of people who honored God and the majority who rejected Him escalates. Human wickedness multiplied along with the earth’s population. The rise of evil not only impacted people but grieved God.

God’s Judgment on an Evil World – 6:1-7

God determined humanity was ripe for judgment but allowed a 120-year delay before judgment fell. God is patient, giving time and opportunities for people to repent and call on His name. 1 Peter 3:20 tells us God waited patiently while Noah built the ark. Even today, God withholds final judgment until the day He has appointed, allowing His Word and the gospel to spread so people will call on Jesus for salvation. There is a point, however, when God’s righteous judgment must fall. In Noah’s world, the flood of sin reached God’s determined crest, and a physical flood awaited. When judgment looms nearer, God’s faithful remnant continue to proclaim His name.

The sons of God and the daughters of humans – 6:2, 4

These strange and mysterious verses raise questions. The entire Bible is equally true, but not equally clear. Various theories attempt to explain the sons of God, daughters of humans and the Nephilim. No explanation completely resolves all the questions or issues that are raised.

The text says that as Adam and Eve’s descendants married and had offspring, daughters were born (6:1). These beautiful “daughters of humans” attracted the “sons of God” who married them (6:2). Male offspring from these marriages are called Nephilim, “heroes of old, men of renown” (6:4). They contributed to the rising wickedness of humanity (6:5).

Have you wondered, who were these “sons of God”? Whom did they marry? Three common theories are:

- **An angelic order.** In this view, while the daughters are normal human beings, the sons of God are fallen angels. These fallen angels completely inhabited human flesh to produce corrupted angelic physical offspring with “daughters of humans.”
- **Men possessed by evil spirits.** In this view, both the “sons” and the “daughters” are human beings, but the sons are men controlled or possessed by demons. This view avoids the problem with the first view that angels were not created to have sexual relations with humans. These evil men corrupted marriage and family and raised violent children. They drove families to hate God, creation and community.
- **Men from the line of Seth.** In this view, the “sons” and “daughters” represent two genealogical lines of humans. Seth’s godly descendants (“sons of God”) intermarried with Cain’s ungodly descendants (“daughters of humans”), resulting in humanity progressively turning away from God and toward overwhelming wickedness.

God’s regret – 6:5-7

God’s grief over the multiplication of evil among humanity reveals His complete separation from sin. Sin infected every human born after Adam – even Noah’s family, whom God spared by His grace. The rest of mankind so yielded to sin that “every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (6:5). God brought judgment in righteous
indignation against the evil that reached a point of no return. God would wipe wickedness from the face of the earth. That declaration represented pain and destruction on the entire creation – people, animals, birds and the earth.

When God acts in judgment, He does not violate His heart of compassion and love for mankind. This passage offers a unique look at our great God, who “regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled” (6:6). God did not have second thoughts or change His mind. “God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind.”12 God dealt with the problems of suffering, injustice and destruction caused by sin. He continued to extend grace and beckon people to Himself until every human being was overtaken by evil and wickedness. Only then did His full judgment fall. As we look at the complete narrative of Noah, the flood and all of history, God’s character reflects the perfect and uncompromised union of His love, grace, mercy and justice.

God’s people must approach the pain and reality of God’s judgment with a heavy heart. We must not skim past these painful realities. The accounts that describe God’s judgment reveal we take sin too lightly. The reality of impending judgment compels us to call people to salvation in Christ.

God’s Grace to a Blameless Man – 6:8-13

God shines light into the darkness. As God announced His intention to judge the corruption and violence on earth, a beam of light breaks through. “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (6:8). Noah was not perfect or sinless, but faithful.13 Three phrases describe the man God chose to carry forward His plan of redemption.

- **A righteous man** – Noah was declared righteous by God, not by his own merit, but because of God’s grace.
- **Blameless among the people of his time** – Noah’s wholehearted obedience to God set him apart from other people.
- **He walked faithfully with God** – Noah’s daily choices and actions prioritized an intimate relationship with God.

God’s Plan to Save the Faithful Few – 6:14-7:10

God could have saved the remnant in any way He chose. God seldom accomplishes His plans the way we would. God’s stories of unlikely ways of rescue for His people continue throughout Scripture. God’s higher thoughts and better ways often seem unthinkable or unimaginable.14 This same God later chose a condemned and crying baby floating in a basket to deliver His people from Egypt’s bondage. He parted the Red Sea for His fleeing people. Humanity’s Redeemer was born as a baby in an obscure manger. God chooses to accomplish His plans in ways that astound us.

God instructed Noah how to build the ark – 6:14-22

God gave Noah detailed instructions for the design of the ark. He described the materials and measurements needed to accomplish everything. God also provided Noah the strength, skill and perseverance to accomplish this overwhelming task. Hebrews 11:7 commends Noah’s faith in God and His response of “holy fear” in building an ark to save his family. 2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah “a preacher of righteousness.” Doubtless, Noah’s daily work and words gave witness to His faith in God and warned of the impending destruction.

God openly described to Noah His plans to destroy all life under the heavens. Surely, this sobering knowledge hung over every cut of lumber and conversation with his neighbors. God demonstrated His love for Noah as He promised a covenant with him and safe deliverance of his family in the ark. God instructed Noah to bring
into the ark two of every living creature and food for the people and animals. God's plan to save Noah and his family demonstrates God's faithful provision and Noah's obedient cooperation. In keeping with God's description of his character, "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (6:22).

God told Noah when to enter the ark – 7:1-10

God told Noah and his family to enter the ark seven days before a drop of rain fell. God promised rain for 40 days and nights. Noah's family and the requested animals boarded the ark. Again, “Noah did all that the LORD commanded Him” (7:5). Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark with his family. And just as God promised, after seven days, His floodgates opened upon the earth.

The Doctrine of God’s Judgment of Believers and Unbelievers

God's Word, human history and personal experience reveal that humans cannot stop sinning. We cannot solve the problem of evil on our own. Sin's damage spreads until God steps in to judge and stop the evil. God promises judgment for both unbelievers and believers. The Bible speaks of many kinds of judgment. The chief kinds of judgment are:

- **evaluative judgment** upon believers to reward their service (Romans 8:1; 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:8)
- **punitive judgment** upon unbelievers for their sins (Acts 17:31; Romans 1:18, 28; 2:1-13; Hebrews 9:27)

God’s judgment establishes true value. He alone declares what is worthy and good. Christians can know their work on earth matters because God will reward faithful obedience. (See 1 Corinthians 3:14; 15:58; 2 Corinthians 5:10.) God's indwelling Spirit produces works that will stand the test of eternity.

The Bible describes punitive judgments as dreadful and warns sinners to flee to Jesus Christ. Punitive judgments will be endured in a conscious condition forever. (See Luke 16:19-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 20:15.) Although God desires none perish, He allows all people to ultimately have what their hearts truly desire. Those who reject Him in this life spend eternity apart from His presence. God makes a way to save all who repent and believe.

The truth that I will face God as Judge determines how I live. If I do not believe God is my judge, I can live any way that pleases me. I am accountable only to myself, able to determine what is right for me. But when I know that one day I will stand before my Creator, who knows everything about me, who I am and what I have done, this life matters more. I do not take good things for granted. I measure my thoughts, words and deeds against His standards, not mine. I quickly realize my own efforts can never meet His standards; therefore, I humbly seek the rescue He provides in Christ. I anticipate everlasting life and great reward. I am eager to invite others to this bright and beautiful future. I do not fear my Judge. I love Him.
God’s Condemnation through the Flood – Genesis 7:11-24

The Flood stands as a monumental event in human history, given more words in Scripture than Creation or the Fall.

The Rain Began – 7:11-16
On God’s appointed day, the 17th day of the second month, the springs of the great deep and the heavens above opened wide. The Lord Himself shut the door of the ark, sealing Noah and his family in safely and ending the opportunity for others to gain entry. Incredible amounts of water were unleashed on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights. Imagine the sights and sounds as torrential rain pounded the roof of the ark. Imagine the mix of grief and gratitude Noah and his family felt, knowing they were spared while their neighbors experienced a dreadful death.

The Waters Rose – 7:17-24
This passage vividly describes the magnitude of the Flood and its destruction. The waters flooded the earth for 150 days. Faithful Christians who believe in the inerrancy of the original Scriptures

The massive loss of human and animal life rightly raises hard questions. All creation, including plants and animals, suffered the tragic effects of man’s original and escalating sin. The harshness of this scene is difficult to process. Christians do not dismiss God’s just judgment lightly, thinking this is what evil people have coming to them. We should rightly understand that this is the judgment we all deserve. We are spared only because Jesus bore God’s wrath for us on the Cross.
agree on God's perfect judgment and yet interpret this passage differently. Two views emerge:

- **Localized** – The original language permits “universality” to mean only the area inhabited in early civilization. Other verses use the language in this way. A local flood seems to resolve some geographical problems but raises other issues.

- **Worldwide** – This sense is conveyed with “every living creature” (7:4), “all the high mountains under the entire heavens” (7:19) and “all living creatures” (8:21). The Flood is later compared to future judgment of the entire world by fire. This view finds support in ancient accounts, such as the Atrahasis Epic and the Gilgamesh Epic, which portray the Flood as universal.

God is faithful and just. He kept His promise to deliver Noah, his family and the remnant of living things, male and female, according to their kinds. God **delivered judgment in His time, in His way and in keeping with His character.** God’s own love for humanity and grief over the flood are clearly seen in this passage. We see the depths of God’s love most clearly as God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to suffer and die in the place of sinners. The ark pictures Christ. Those who enter into Christ are spared judgment through His sacrifice. Through Jesus, all can receive His righteousness through faith.

This passage loudly warns of the seriousness of rejecting God and His mercy. People deny God and live denying any accountability to Him. There is simply no way to escape accountability before God. He has appointed the judgment of all people to His Son, Jesus. The Bible teaches that either Jesus will bear your sin for you or you will bear it yourself. Two absolute truths stand together: God will judge sin and God extends saving grace, a way of rescue through His Son.

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Hold Fast

The fall of humanity brought the curse of sin and death in Genesis 3. The first family experienced sin’s deadly damage in Genesis 4. Even God’s preserved remnant recorded in Genesis 5 experienced death, except one, Enoch. Genesis 6 and 7 find humanity so ruined by sin that God saved only one family from death in the Flood. Death takes our loved ones. The fear of death grips the world. The death we experience goes far beyond physical death. Our minds and desires are dulled and deadened by sin’s hold on us. How do we process so much bad news? God does not withhold hard truth from us. Without a realistic understanding of the depth of sin’s death blow, we will not seek the relief and rescue we desperately need. If these chapters and truths hit you hard, do not run from the truth. Run to Jesus.

The darkness of sin cannot extinguish the light of God, His truth and His people. God preserved people who held onto faith in Him. They were sinners, like their neighbors, but they called on the name of the Lord, who is worthy to be praised. This life goes by quickly. Our time on earth is short compared with eternity. You are studying the Bible. Even in this lesson, God has revealed sobering truths and reasons for hope. God is turning on the light for you, one that nothing in this world can extinguish. Call on the name of the Lord. He longs to save you, walk with you and sometimes even carry you through this life. He is faithful and calls us to live faithful lives and be accountable to Him, our Creator.

The Flood and Noah’s ark are not a children’s fable about animals in a boat. The Flood describes the frightening consequences of defying God. It foreshadows the final judgment promised by God. The Flood reminds us that God has prepared a way of escape for those who trust His Son. The Flood tells a sobering story that wakes us up and offers us hope.
Apply It

The reality of evil and God's promised judgment of evil people creates some choices for Christians. One seemingly painless way to process the Flood is to assume an “us/them” mentality about the world. God has His people and Satan has his. The thinking from that point of view is, “If I end up on the right team, I win, and ‘they’ lose. I insulate and isolate myself as best I can to avoid the downward descent of culture. I long for the good guys to win, and soon.” But there is a better and correct way: “When I think about the Flood, I realize that I deserve to be in the water, not the boat. I cannot be proud to be among the rescued, because nothing in me deserves rescue. I can speak only words of worship and gratitude to the One who rescued me, just because He loved me. I can offer only compassion for those who are caught in sin's trap. I will risk discomfort and reach beyond myself to offer rescue and relief to others, because I understand their great need.” How will God enlarge your heart and vision through this sobering lesson?

Noah measured and hammered on the ark knowing he lived in the final generation before God's judgment fell. We live today, closer to Jesus’ return than ever before. While only God knows the exact day marked on His calendar, we, too, live in a generation poised for God's judgment. Jesus compares the days preceding His return to these days of Noah. We witness evil practices and abnormal corruption accelerating today. Rebellion against God, sexual sin without restraint, satanic cults, and family collapse trouble us. Knowing God's promises of judgment are true, what urgency is God awakening in you? How actively are you loving and serving God, your neighbors and your enemies?

God's final judgment will forever separate those who trust Jesus Christ from those who reject Him. Just as God provided a way of safety for Noah in the ark, God has provided deliverance in Christ. Have you, like Noah, experienced God’s favor and His provision of rescue from judgment? Are you willing to live, along with your family, in the minority in your culture as a voice of truth and hope that speaks of God’s deliverance through Jesus Christ? Are you watching and living in expectancy of the Lord's return at any moment? Do you recognize the reality of God's justice and judgment enough to reach out to others to encourage them to walk with God? Live in the light of Jesus’ soon return and coming judgment.
God Judges With the Flood but Favors Noah
Genesis 5-7

Go Deeper

Check out these footnoted references for further study of God’s Word in this week’s lesson.

1. All die: Ecclesiastes 9:2; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:15
2. Life span: Psalm 90:4-10; James 4:14
3. Enoch pleased God: Hebrews 11:5
4. Enoch prophesied: Jude 1:14-15
5. Genealogies: Genesis 5; 11
6. The name of the Lord: Genesis 12:8; Joel 2:32; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-13; 1 Corinthians 1:2
8. Accountable to seek Him: Romans 1:18-20
9. Obdurate people: Isaiah 65:2
10. Lord is near: Psalm 145:18
11. Fallen angels: Job 1:6, 2:1; Jude 1:6-7
12. Unchanging, holy God: Numbers 23:19
14. God’s ways not ours: Isaiah 55:8
15. All defined as part: Genesis 41:57; Deuteronomy 2:25; 1 Kings 18:10
16. The Flood compared to judged by fire: Matthew 24:39; Luke 17:26-27; 2 Peter 3:5-10
17. God’s love: John 3:16-18; Romans 5:8
18. Jesus, the Righteous Judge: 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Revelation 6:10
19. The final judgment: Romans 2:16

All Scripture quotations, in this publication are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® NIV®

WEEK TWO

GOD’S CARE FOR AND COVENANT WITH NOAH

GENESIS 8:1-9:17

Scripture Memory Verse

“I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Genesis 9:11
Day 1

1. Use this space to record how you have seen God's activity during the week. (How has He provided, answered, comforted, reconciled, guided, etc.?)

2. What from the notes, lecture, group sharing or personal study impacted you most in the past week?

Day 2 – Genesis 8:1-14

God remembered Noah and ended the Flood.

3. What do you notice about Noah's actions while he waited for the earth to dry up?

4. a. Where is the meaning of "God remembered" demonstrated by God's actions in these verses?

   b. What truths about God and Noah do you want to remember?

5. What are you currently waiting on God to do? How does this passage encourage or challenge you while waiting?
Day 3 – Genesis 8:15-22

6. a. What instructions and promises did God give?

b. How did Noah respond? Why?

7. a. What sacrifice ultimately pleased God? (See John 12:27-33; Romans 3:25-26; 1 Peter 2:21-24.)

b. What sacrifices can you offer in response to God today? (See Proverbs 21:3; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8; John 15:13; Romans 12:1-2; and Hebrews 13:15-16 to expand your thinking beyond this passage.)

8. List the attributes or characteristics of God in this passage. Which one is most meaningful to you?
Day 4 – Genesis 9:1-7

God gave blessings and instructions for filling the earth.

9. List the commands God gave Noah. How do these compare with the commands He gave in Eden (Genesis 1:28-30)?

10. How are God’s commands concerning people and animals reflected in your attitudes, actions or culture?

11. What do you learn about God’s desires for humanity and the value of human life that challenges your interactions with others? How might this change your prayers for our world today?

Day 5 – Genesis 9:8-17

God gave an unconditional covenant to humanity and all creation.

12. What are the details of God’s covenant with Noah and his descendants, including us? (See also Genesis 8:21-22.)

13. How does the covenant shape your thinking about God and His creation?

14. a. What is the sign of God’s covenant? What does the sign signify?
b. What reasons do we have to believe that God is able to keep His covenant?

Day 6 – Genesis 8:1-9:17

15. How does this week’s study help you with questions you or those around you ask about God’s plan for the world?

16. Homiletics for group and administrative leaders: Genesis 8:1-9:17
Focus Verse
“...” – Genesis 9:11

- God Remembered Noah – Genesis 8
- God Reassured Noah – Genesis 9:1-17

Engage

Have you ever had to adjust to a “new normal”? Parents adjust to a new normal when their children leave home to establish life on their own. Employees adjust to a new normal when they transition to retirement. Families are forced to adjust to a new normal when they lose a loved one. Unexpected pain or difficulty often takes life on an undesired path. **Any new or unfamiliar situation – a new job, a new city, a new relationship – requires adjusting to a new normal.** It can be difficult.

In Genesis 8 and 9, Noah had to adjust to a new normal. Noah and his family found themselves lone survivors of the greatest act of destruction the world has ever seen. Their friends and neighbors were gone. What did life look like moving forward? As Noah faced his new normal, God proved He is faithful. God faithfully remembered Noah and reassured him of His unfailing love. He established a covenant with Noah, promising to never again destroy the earth by flood. Noah believed God. Believers can experience genuine hope because of God’s unchanging faithfulness. **God-given faith trusts His character, will and Word.** How will you trust God to faithfully care for you this week?
God Remembered Noah – Genesis 8

The Waters Receded – 8:1-5

God’s judgment rained down on humanity for 40 days and 40 nights. The floodwaters remained for another 110 days. For several months, Noah remained adrift on the endless world sea. God promised to keep Noah safe from death but did not tell Noah how long he must remain in the ark. As the days passed, Noah must have questioned whether God would remain true to His promise. Would God indeed save him? Or would God forget and abandon him to the floodwaters? Genesis 8:1 offers a ray of hope. “But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark....”

What does it mean that God remembered? When people remember, they recall something previously forgotten or put out of their minds. God is omniscient, knowing everything. The statement “God remembered” is an example of anthropomorphism, a figure of speech that ascribes finite human traits to the infinite God. These figures of speech are found throughout the Bible and help us better understand God’s work from a human perspective. The statement “God remembered” emphasizes the faithfulness and everlasting care of God. Throughout the Bible, some action or work of God on behalf of His people follows this phrase. Genesis 8 is no different. God took action to fulfill His promise to Noah. He made the waters recede.

The Earth Was Dry – 8:6-14

Through God, Moses recorded dates related to the Flood. God either confirmed dates handed down through generations or revealed these specifics directly to Moses as he wrote the Genesis account. These dates were significant to Moses’ original audience, the Israelites. God’s people related to a new beginning because they had experienced it. Through the Exodus from bondage in Egypt, they had been protected from judgment through faithful obedience to God in the Passover. God’s miraculous power overturned the power of nature, evil, false gods and wicked rulers to give them a new beginning in the promised land. This same pattern appears again and again – God faithfully judges sin but promises deliverance and new hope for new life through faith in Him.

After Noah saw the tops of the mountains for 40 days, he sent out birds to test the water level on the earth. Noah used his intellect, experience and the birds that God provided. Noah needed to know that the land beyond his view could produce the vegetation needed to support life.
The dates recorded confirm that God’s almighty power caused the water to recede and plants to regrow quickly. He can accomplish what is impossible for people to imagine. **God covered the earth with water and then uncovered the transformed earth by His command.** When the last dove did not return, Noah knew the water had dried up sufficiently to inhabit the earth again. Yet, Noah faithfully waited until God told him to come out with his family and all the animals.

**Noah Came Out of the Ark – 8:15-22**

**God faithfully keeps His promises.** God preserved a remnant of His image-bearing people and the animals. After months of safety in the ark, Noah and his family came out, followed by God’s creatures, one kind after another. Picture the procession of people and animals coming out of the ark onto dry land. Imagine what it felt like to view the sky, feel the warmth of the sun and walk the open space after so many long months. God delivered them safely and blessed them greatly.

**Noah obeyed God – 8:15-19**

Noah had God-given faith that produced dependence on God and courageous obedience. He obediently built and entered the ark because He trusted God to keep His promises. Now, he exercised his faith to exit the ark in obedience to God’s command, “Come out of the ark ... so Noah came out ....” Noah also obeyed God’s call to work. Noah brought out the animals under God’s renewed blessing to be fruitful and increase on the earth.

**Noah worshipped God – 8:20**

Like astronauts or explorers who plant a national flag on the ground they claim, Noah’s altar declared that the earth and everything in it belonged to the Lord. Noah’s love and reverence for God laid the foundation for his faith. He expressed gratitude to God by making worship his first priority.

As soon as he cared for the creatures, Noah offered the first recorded offering since Cain and Abel. He sacrificed some of the clean animals and clean birds from the ark as burnt offerings. Noah did not express his worship in a convenient or self-determined way, but followed God’s prescribed plan. Noah knew God’s expectations regarding acceptable worship, though we do not know how God instructed him. Noah’s appropriate sacrifice on an altar pleased the Lord.

God had instructed Noah to gather both “clean” and “unclean” animals to enter the ark, with more clean animals than the single pairs of other species. (Compare Genesis 6:19-20 with 7:2-3.) Moses’ original audience understood the significance of clean and unclean animals. They knew what God judged as appropriate for sacrifices and to eat as food. God faithfully provided for worship through sacrifice.

**Noah pleased God – 8:21-22**

Noah’s altar revealed his heart of devotion to God, and it pleased the Lord. The
The necessity of substitutionary blood sacrifice foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Worship involves far more than habits or rituals. God sees the heart attitude within each worshipper. God based His response to the offerings of Cain and Abel on their hearts. God saw and was pleased with Noah's heart of grateful sacrifice reflected in worship and obedience. Later, Paul's letter to the Ephesians encourages believers to wholehearted devotion by offering faithful deeds to God after the example of Christ as a “fragrant offering and sacrifice” to God. Verse 21 offers insight into God's thoughts at this pivotal point in human history. God “said in his heart” He would never again destroy all living creatures, “even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.” The Flood cleansed the earth from wicked people but did not remove the sin nature born within every human. Those in the ark had been saved from that judgment, but Noah, his family and all humanity would continue to sin.

God remains faithful, even though humans persist in rebellion against Him. The Flood warns of God's just judgment which is required because God cannot overlook the offense of sin. But God qualifies the delay of judgment: “as long as the earth endures.” Until then, the seasons, cold, heat, day and night provide faithful reminders of God's mercy and grace. Although all people deserve judgment, we live and breathe because of God’s love, grace, mercy and faithfulness to keep His promises.
The Doctrine of Faith

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith: “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” True faith places confidence in God’s character and offers assurance that He will do what He has promised. **Salvation comes as a gift of God, by grace through faith, not from ourselves.** We have no reason to boast (Ephesians 2:8-10). God gives people the gift of faith that leads them to repent of sin and trust in the sacrifice and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Saving faith requires humility regarding self and reverence toward God. “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

God the Holy Spirit graciously gives sinners saving faith. No one can do anything to earn or deserve this gift. Saving faith involves three elements:

- **Content** – specific belief in the claims of the gospel for salvation (John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 4:12; 16:31). Noah believed what God had promised. He believed what God had revealed at that point in redemptive history about sin, judgment, salvation and hope for new life.

- **Personal, loving trust** in Jesus Christ, the Savior, who first loved us (John 6:37; 1 John 4:9-10). In Noah’s day, the promised Savior was yet to come. Yet Noah believed God’s promise to save His followers from sin and judgment. God declared Noah righteous through faith. Noah’s worship pleased God, and their relationship confirmed Noah’s personal trust.

- **Commitment to repent and follow** Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23; 14:25-27; Acts 3:19; 20:21; Romans 12:1-2). God’s covenant with Noah looked forward to the future person and work of Jesus Christ. Noah demonstrated that He accepted and applied God’s Word by building and entering the ark. But Noah and his family were saved from the Flood by God, not Noah’s efforts. God shut Noah safely in the ark, saving him from death and giving him new life through faith, another picture of Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews commended Noah for living by faith. Noah believed God and obeyed God in “holy fear” (Hebrews 11:7). **A life of obedience and worship gives evidence of saving faith.** Mere intellectual agreement to the gospel does not bring salvation. The demons have this kind of faith but are not saved. To know about Jesus is not the same thing as to enjoy personal relationship with Him (John 14:21-24; 1 John 1:5-10; 2 John 1:6). Biblical faith trusts God’s faithfulness and promises even when we do not understand all He is doing.

Faith in anything but God can lead to pride and prejudice against others. **Without faith in God alone, you have no choice but to rely on your own logic, personal experiences and human explanations to find meaning in this world and in this life.** Your search for freedom, fulfillment and answers is limited to the people, places, things and pleasures of this world. How do you expect your career, hobbies, intellect, friends or marriage to satisfy your deep longings?

**True faith in God changes everything in this life and for eternity.** When I trust completely in the finished work of Christ, I can stop expecting that I can please God merely by managing my behavior and trying to be good. My desire and ability to please God depends on His power, not my own. I can rest, knowing my salvation is not something I can earn or mess up. My life has purpose because I know God loves me with an everlasting love. Life on earth is not a meaningless journey, but the first steps toward a joyful eternity in the presence of my Creator. Believing God puts me in a safe place. He knows completely what I know only in part. God is worthy of my complete trust. Faith can grasp what the mind cannot fully explain.
God preserved Noah's family in the ark. Now, He gave instructions and promises for how they were to live. **God provided a covenant and sign as a testimony of His faithfulness.**

**Five Commands – 9:1-7**

Following the judgment of the Flood, God blessed humanity with five commands:

- **Be fruitful and fill the earth** – God repeated twice His creation command first given to Adam and Eve, emphasizing His priority and plan for marriage, family and society.

- **Rule over the animal world** – The relationship between animals and people changed, as evidence of sin’s corruption. Loving supremacy and gentle shepherding were replaced by fear and dread.

- **Permission to eat meat** – Now, God allowed animals to be eaten.

- **Refrain from eating blood** – In Scripture, blood represents life, the gift of God, and requires proper respect.

- **Capital punishment** – God upheld the sacred-ness of human life made in His image. God declares justice against murder by establishing human government when He announced, “by humans shall their blood be shed.”

**The Promise of the Covenant – 9:8-11**

God will never again destroy the earth and all life with a flood. He demonstrated His compassion for people with a public promise now called the Noahic Covenant. This unconditional covenant does not depend on people’s obedience for its fulfillment. God will fulfill the covenant because He is faithful to His Word, a source of comfort and hope for all creation.

**The Sign of the Covenant – 9:12-17**

Covenants usually have a physical sign as a reminder of the promise. Wedding rings represent the marriage covenants in many cultures. **God designed the rainbow as the sign of the Noahic Covenant.** This beautiful sign affirms His power over creation. He brings rain clouds and sets rainbows in place, visible signs of His mercy on our sinful condition. All generations have witnessed the rainbow God sets in place to comfort and warn sinners. God patiently offers grace and mercy until His day of final judgment comes. On that day, His judgment will fall on those who have lived in opposition to Him and His commands.

**What do you remember about God when you see a rainbow?** The brightness of the rainbow declares the steadfast goodness and glory of God. God made and governs His creation. God remains present and intimately involved in shaping creation for His purposes. In wisdom, God brings about all life and knows how events relate to His plans. We can trust Him to perfectly judge all things. He is worthy to be praised!

The Flood warns of God's right and power to judge. Adam and Eve’s sin spread into every person and place on earth. Although sin deserves one flood after another, God promised to never again bring worldwide devastation in that way. When rainbows appear, those who trust God can rejoice. His patience, mercy and grace bring comfort to those who know, love and trust Him. Believers live by faith in God's faithfulness. God-given faith trusts in His character, will and Word.
Hold Fast

Long before Moses wrote Genesis, stories recounting the events from God's creation to the Flood were shared and handed down from generation to generation. Genesis 1-9 records what God wanted the post-Exodus generations to remember. God's creation was destroyed by humanity's sin, bringing His holy judgment through the Flood. But God offered salvation to Noah and his family. The familiar pattern of God's promise to judge sin but also to offer salvation through faith continues throughout Scripture. **People everywhere can know, trust and praise our faithful God, who creates and sustains all life for His glory.**

The account of Noah displays the pattern of faith that experiences victory over sin: trust, wait, obey and praise.

- **Noah trusted God.** He looked out through the opening of the ark into a changed world, a new normal.
- **Noah waited on God.** The Bible does not record any doubts or complaints about his time in the ark.
- **Noah obeyed God.** Noah, his family and the animals came out only after God's command.
- **Noah praised God.** He stepped into a world marked by just judgment, yet with signs of God's grace everywhere; he then built an altar to worship God.

Whether or not Noah had previously seen a rainbow, God made it the sign of His covenant, representing His faithfulness. God gave the rainbow special meaning for Noah's descendants, including us. We usually see only half of God's "rainbow in the clouds." However, the prophet Ezekiel and the apostle John saw the full circle of the rainbow in their visions of God's glory.5
When we see God face-to-face, we will behold the full circle of glory in His person and work. In that day, “The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the LORD.”

Noah’s faith pleased God. Noah had faith even without full sight of God's plan for redemption through His Son, Jesus Christ. Now we know that Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, came to earth, lived a righteous life and died in our place for our sin. He is resurrected from the dead and will return as King forever. God keeps His promises.

Apply It

God sustained Noah and his family through the Flood and their time in the ark. Surely those months seemed long as the boat bobbed on the waves and the waters began to recede. As Noah waited, he must have longed for release from the confines, noises and smells of the ark. We do not naturally enjoy waiting. Even steps of obedience to God often involve waiting. God is at work as we wait. God remembered Noah, his family and the animals. God caused the waters to recede and life-giving plants to spring up on the renewed earth. When the ark came to rest on a mountain, Noah opened a window, probably squinting as the first beam of sunlight shined in his eyes. Waiting on God to bring the full answer to His promises develops your faith. What are you waiting for? Are you waiting for a clear answer, a firm direction, a release or solution? Can you trust that God remembers you, even while you wait? Can you praise God, even if you cannot see His answer? God can be trusted.

We find security and a sense of stability in the familiar. However, life takes us on a continual journey into new things, new places, new experiences and new challenges. Noah survived the trauma of the Flood. But emerging from the ark, his first steps on the flood-drenched earth forced him to face the new and unfamiliar. God met him with hope and assurance. Noah expressed gratitude to God, and God set the rainbow in the sky to seal His promise. Is God
calling you to a new place? Can you honestly express your fears and specifically trust a promise in His Word? If your past involves trauma or difficult memories, will you trust God to bring hope and redeem your pain for His glory? **God takes us beyond the comfortable and familiar, sometimes removing all options except trusting Him.** In those moments, we exercise the muscles of faith and experience that God is faithful. How is God meeting you in your “new normal”?

**Noah’s response to God’s faithfulness was worship.** He offered animal sacrifices to God – an act of worship and dependence on God to cover he and his family’s sins. He humbly and gratefully acknowledged God’s faithfulness to deliver him and his family from death. Noah’s worship rose to God as a “pleasing aroma.” Worship pleases God. Worship attests to God’s worthiness and expresses your gratitude for the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. God seeks true worshippers who worship Him in the Spirit and in truth. True worshippers offer their humbled and surrendered souls before our God. True worshippers align their hearts and minds to the truth God has declared in His Word. We can worship God in joy or sorrow, in wealth or poverty, in need or abundance. Consider how you can worship God in your current situation. How will you honor God’s worthiness and faithfulness in your life?

“The prospects are as bright as the promises of God.” This quote, spoken by missionary Adoniram Judson in the midst of intense suffering, captures well the message of the rainbow. God hung the rainbow in the sky as an intentional reminder of His promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood. **Every promise in God’s Word will be fulfilled someday, even if we do not experience the complete fulfillment now.** Faith in God grows when you trust Him in specific ways based on what He has declared to be true. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says it well: “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” What is your greatest need today? What promise will you believe as you surrender your need to God and trust His timing to bring it to pass? Does your faith echo “yes” and “amen” to a specific promise in God’s Word? Your prospects are bright because God’s promises are true!

### Go Deeper

Check out these footnoted references for further study of God’s Word in this week’s lesson.

1. **God’s miraculous power:** Exodus 1-14
2. **Pleasing aroma:** Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 1:9, 17; Numbers 15:3
3. **Fragrant offering:** Ephesians 5:2
4. **Judgment:** Isaiah 34:1-4; 2 Peter 3:3-13
5. **Rainbow:** Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3
6. **See God face-to-face:** Psalm 107:42-43
7. **Spirit and truth:** John 4:24
WEEK THREE

SIN FROM NOAH TO NATIONS
AT TOWER OF BABEL

GENESIS 9:18-11:9

Scripture Memory Verse
But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building.
Genesis 11:5
Day 1

1. Use this space to record how you have seen God's activity during the week. (How has He provided, answered, comforted, reconciled, guided, etc.?)

2. What from the notes, lecture, group sharing or personal study impacted you most in the past week?

Day 2 – Genesis 9:18-23

Noah's nakedness was revealed by Ham and covered by Shem and Japheth.

3. Describe the actions of Noah and his sons.

4. What do you learn about sin and its influence from Noah and his sons?

5. What are you challenged to imitate or avoid?

6. a. How has your life been affected by the faults and successes of others?

   b. How are others being affected by your faults and successes?
Day 3 – Genesis 9:24-29

Noah prophesied about his sons' future nations. (Note: God’s “curse” means He foretells of justly deserved destruction for rejecting Him and His ways. The godless Canaanite nations ended in judgment when Israel and others conquered them.)

7. What was Noah’s prophecy regarding the nations to come from the lines of his three sons?

8. What is a truth Noah’s sons learned about God in this moment? At what point in your life did you learn this truth?


Day 4 – Genesis 10

Nations descended from Noah’s sons spread out over the earth. (Note: Genesis 9 and 10 show the origin of the world’s nations. Genesis 11 shows why and how they were scattered.)

10. a. Which names or places listed interest you or remind you of their mention in other Bible stories?

    b. What does this list tell about the nations’ relationship with and connection to the God of the Bible?

11. What qualities of Nimrod are highly celebrated in today’s cultures? What do the cities associated with Nimrod tell you about how he used his power? (Use any cross-references or other references.)
12. What are you growing to appreciate in both the commonalities and differences among the nations represented by your family, those around you and in the world? (See Acts 17:26-27 and Revelation 7:9.)

**Day 5 – Genesis 11:1-9**

The Lord confused the language of tower builders to scatter them.

13. How was the tower of Babel contrary to God’s plan for people?

14. a. What was at the root of their desires?

   b. How or where do these roots show up in your life?

15. What do you learn about God from how He responds to the people and their plans? (See Psalm 2:1-5.)

16. What will you pray in response to this passage and its impact on communication and unity today?

**Day 6 – Genesis 9:18-11:9**

17. What have you learned about God's sovereignty and humanity's free will in this week's study?

18. Homiletics for group and administrative leaders: Genesis 9:18-11:9
Focus Verse
“But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building.” – Genesis 11:5

- Noah’s Sin and Noah’s Sons – 9:18-10:32
- The Tower of Babel – 11:1-9
- Takeaways from Genesis 1-11

Engage
Our modern world boasts lessons learned from years of history and technological advancement. We live with gadgets that make work easier. High-speed travel and communication allow global cultures to intersect as never before. Humanitarian causes allow people to engage all around the world. All this progress raises an important question. Have we advanced – really? Racism, human slavery, domestic violence and many other societal ills continue to flare as violently as ever, despite our supposed progress. Modern ways seem to provide people new ways to express sin. There is no human solution to the problem of sin.

This lesson presents two disappointing examples of mankind’s inborn rebellion and fallen desires. Noah, God’s faithful servant, struggled with public sin, even after dramatic obedience. Still, the noblest people sin and fall short. Even Noah’s descendants combined resources and utilized the technology of their day to exalt their own cause in open rebellion against God. With so many disappointments, where do you find hope? Is your natural response to turn to God? God sovereignly governs evil enemies and His faithful servants. He rules in mercy to save many until He accomplishes all His purposes for this world.
Noah’s Sin and Noah’s Sons – Genesis 9:18-10:32

A New Beginning – 9:18-19
God offered Noah and his family a fresh start after the Flood. Noah offered sacrifices and worshipped God. God made a covenant with Noah, sealed with a sign of His faithfulness – the rainbow. God promised He would fill the whole earth through Noah’s three sons.

Noah’s Sin – 9:20-21
One proof of the Bible’s truthfulness is that it exposes the flaws and sins of its human heroes. The next scene in Noah’s story surprises us. Noah drank wine from his vineyard and became drunk to the point of being incapacitated. He lay naked in his tent. The Bible does not prohibit consumption of alcohol but does consistently call drunkenness a sin. Though Noah had obeyed God and experienced His faithfulness, he was not immune to temptation and sin. Noah’s sin did not require a talking serpent; his sin rose from within his own sinful nature.

Because God is perfect, He can use imperfect people as a part of His plan. Christian leaders struggle with sin just like everyone else and can disappoint us. Sadly, public scandals involving pastors and well-known Christians occur too frequently. Faith never matures us past our need to depend on God’s mercy and to stay on guard against sin. The spiritually mature maintain a healthy distrust of their sinful desires.

1 Corinthians 10:12 offers a needed warning: “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” While God’s grace abounds, believers remain vulnerable to sin. Are you openly aware of things that cause you temptation?
Noah’s Sons – 9:22-10:32

Noah’s three sons react to his sin – 9:22-23

The reaction of Noah’s three sons confirms mankind’s ongoing struggle with evil desires and sin. God said, “... every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.” Ham saw his father’s nakedness, and rather than protect him, he told his two brothers. Shem and Japheth chose the honorable response of refusing to speak of their father’s embarrassing exposure. They entered the tent backwards to avoid dishonoring Noah and covered his nakedness. They illustrated the truth that “love does not delight in evil ...”

What a lesson for today! Our culture publicizes and even delights in the ridicule and ruin of others. Both unintentional and deliberate sin are found entertaining. In Christian culture, we can redefine gossip as prayer requests. How do you react when you hear of someone’s sin or exposed weakness? Do you assume right motives when someone makes a mistake? The sins of others can make us feel smug and superior if we do not honestly assess our own weakness. Only God’s grace keeps you from sin. Do you often overestimate your goodness and underestimate your capacity to sin? When you understand the grace God extends to you, do you freely offer grace to others?

Noah prophesies regarding his three sons – 9:24-29

Noah awoke from his drunken state to discover the disrespectful response of his youngest son. As further evidence that God uses broken people, Noah spoke to summarize the destiny of the future nations rising from his three sons. He revealed the moral and spiritual history only God could know. Genesis 10 adds further details regarding these nations. God’s wisdom in predictive prophecy is undeniable. God not only knows the future; His sovereignty guarantees the power and authority to accomplish His determined will. The future rests firmly in God’s grip. This truth gives us hope as we, like Noah, simultaneously struggle with personal sin and experience His grace and redemption.
Canaan

Noah used “cursed” as a prophetic word, not an indication that God endorses hatred, harm or persecution. **Canaan rejected God and placed those who came after him in the path of disaster.** Centuries later, the godlessness of the Canaanites reached its peak. Their defiant sin and perversion of God’s ways led to their conquest by Israel, descendants of Shem. The path of this nation did not prevent God’s grace from saving Rahab, a Canaanite woman who trusted God. She became a part of God’s covenant people, interwoven into the family line of the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s grace permeates even the damage sin inflicts.

Shem

Noah praised the Lord, the God of Shem. **Shem and his offspring would be a nation marked by their walk with God.** Shem’s descendants, the Semites, became the nation of Israel through Abraham and his sons. God used Shem’s people to write and preserve most of the books of Scripture. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, was born through the human line of Shem. No wonder Noah opened his mouth in praise! His inspired burst of prophetic thanksgiving foreshadows all the praise that will rise to God and the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity. Jesus Christ came through the lineage of Shem as a promised blessing for all nations.

Japheth

Japheth’s blessing can be translated from Hebrew as “May God expand Japheth, and he shall live in the tents of Shem.” The original audience understood that to live in a person’s tent implied sharing hospitality and blessings. **Throughout history, Japheth’s nations have generally prospered through association with the nation of Shem.**

Noah’s prophecy elevates the spiritual heritage of anyone who comes to God through Jesus Christ, a descendant of Shem. Through Jesus’ sacrifice, Jewish believers unite with believers from every nation and background as “the household of God.” We share the blessings of Shem’s nation as we live spiritually “in the tents of Shem,” in fellowship with Christ.

God orchestrates human history – Genesis 10

Chapter 10 follows Noah’s prophecy to explain the origins of 70 nations all over the world. This Table of Nations documents the scattering of people after the Tower of Babel in Chapter 11. God commanded Noah’s family to multiply and fill the earth, and they did, despite their rebellion. Human history reflects the plan and purposes of God.

Moses’ original audience, the Israelites, found these nations quite familiar. Their history incorporated these details. They escaped slavery under the Egyptians shortly before Moses wrote this account. They passed through many of these nations to arrive in Canaan, the promised land.

**The nations listed were divided linguistically and geographically** (10:5, 20, 31). Other biblical prophecies, such as Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation, record symbolic meaning and geographical locations using the ancient names in this list.

Sons of Japheth – 10:2-5

They spread east and west to form the Indo-European nations including:

- **Gomer** – Settled north in relation to Israel, likely modern-day eastern Turkey (Ezekiel 38:6)
- **Magog** – with Tubal and Meshek, perhaps the area of the Scythians in modern day Turkey and south-central Russia (Ezekiel 27:13; 32:26; 38)
- **Madai** – the Medes (2 Kings 17:6; Isaiah 21:2)
- **Javan** – the Greeks (Isaiah 66:19; Daniel 8:21; 10:20)
Sons of Ham – 10:6-20

They spread across the Middle East and parts of Africa including:

- Canaan – the Canaanites
- Sidon – from Canaan, a Phoenician city still present in Lebanon
- Jebusites – from Canaan, occupied Jerusalem before David’s conquest
- Put – the Libyans
- Egypt – sometimes translated with the Hebrew word for Egypt, Mizraim; gave rise to many nations
- Philistines – from Egypt, seafaring people on the Mediterranean coast of Canaan and Israel’s great enemy
- Cush – the Ethiopians
- Sheba – from Cush, Southern Arabia
- Babylonians and Assyrians – Israel’s fiercest enemies, founded by Nimrod, son of Cush.

This account singles out Nimrod, who is repeatedly described as “mighty.” His acts earn him a cultural saying, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD” (10:9). The combined terms warrior and hunter paired with kingdom expansion lend support to the theory that Nimrod founded a military state by force. This would mean he was a hunter of men in defiance of God’s commands about the sacredness of human life. These verses suggest he might have led the people at the Tower of Babel (11:9). He may have founded his empire after God confused their language. The mighty cities listed that he founded are in present-day Iraq.

Sons of Shem – 10:21-32

The Arabian tribes through Abraham, the Israelites, Ishmaelites, Midianites and Edomites include:

- Eber – the name from which the word Hebrew likely originated.
- Elam – or Susiana, whose capital was Susa (Shushan) (Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 2:8; 3:15)
- Uz – Job lived in Uz, likely before Abraham’s time (Genesis 36:28; Job 1:1; 42:16)
- Peleg – in his days “the earth was divided,” perhaps referring to the scattering of Babel.
The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God

Genesis 9-11 sets God's sovereignty on display through a seemingly tedious genealogy and the Table of Nations. These accounts showcase the expansion of the peoples of the world from Noah’s three sons. The lists provide a bridge to the patriarch Abraham and nation of Israel. In His sovereignty, God prepared the world for the coming of Christ. He established a covenant with Abraham and Abraham’s descendants. These chapters demonstrate that God controls and guides all history for His glory and our good.

God is sovereign. God determines the outcome of all things according to His own wise purposes. He has absolute authority and rule over His creation (1 Chronicles 29:11-12; Psalm 47:7). Nothing exists outside the scope of God’s rule (Ephesians 1:11). He controls and guides all events for His glory and for believers’ good (Romans 8:28-29). God governs human history. He does not merely adjust His plans to incorporate people’s decisions but determines the course of mankind (Daniel 4:34-35; Acts 2:23; 17:24-27). He calls the saved to Himself (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2).

God is also good. God fulfills His sovereign reign balancing every perfect facet of His character and will. Not only is God in control, everything He does accomplishes a good purpose that is ultimately beneficial. Believers need not rebel against His commands or demand their preferred outcomes. There is no cause to worry that God will be late or make a mistake. Because God is both sovereign and good, we need not fear failures as final or resent His discipline or redirection. God the Son, Jesus Christ, defeated evil, death and sin. His victory gives comfort and security for believers in trials, temptations and failures (Romans 8:31-39). When we understand who God is, we love and trust Him.

God is sovereign, whether we recognize it or not. When I do not believe God is sovereign over my life, I will flounder upon waves of insecurity and indecision. Anxiety will rule over and above the peace of God. Worry and dread will overwhelm me every time I watch the news or hear about our world’s evils. I will strive to define truth on my own terms yet never find satisfaction. I will fear failure, doubting God is sovereignly working all things for good. I will fear the future, doubting God's wise control. And I will exhaust myself striving unsuccessfully to control every word, every relationship, every act and every outcome in life.

When I truly believe God is sovereign over my life, I am free not to worry. I realize I do not have enough power or control over my life to thwart the plans and purposes of God. I can take my fears and worries to God in prayer and confidently know His perfect and pleasing will prevails. Romans 8:31 states, If the sovereign God of the universe is for me, who can be against me? He is victorious. He rules everything. He has already determined the moment by moment details, the considerations and the circumstances of my life. By His Spirit, He conforms my will to His and weaves my life into His purposes. He alone is good.
The Tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-9

Humans Reject God’s Authority – 11:1-4

God commanded Noah’s descendants to fill the earth. They spoke one language and migrated eastward until “they found a plain in Shinar.” This area near the modern-day Persian Gulf is also called Babylon. These people settled, unified and committed to build a city with a tower reaching heaven in defiance of God’s command.

Babel’s cultural and technological advancement mirrors that of Cain’s descendants in Genesis 4. They baked bricks, a seeming upgrade from the stone God created. They sought to reach heaven through their own inventions, efforts and methods. They replaced faith in God with faith in self, society and idols. This spirit that defined Babylonia’s later history is witnessed in our world today. Is progress that denies and defies God really progress at all?

Human unity and organization should be desired and valued, if that unity aligns with God’s purposes. Unfortunately, flawed humans often unite around causes that oppose God. Outwardly, such unity appears to provide strength, security, progress and success. No permanent progress exists when God is denied His rightful place as the sovereign center of life.

Adam and Eve sinned in the garden by seeking independence from God – the “freedom” to determine their own destiny. In Genesis 11, humanity organized to commit the same sin. We often do not recognize our more subtle attempts for personal autonomy and refusal to yield to our Creator. When we elevate our thoughts and will above God’s, we build our own towers, which will also fall. Human attempts to usurp authority that belongs only to God will fail, whether immediately or ultimately. God’s will and ways always prevail.

God Overrules Human Mutiny – 11:5-9

The godless confederacy at Babel did not escape the watchful eye of God. These first Babylonians denied God’s authority as governor of the universe. At the right time and in the right way God intervened to stop escalation of the rebellion. The enemy always seeks to overthrow the plans of God. We see God’s personal involvement through such phrases as, “The LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building” and “Come, let us go down.” God overruled their plans to accomplish His plans; His personal involvement in world affairs has not stopped.

God confused their language, forcing these ancient peoples to fulfill His command to scatter and fill the earth. God can do whatever He needs to do to accomplish His sovereign will. In Genesis 11, He confused language to spread out a rebellious people and overrule sin. On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, He multiplied languages to spread the reach of the gospel and redeem sinners. God’s purposes can never be thwarted by human opposition. One day, even those who refuse to bow to the Lord in this life will bow before Him.

The default direction of humanity is rebellion against God. By dispersing the people of Babel, God protected the world at this time from being completely engulfed in wickedness, mercifully delaying His final judgment. God sovereignly governs evil enemies and His faithful servants. He works among rebels and in His faithful remnant. He moves all events to accomplish His determined will. He determines best how to display His full glory for people and creation.
Takeaways From Genesis 1-11

Chapters 1-11 represent the first major section of Genesis, covering thousands of years and multiple events that shaped the course of this world and its people. These foundational chapters provide the right outlook on God, human history and many other crucial issues. Review of some essential truths prepares us to move into chapters 12-50, the story of Abraham and God’s people. At every point, God is the center of the story.

**Truths About God**

*God reigns as the Sovereign Creator.* God’s amazing creation reveals enough about Him that every person, everywhere and in every age, stands without excuse – accountable to Him. Everyone ever born knows enough about God’s power and divine nature to worship Him. God personally related to the people He created, beginning with Adam and Eve. He raised up specific individuals and families to call on His name and carry forward His plan to send His Son as Savior. God preserves His revelation of Himself in the Bible to this day.

**Truths About Humanity and Sin**

Genesis stresses that God uniquely makes humans in His image. Each person finds their highest life purpose knowing and loving God. *God desires people to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.* When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, all humanity fell with them and inherited a sinful nature and the resulting penalty of death. The brokenness we experience in this world can be explained by our sinful nature that values satisfying self over glorifying God.

The depth of sin in people’s hearts impacts not only individuals, but society. Cain’s family line proudly embraced this sin nature without fear. All those who perished in the Flood and rejected God at the Tower of Babel rejected God’s loving rule. *The greatest tragedy in human history is to reject fellowship with God.* The sin of Genesis 11 was not just individual, but corporate. By His grace, God began restoration in Genesis 12.

**Truths About God’s Judgment and Hope**

Rejection of God’s truth is unbelief, a root sin in the human heart. Sinners prefer self, darkness and rebellion to the truth about God. *The reality of sin highlights the depth of God’s mercy toward sinners.* God, in mercy, judges sin severely to turn the hearts of people back to Him. He desires all to repent and believe His message of salvation through Christ. When Adam and Eve first sinned, they faced God’s just consequences, but also His promise of a remedy for sin.

Jesus Christ is God in all His glory. He came to earth to die for sinners, fulfilling God’s plan to redeem fallen humanity. We glorify God when we live at peace with Him and allow His goodness and character to be reflected in us. *We can know God through the person and work of Jesus Christ.* He lovingly took sin’s judgment upon Himself and preserves a remnant to offer eternal hope to the world. He enables all who will repent and believe to share in His love and glory.
Sin so firmly grips humanity that even obedient Christians struggle to please God all the time. After the Flood, sin and rebellion quickly reappeared. Noah was praised for his faith and obedience, but he and his family suffered sin’s bitter consequences in daily life, continuing through later generations. Individual, family and societal sin brings consequences. God prevailed against mankind’s organized and arrogant display of self-rule at the Tower of Babel. Despite sin’s consequences, God shows grace to sinners.

Chapter 10 reveals God’s hand in human history. From this time on and within His deliberate limits, God allowed Gentile nations to walk in their chosen ways.9 The rest of Genesis focuses on the line of Eber, from Shem, the ancestor of the Hebrews. The world’s Savior and King, Jesus Christ, descends from this lineage.

The people and Tower of Babel illustrate the rebellion against God that grips individuals and society today. The same spirit of human arrogance still prevails. Despite boasts of societal advancement, racism, hunger, disease, terrorism and war continue. The perpetual quest for personal satisfaction and freedom intentionally ignores our God-given consciences and His image within us. What this world offers as freedom destroys and enslaves. Lack of gratitude for God’s blessings focuses on what God owes us rather than what we owe Him as our Creator. People believe they can reach God their own way and ignore His commands and outstretched arm.10 But God, in His perfect Word, tells us otherwise.

The moral and spiritual choices made by individuals matter to God. Stories about human failure, especially in our heroes, disappoint and disturb us. Noah’s temporary lapse may sadden us, but the depth of our own sinfulness should sadden us more. Unbelievers can sin freely, often unaware of their offense to God. Believers, who
know and love God, also struggle with personal sin. God’s Spirit changes your desires and gives you power to obey. You please God only in His strength, not your own. Does your ongoing battle with sin only discourage you or drive you to Jesus? This constant struggle with sin helps us remember how much we need Jesus.

God’s sovereignty provides security and stability for us. God commanded people to spread out and fill the earth, and He intervened when they refused to do so. Human rebellion did not alter His plan. Do world events or your personal life sometimes feel a bit chaotic or random? Remember that by His power, God holds in orbit every planet in every solar system and every electron in every atom. Rulers come and go at His command. Nations rise and fall according to His plan. Do you struggle to trust that God rules the planet and your world? Do you think your issues are too big for God to handle or too small to deserve His attention? The God who controls history can handle your life.

Self-effort plagues humanity. We wrongly think that trying harder, working longer or investing more takes us where we want to go. Certainly, God wants you to work with energy and passion for His glory. The Bible condemns laziness. But self-focus often distorts the pleasure God intended in your accomplishments. The people planning the Tower of Babel built a monument to human achievement. They stacked cutting-edge, man-made bricks to reach the heavens. Did they feel proud sitting in the shadow of their brick-and-mortar tower, unaware that the sun God created cast that shadow? Even Christians who understand that their works contribute nothing to salvation can define personal worth by what their minds grasp and their hands accomplish. Our little towers crumble before the greatness of our God. What kind of monuments are you tempted to build? Where do you wrongly depend on yourself more than God? Right relationship with God infuses your work with worship to God’s glory.

The people at Babel sought superficial unity but were dispersed, unable to communicate with one another. The believers at Pentecost experienced true unity and were dispersed to communicate the gospel around the world. Have you experienced the organic unity of true believers? Although our actual languages and backgrounds differ, those who know the Lord and His Word speak one language as disciples of Jesus Christ. Believers have an inner unity stronger than any distinction or division. Believers unite through the Holy Spirit and in prayer, upholding one another as they intersect with cultures around the world. Where is God sending you to speak His message of reconciliation and redemption?

Go Deeper

Check out these footnoted references for further study of God’s Word in this week’s lesson.

1: Drunkenness: Proverbs 23:29-35; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 4:3
2: Evil inclination: Genesis 8:21
3: No delight in evil: 1 Corinthians 13:6
4: Rahab: Joshua 2; Joshua 6:17, 22-23; Matthew 1:5
5: Household of God: Ephesians 2:19-20
6: Bow before Him: Romans 14:11
7: God’s worth and wrath: Romans 1:18-32
8: Salt and light: Matthew 5:13-16
9: Gentile nations: Acts 14:16-17; Romans 1:24, 26
10: Outstretched arm: Deuteronomy 9:29
Congratulations!

We hope you have found this study soothing to your soul. Feel free to continue exploring God’s Word with your current group for as long as they are meeting.

Thank you for spending your precious time with Bible Study Fellowship. We pray your time in the Bible has enriched your life and we hope to study alongside you again soon!