

Part 9: What Do You See?

Tyler Velin | Genesis 6:1-7:24

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For many of us, the story of Noah's flood is like one of those inkblot tests you've seen in cartoons or movies. You know, the test where someone holds up a photo that doesn't really look like anything and they ask you, "What do you see?"

Maybe you see in here a story fit a little kid's bedroom; cute little animals coming two by two. Or, perhaps, you see the story of morality and why you should live a clean life. Maybe you see an angry and vindictive God, or maybe you see a scientific debate as to how the flood worked, or maybe you see a fable that's so big it can't be true.

Those inkblot tests were based off a simple premise: what you think you see reveals how you view reality. The difference between the inkblot test and this piece of history is that one actually looks like something. It's cute when my daughter thinks a cloud looks like a unicorn—the consequences are low, and I'm not at all frustrated by it.

It's more frustrating when your coworker looks at the same project you've been working on and has a different idea of what it is you're supposed to get done. It's dangerous if you look at a red light and you see it as green. And it's downright deadly if you look at a cyanide pill and think it looks like a multivitamin.

What do you see? That's the title of our sermon this morning. Because believe it or not—what people see in their world, and how they interpret that, has been the story of Genesis so far. What we see in our world today is a lot of brokenness. But that's not what we saw when God created the world. If you remember the theme of Genesis 1, on each day we read, "God saw all that he had made and it was good." God made it good. God saw it as good. And he created and called Adam and Eve to see and live accordingly.

But we've all got a vision problem. Despite what God saw, despite what God said, the serpent crept in and distorted the colors for Adam and Eve. Eve saw the fruit that God made pleasing to the eye, and she "Saw that the tree was good for food." But it wasn't. And from that moment on, the baseline of what we see has been askew, the colors are a little off, and the results have been devastating. Our eyes were opened, but our vision was broken.

Genesis so far has followed everything that seemed good to man—and that continues today as these mighty sons of God saw attractive women—and took them as they desired. Men saw what they thought was good—they acted on it—and as readers of scripture, we see the consequences.

But today, hope returns. Man's vision of the good life has led to pain and sorrow. But today, God's view returns. What man can't see clearly—God does. This passage isn't about the world you think you see—this passage is about the world as God sees it. He sees the wickedness of sin, and he sees the righteousness of Noah. And today, we might have our vision aligned with his, and in the process see hope for a dark world.

Our main idea this morning is this: **The God who sees clearly is hope for those who don't.**

There are three things this passage helps us see with clarity today: **Sin, Hope, and God.**

Now, before we get too far we need to be sure we understand the Bible clearly. Because depending on what you think the Bible is—this passage might be frustrating to you. Consider our opening passage this morning: **Genesis 6:1-4**, "When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown."

If I ask, "What do you see" here, there's probably a lot of answers. There are some characters here, and some activity that frankly we just don't have any more info on. Who are these sons of God? What does it mean they took wives of the daughters of men? There's two Hebrew words here that seem to define a category of people: the Nephilim, which means "giants," and the Gibborim which is here translated as mighty men.

If you go online and try to research this—you'll see all kinds of wild theories. The truth is, the Bible doesn't really tell us anymore about these people, or any details on what they were doing. But that doesn't mean we can't clearly see what is going on here.

Whatever happened here, Moses and his original audience understood it clearly—and their understanding was such that they didn't really feel like anything more needed to be said of it.

But moreover, whatever it was that these men were doing—it was obviously wicked. Last week we saw how sin and death spread downward through the line of Cain and Seth, and it seems Moses is now showing us how sin is spreading outward as the families of Cain and Seth multiply on the earth.

As men multiplied, so too did their pride, and so too did their sin. That's clearly the case not only because of what we see in verse 3, but because of what immediately follows in **Genesis 6:5**, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This is our first point this morning: How do you see **Sin**?

Now kids, what do you think sin is? If someone on the playground asked you what "a sin is" how would you answer it? It's a hard question. But let me try to give you an answer: Sin is any thought or action that calls us to question God's goodness. Sin thinks we know what's better for us than God does.

We see that happening in our text today. These men knew that God made marriage between one man and one woman—but they took whoever and whatever amount of wives they wanted. Why? Because they were mighty men. We always justify our sin don't we? While other people might have to obey more strictly—we are wise enough and big enough to take a little bit of liberty.

This is what leads us as parents to shield our kids from movies with coarse humor and nudity—but once they go to bed—it's ok for us to watch it. Why? Because we are mighty men. We know what's good for us.

For many of us “sin” is just another name for “fun God doesn't want us to have.” I'm not sure if it's still there, but at some point, there was a store downtown called, “Sinful.” I didn't know what was in there, but I'd lie if my interest wasn't piqued. Maybe it was a store that really celebrated sin. Maybe it was a bakery which made “sinfully good” cakes.

We struggle to see sin for what it is. We think it is simply a matter of preference. But it's a matter of life or death. Look at how God viewed men's sinful living: **Genesis 6:6-7** “And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

God sees clearly what man doesn't. Sin hurts. Warnings against sin are not for God's protection—they are for ours. And when God saw that the hearts of men were only evil continually—he didn't see a world flourishing in joy.

Look at how he describes this later to Noah: **Genesis 6:11-13**, Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them.”

Isaiah makes it clear that all of our hearts are corrupted by sin. That's the state we are born in. It's only by God's grace that we who are sinful don't live as sinfully as we could. It's God grace, not man's goodness, that allows us to see glimpses of kindness in people. Because what we see here is that if God doesn't restrain sin—goodness doesn't spread. Destruction does.

And as a loving Father, and a good God, he would not stand by and do nothing. If you care about justice—you should care about sin. If you care about goodness—you should care about sin. If you care about loving others, and human flourishing you should care about sin. And here's the beauty of what we see in this passage: God cares about sin.

And because sin is so serious, that the God who made the world is going to conduct the great unmaking of the world. He's sending a flood. But even here, there's a glimmer of hope.

Look at what we see in **Genesis 6:8-10**, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.”

Here is our second point this morning: what do you see in **Hope**?

Notice the contrast again—what men saw as good brought only condemnation and violence. Man's eyes saw nothing helpful—but God's eyes are the eyes of hope. Noah found favor in God's eyes.

Unless we see the world from God's perspective, we will never see hope rightly. This doesn't stop us from trying to find hope in the world. We look through the lens of hope every day. We make decisions hoping that it grants us happiness, that it minimizes suffering, and that it might quiet our fears.

But God saw a way forward, and God was going to deal with sin while also dealing mercifully to those who hoped in him. The eyes that judged sin were the same eyes that directed Noah to hope.

Genesis 6:14-22, Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him."

Here's the hope--the recreation of the world would stem from Noah's arc. The garden was going to be transplanted from the ground, and into the arc. All the animals needed to repopulate, all the humans needed to be fruitful and multiply--they would be there in the arc.

If you want to be spared God's judgement, if you want to be free from evil, you've got to get on that arc. That's our only hope.

So, what do you have to do to do that?

If we aren't careful, we might fall back into the sinful thinking of the mighty men. We've got to exert our might--not in sin--but in righteousness. We can live our lives in such a way where we, like Noah, deserve God's favor.

But we don't actually see any of those words in this passage. Noah was a righteous man for sure, blameless in his generation. God affirms that Noah was righteous before him. But what does that mean? I don't think it meant that Noah's hope was in his own righteousness. I think it shows us that Noah's righteousness was the result of his hope. Like Enoch last week, Noah walked with God. But it's not the strength of Noah's walk that spared him—it was the one who he walked with.

Did you notice what God said to Noah in **Genesis 6:18**, "But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you." Noah wasn't going to be saved because of his walk. Noah was saved because God established a covenant with him. Noah walked with God because like Seth, and Enoch, and his own dad—he refused to trust in the hope of man and hoped in God alone.

Noah hoped in God and refused to walk in the ways of the world and the Lord desires to save those who put their hope in him. The story of the flood is the story of Noah's hope in God, and God's great work to save all who hope in him.

Noah's work was the visible fruit of the hope he saw in the world. He didn't know where this humanity thing was going. He saw the wicked world around him—but he refused to act in such a way because he hoped in God's vision of goodness, not his own.

That's why it's Noah's obedience, not Noah's actions that take center stage here. God saw Noah. God told Noah of the flood. God told Noah to build the arc. God told Noah the waters were coming. God told Noah to get into the arc. Next week, God will tell Noah to get out of the arc.

And before Noah saw any rain with his own eyes, he obeyed the God he already hoped in. Genesis 6:22, "Noah did this. He did all that God commanded him," "Genesis 7:5, "Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him," Genesis 7:16, "And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded [Noah]."

God is the hope for those who need it. God provides what sin promises. And God saves those who hope in him from the judgement we deserve. Peter reminds us of this when he says, **2 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10** "If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of the defiling passion and despise authority."

We might look for hope and relief from the toil of this world in all sorts of places—but Noah reminds us that if we want hope—we must learn to see sin for what it is, and God for the savior he is. He knows how to rescue the godly from trials.

But let's be real. Sometimes our experiences in life would call us to question if God is able to do this. It's easy to look at the world with our own eyes and come to conclusions that would make us doubt God's ability to keep his word.

But this brings us to our last point this morning. How do you see **God**?

If we aren't careful--this passage seems to send some mixed pictures of God. On the one hand, God might seem weak and impotent. Consider **Genesis 6:5-8**, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

Did we read that right? Is God, sorry? Did God have regrets? Is God unable to do what he wants? Is he like a puppy dog cheering us on from the sidelines but he's too weak to really stop evil or accomplish good?

Ironically, some might read this passage and think that God is the all-powerful, but vindictive and harsh ruler. Consider **Genesis 7:20-24**, "The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and

creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days."

What about the God of love? The text makes it clear--while the waters prevailed--God blotted out everything. God sent the waters, God judged, God destroyed. Is this God uncontrolled and power hungry?

If our view of God is off--everything looks off. If we see sin rightly, then a God we don't see rightly is a big problem. If sin is evil--but God's only response is that he's sorry--then that's no help to us at all. We don't want a God who is simply sorry. We want a God who is sovereign and can do something.

And this God--does something. This text reminds us that while God has emotions--he's not ruled by them. God didn't change his mind and, all of a sudden, get sad about his creation. God always hated sin. That's why he warned Adam and Eve, that's why he warned Cain, and that's why he's warning here.

God didn't change. If God wasn't regretful towards sin, then he would have stopped being God! God had to oppose sin because he is a good and perfect Father.

And God's perfect affections are effective to do exactly what he wants. Our affections and emotions affect our will--God's emotions and affections are the effect of his will. When we are sorry--we often don't have the wisdom or the strength to make something right. When we regret something--we can't undo what we did. But God's emotions are tied to his infinite attributes. When he is sorry--he does something. He changes things--or in this case--unchanges things.

That's what's happening here isn't it? The same God who created the world is the only God who can remake the world. And if you have a big problem--you don't need a sorry God. You need a sovereign God. That is the God we serve. This is the God who will do something about sin. This is the God who will do something about your sin.

That means--he will judge it.

But here's where we transition to God's judgement. God is a sovereign God. The Psalmist says, "Our God is in the heavens and he does all that he pleases." What pleases God in this text is to judge sin with his sovereign power. But what also pleases God is caring for those who hope in him. And he's just as strong to deliver as he is to judge.

Like a good physician, he is able to find a way to treat the disease with lethal measures while delivering the sufferer at the same time. Sin must die, but sin is wrapped up in our bodies. It's in our hearts, and it needs to be dealt with seriously and tenderly.

This God does that. Here it was an arc. God says, "Noah, you're going through the same waters of judgement. But get in here. You'll be tossed. You'll be buffeted. But you'll be safe." Did you see that in **Genesis 7:16**, "God shut him in."

It was not Noah's purity that saved him--but his righteous hope in the God who would save. It was not Noah's arc that saved him, it was God's arc. Designed by God. Given by God. And sealed by God. Noah had to obey--but what sealed his safety was not his obedience--but the God who he obeyed.

God judges sin--but for those who trust in God--he seals us up to bring us safely through. He will deal with sin and bring us out on the other side. He brings us to death in our sin, so that he might bring us to life on the other side.

And notice how it was only Noah's righteousness who was mentioned--but God gave guest passes to the arc. No guest passes to the general public--but for those who belonged to Noah--his righteousness was their safety through the waters.

And doesn't this lead us ultimately to Jesus Christ? When we trust in God and put our faith in Jesus--he is the arc that sees us through. When we are buried in him, his righteousness covers us, and in him we pass safely through to the other side. In him we see sin clearly, in him we see our hope, in him we see our God's justice to deal with sin and his mercy to save sinners.

When our faith is in Jesus, if you repent and believe in him, then God shuts you in and seals you in Christ. And though sorrows will come, and storms will roar, we consider not the promise of sin because we see the words of Christ: **John 6:37-40**, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

What do you see? Because the god who sees clearly is hope for those who don't. Will you look on the Son, and believe in him? Will you rest your buffeted soul in the promise of God and know that the arc holds, the day is coming, and we are safe. And will you live in this world knowing that those around you will never see this hope unless we show them this salvation?