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Presentation Transcript
Bible Stories for Adults, Part 6 – Noah and the Flood
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Today we're continuing our series, called *Bible Stories for Adults*, and we're covering the flood. And we're asking the question, along with that, "Is God a monster?" Some people think that. I hear that a lot, as I'm a psychotherapist. People talk to me about God a lot. And one of the things I hear from them has to do with, "If God is a loving and all powerful God, why does He let genocide happen, war happen, cancer happen, starvation happen? He allows pedophiles, rapists, serial killers to do what they want to do. Some loving God!" That's kind of the attitude some people have. One client even pointed to the flood of Noah to prove that God was a mass murderer. So is He? Well, let's think about that today as we consider what the Bible tells us about the event and the lead up to it.

Let's start in Genesis 6:1. It says:

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.*

Now we would all love to know more about what was going on back then and what all that meant. Who are the sons of men and the daughters of God, for example? And the *Nephilim*? Well, that one's not so hard. The word seems to mean *giants*, but they were exceptional in some way – probably bigger than most people. But so what? Why are they mentioned here? There is so much confusion about what this means. There are so many interpretations of it – so much supposition – that it's mind-boggling. But, according to our rules, we'll just stick to what we can read.

Notice the phrase in verse 3: *My Spirit shall not abide in man....* There's a footnote there with an alternative interpretation. It could mean, instead of *abide with*, it could mean *contend with*. And that would mean that God's Spirit and that of human kind were not on the same page. The term *mighty*, in verse 4, could also be translated *tyrant*. So some things just never change, right? There are always people that want to control everybody else. So, I don't know which of those is the correct translation, but there's an implication in all this – from the context of what we're going to read next – that things were not going well. And that suspicion we have grows strong when we look at this context. Let's look at verse 5.

V-5-7 – *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 in 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."*

We're told here that humankind has taken a turn into evil continually – and apparently, a very noteworthy kind of evil. We don't know exactly the detail of it all. If we jump ahead a bit to Genesis 6:11, we can read:

V-11-12 – *Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. Now, when people are violent, other people get hurt, don't they? So there was a lot of suffering going on. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.*

So we can only imagine what was going on then. We live in a world, where in the last century – a century of science and education – when a handful of men were responsible for murdering the better part of a billion people. So, apparently, what was going on back then was even worse than it is today. And then, an astounding statement – that God regretted what He had done.

Does that mean that God made a mistake? Usually, when you and I feel regret, it's because we've made mistakes. We didn't realize we were making a mistake when we did it, but the results turn out bad for us and we're suffering, and we realize it was a mistake, and so regret what we've done. Or, sometimes we see that we've hurt others and we regret that. But God is not like you and I are. He does not make mistakes. He did, however, give us free will. And when we make mistakes, God has to adjust His approach accordingly, because He's going to let us do what we want to. Contrary to what some people think, God is *not* a control freak. So why does God have to adjust His approach? Well, because He's working out a plan that takes our free will into account. And when we do things that don't fit with His plan, then He adjusts to what we've done to make His plan continue on to the results he's intending to get all along.

Well, if that's true, then why did God feel regret? Well, it doesn't say exactly. It just says that He *did* regret making humankind. And it also says that people were extremely violent. So that means

they were hurting one another. So it could have been that He regretted it because of all the misery His children were experiencing at the hands of others in the family. But we know from experience and other scriptures that sin leads to trouble, misery and unhappiness. Maybe He just wanted to end the suffering. Maybe it was too much. But it doesn't say that either. It just says that He did. But it is true, that when He did that, suffering stopped. You can't argue with that, if you believe what was said previously. Other places in the Bible tells us that it grieves God when we sin because it hurts *us*. So there's solid evidence to consider that as a possibility – a strong possibility. That seems to me the most reasonable thing. If you have to assume something, because nothing is said directly, then it seems logical that that would be why He did it.

But then we learn something hopeful in the midst of all this misery. In Genesis 6:8, it says:

V-8 – *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*

The word *favor* there can be translated *grace*. So we see the concept in part of the Bible from the very beginning. Even when Adam and Eve covered themselves with leaves, we learn that God made clothes for them, because they didn't know how. They didn't even know how to do that in the beginning, so He helped them – right after they had just fouled up in a most egregious way – a way that led to what was happening in Noah's day. So, from the beginning, God has extended grace and mercy and helping and caring for people. So you have to line that up along with Him also killing the entire population of the earth, except for one man and his family. He does both.

It's interesting that the Bible tells us that when things get bad, people call good evil and evil good. When living in the world is so horrific that God feels regret and puts everyone out of their misery, He's called a monster for extending grace to them – by some people. But God extended grace to Noah and his family as well – and to all of us as well. Right? We're still living because of that one man and his family, who got to live because he found *grace* with God.

Now let's read about the flood some more. Here in Genesis 6:9 through 8:19 is an account of this man and his three sons and their families building an ark, which floated through forty days of rain and much, much more. Let's read what happened there in Genesis 7:11.

Genesis 7:11 – *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life.... You know, I wonder, if because people lived so much longer then, they had a lot of opportunity to learn how to be bad. Reasonable.... It does say He shortened everybody's life after that. But in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day, all the fountains of the great deep burst forth.... What's that talking about? Well, apparently, there was a lot of water under a lot pressure under the surface of the earth at that time. I mean, how else could fountains of the deep burst forth? ...and the windows of the heavens were opened, and rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.*

So a cataclysmic event took place on the earth. Of course, there's a lot of skepticism about the possibility of such an event. How could all the animals we see today fit on a barge? Where would

all that water come from? Maybe it was just a small local flood. You know, when we hear these things, we need to consider what the apostle Paul said – Romans 1:18.

Romans 1:18-23 – *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who, by their unrighteousness – what do they do? – suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes – He is invisible – namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. He says that people are foolish if they look at the universe and they can't figure out that somebody greater than themselves created that. And he says: So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, and birds, and animals, and creeping things. He's talking about idolatry back then and we worship other things today, like science.*

So, in the world today, and in Paul's day too, there was a huge bias against God. And what we are told is, that God caused the death of everyone in the world except Noah and his family. He did it with a flood. That's what we're told.

Now, I'm going to make a statement – an evidence-based statement – that no geologist would argue with it. Here it is: There is evidence of flooding all over the globe today. And that evidence indicates, not just gentle rain, but cataclysmic power in places. You can see it. There is evidence of death and destruction, of geological upheavals *everywhere*. Why do so many scientists discount that there could have been a global flood – or perhaps even more than one. Well, because it says it in the Bible, and they don't want to be found agreeing with that. But we don't have to be afraid of them or their views – distorted by their distaste for God. The evidence that something really bad happened is all around us all the time under our feet.

So *why* did all this happen? I mean, why was God upset with people because they were taking a turn away from Him? Well, because God is, right now – if we take the long view – creating a family. He wants to have lots of children. He wants children that will love Him like He love them. And this necessitates that all His children will willingly love Him and live in harmony with Him. So we can't be robots. We can't be clones. We can't be drones. We can't be minions. We have to have free will. God is good, not evil, and to live in harmony with Him, we must be good and not evil, too. Back then, in Noah's day, everyone we becoming evil. So they'd stepped out of the plan and were suffering for it. And God judged that the longer it went on, the worse it was going to be, and the more suffering there would be, and the less likely it was going to produce children for His Kingdom. So He adjusted. He let us do what we were going to do, and then He made an adjustment. He made a course correction. He took it back to a family – one that was following God's way.

But that causes some people to call God a monster. Well, how do we answer? Is God a monster? I want you to read scripture with me. It's in Isaiah 55:9.

Isaiah 55:9 – *For as the heavens are higher than the earth – now how high are they? We don't even know the end of it all – so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.*

God does not do things the way *we* do them. He's different. He's not conventional, according to our way of thinking. And we say, "But I think..." Well, that doesn't cut it when it comes to how God does things. He thinks differently than we think. And we can have our opinions all day long, but He's still going to do things the way He wants to do them, because He's God and we're not.

So, in preparation for that family, he created a cast of what Paul called *ministering spirits*, or angels. Angels were created to help us, take care of us, watch over us. Did you know that? That's what they're for.

There's a hilarious story in the book of Acts. In this story, Peter had been put in prison, but an angel sprung him. And so he went to Mary's house after he ran away, where he knew the other disciples were. And he knocked on the door and a servant girl, named Rhoda, came to the door – heard Peter's knocking and his voice – and she was so happy. She recognized his voice through the closed door. She forgot to open it, but ran back into the room where everybody was and told them that Peter was outside. They looked at her and said, "You're nuts! You've lost your mind!" But she kept insisting. And they kept saying, "No, it can't be him. He's in jail. It's his angel." So the point of that is, that in the New Testament church, they all believed that everybody had an angel assigned to them. "...his angel," they said. And when they finally let Peter in, they were all astounded and they had a joyous reunion. And he told them how an angel – he was sleeping in prison – thumped him in the side and woke him up, and the chains that were on him fell off, and the door opened, and out he walked.

That's great, isn't it? That we all have an angel and that God created a whole cast of spirit beings to protect – some of them mighty and powerful beyond belief. The problem with angels is, that one of them – a long time ago – rebelled against God. And he convinced a third of the rest of them to follow him, and they did. And now God does not want that to happen again. So He has allowed His new family – begun by Adam and Eve – to be influenced by this rebellious angel – whom is now called the devil. And this provides an ambivalence to develop between God's way and the devil's way in the minds of humans. And the two valences are good and evil. And we ride that valence point, a lot of the time – which way are going to go? So, that's good. God wants it that way, because our job is to struggle with that and come out on the side of good. And that will make us more committed to God than somebody that was just given eternal life without any experience. We're going to have experience.

Now we just read that humankind had turned wholesale to the evil side. So what to do? Well, we saw what he did. He stopped the spread of evil by killing all those who had gone the wrong way. But does that mean all those people will *never* be in His family? Well, some people think that it does. But I'm here to tell you that it most emphatically does not! But how could that possibly be? Well, read with me in Revelation 20, verse : – John said:

Revelation 20:4-6 – *Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus Christ and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. And then there's a parenthetical statement. And it's about all the people that died in the flood and everybody else that wasn't a follower of Jesus. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This, however, is the first resurrection – talking about all the people who were a part of the Church of God – the believers who followed Jesus. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power – you mean everybody gets to die twice? Well, not everybody. Some people, it's not going to have any power over them, because they died, were resurrected because they were believers in Jesus, and once you have that first resurrection, death can't touch you ever again. You have eternal life. But they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for a thousand years. So this resurrection occurs at the return of Jesus.*

Now notice that in verse 5, we're told that the rest of dead were not resurrected at that time. Who are the rest of the dead? Well, it a bit of a duh, isn't it? The rest of the dead are the rest of the dead. Everybody who was not resurrected in the first resurrection is the rest of the dead. And who were the first resurrection? Well, there were the people that were beheaded for Jesus and didn't fall for the big false system that's been on the earth ever since Adam and Eve. So they're the followers. Everybody else that didn't follow Jesus all down through history – from the Garden of Eden until Christ's return. Those are the rest of the dead – the vast, vast, vast majority of all people who ever lived – all the Muslims, all the Hindus, all the Buddhists, all the Zoroastrians, all the worshippers of Aphrodite all the way back – all the way back into antiquity. All of those people – “the rest of the dead.” And that would include all those who died in the flood. They're going to come back to life – after a thousand years of Christ's reign – to a resurgence of the Garden of Eden. Let's read about it – Revelation 20:11:

V-11 – *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne.... So what do you call it when the dead stand up? A resurrection. So there they are. ...and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, death and the grave gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.*

There's even a scripture in Ezekiel about a resurrection – you know, that song, "...the knee bone connected to the thigh bone," duh, duh, duh, dah? Well, that resurrection. And it says that the *whole* house of Israel was going to be resurrected then – not just the believers of it, but the whole house – the believers of it have already been resurrected – not just the ones who had followed God in their life, but those who had not yet been resurrected at Christ's return. That's who is coming up. And at that time, they will see with their own eyes how good life can be when one follows God's way. They'll see that because there's been a thousand years of it practiced on the earth – before they're resurrected. And it will be an awesome witness for the good rather than the evil that they knew in their first life.

Now what's the point of all that, if they're only going to die – because they're called up before the great white throne, and the books are pulled out and examined, and as they go by, Jesus – up on the throne – goes thumbs down or thumbs up? What's the point of having a witness and seeing all this great stuff? Well, you see, in our minds, we see that happening, because we think that's what judgment is. That's been the picture we saw in cartoons when we were little kids. But that's *not* the biblical concept of judgment – when someone is judged during a period of time when they are observed, and then a decision is made.

In 1 Peter 4:17, Peter said:

1 Peter 4:17 – *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?*

So, for Christians, they're time of judgment is while they're living as Christians. My time of judgment is right now. And it's been going on since I was baptized at, I guess, eighteen years of age. So, all Christians are being judged *now*. And all those people who never knew God, it wouldn't be fair for God to judge them without knowing Him. So, they're going to get a chance after they're resurrected. They're going to come up in that second resurrection, and they will have a chance, at last, to understand and to know Christ and the Father, and to make a choice about how they live – good or evil – same choices we have. And rather than let them lose out – those folks back before the flood – a something that grieved God greatly was the thought of them losing salvation – He took them out of it and is planning to bring them up later. They were headed in a way that was going to jeopardize their chances for eternal life. And I don't know exactly what that is, but I know that He was really upset about it. We learned that.

So, long story short, the reason God killed them was to save their eternal lives and to stop the suffering they were enduring at that time. That's a weird thing, isn't it? How does that happen? You know, God does not think like you and I think. We probably never would have conceived that kind of plan. We would probably have sent missionaries out, convince people to do the right thing, and blah, blah, blah. Good luck with that. God thinks differently. Every time someone points to something terrible that's going on on the earth, or suffering – things like that – it only shows the commitment and the power of God. He allowed His own Son to be *crucified* for all of

us. He allowed eleven of the twelve apostles to be murdered by torture. He's allowed many other Christians to suffer terribly – and not just Christians – but all over the planet. And every time something evil like that happens.... You know, uncounted numbers of people have suffered terrible things at the hands of evil world leaders. And every time that happens, it's only a testament to the patience and the commitment of God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son.

With free will in the world, terrible evil is done. And that grieves God to His heart. But without free will for humankind, there's not going to be any willing connection with God. So, in spite of the evil that's been done in the world, the majority of all who have lived will eventually make the choice to follow God. And that includes the people who died in the flood.

So, to sum it up, God is working a plan that includes every last human being. And He is willing that all of them should be an eternal part of it. And God usually gets what He wants. His plan requires that we, on our way to immortal life, have to die somehow, whether it be from old age, or illness, or accident, or even a flood. And that might not make sense to us, but it's not our plan. It's God's

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Until next time, then, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.