

## Genesis 6:9-22 "One Righteous Man: Noah"\*\*\*

Key Thought: Genesis 6:9-22 tells the story of how God worked through one person to fulfill His plan that affected the entire world. The account involves four scenes.

I. We see a person in step with God (9-10).

A. It showed up in his reputation.

B. It showed up in his resolve.

II. We see a world out of step with God (11-12).

A. It was corrupt.

B. It was full of violence.

1. Violence isn't merely a social problem.

2. Ultimately, it's a spiritual problem.

III. We see what God said about it (13-21).

A. There will be destruction (13).

B. There will be deliverance (14-21).

1. God gave Noah a job to do (14-21).

- Build an ark (14a).

- Build it according to specifications (14b-16).

- Enter the ark (17-18).

- Bring animals with you (19-20).

- Bring food along, too (21).

2. God gave Noah a promise (18a).

IV. We see what Noah did (22).

A. He obeyed God.

B. He obeyed God *completely*.

Response: How can one person make a difference?

1. Like Noah, you must experience the grace of God.

- God spared Noah.

- What happened to Noah can happen to us.

2. Then, like Noah, you must walk with God.

"The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him." Those words were spoken to D. L. Moody a century ago by a fellow evangelist, and those words fired Moody's imagination and gave him a vision for living all-out for the glory of God. Moody responded, "By God's help, I aim to be that man."

In his biography of Moody's life, Lyle Dorsett comments, "Moody preached the gospel to more than 100 million people in the pre-television era. His energy and vision gave birth to fruitful ministry ventures in publishing and education. He was an innovator, an encourager, a disciple-maker. He had a passion for souls."

It is amazing to see what God can do through just *one* person.

But there's a peculiar brand of Christianity brewing these days. Its adherents seem to think that God is frustrated about what's happening in the world. They suggest that it takes *a lot of* people to bring about change. Because of that we're told that we need to lay aside doctrinal convictions in order to unite. The strategy suggests we must pool our resources for political purposes. And so Christians are engaging in power politics. After all, how can we "save this culture" if we don't?

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not suggesting the Christian has no place in the secular arena. We do. Jesus called us to be salt and light. What I am challenging is the underlying notion that it takes numbers to fulfill God's plan.

It doesn't. God told Gideon he had *too many* soldiers, didn't he? And He whittled down his army from 32,000 to 300!

We may be into numbers and externals, but God isn't. God always has a remnant of righteous people in every generation, and He works through that remnant to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

And that's what we see in Genesis 6. Genesis 6:9-22 tells the story of how God worked through one righteous person to fulfill His plan that affected the entire world. The account involves four scenes. In scene #1...

#### I. We see a person in step with God (9-10).

Who was that person? Verse 9, "This is the account of Noah." Noah. Most of us first heard the story of Noah and the Flood when we were children. Verse 9 begins, "This is the account of Noah [or in the KJV, "These are the generations of Noah"]."

From a literary perspective, Genesis has ten major sections, each one beginning with this phrase, "This is the account of." We've already seen the first--"the account of the heavens and the earth (2:4-4:26)," and the second--"the written account of Adam's line (5:1-6:8)." Here's the third (and it runs from 6:9-9:29), "This is the account of Noah."

What a man of God! Noah was indeed a person in step with God, and it showed up in two ways.

A. It showed up in his reputation. Verse 9 explains, "Noah was a righteous ["just" in the KJV] man, blameless among the people of his time."

To appreciate what the Bible says about Noah in verse 9 we must see it in contrast with the condition of the world spelled out in verse 5, "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

Is it possible to be a righteous man in a wicked world? Noah was. He was a righteous man. He wasn't merely the best of a bad generation. He was a *righteous* man, truly a man of God.

You say, "I can't live for God in my situation. It's too hard." Noah did. He had a reputation for being *righteous*.

How'd he get that way? Don't miss verse 8. Righteousness isn't earned nor inherited. It's all of grace, isn't it?

"Noah found favor (or *grace*) in the eyes of the LORD." That's critical--we'll comment more on it later.

What does it mean to be "righteous?" One commentator suggests that someone called "good" in English would be described as "righteous" in Hebrew (Wenham). So to call Noah a "righteous" man is to say he was a "good" man who lived according to God's standards--in a world that didn't.

Furthermore, he was "blameless [or "perfect" in the KJV]." The word "blameless" carries the idea of wholeness or completeness. Elsewhere in the Bible it describes blemish-free sacrificial animals (Lev 1:3, 10). No one could make an accusation stick against Noah. There were no cracks, no inconsistencies, no skeletons in his life.

Ponder that. Noah had a distinct reputation. A literal rendering of the Hebrew would read, "Noah, a man righteous, perfect was he among his contemporaries." He was in step with God and people knew it.

Is that true of you? If you are in step with God, it will show up in your reputation. Secondly, for Noah...

B. It showed up in his resolve. "And he walked with God." Sound familiar? Who else walked with God? Noah's great-grandfather did. Enoch walked with God 300 years (Gen 5:22).

Is it possible to live a righteous life in a corrupt world? Yes. Noah did. He walked with God, just like Enoch did. But unlike Enoch, God did not "take away" Noah. He had other purposes for Noah. He was going to take him right through the greatest storm the world would ever see.

This was Noah's resolve--to walk with God. To walk with God implies he didn't walk *with man*. He went against the flow.

I must warn you. If you walk with God, you will be *odd*. The world will mock you and here's why. If you're walking with God you won't go certain places. You won't do certain things. Why not? Because God is your constant companion. You walk with Him, and to walk with Him means you go only where He wants you to go--no matter what your peers think.

Verse 10 concludes, "Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth." Why are we told that again (the information was given first in 5:32)? Because here's where a godly influence shows up first--*at home*. We'll see in a moment that these sons joined Noah on the ark.

Were they believers, too? I think they must have been. Why do I say that? Because, they, like Noah, obeyed God's command and got on the ark.

Years later, in stark contrast stood Lot's family members who refused to leave Sodom and Gomorrah. Though Lot warned them about the coming judgment, "His sons-in-law thought he was joking," Genesis 19:14 says.

There's scene #1. Noah was a person in step with God, and it showed up in his reputation and resolve. In scene #2 we see the exact opposite...

## II. We see a world out of step with God (11-12).

"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways."

Noah was in step with God, but the world in which he lived was *not*. Two things were true of that world--a world not very much unlike ours in many ways.

A. It was corrupt. In fact, if you'll notice you'll see the word mentioned three times in these two verses, "Now the earth was *corrupt* in God's sight...God saw how *corrupt* the earth had become, for all the people on earth had *corrupted* their ways."

But notice the example of corruption that God mentions here, the one that took the world past the point of no return. What was it? Violence.

B. It was full of violence. The Hebrew word for "violence", *chamas*, denotes any antisocial, unneighborly activity (Wenham, 171). Often it involves the use of brute force, but can just as well refer to any act of exploitation. Here's one definition: "*Chamos* is cold-blooded and unscrupulous infringement of the personal rights of others, motivated by greed and hate and often making use of physical violence and brutality."

That's what characterized Noah's world--not just a little violence, but it was *full of* violence. Sound familiar? Do we have a problem with violence these days?

How many of you lock your doors when you leave your house? How many of you can remember a time in the past when you *didn't have to*? Something's happened, right? Don't miss two things indicated here about violence.

1. *Violence isn't merely a social problem.* What is it?

2. *Ultimately, it's a spiritual problem.* Remember the Nephilim from our last study? They were violent giants. The world called them "heroes (4)," and apparently followed their lead. And God saw their violence. Just like He sees it today.

He sees that we sit in front of a screen and call "entertainment" what He once called corruption. Read the Old Testament prophets—men like Amos and Isaiah—and watch what they had to say to their people about violence and social injustice.

The question arises, "How could a loving God destroy the entire world?" It's significant that in the Hebrew the words "corrupt" and "destroy" are similar. What did God say He was going to *destroy*? A world that had become *corrupt*, in fact, a world that had already begun to *destroy* itself. Derek Kidner remarks (87), "The Hebrew...makes it plain that what God decided to 'destroy' (13) had been virtually self-destroyed already."

Sin brings forth death. Always. And in Genesis 6 we see a world where sin permeated every nook and cranny of civilization. When sin prevails, it's merely a matter of time before destruction occurs. What amazes me is that it took only ten generations to go from Adam to the corrupt, violence-filled world of Noah's day.

Answer this. Is our world much different from Noah's? Listen to Jesus' words in Luke 17:26-27, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all."

Our world, just like Noah's, is out of step with God. It's corrupt and full of violence. What's God's assessment of the situation? Scene #3...

### III. We see what God said about it (13-21).

In verse 13 God spoke to Noah. What he heard was shocking—a twofold announcement from God.

A. There will be destruction (13). "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.'"

The time had come. "Be sure your sins will find you out," God later told His people. The time was now for Noah's world. And notice again why—God specifies the violence. So destruction was coming, total destruction—for both people and the earth.

But God made a second announcement as well...

B. There will be deliverance (14-21). For whom? God doesn't say yet in His message to Noah. First...

1. *God gave Noah a job to do (14-21)*. The job involved a punchlist of five instructions.

· Build an ark (14a). "So make yourself an ark." Now there's a loaded statement! Put yourself in Noah's shoes and imagine what went through his mind: "An ark? What's an ark? I've never seen one before. And what will people think of me?"

Noah couldn't *buy* an ark from the local marina. His assignment was to *build* one.

It's noteworthy that the same Hebrew word appears in Exodus 2:3, 5. There it's translated "basket," and refers to the basket that into which Moses' mother placed him. It's interesting that both the ark and the basket were coated with pitch, and both brought deliverance to those inside.

God gave Noah a second instruction...

· Build it according to specifications (14b-16). "So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks."

The ark wasn't a ship per se, but more like a floating barge. Its dimensions—300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. How big is that? Henry Morris answers, "Assuming that the cubit was 17.5 inches in length (the exact value is uncertain, but this is the smallest number suggested by any of the authorities), the total volumetric capacity of the Ark was approximately 1,400,000 cubic feet, the same as that of 522 standard livestock cars such as used on modern American railroad cars."

God elaborated on some other specs in the building project. The ark was to contain three decks, a window—probably extending all the way around the top (for ventilation?), and one door on the side. Noah was to make it of "gopher" wood—this is the only place where this Hebrew word is used. The NIV renders it "cypress" wood. The ark was to be fitted with "rooms" (literally "cells" or "nests") for the animals.

Furthermore, Noah was to seal the wood with pitch inside and out. The word means "covering" and in the Hebrew is the same word translated elsewhere as "atonement" (as in Lev 17:11). Morris comments (96), "Whatever the exact substance may have been, it sufficed as a perfect covering for the Ark, to keep out the waters of judgment, just as the blood of the Lamb provides a perfect atonement for the soul." Then came the third instruction on the punchlist...

· Enter the ark (17-18). God said, "I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark--you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you."

Remember, Noah had never seen rain before, let alone a flood. It took great faith on Noah's part to build the ark, and then to build it according to specifications. But the ark would do him no good if he failed to what?

*Get on it.* So here God says, "You will enter the ark."

But Noah wouldn't be alone, would he? In His grace, God here announced that Noah's wife, sons, and daughters-in-law would join him. Interestingly, it's likely that when God first announced the Flood was coming, Noah's father and grandfather--Lamech and Methuselah--were still living. But Lamech died five years before the Deluge came, while Methuselah died the same year the Flood occurred. Instruction #4...

· Bring animals with you (19-20). "You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive."

Skeptics counter, "This is just a myth. That ark couldn't hold all the animal kinds of the world, could it?" In fact, it could—as another comment by Henry Morris substantiates (96-7), "Marine creatures were not to be included, as they could survive the flood waters...Authorities estimate that there are less than 18,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians in the world today. Even assuming that the biological species is equivalent to the Genesis 'kind' (in most cases, the 'kind' was undoubtedly a unit of broader scope than this) and that the average species size is that of a sheep (undoubtedly much too large), one can quickly calculate that the Ark's capacity was abundantly large for its purpose. It is known that about 240 sheep can be transported in one stock car, so that 150 cars would suffice for 36,000 animals of this size. This is less than one-third of the Ark's size. There was ample extra room for the approximately 1,000,000 species of insects, for food, for possible animals now extinct, for living quarters for Noah and his family, and for any other necessary purposes."

Again the skeptic objects, "But how did Noah get the animals? It would be impossible for him to build an ark *and* track down two of every kind of animal!"

Hold on. Noah didn't have to "track down" the animals. Why not? In verse 20 God told Noah the animals would *come to him*. And if God enabled the animals to migrate to the ark, perhaps He likewise enabled them to hibernate during their time on the ark.

One final instruction on the punch list...

· Bring food along, too (21). "You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." Wow! Noah must have had the gift of administration, to organize a menu for himself, his family, and two of every kind of animals for a year!

That was a lot of work, wasn't it? And no doubt Noah faced intense ridicule. What kept him going? Something that God gave him in the first part of verse 18...

2. *God gave Noah a promise (18a)*. "But I will establish my covenant with you." Here is the first mention of "covenant" in the Bible. A covenant is a promise. Later God would make covenants with Abraham, Moses and the Israelites, and David. Ultimately Jesus would inaugurate the new covenant.

Our God is a covenant-making God. He makes promises to His people—and keeps them, both His promises and His people.

When Noah entered the ark, he did so not only as a survivor, but as "the bearer of God's promise for a new age (as Kidner puts it, p. 89)." God's promise and work through one man would ultimately bring hope to the world.

Didn't God do the same for us? Yes, He did through Jesus Christ. Now scene #4...

IV. We see what Noah did (22).

"Noah did everything just as God commanded him." Noah did two things...

A. He obeyed God. And...

B. He obeyed God **completely**. He did *everything* God said to do. Everything. That's amazing, isn't it? Think of the implications.

Noah built an ark the size of one and one-half football fields in length—*without* power tools. He gathered food and animals. What's more, 2 Peter 2:5 refers to Noah as "a preacher of righteousness." While he was building he was *preaching*, too—warning people to repent and get right with God.

Don't minimize what Noah's obedience cost him. Obeying God cost him money, time, energy, and even his reputation. No doubt his neighbors must have whispered to each other, "That Noah is loony! Stay away from him!"

Let's be honest. A lot of us want a *costless* Christianity. We'll go to church as long as we don't have to miss something else we'd rather do more. And please don't ask us to visit the sick and hurting—we'd rather pay someone else to do that.

Listen. A costless Christianity is not biblical Christianity. Noah did *everything* the Lord commanded him. He was radical in his obedience. Are you? He took God's Word seriously. Do you?

"Give 10%? Oh, I know what God's Word says, but I can't, not this month..."

"Love my spouse? Yes, I know what the Bible says, but I can't. Not after what he did to me."

Let's be honest. *Can't* means *won't*. I'm convinced we complicate things too much. When you boil it all down, the Christian life is quite simple. *Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

Yes, one person can make a difference. But you must *trust*. Have you trusted in Christ to be your Savior and Lord? And *obey*. Are you obeying Him. Are you obeying *everything* He has commanded you to do?

In Response, a question: How can one person make a difference?

1. *Like Noah, you must experience the grace of God.* Genesis 6:8 is the key to understanding what made Noah tick, "But Noah found favor [that is, "grace"] in the eyes of the LORD." Then the next verse says he was a "righteous" man.

How is righteousness attained? By merit? No. By grace.

We're given New Testament commentary on this truth in Hebrews 11:7, "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

Don't miss that. How did Noah become righteous? By works? No. By *faith*. Righteousness, then and now, comes *by faith*.

And what is the source of saving faith? It's the gift of God. It's the grace of God. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8)."

When I step back and ponder Genesis 6, two things astound me. One, I'm struck that there was only *one* righteous man. And two, I'm struck that there *was* one righteous man! And all because of grace.

Because of the grace of God, two things are true. First...

- God spared Noah. And secondly...
- What happened to Noah can happen to us.

How do I know? Because of what Peter said in 1 Peter 3:20-21, "...Long ago...God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

One person can make a difference. God can use you for His glory. How? Like Noah, you must experience the grace of God. And then...

*2. Then, like Noah, you must walk with God. May it be so.*