
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

LECTURE 4: NOAH

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The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

30 LECTURES

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21 CHAPTERS OLD TESTAMENT · 9 CHAPTERS NEW TESTAMENT

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3. Fall
- 4. Noah**
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6. Patriarchs I
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Lecture 4

NOAH

Lecture Theme:

God displays his glory in salvation through judgment.

Text:

“For if God spared not...the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly... The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Pet. 2:4, 5, 9).

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 4

The story of Noah’s Ark and the worldwide flood may be one of the best known stories in the Old Testament. It certainly captivates the minds of children, but it is a sobering account of God’s unparalleled destruction of the world. It seems as if so much happens, so much goes wrong between the time of Adam and Noah. At the flood, the world is forever changed, but God provides a central message of hope in this story in which God further discloses the nature of His plan of salvation.

So, what is the theological significance of Genesis 4 and 5? What do we learn about man’s fallen condition at the time of Noah? Are judgment and salvation opposed to one another? Or does salvation come through judgment? How does God’s covenant with Noah after the flood advance God’s plan of redemption and point us forward to what follows in biblical history?

In this lecture, we will see what God reveals to us about Himself, about His people, and His salvation and we will do so by looking at the periods before the flood, during the flood, and after the flood. The Lord intertwines the themes of grace and wrath, demonstrating that salvation must come through judgment.

So, first of all, let’s consider the period before the flood. Before the flood, God reveals the division and separation between the trajectory of the two seeds that are mentioned in Genesis 3:15. We find the first distinction between the church and the world in Genesis 4, followed by two lines leading to the days of Noah. We’ll consider those two lines under this first point.

Consider first of all the line of the godly seed. We know from Genesis 3:15 that it is through the godly line that the Mediator will come. Genesis 4 is the first major outworking of the promise of Genesis 3:15. The struggle between the two seeds begins over God’s appointed worship. Cain becomes the first hypocrite apostate, and Abel, the first believing martyr. We discover several characteristics of God’s Church before the flood. We see that

God's revelation of His appointed worship is given in Genesis 4 in the end of verse 4, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." We must come to God on His terms, according to His appointed worship, not our preferences or creativity or innovation. Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

Now we know that faith is a response to God's Word. Romans 10:17 teaches us that, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So, Abel was obviously responding to God's Word and offering to God the worship that He commanded, though it's not recorded explicitly in Genesis 4. We also see God's appointed institution of sacrifice. This becomes the foundation for what follows, and this will be expanded into a more elaborate institution under Moses. All of this points, of course, to Christ's sacrifice and the truth that without shedding of blood is no remission.

The word Abel actually means "vanity," a theme that is expounded for us in the book of Ecclesiastes. After the death of Abel, the line of the godly seed goes through Seth. We read, "His name is Seth: for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel" (Genesis 4:25). After the birth of Seth's son Enos, we read, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). The godly assembled to worship God. The church now emerged visibly for the first time in contrast to the surrounding world. If you read further, Enoch is one more link in the godly chain leading to Noah. Genesis 5:22 and then again in verse 24, we read, "And Enoch walked with God." Verse 24, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

The Hebrew word for walk indicates a daily interaction, so think, for example, of Deuteronomy 6:7 where, you're to teach your children diligently God's Word in rising up and lying down and going in the way. That's what's intended. Hebrews 11:5 says, speaking of Enoch, "that he pleased God," so spiritual fellowship with God continued. Enoch lived in the presence of God. Similarly, this testimony continues in Genesis 6:9, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Later, God demands the same of Abraham. "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

What else do we learn? We learn from Jude 14 that God's Word continued to sound forth through the prophecy of Enoch. It was, of course, God's Word of judgment on the ungodly. And God's Word continued to be proclaimed through Noah as is seen in 2 Peter 2:5, where he is described as a preacher of righteousness. And so, the faithful, the godly seed, assembled around the ordinances of God, the purity of God's worship, God's Word by prophecy and by sacrifice.

Secondly, under this first point, we also learn some things about the line of the ungodly seed. The seed of the serpent unfolds through the line of Cain. Notice 1 John 3:12, and look at the words, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one," who was of that wicked one, "and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." In Cain we see the first defection from God's appointed worship, his rejection of sacrifice by blood, and we see the first case of church discipline, Cain's expulsion from the assembly of the true worshipers of God. In Genesis 4:16 it says, "And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD." John Owen, a Puritan, described this as "a divinely ordained and displayed type, an example for all future reformation of the church."

The first murder leads to more murder by Lamech, and he boasts over that murder in Chapter 4. The opening verses of Genesis 6 show the corruption that came from the intermingling, the bringing together of the church and the world. Some descendants of Seth, the sons of God, intermarried with those of Cain, the daughters of men, and the results were spiritually devastating. Again, John Owen says, "In all ages, free association with the wicked leads to the downfall of the church." In Genesis 6:3, God's Spirit began to withdraw His presence and blessing as a result, and this opened the way to God's determination to destroy the world with a flood. The floodgates of iniquity led to the floodgates of judgment. God's principle of godly separation had been violated and replaced with an unholy alliance between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

That brings us to Noah's day where we read in Genesis 6:5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the Earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Notice six things that are described about sin in this verse. We see that first of all, sin is innate. It's inborn. You'll notice this later on in Chapter 8:21, "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." And so, sin is innate or inborn, described as the wickedness of man in Chapter 6:5.

Secondly, we see the intensity of sin. He says that it is “great.” Thirdly, the totality of sin: “every imagination.” Fourthly, we see the perverse creativity of sin. It’s described as “imagination.” This is building on the concept that man is creative in his work as one made after the image of God. Fifthly, the inwardness of sin, the thoughts of his heart. And then sixthly, sin is exclusive. It is only evil. To this we can add one more, and that is, seventhly, that sin is habitual. You see the word “continually.” There’s a lot packed into that one verse. Sin is universal because fallen man is born in sin. We read about this all through the Old Testament and in the New Testament as well. Consider Romans 3:9–23, for example. Natural man’s estimation of himself is grossly inflated. He cannot boast in anything without depriving God of His honor. And let me give you two brief examples.

One from the Old Testament, Nebuchadnezzar, who in his pride was lifted up and took glory to himself, and the Lord humbled him and sent him into the fields like an ox. And in the New Testament, we see Herod in Acts 12. He was praised as a god, and he received that praise, and God smote him, and he was eaten with worms and died.

In Genesis 6:5, we have one of the earliest and clearest verses of the doctrine of Total Depravity. Now, by total, the word ‘total’ does not mean that man is as wicked as he possibly could be. Rather, ‘total’ means that every aspect of man’s nature is impacted by sin. Man’s corruption is extensive, but not necessarily intensive. The unbeliever is totally, not utterly, depraved. All of his faculties are affected, and we could list a long string of Scriptures from the New Testament to establish the fact that his mind and understanding are affected and fallen in sin. His emotions, his conscience, his will, and we could go on. The moral inability of the natural man is because he’s a slave to sin. He is, in the words of the New Testament, spiritually dead. He’s blind, and he’s powerless. He’s also ignorant. So, natural man is not just sick or dim-sighted or weak or somewhat knowledgeable; he’s totally depraved. The unbeliever is in a position of bondage, not freedom. Slavery, not liberty. He does not have the inherent ability of freedom of will to do good or to come to God or exercise saving faith without divine intervention.

It would be helpful at this point to summarize the doctrine of the Freedom of the Will as it’s seen throughout redemptive history since that’s the purpose of our course. This will help us better understand Genesis 6 against the backdrop of the big picture. We can divide up redemptive history into four sections and consider the freedom of man’s will under each of those.

First of all, we begin before the fall with Adam in the estate of innocency in the garden. There, what do we know about his will? Well, he was able not to sin, and therefore he had the ability to do both good and evil.

The second category is after the fall, and this is in reference to the unbeliever in his fallen sinful state. The Bible teaches us that he is not able not to sin. In other words, he only has the ability to do evil and not good.

Thirdly, we can think in terms of the category of a person after they are converted, after they are brought to faith in Christ, the believer. And the believer is able to sin and able not to sin. So, he has the ability to do good and evil.

The last category is in Heaven in reference to the believer. In Heaven, the believer is not able to sin. He only has the ability to do what is good and not evil. And so we find ourselves in Genesis 6:5 in that second category: the unbeliever is not able to do good. He’s only able to do what is evil. We can also distinguish very briefly between the sinfulness of sin on one hand, and the heinousness of sin on the other. And this is helpful especially when practical questions come up. If a person commits adultery, you might hear someone say, “Well, we’re all sinners. We’ve all sinned.” And that’s true, but it fails to recognize the distinction between the sinfulness of sin and the heinousness of sin.

So, while hating your brother in your heart is sinful, and murdering your brother with your hand is also sinful, the latter, murdering your brother, is more heinous. It’s a more heinous sin. And so, there are degrees of heinousness. We can go from thinking bad thoughts to maybe speaking angry words to maybe striking someone to ultimately murdering someone, and in each case, there’s an increase of the heinousness of the sin, though the sinfulness of each sin shares some equality.

The Bible portrays a high view of God, a low view of man, and consequently the necessity of salvation leading to humility and dependence. Man must be saved from himself, saved from sin, and saved from God’s wrath in Hell.

Secondly, we need to consider the period during the flood. The worldwide apostasy had reached an unparalleled height as you see in Chapter 6:11–13. And the old world ends with an apocalyptic storm to show how God’s blessing and gracious salvation will only come in the way of just judgment upon sin. This constitutes the end of an epoch, the end of the world as it was then known. Again, notice two things under this point. First of

all, the wicked are punished. God had warned them, calling them to repentance through Noah and through the preaching of Enoch.

But as Jesus said, “For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noe entered into the Ark and knew not until the flood came and took them all away.” You find that in Matthew 24 as well as Luke 17. It was as in the words of Proverbs 29:1, “He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

Contrary to what some skeptics say, this was a worldwide flood, not localized. It covered the whole earth. It was a universal catastrophe that God brought to pass by His word. This is confirmed in the words of Peter in 2 Peter 3:3–7, and that’s an important passage for understanding Noah. You should take time to read it. In fact, the New Testament draws a parallel between the universal flood and the final judgment of God. The flood is, if you will, an emblem of the final judgment to come, the consequence of sin in a pictorial form. So, I would encourage you to read that passage in 2 Peter 3:3–7.

Secondly, under this point, dealing with the period during the flood, we see that the believing are saved. Now, the need for God’s grace is evident from Genesis 6:17, “And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the Earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under Heaven; and everything that is in the Earth shall die.” That shows the need for God’s grace. There’s also an expectation of grace a little earlier on in Chapter 5:29, speaking of the birth of Noah. It says, “And he called his name Noah.” The name Noah means rest. “He called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us.”

But most importantly we see the experience of grace in Genesis 6:8, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” This presupposes that Noah also sought grace and longed for it. He found what he had sought. He was a just and upright man that was walking with the Lord. And so, in Genesis 8, we hear, “And God remembered Noah.” We also need to recognize that salvation came in the way of judgment. This is an important point. Noah was not just saved from water, but by means of water. This is what the Bible says in 1 Peter 3:20, “When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

Peter then draws a connection with the meaning of baptism and sanctification by means of Christ’s resurrection. Believers are saved by the death and resurrection of Christ, when the waters of God’s judgment went over Him. The water that purged the world of corruption saved those that were in the Ark. The wicked world threatened to swallow up or to destroy Noah. The flood destroyed the world, and at the same time, that same water saved the Church and separated her from the wicked world. In the words of Isaiah 1:27, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

So, God graciously instructs Noah to build an Ark, and Noah submits to God’s Word. God provided an Ark. God called them into the Ark. God shut them into the Ark. God remembers them in the Ark, and God brings them out of the Ark. The Ark pictured God Himself in Christ as the Refuge and Savior of His people. There we see the seed of the woman floated safely to salvation, while the seed of the serpent perished.

Thirdly, we have to consider the period after the flood. After the flood, God blessed Noah and reasserted His gospel promise in the Covenant of Grace. We read about this in Genesis 9. The pronouncement of God’s blessing on His people becomes a very important feature throughout the Bible right down to the very last words and the very last verse of Scripture in Revelation 22:21.

As we saw before, God is the one who initiates His covenant. In Genesis 9:9, we read, “And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.” God is the author of the covenant with Noah. In the Noahic Covenant, you’ll notice the reference to creation demonstrating the coexistence of creation and redemption. This is for at least a couple reasons. God’s purposes in creation are upheld in order that redemption may proceed and unfold. God’s works of creation and providence serve God’s gracious purposes in advancing His plan of redemption in history. We also know that covenantal blessings will culminate at the renewal of the ordered existence of creation in the new Heavens and the new Earth, which we considered in a previous lecture.

So, we read in Genesis 9 of the promise of life, of God’s provision and of God’s preservation. These fresh covenant promises are accompanied by multiple sacrifices. You see them at the end of Chapter eight and the first section of Chapter nine. While most of the creatures came into the Ark two by two, the animals that God designated clean came by sevens. This was God’s provision for both sacrifice (these clean animals would be offered

in sacrifice) and for food which Noah would eat. We have the first mention of an altar in Genesis 8:20. God's Covenant of Grace is once again established with sacrifice and bloodshed, drilling into our minds early on in the Bible the expectation of Christ, Who would much later say at the time of the Lord's Supper, "This cup is the New Testament or new covenant in my blood which is shed for you."

You'll notice that God provides a perpetual sign of this Covenant of Grace, namely in a rainbow. We read in Chapter 9:13, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." This is repeated in verses 16 and 17.

Well, this is another building block because signs of the Covenant of Grace will become a staple feature in our future studies. We should also note, in reference to this covenant, the household principle; the expansion of the covenant promise includes the family of believers. Noah was himself a man of faith. He believed the gospel and was saved by faith in Christ. He believed God's Word. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). Notice that God extends His covenant blessing to Noah as a believer and to his children. In Genesis 9:9, "And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." This household principle runs through the Old Testament and New Testament as we shall see. When Peter preaches the gospel in Acts 2:39, he says something very similar. He says, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children."

Now, inheriting covenant promises in covenant families was not synonymous, however, with true conversion and saving faith. That is, not all received the promise by faith. The seed of the serpent rose again from within the seed of the woman through Ham's rebellion and covenant breaking. And he was cut off from the assembly of God's people. You see that in Chapter 9:25-27. But let's also think about the way forward. We're considering what took place after the flood. After God's flood, the world starts again with Noah, but there is a continuity that remains. In Genesis 9, you see, for example, references to the continuation of the creation ordinances that we learned about in the second lecture on creation. We see the preservation of man as God's image, now protected by the death penalty for murder in Chapter 9:6. God's provisions of covenant promises of salvation also continue.

But in conclusion, I want to draw your attention to something important at the end of Genesis 9, something significant for our understanding and expectations regarding the history of redemption. In Chapter 9:26 and 27, we read, "And he said 'Blessed be the LORD God of Shem, and Cain shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.'" What do we see? Well, we see that Shem will build the tent. The descendants of Canaan will get into the tent through service. The book of Joshua gives us an example of how. But the children of Japheth will make the tent really large.

We see here already God's long-term plan in the history of redemption. God will use the Jews, the seed of Shem, to establish His Covenant and Church. And the Gentiles will come into it and greatly expand it in the future. The gospel promise will spread to the whole world. This is greatly enforced in God's promise to Abraham, which we'll consider in the next lecture. But it ultimately comes to fulfillment in the book of Acts and beyond. The future path of God's plan and the history of redemption is bright.

Well, we have learned that God displays the glory of His salvation in judgment. In the next lecture, we will continue with the revelation of God at the time of Abraham.