

THE JOURNEY

from Creation to New Creation

Part 5 Cataclysm and Covenant

Introduction

These notes give some guidance on how to lead the group through the questions and discussion. *There are also additional Bible references in the notes, and you may like to ask group members to read out some of these, as appropriate.*

You may want to begin by asking if anything particularly struck people as they watched the video. However, it would be wise to limit this part of the discussion to ten minutes at most.

Read **Genesis 6.1-8**.

Question 1

Sin continued after the Flood. So what did God achieve by sending the Flood?

God dealt with *the particular kind of sin* committed by the *"sons of God"*. Who were these *"sons of God"*? The most likely explanation is that they were evil angels. Angelic beings are called the *"sons of God"* in Job 1.6 and 2.1. Other explanations are (1) human tyrants, perhaps possessed by fallen angels, or (2) descendants of Seth who were intermarrying with girls descended from Cain. These explanations are not so likely.

If so, these angels were marrying human women. The children from such unnatural marriages would have been abnormal. In Genesis 6.4 these offspring are called *"the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown"*. They were great and famous warriors. It seems likely that they were giants – men of great stature. The passage also mentions the mysterious *"Nephilim"*. These Nephilim may well be the same as the *"mighty men"*.

If all this is correct, then these evil angels were degrading the human race. In the last session, we learned that God promised Eve that one of her descendants would defeat Satan (Genesis 3.15). If our human race was indeed being degraded like this, then Eve's own family line would have been threatened. Her promised descendant might never

be born and be the perfect Human that God needed Him to be to defeat Satan. If this had happened, *no human could be saved*.

The idea that angels were marrying humans seems very strange. But in the ancient world, stories were told of sexual relations between gods and humans, whose offspring were said to have abnormal powers. For example, Hercules, famous for his strength, was believed to be the son of the god Zeus and the mortal woman Alcmena. It may well be that these myths were based on the historical events described in Genesis 6.

Jesus said that, after their resurrection, people *"neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven"* (Matthew 22.30). The angels in heaven don't marry. So how could these angels marry humans? Jesus was speaking about good angels. But these angels were evil. And they were marrying *humans*, not other angels.

Whatever was going on, it's clear that there was wickedness of a horribly loathsome and perverted kind. It would, it seems certain, have brought our human race totally and permanently under Satan's control – and so achieve his goal: to rule this world as if he were God.

God would not allow this. So He stepped in to stem the hellish tide of sin. He sent the Flood to deal with this vile wickedness, and to preserve the integrity of the human race and eliminate the threat to the promised Offspring.

But how can we reconcile the death and destruction that God brought about by the Flood with His love? Firstly, our God is a righteous and holy God and therefore He judges and punishes sin. *But it's also important to remember that the Flood removed the threat to God's plan of salvation*. The Flood was not only an act of righteous judgment *but also a supreme act of mercy and grace*. God changed the course of history, so He could work out His plan of salvation for mankind and for this world.

Read **Genesis 9.1-7**.

Question 2

How does God's covenant with Noah (Genesis 9.1-7) reflect what God said to Adam in Genesis 1.28-30? What's the significance of this connection?

Notice the similarities between God's covenant with Noah and what God said to Adam:

- ▶ God blessed Adam and Eve (Genesis 1.28); He blessed Noah and his sons (Genesis 9.1).
- ▶ God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth (Genesis 1.28); He did the same to Noah and his sons (Genesis 9.1,7).
- ▶ God gave Adam and Eve dominion over animals (Genesis 1.28); God gave Noah and his sons power over all beasts, birds and fish (Genesis 9.2).
- ▶ God appointed Adam and Eve's food (Genesis 1.29); He appointed food for Noah and his sons (Genesis 9.3-4).

Noah was like another Adam. Adam lived in a newly created world. After the Flood, Noah stepped out into a newly cleansed world. It was like a new creation. It was a new beginning for our world.

Adam was the father of the human race. Noah was a new father of our race. From his three sons "*came the people who were scattered over the whole earth*" (Genesis 9.19 NIV).

Read **Genesis 11.1-9, 12.1-3, Hebrews 11.8-10**.

Question 3

How do God's words to Abraham link to the story of the tower of Babel, and what's the significance of this connection?

As Michael Williams puts it: "*God graciously promises to Abraham the very things Babel coveted . . .*" They wanted to make "*a name*" for themselves (Genesis 11.4) – to find enduring fame. And they wanted to build a *city* and a tower. Neither a name nor a city are, in themselves, bad things; their sin lay in the fact they wanted to get these things *their way*, and for *their* purposes. God promised Abram exactly these two things – a *name* and a *city*.

- ▶ God said to Abram: "*I will . . . make your name great*" (Genesis 12.2). God was going to make Abram's name famous - not because he had made himself great, but because God had blessed him.
- ▶ And Abram looked for a city - not a city built by humans for human glory, but "*the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God*" (Hebrews 11.10).

God commanded mankind to multiply and spread across the globe (see Genesis 1.28). But the people of Babel didn't want to be "*dispersed over the face of the whole earth*" (Genesis 11.4). Instead, they wanted a secure power-base, a united strong society where their god lived among them. In other words, they wanted to live in a paradise in the presence of their god (in fact, the name 'Babel' in the local language Akkadian is *bāb-ili*, meaning 'gate of god'). But it was a false paradise in the presence of a false god.

God wanted this world to be a place where His people lived in His paradise in His presence. The people of Babel tried to bring this about themselves – on their own terms, and for their own selfish purposes.

Satan dreamed of a godless 'utopia' – a human civilisation united under his domination and in rebellion against God. The city and tower of Babel was an early attempt to achieve this.

So, once again, God changed the course of history, so He could work out His plan - *His people living in His presence in His paradise*.

We can view the Bible as *a tale of two cities* - mankind's city and God's city. These two cities symbolise something. A city is a commercial hub and a cultural centre (see the description of Babylon in Revelation 18.11-19). It's also typically a seat of government, whether local or national (or both). A city symbolises civilisation. *Babylon and New Jerusalem respectively represent Satan's and God's vision of what this world should be like*.

Babylon represents, in Vaughan Roberts' words, "*human attempts to create a perfect world by our own efforts*." It symbolises a false paradise, a global society under Satan's dominion and in rebellion against God. In contrast, New Jerusalem pictures *God's perfect world* - a world where God lives with His people in paradise.

The contrast between Satan's city and God's city begins here in Genesis. It comes to its vivid finale right at the end of the Bible, in the Book of Revelation. At the close of history as we know it, God will judge and destroy mankind's city Babylon (see Revelation 18.1-19.4). (*Babylon* is another name for Babel, and links us back to the city and tower of Babel in Genesis 11.1-9.) Then God will bring His holy city, the New Jerusalem, out of heaven onto earth (Revelation 21.2). God will live together with His people in His new perfect world.