

DON'T MISS THE POINT!

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ June 26, 2016



¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷ Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.” ¹⁸ So Noah came out, together with his sons and his

wife and his sons' wives. ¹⁹ All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on the earth—came out of the ark, one kind after another. ²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹ The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. ²² “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” (Genesis 8:15-22)

I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain,

When you are cooking or baking, it's important to have the right ingredients. Whether you are working off of a recipe, or cooking by instinct, there's nothing worse than forgetting a key ingredient. Just imagine if a baker forgot to put yeast in his bread? Or if your batch of sugar cookies didn't have any sugar? Or if the curry chicken didn't have any spices? That recipe would not taste what it is supposed to taste like, it might even taste terrible. Having the right ingredients, or sometimes having the right ingredient makes all the difference.

Have you ever stopped to think what the Bible would look and sound like if it was missing the main ingredient – the gospel message? It is the gospel message that separates the Bible from all other religious books. It is the gospel message that is weaved into every account, every parable, every declaration of faith. Without the gospel message, the Bible would cease to be God's Word. If you want an example of what this looks like, look no further than one of the recent Bible movies that hit the theaters two years ago – *Noah*.

In that 2014 movie, it is the Hollywood interpretation of the story of Noah and the flood, part of which we heard in our first lesson for this morning. It isn't a far stretch to say their interpretation of the Genesis account takes great liberties, and even in some places conflicts with the Bible account. And if you've watched it, you'll know what I'm talking about. But the most glaring omission in the movie, the ingredient that is completely missing is the gospel message. The gospel message of a promised Savior. Without the gospel, the movie *Noah* looks just like any other ancient story. But the Bible account of Noah is not just some ancient myth or legend, but rather it is a record of how God kept his promise. And as we consider the life of Noah, DON'T MISS THE POINT

1. About God's justice
2. About Noah's righteousness

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I think many of us are somewhat familiar with the account of Noah and the flood, but in case you aren't, or in case you need a refresher, let's go over the basics of the story. Noah lived during a time of incredible wickedness on the earth. The Bible describes the wickedness like this: **"every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil all the time."** This is what led God to wipe mankind from the face of the earth. And he was going to do it in a very unique way, he was going to send a worldwide flood.

But Noah was different, the Bible says that **"Noah was a righteous man"** and that **"he walked with God."** DON'T MISS THE POINT, Noah's righteousness had nothing to do with his actions, but had everything to do with his faith, with his trust in the promise of a Savior God was going to send. And so God spoke with Noah and gave him instructions. The instructions were to build an ark, a huge floating box, designed to withstand the waters of the flood and save a pair of every animal and Noah's family. To give you a quick visual, this room we are in right now would be about 1/10th of the ark. Just imagine laying 10 of these rooms side by side. That would be the approximate size of the ark.

And while scholars and sceptics wrestle with the logistics of the size and the amount of animals such a vessel could contain, we should not worry ourselves about that. If the Bible says this is what happened, we will take the Bible at its word. It has never given us any reason to doubt. But DON'T MISS THE POINT God was making by sending a flood. DON'T MISS THE POINT about God's justice.

Just a quick "Google" search about Noah and the flood comes up with plenty of sceptic's opinions of the flood. One said it's a story about genocide and incest, another that God killed all the people in the world because he loved them. These are people who MISS THE POINT about God's justice. **"The earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence."** **"Every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood."** These were not just "innocent" people going about their business whom God just randomly decided to destroy. These were terrible people, these were violent people, these were wicked people. And just like a reasonable person wouldn't blame a judge for sentencing a convicted murderer to the death penalty (or at very least life imprisonment), a reasonable person would not blame God for sentencing a convicted sinner.

And so when Noah had finished building the ark, God sent the flood upon the earth. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. But it took much longer than that before Noah and his family could leave the ark. It was six months after they entered the ark that it finally came to rest on the Mountains of Ararat. But even then, Noah and his family waited. They waited until the mountains were visible, they waited until most of the ground was visible, and they waited another two months after that for the ground to dry up. And even then it was only when God spoke to Noah and said, **"Come out of the ark,"** that Noah left the boat. It had been an entire year since Noah had set foot on dry ground.

What was the first thing Noah did? **"Noah built an altar to the Lord and he sacrificed burnt offerings on it."** The aroma was pleasing to God, and God gave the wonderful promise, **"Never**

again will I curse the ground because of man even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood." In it we have not only a wonderful promise by God, but also an indictment against the human condition. God basically said he's not going to destroy the entire world again, even though mankind is still evil.

DON'T MISS THE POINT, the flood didn't actually change the human condition, the flood didn't make everyone perfect. And that's something important for us to remember as well today. It's not just that the world isn't perfect. It's not just that many in the world are wicked. It's that we are included in that number. When God says, "**every inclination of his heart is evil all the time**," that applies to us as well. And when we think about it, we realize how true it is.

Perhaps the most common way this comes out is through selfishness. We all know people who have a tendency to be selfish – those who don't seem to care about what others think, who are always looking out for what's best for them. But let's face it, we have tendencies to be selfish too. It's the selfish tendency that compares ourselves to others. It's the selfish tendency that gets upset or envious when we don't get what we feel we deserve (and somebody else does). It's the selfish tendency that says I'll get around to God, church, Bible study and devotion when it's convenient for me. It's the selfish tendency that makes us wish God would destroy those we deem as wicked right now. It's the selfish tendency that convinces us that we're worth saving, just like Noah was.

But DON'T MISS THE POINT. Noah wasn't worth saving because he acted kinder, acted less violent, acted more Godly than the rest. Noah was a sinful man just like the people around him. This was perhaps the point that the movie *Noah* brought out too much, Noah realized that he was just wicked as the rest. Granted his sinfulness probably didn't display itself in outright ungodliness, but God's justice doesn't grade on a curve – for Noah, or for us. Noah was just as deserving to die in the flood for his sins, just like we would have been. This is God's justice.

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While we certainly don't want to miss that point, the point that is even more important NOT TO MISS is the point about Noah's righteousness. Once again, this was the part that was severely missing in the movie *Noah*. Was Noah perfect? No. Did Noah try hard? Probably. But that isn't what made him righteous. Noah was not righteous because he did the best he could, Noah was not righteous because God just happened to have pity on him. Noah was righteous because God gave him faith to trust in the promise of a Savior.

You see, when the world began, everything was perfect. Perfect, that is, until Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit. Since that time, each and every person that has lived on this earth has disobeyed God again, and again, and again. But right after Adam and Eve fell into sin, God gave a promise. A promise that a Savior would come from Eve's children. He would undo what was done in the Garden of Eden. And each generation passed down the promise to the next. Noah was the tenth generation from Adam who received the promise. Noah surely realized he couldn't live up to God's standard, but he trusted that a Savior would do so for him.

It would be another few thousand years after Noah lived before that Savior would come, but come he did, because God always keeps his promises. It was hope in the promise of Jesus coming that made Noah righteous before God. It made Noah righteous before God, because the

righteousness, the perfect life that Savior lived was transferred to Noah, and the punishment that Noah deserved for his sin was transferred to Jesus on the cross, even though Noah lived a few thousand years before. It was that same righteousness that was transferred to everyone who believed God's promise in the Old Testament. It was God's people the Jews who were the primary recipients of that promise.

Nothing has changed in God's plan. Just like Noah was saved from the flood and considered righteous in God's eyes because of his faith in a promise to come, we are saved from the fires of hell because of faith in a promise completed. This faith in our Savior Jesus Christ and what he has already completed for us covers over our sins of selfishness. This is the only thing that allows us to stand righteous before God, and to believe anything else contradicts God's Word.

We were made righteous when the Holy Spirit worked the spark of faith in our hearts – perhaps at our baptisms, perhaps later in life. Having been made righteous we have been given an awesome opportunity. Just like Noah was given an opportunity to give evidence to his faith, to give evidence to his righteousness by building an ark for all to see, we are given the opportunity to give evidence of our faith in God's promise. God has promised he would not destroy the entire world, even though the thoughts of man are evil. Our goal as Christians is not to try and dissuade the wicked from their wickedness, that would be like pulling the head of the weed but leaving in its root. Our goal as Christians is to share the patience of our God and encourage the world not to gamble their lives with God's patience.

So our goal as Christians is not to picket outside of movie theaters about how deviant a particular Bible movie is from the original story, that would be MISSING THE POINT of what God wants us to know and do. We can consider the actions of Noah as the ark grounded on the mountains of Ararat, both recognizing God's righteous judgment, but also recognizing God's gracious mercy. May God give you strength to remember the main point of God's Word. Amen.