

Salvation through Judgment

Genesis 7

Introduction

Let's pray.

--

Happy New Year!

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It's hard to believe, isn't it?—

That 2021 is over, and 2022 is here.

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As you see on your outlines, we will continue in Genesis this morning—chapter 7—

So we're not deviating to a special text with a more pointedly "New Year's" theme.

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But I do want to take a few minutes at the beginning here—

For us to think about something that we usually connect with the New Year.

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Traditionally, there is something people make this time of year having to do with goals—

Usually connected with finances, diet, exercise, work, family—

What do we call these goals we make at this time of year?

Yes, ***New Year's Resolutions.***

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What ***is*** a New Year's Resolution?

Well, at its most basic, a New Year's Resolution represents an agenda, or a plan.

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When people make "New Year's Resolutions," they are—

Theoretically—

Committing to a certain course of action—

Or to the development of a new habit pattern—

In the New Year.

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What I want us to think about for a moment is this:

Is this a ***biblical*** idea—

This making of New Year's Resolutions?

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I would submit to you that it ***is*** a biblical idea.

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It is VERY biblical to pause—

Even every day, and particularly on certain occasions—

(God has built this into the lives of both Israel and the church)

It is right and biblical for us to take time to consider **ways** in which we should RESOLVE to change our habits—

And to pursue better courses of action in our lives.

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So bottom level—

Yes, the idea of a New Year's Resolution is **biblical**.

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But **now** think for a moment about what our eyes tend to be on when we make these resolutions.

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Perhaps, most notoriously—

Our eyes are on the bathroom scale, as we lament our indulgence in so much feasting during recent weeks.

And at the same time, our eyes are on images designed to bombard us especially at this time of year—

Of people who have mastered their diets and workouts and have fit, healthy bodies to show for it.

And we think—

THERE!

That's what I want.

That would be an IMPROVEMENT, and I'm going to resolve to do the hard work it takes to look like that in the New Year!

--

Or, perhaps—

Our eyes are on our bank statements.

And we think—OKAY, the extra spending and the gift giving has been fun—

But that monthly government check isn't coming anymore—

And we should tighten our belts a bit.

By the end of 2022, wouldn't it be nice to have cultivated some extra financial discipline—

And to have a decent cash reserve to show for it by this time next year?

That's a good New Year's Resolution.

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Or, perhaps our eyes are on our relationships.

I'm going to be better about listening to my wife—

Or about spending time with my kids.

Or about investing at church.

I see that the things I've been spending my time on have left me too empty this past year—

And my New Year's Resolution is to invest in RELATIONSHIPS—

That way, I'll feel much more FULFILLED a year from now than I do today.

--

Now if it seems like I'm about ready to condemn these things, let me just say—

None of these are *bad* resolutions.

But at the same time, they all have something in common that **CAN** BE a trap for us.

What do all these have as their focus, at least as I've worded them?

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Generally speaking—

These and about a million other resolutions we could make—

All have selfish EARTHLY good as their goal.

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I will feel better if I look a certain way, if I weigh less, if I have more money, if I can gain more fulfillment from my relationships.

I will feel better—

I will *be* better—

If I can work hard to achieve one or more of these goals.

--

These are the things of everyday life.

And certainly we **do** have a responsibility to be good stewards of these areas of our lives.

HOWEVER, if our eyes are on **these** things—

And as a result, our pursuits and habits are **driven** by them—

We risk missing the warning Scripture gives repeatedly in connection with our text for today.

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Listen to these words from Jesus as He connects the events of the flood to the need for vigilance in the lives of His followers—

These words of Jesus come from Matthew chapter 24, starting with verse 38:

38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage [**notice: everyday things of this life**], until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

...

44 For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.

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And of course—

As we read this morning already in 2 Peter 3—

Peter uses the events of the flood in a very similar way.

And as you see on your outlines, he gives us the key question for our sermon this morning.

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Directing our attention to the reality of the flood judgment as taught in our text today—

And to its connection with the certainty of the coming judgment—

Peter writes this:

“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (2 Pet 3:11).

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Beloved, this is the question.

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The question is not WHETHER you *should* make a resolution.

You should do so, and in all likelihood you **WILL** do so.

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The question is where **will your eyes be when you do**—

And whatever you see when you gaze there—

What difference will that make in the kind of life you lead going forward?

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What we find in today's text are three components of God's Salvation through Judgment—

That can help teach us about **the kind of life we must live in holy conduct and godliness** in light of these things.

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If you haven't done so already, I invite you to open your Bibles with me—

And please stand for the reading of God's Word.

The Word of God, from Genesis chapter 7:

- 1 Then Yahweh said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.
- 2 You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and his female;
- 3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep their seed alive on the face of all the earth.

- 4 For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.”
- 5 And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.
- 6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.
- 7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.
- 8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground,
- 9 by twos they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.
- 10 Now it happened after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.
- 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.
- 12 Then the rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.
- 13 On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,
- 14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind— every fowl, every winged creature.

- 15 So they came to Noah into the ark, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.
- 16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him.
- 17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water multiplied and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.
- 18 And the water prevailed and multiplied greatly upon the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water.
- 19 And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.
- 20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.
- 21 And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind.
- 22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.
- 23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.
- 24 And the water prevailed upon the earth 150 days.

MAY THE LORD ADD HIS BLESSING TO THE
READING OF HIS WORD.

You may be seated.

--

What we find in these twenty-four verses is—
God's account through Moses—

Of the most staggering earthly example of God's
"SALVATION THROUGH JUDGMENT."

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As we began to see last week in Genesis 6—

One of the keys to understanding God's salvation,
even though it can be a little hard to swallow—

Is to understand that God's SALVATION is
accomplished ***THROUGH*** judgment.

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And although the supreme instance of this is the
judgment that took place against Jesus on the
cross—

What we find in this account in Genesis 7 is an
account of how God's judgment has—

HISTORICALLY—

Touched this earth in a way that brings—

BOTH—

The terror of judgment to the unrepentant—

And the hope of salvation to those who trust in the LORD.

--

As you see on your outlines—

We find this “SALVATION through JUDGMENT” broken into three components in this text.

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Starting in verse 1, we find the FIRST component of God’s Salvation through Judgment:

1. A Holy Separation (1-10)

In verse 17 of the previous chapter, God gave His most detailed description yet of the judgment He was about to bring:

“As for Me, behold I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall breathe its last.”

--

God was going to flood the earth with water, and all life—

Including all people on earth—

Would die in the flood.

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Alongside the depiction of coming judgment in chapter 6—

We also saw God's promises and instructions by which He would sustain the lives of Noah and his family.

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Here in verse 1 of chapter 7, God begins to fulfill these promises and instructions—

As he calls Noah to separate from all life (especially human life) on earth, by entering the ark with only his family:

“Then Yahweh said to Noah, ‘***Enter the ark***, you and all your household, for ***you alone*** I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.’”

--

In addition to this command to Noah, who ALONE is righteous in his generation—

A further key to understanding the dominant theme of “HOLY SEPARATION” here is found in God's instructions in verse 2.

Whereas in chapter 6 God had indicated only generally that he would bring animals in pairs to be preserved in the ark—

Here He specifies that He is making a ***distinction*** among the animals.

God says to Noah:

“You shall take with you of every **CLEAN** animal by ***sevens***, a male and his female; and of the animals that are **not clean**, ***two***, a male and his female...”

--

Now there is some question here as to how Noah would have known which animals were clean—

Given that such specification is not given in Scripture until Leviticus 11.

But this is a question that is easily resolved by the fact that it was not Noah who was in charge of choosing the animals to enter the ark—

God had said (in verse 20 of chapter 6) that the animals to board the ark would come to Noah—

And we will find here in chapter 7 (vv. 9, 15) that this is exactly what happened.

And so, *implicitly*—

Even though the details are not recorded here—

If he hadn't *already* known, Noah would have learned from this event which animals were clean.

They would have been the ones who showed up in seven pairs, as opposed to just one.

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More importantly for our purposes—

We should ask—

What is the *point* of this distinction between CLEAN and UNCLEAR animals?

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Here it will help us to think ahead to the book—

Also written by Moses—

Where the theology of this is really worked out:
LEVITICUS.

--

What is the point of all the laws regarding food and clothing and mildew and disease?

What's the point of all the Old Testament laws that talk about the reality of contamination and the importance of separation?

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The point of these laws is the same as the major point of the book of LEVITICUS—

In a word, **HOLINESS**.

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In the context of Leviticus, God had brought His people out of slavery in Egypt.

They were to be a HOLY people, set apart for His HOLY purpose.

Israel was to be a HOLY nation, and they were to look different from other nations in MANY specified ways—in terms of:

- How they worshipped.
- What they wore.
- How they lived.
- What they ate.

--

If we think about this theology of a distinction between CLEAN and UNCLEAN animals making its first appearance here in Genesis 7—

And of how it's supposed to teach a separation of God's people from other people, setting them apart as a people of holiness—

Is that something we see in this text?

YES.

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And hopefully this is becoming clear: **God is connecting these two things here.**

God is calling Noah to separate himself and his family from the world that is under judgment—

And—

He is using the separation of animals into the categories of clean and unclean **as an object lesson** that would teach God's people about holiness throughout the Old Testament.

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Noah and his family—

And animals to be used for their food and for worship—

Are set apart here unto **A Holy Separation.**

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This holy separation is effected—

In verses 5-10—

Through a combination of Noah's obedience and God's sovereign action.

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In verse 5, the emphasis on Noah's complete obedience, which we saw last week, is repeated using the same wording from chapter 6:

5 And Noah *did* according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.

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This obedience is further described in verses 6-7, as the now six hundred year old Noah enters the ark with his family.

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In verses 8-9, the animals come to the ark just as God had said.

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And, finally, the separation of Noah from the rest of the world is accomplished in verse 10, with the arrival of the flood:

10 Now it happened after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

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This is the first component of God's Salvation through Judgement—

God separates His people, those He sees as righteous—

Unto **A Holy Separation** from all others on the earth, who are subject to His coming judgment.

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So what does this mean for us?

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Consider again how you might think about things like New Year's Resolutions.

If we are called—like Noah was—

To A Holy Separation—

What difference will that make in terms of how we make plans and set goals?

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Recall the way that Jesus and Peter later apply this lesson.

The world is full of concerns about circumstantial wellbeing and relational happiness.

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We'll save the specifics for later—

But for now—

Just realize—that our goals—

Our plans—

Our RESOLUTIONS—

Should generally **NOT** **be** like the world's.

This is true **AT LEAST** when it comes to what they are at their root, and at their ultimate end.

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This is why we find verses in the Bible like 2 Corinthians 6, verses 16-17:

- 16 Or what agreement has a sanctuary of God with idols? For we are a sanctuary of the living God; just as God said,
 "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
 AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.
- 17 THEREFORE, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," SAYS THE LORD.
 "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN,
 AND I WILL WELCOME YOU.

--

God calls us here—and this is a New Testament text—

God calls His people to **A Holy Separation**.

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Similarly, we read in 1 Peter 4:3:

"For the time already past is sufficient for you to have worked out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries."

--

Friends, the world has *its* goals.

WE ARE TO HAVE DIFFERENT GOALS.

Peter assumes—

Rightly—

That we all have experience pursuing the things
the world desires.

And although some items in his list might not
appeal to you, consider that we are able to make
anything—

Even good things like marriage and family and
work—

We, like the world, can and do make even good
things into all-consuming desires—into idols.

And the pursuit of these things—

Even good things, if we pursue them for their own
sakes—

This will dull our senses and cause us to look like
the world.

Ultimately, this will lead us to ignore the Bible's
warnings, and to pursue the world even as we
head with it to its coming judgment.

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Rather than this—

The first component of God's Salvation through
Judgment—

We are called to **A Holy Separation.**

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With verse 11, we find a shift to a focus on the HISTORICAL TIMING—

And the HISTORICAL, PHYSICAL phenomena—
Of the event of the flood.

And with this shift, we find our next component of God's Salvation through Judgment:

2. A Gracious Preservation (11-16)

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- 11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.
- 12 Then the rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

--

One of the first observations we should make in these verses has to do with the specificity of the date given—

This was the:

- Six hundredth year of Noah's life
- The second month
- The seventeenth day of the month

On THIS day, it says—

“All the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.”

--

Now this is something I've already pointed out in Genesis—

And so I won't spend much time on it here—

Once again, what we find here is very clear evidence these early chapters of Genesis are **indeed HISTORICAL NARRATIVE.**

The HISTORICITY of this cannot be dismissed by saying this is some other genre.

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Myth, and even ***poetry*** do not assign such specific dating to events.

--

And here, with the specific dates, it is OBVIOUS that God through Moses is identifying the **exact** day—

Relative to Noah's life—

When he and his family entered the ark and the flood began.

--

This is ***further*** emphasized with the first few words of verse 13—

In the Hebrew, this is an idiom—literally: **"in the bone of this day..."**

Or—

As it probably says in your Bible—

“On this very day.”

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This is impossible to mistake for any honest interpreter—

This is a claim to historical fact.

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Why belabor this point?

Well, most essentially, because we **need** to know that God’s Word is trustworthy.

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As many advocates of biblical inerrancy have explained over the years—

If the Bible cannot be trusted in EVERYTHING it claims, down to the smallest historical detail—

Then how can we possibly trust it in the **big** things?

In other words, if the historical events it reports relative to the flood are not true history—

Then how can we trust that other historical events the Bible reports—

Like the death and resurrection of Jesus—

Actually happened.

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As Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15—

If we lose the HISTORY, we lose the THEOLOGY—

For: if there is no resurrection, our faith is in vain, and we are to be pitied.

It is clear from these verses especially that the book of Genesis is HISTORICAL NARRATIVE—

JUST LIKE THE RESURRECTION of Christ—

And it must be read and proclaimed as such.

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Continuing in verses 13-16 of Genesis 7—

We find that this historical emphasis is DIRECTLY CONNECTED with ***God's Gracious Preservation***:

- 13 **On this very day** Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,
- 14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind— every fowl, every winged creature.
- 15 So they came to Noah into the ark, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

--

We saw in chapter 6 that God was making two promises that seemed to be in tension with each other—

He would, EXTINGUISH all life that was in the earth—

But, at the same time, He would preserve Noah and his family.

--

Here we find that on the very day (“in the bone of this day”) —

The specific, historical day—

When the earth for the first time split so that the flood waters would come up from the ground—

And when the “windows of heaven” opened so that the flood waters would come down from the sky—

God was faithful to at the same time **preserve**—

In Noah and his sons and in the animals he brought into the ark—

“All flesh in which was the **breath of life.**”

--

Now recall from chapter 6—

From the language of God’s “repentance,” and the actions that He said would accompany it—

How we saw that God was going to “UNCREATE” everything He had made.

This was God’s judgment against creation—

It had corrupted itself, and God’s bringing of destruction would simply confirm and complete the self-destruction man had begun.

But here—

With this “Gracious Preservation” —

We find that God is not just DESTROYING creation.
He is also making provision for a NEW CREATION.

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As He puts Noah and his family in the ark,
together with male and female animals who can
repopulate the earth—

God is putting the *seed* of a new creation in the
ark.

--

Verse 16 restates this in a way that emphasizes
God's decisive role:

16 And those that entered, male and female of
all flesh, entered as God had commanded
him; and **Yahweh closed it behind him.**

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Yahweh had given His commands and instructions.

And with **Noah**, we find that he *had the heart to
obey* all of Yahweh's instructions.

With the **animals**, it seems, they *simply DO what
Yahweh has appointed* them to do—

They enter the ark as part of "ALL FLESH" which
Yahweh preserves.

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But then note *especially* the words at the end of
verse 16:

"... and Yahweh closed it behind him."

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While God gave Noah a stewardship in his own salvation—

And Noah diligently obeyed—

*We find here one more indication that **this was God's preservation from start to finish.***

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God had seen the misery of His people.

God had decided to act.

God had set apart Noah as righteous and blameless before Him—

Through whom human life and the promise of its redemption was to be preserved through judgment.

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And in terms reminiscent of the Psalms, it is God who finishes the job.

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Listen to these similar words from the Psalms:

- Psalm 34:7 – **“The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear Him, / And rescues them”**
- Psalm 125:2 – **“As the mountains surround Jerusalem, / So Yahweh surrounds His people / From now until forever”**

- Psalm 139:5-6 – “**You have enclosed me behind and before,** / And You have put Your hand upon me.”

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Beloved, **this is what Yahweh does.**

He graciously preserves His people, accomplishing salvation through the obedience of His Servant—

And it is He who encloses us in His salvation.

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So we've seen—

First—

A Holy Separation:

That God made a distinction between His people whom He would save—

And all others who would perish.

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And now we've seen—

A Gracious Preservation.

While God has commanded and taught His people to be set apart unto holiness—

ULTIMATELY, God shows that our preservation is His work—

His accomplishment.

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Building on what we've observed already from the first component—

That we are to be different in our goals and pursuits and plans—

What difference does this **second** component of God's "Salvation through Judgment" make for us?

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In large part, this is a matter of MOTIVATION.

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What is the benefit of "A Holy Separation" **on its own?**

Israel's history answers this question in abundance.

This is part of what's on Paul's mind when he writes—

In Colossians 2 verse 23—

That distinctions between clean and unclean—

Reflected in commandments like "do not taste, do not touch"—

Such distinctions and rules have NO VALUE on their own.

--

For there to be any value whatsoever in "A Holy Separation"—

**That “Holy Separation” must be connected with
God’s “Gracious Preservation.”**

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In other words, beloved: **we need Christ.**

WE NEED THE SEED PROMISE—

Preserved here in Genesis 7 in the ark through
Noah—

And in Him and with Him, the promise of new
creation.

--

Why ***should*** we be ready—

And not just ready, but **EAGER—**

For our desires and plans and “New Year’s
Resolutions” to look different from the world?

Because—

POSITIVELY—

We have Christ.

This is the *positive* side of our motivation.

WE HAVE THE PROMISE OF NEW CREATION.

--

All the pain and toil and grief and curse and
death—

All of it, we will find, is covered by the waters of
God’s judgment in Genesis 7—

But the hope of our SALVATION is secured.

It is **GUARANTEED** here through **God's Gracious Preservation.**

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So we have seen the first two components of God's "SALVATION through JUDGMENT"—

A Holy Separation—

And—

A Gracious Preservation.

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We find with the third component—

That the **MOTIVATION** for God's people to ***separate and be holy*** is not only POSITIVE—

It is also NEGATIVE.

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Component #3 of "SALVATION through JUDGMENT"...

3. A Mighty Devastation (17-24)

Verses 17-18:

- 17** Then the flood came upon the earth **for forty days**, and the water multiplied and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

18 And the water **prevailed** and **multiplied**
greatly upon the earth, and the ark went on
the surface of the water.

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The MAJOR EMPHASIS in these verses—

And it continues through verse 24—

Is on **the all-consuming POWER of God's
judgment.**

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God had made clear by the end of chapter 6 that
His judgment would be accomplished **by means of
a flood.**

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Here, this is graphically fulfilled.

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The POWER—

Or, MIGHT—

Of this DEVASTATION is related through the text
in a number of ways.

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FIRST: The flood came upon the earth **for forty
days.**

Both in Exodus (when Moses spends forty days
and 40 nights on Sinai)—

And in Jesus' temptation in the wilderness—

In both of those cases, as here, the number of days—

40 days—

Has the connotation of **a LONG time**.

This is a constant, **40-DAY-LONG** deluge of FLOOD WATERS on the earth.

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SECONDLY, it says—repeatedly—

The waters **MULTIPLIED**.

We find this in verse 17—

And then, verse 18, that the waters multiplied GREATLY.

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This word—

MULTIPLY—

This calls to mind the creation mandate.

But here, *instead of people* multiplying—

The flood waters are MULTIPLYING in the earth—

To the end that **all people will be blotted out** of it.

Once again we see, this is God's UNCREATION of what He had made.

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Moreover, in verse 18, it says, the waters
“PREVAILED.”

This term is used **three more times**—

The waters are said to *prevail* “**MORE** and **MORE**”
in verse 19; they *prevail* again in verse 20, and
once more in verse 24.

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*Significantly here, this term “PREVAILED” has a
connotation of MILITARY VICTORY.*

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This is God’s MIGHTY MILITARY VICTORY.

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Recall the rebellion instigated in the garden,
when the serpent showed up, and humanity
rebelled with him—

FIRST in Adam and Eve—

And then—

As we’ve seen since—

In the “GREAT ONES” in the earth who conspired
with the “Sons of God.”

***Men and angels had gone to war against God,
and thereby against those who belong to God.***

--

And if you think about it, doesn't this line up with what we find in so much of the Bible?

For example, in Psalm 2 we read that:

“...the nations rage / And the peoples meditate on a vain thing... / The kings of the earth take their stand / And the rulers take counsel together / Against Yahweh and against His Anointed, saying, / ‘Let us tear their fetters apart / And cast away their cords from us!’”

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The great ones of the earth—

And the powers of the air—

The thrones and kingdoms and rulers and authorities—

All of these are willful in their rebellion.

--

They are at war with God.

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And in Genesis 6, as we saw—

God surveyed the land, and **He determined** that He would restrain this rebellion.

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Here, in verses 18-20, we find that **His judgment PREVAILS.**

This is a scene where God's MIGHTY MILITARY VICTORY is in view.

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He who sits in the heavens brings His judgment—
And HIS JUDGMENT prevails—

None of those in rebellion can escape.

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As you may know, it is generally thought that Psalms 1 and 2 are connected by more than just their adjacent positioning in the Bible—

Perhaps even that they were originally one Psalm.

--

I was struck by that connection as I considered this week the second part of verse 20 here in Genesis 7:

As "*The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher,*" it says...

"THE MOUNTAINS WERE COVERED."

--

In Psalm 1 verse 5 it says that "*the wicked will not stand in the judgment.*"

And I couldn't help but be struck by this thought:

As God's waters of judgment prevailed, they literally made this TRUE on the earth—

Once the waters covered even the tallest mountains, **there was LITERALLY no place left to stand on the earth.**

--

God's judgment—

His mighty, GREATLY MULTIPLYING judgment—

PREVAILED.

No one could stand.

--

Continuing on, the **devastating** effects of this MIGHTY judgment are clearly seen—

Verse 21:

--

21 And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind.

22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

--

In these verses, we find fulfillment of at least two of God's earlier statements.

--

FIRST, God had said in chapter 2 verse 17 that the consequence of sin would be DEATH.

--

Just ten verses earlier, He had given life to man—

As He “formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.”

--

The words of verse 22 in particular—

“All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life” —

Those words intentionally call to mind that scene from chapter 2.

--

Furthermore, this makes good on God’s statement in chapter 6, verse 3—

That His Spirit would not strive (or remain) with man forever—

The 120-year timeframe has expired, and God here removes the breath of His Spirit from the nostrils of all flesh.

--

Although this judgment is seen here to be principally against man who had rebelled—

It is all of creation as well.

“All flesh” includes not just all mankind, but also the birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth.

The very same language used in the creation account to describe the GOOD creation God had made—

Is used here of God's judgment of UNCREATION.

--

Everything God has created, He destroys—

He UNCREATES—

In this MIGHTY DEVASTATION.

--

Verse 23 recapitulates this, both for emphasis, and as a summary:

- 23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth;

And verse 24:

- 24 ... the water prevailed upon the earth 150 days.

--

--

With this, the MIGHTY DEVASTATION of God's judgment is seen to be absolute.

EVERY LIVING THING is blotted out.

And notice the similarity to the situation BEFORE CREATION in Genesis 1.

Everything was formless and void, and what was over the surface of the deep?

Only the waters.

--

God's creatures have gone to war against Him—
And He has fought back, as promised.

--

While the flood does not represent the DECISIVE battle—

It is the first one we see in Scripture.

And the results of it are undeniable.

--

It is no wonder that—

As He looks on the scheming rebellion of the kings and authorities of the world—

As it says in Psalm 2: He who sits in the heavens laughs.

--

There is NO ONE who can stand in the MIGHTY DEVASTATION of God's judgment.

--

--

Now you may have noticed that there were a couple of details in these final verses which I haven't addressed.

--

Again, there is a *tension* we have been observing throughout this narrative—

Extending back to chapter 6:

Even in the midst of this third component—

“A Mighty Devastation”—

There is overlap in these verses with God’s Gracious PRESERVATION.

--

We find here—

Indeed—

SALVATION through judgment.

--

Most straightforwardly, in verse 23—

Even as “every living thing,” including “all mankind” is blotted out upon the face of the land—

Yet it says... “Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.”

--

And notice that this accompanies the word PREVAILED again, verse 24—

The waters PREVAILED—

The effect this creates—

Rightly understood—

Is that **the preservation of Noah and His family in the ark is actually part of God's MILITARY VICTORY.**

--

The rebellion against God was also a rebellion against His Seed—

Against not only the promised Messiah, but all who are with Him and in Him as the seed of the woman—

Which includes Noah.

And so, **part of God's victory is the defense and preservation of His seed which was attacked by the rebellion.**

--

Backing up a little further, we catch a glimpse of this also in verse 17:

17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water multiplied and **lifted up** the ark, so that it **rose** above the earth.

What we see here at the very least is that the Ark is **rising** and being **lifted up above the earth**, so that those in it can escape the judgment.

This, again, would be part of God's gracious provision of "SALVATION through JUDGMENT."

--

Now this next part I don't want to make too much of—

Mainly because I wasn't able to find other commentators who mention it—

But the wording here is strikingly similar to other texts connected with God's **MESSIANIC** salvation.

--

What we find here is **the same wording** as in *other places where the Messiah is said to be "HIGH and LIFTED UP"*.

--

First, in Balaam's prophecy of the Messiah in Numbers 24:7, it says—

The seed and king of Jacob "will be **lifted up higher** than Agag."

And—

Much later—

In Isaiah 52:13, Yahweh says of His Servant (the Messiah):

"Behold, My Servant will prosper; / He will be **high** and **lifted up** and greatly exalted."

--

FINALLY—

In John 12:32, in describing His own judgment at the cross, Jesus connects these words with Himself:

“And I, if I am **lifted up from the earth**, will draw all men to Myself.”

--

What is the significance of this?

Well even if it's not linguistically connected, which I do think it is—

All of this is certainly connected theologically.

--

At the crescendo of His MIGHTY DEVASTATION—

In the midst of the JUDGMENT God pours out in the flood—

We find this hope:

The ark, and those in it, are preserved.

--

And even so—

At the crescendo of JUDGMENT poured out at the cross—

Even as Christ is high and lifted up on the cross above the earth—

He draws all men to Himself, and all who are in Him are preserved.

--

The promise of a New Creation is preserved both through the MIGHTY devastation of the flood—

And through the MIGHTY devastation of the cross.

--

This THIRD COMPONENT of God's Salvation through Judgment shows—

Most clearly of all—

That God's SALVATION is one that is **through** judgment.

--

--

Conclusion

So, beloved, we return to the question—

In light of all of this—

In light of the historical judgment of the flood—

And all the rich theology we find connected with it—

“What sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?”

--

What difference should this make in your lives, in your plans, your decisions, your goals, your actions—

Today and in the New Year and always?

--

--

Many of you are familiar with John Bunyan's classic *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

(And if you're not, there's your first New Year's Resolution – Read *Pilgrim's Progress*!)

--

As Christian is on his way to the Celestial City—

And at this point in the story he's accompanied by his friend Faithful—

Christian and Faithful find that they must pass through a town called “Vanity Fair.”

Vanity Fair has every kind of delight and diversion its townspeople can conceive of—

And they begin offering all these supposed enjoyments to Christian and Faithful as soon as they enter the town.

Much to the **surprise** of the town's residents—

Christian and his friend have ABSOLUTELY NO INTEREST in the pleasures on offer at Vanity Fair.

--

Why?

Because Christian had left what was once his home—

A place called the City of Destruction.

--

Although Christian was born in the same condition as the people of Vanity Fair—

He had received a summons from the Celestial City.

--

That is to say—

In keeping with Bunyan’s allegory—

Christian had been set apart unto a HOLY SEPARATION.

--

And even as he looks forward to the promised joy—

To the “NEW CREATION” of the Celestial City—

Christian knows the truth about Vanity Fair and its diversions.

Just like the City of Destruction, *Vanity Fair is already judged.*

--

Friends, this is the lesson of the flood.

Where does John Bunyan get this theology?

How do we understand, biblically, that this world is already judged?

How can we know that the diversions on offer from this world—

The fleshly delights and allurements and entertainments reflected in Bunyan’s “Vanity Fair”—

How do we know that to pursue the things that the world loves is to pursue judgment?

How do we know even, that as Jesus said, to pursue eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage—

How do we know that pursuing these things for their own sakes will lead us invariably to judgment?

--

We know the same way Jesus said we know:
By looking at the flood judgment.

--

Again, beloved, there is a negative side to this—
A whole world of people, in whose nostrils was the breath of life—God's gracious gift—
They were judged, and they perished in judgment because their desires and pursuits and—
Yes, their resolutions—
Were shaped by this world and its enticements.

--

But there is a positive side also: there is SALVATION through judgment—
And what God preserved through Noah—
The promise of the coming Messiah—
Beloved, He has come.
And you, like Noah, can find your refuge in Him—

In that He came, that He died the death you deserved—

And in that HE PROMISES TO COME AGAIN, to ESTABLISH the NEW CREATION—

Where we can have eternal life with God, which He has won—

And will win—

As His judgment prevails on earth.

--

--

Now, as I said—

I want to spend our final moments considering a few specifics of what this might look like for *us*.

If you take a moment to mark this change of year by surveying your own habits and choices and priorities—your trajectory in life—

What do you see?

--

Are *you* marked by a holy separation?

Is your hope in the promised new creation, because you know that this world—

With its priorities and pleasures and sins and their effects—

Is already judged—

And that these will be completely eradicated from your experience one day soon?

--

Is this reality where your hope lies?

--

Or do your hopes and dreams (and resolutions) look more like those of the world?

--

If you haven't trusted Christ before today for His salvation, the answer to this question is probably easy—

Your hope has been in this world—

In somehow gaining a better version of the life it supposedly offers.

--

Borrowing from Peter once more, I would exhort you to repent—

Identify with Jesus in His death in a way that reflects Noah's willingness to die to the world by entering the ark.

Peter writes (1 Peter 3:20b-21):

"... the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal of a good conscience to God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”

--

What does this connection teach?

Simply this: if you trust Christ for His salvation, you die with Him.

Like Noah, you die to this world that is under judgment.

And your willingness to enter the waters of baptism—

Corresponds with the judgment of the flood.

You willingly judge your OLD SELF and the world to which it was attached—

To which your hopes and dreams were tied.

And you choose instead to identify with Jesus.

You are in Him, in His death, and raised with Him from the waters of judgment—

TO NEW LIFE IN THE PROMISED NEW CREATION.

--

And so—if you haven't done so already—

Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.

--

--

And for those who HAVE done this already—

Are you living like it?

I am not saying you shouldn't make resolutions that reflect good stewardship of such things as your physical health and finances.

--

But I am asking this:

Do your habits and goals and priorities reflect the fact that this world is already judged—

And that your hope is in the promised new creation?

--

Do you find yourself prioritizing *physical nourishment, or sleep, **over time spent reading God's word?*** [P]

When it comes to a choice between church and another event scheduled for the Lord's day, which are you more likely to choose? [P]

In the inevitable give-and-take between spending money on yourself, and spending it on God's work here at home or around the world—

Where is your treasure? [P]

Do you *plan* to spend more time on physical exercise and getting your physical diet right in the New Year—

Or are you eager to commit **more** of your time and effort to training and growth in godliness?

Perhaps by taking a chance and humbling yourself to be disciplined?

Or by attending small group or Bible study, or going downtown with 4SG to share the gospel?

[P]

--

The way you answer these questions might help you see whether you are in the ark with Noah—

And in Christ in His death on the cross—

Or whether you are **more** inclined to seek your satisfaction in “Vanity Fair.”

-- --

Brothers and sisters, **if you know the Lord, you have a holy calling.**

--

You ARE—Like Noah—

Called to a holy ***separation***, unto a gracious ***preservation***—

In light of the mighty ***devastation*** of judgment we see in the flood and at the cross.

--

--

As we close in prayer, ask that the Lord would be kind to show you ways in which you might—

In this new year—

Show by your plans and priorities that you have died to this world under judgment, and that your hope is firmly fixed in heaven with Christ.

--

Let's pray.