

Noah: The Culture

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Genesis chapter 5. Genesis chapter 5, we're looking at the end of chapter 5 into the beginning of chapter 6 this evening.

But if we're reading in it, Genesis 5, verse 28. Genesis 5 at verse 28. But it reads there, And so on.

Amen. I'm sure we're all familiar with the children's hymn, Mr. Noah built an ark.

The people thought it such a lark. Mr. Noah pleaded so, but into the ark they would not go. Down came the rain in torrents. Down came the rain in torrents.

Down came the rain in torrents. But only eight were saved. And you know, whether we're familiar with the children's hymn or not, and whether we've read the biblical account of the flood or not, and whether we've even watched the blockbuster film starring Russell Crowe or not, I think everyone in our congregation and in our community and even in our country, they're all familiar with the story of Noah's ark.

[1 : 5 6] We're all familiar with the story of Noah's ark. Although I probably shouldn't call Noah's ark a story. Because it's not a story. Neither is it a legend, or a tale, or a myth, or a fable, or a fairy tale, or folklore.

No, the story of Noah's ark is history. And as you know, history is his story. History is God's story of salvation.

History is God's story of salvation. But sadly, and probably subtly, the story of Noah's ark that we often tell to our children and to our grandchildren, it's remarkably different from the reality.

Because as you know, a children's Bible, or even I noticed the other day, our creche intimation, when it comes out on the email, it pictures and portrays Noah and his family in a clean, well-constructed ark.

And there's blue skies, and there's big smiles, and they're all surrounded by these cute and cuddly animals with this bright rainbow beaming in the background. But you know, when you stop and actually study the biblical account, we're quickly brought to realize that the reality of Noah's ark was remarkably different.

[3 : 1 3] Because the history of Noah's ark, it was a history of darkness, of destruction, devastation, and death. The history of Noah's ark was a history of darkness, destruction, devastation, and death.

And yet, it's into that darkness, destruction, devastation, and death that God brings deliverance. And this evening, I'd like us to begin a study of this period in history.

Not only because Noah's day isn't too dissimilar to our own day, but also because Jesus reminds us in Matthew chapter 24. He says that as in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man.

So I think it's important for us to study the days of Noah. Because as in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man.

Now, as you know, the best place to start a study is with the context. So that's where we'll start this evening. We'll start with the context. So that's our first heading, the context.

[4 : 20] Look at verse 32. Here's the context. After Noah was 500 years old, Noah fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth. When teaching preachers how to preach, there was one professor who would always say, Men, there are three points to every sermon.

The text, the text, the text. So preach the text, the whole text, and nothing but the text. Because a text without a context is a pretext for a proof text, which makes a con of the text.

I'll say that again. A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text, which makes a con of the text. And so when beginning a study of a book of the Bible, or even a section of Scripture, it's always good to set the scene.

It's always good to place it within its historical context. But the thing about the context of Noah, it's a very interesting one. Because as you can see, we are not long into our Bible.

We're right at the beginning of our Bible. We're only into chapter 5 of our Bible. We're only into chapter 5 of the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis. Because we have the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2.

[5 : 37] We have the fall of mankind in Genesis 3. We have the conflict between Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. And then we have the genealogy of Adam all the way to Noah in Genesis 5.

We're not long into the Bible. We're only just a few pages in. In fact, according to the biblical narrative, boys and girls, according to the biblical narrative, the age of the earth at Noah's birth is 1,056 years old.

The age of the earth at Noah's birth, according to the Bible, is 1,056 years old. Of course, that all depends upon your view of the age of the earth, whether you believe in an old earth or a young earth.

Scientists will tell us that the earth is an old earth. It's estimated to be 4.5 billion years old, give or take 50 million years.

I'm not sure how they conjure up these figures that are often presented and portrayed by the media as absolute fact. But one of the founding fathers of the free church, amazingly, he believed in an old earth.

[6 : 45] Thomas Chalmers, who was a professor of theology, he was the first moderator of the free church of Scotland, and he was an advocate for what was known as the gap theory. The gap theory, which was a belief that the timeline of Genesis 1 wasn't six 24-hour days of creation, but instead it was actually six periods of creation spanning millions of years.

Personally, I'm of the view that the earth is a young earth, and I'm of the view that the earth is a young earth simply because the Hebrew word for day, boys and girls, is yom.

And yom is used throughout the Bible to refer to a 24-hour period, not a period of millions of years. Therefore, as is often said by those who hold this view, a yom is a yom.

A day is a day. A yom is a yom. And in the beginning, the Bible tells us that God created the heavens and the earth in the space of six days, six yoms, and all very good.

But more than that, I not only follow the fact that the Hebrew timeline is six literal days of creation, I would also follow the Hebrew year when understanding the age of our earth.

[8 : 06] Because the Hebrew year, it follows the chronology of the Bible. It follows the literal chronology of our Bible. And according to our Bible, according to the Hebrew year, the age of our earth in 2024 is only 5,784 years old.

5,784 years old. Admittedly, in comparison to the old earth theory of 4.5 billion years old, the young earth theory makes it a really, really young earth.

But it's a young earth that was created mature. It's a young earth that was created mature. And I say that, and this is my views, which I'm allowed to say. If you have different views, I'd love to chat about them.

It's always good to talk about these things. But, you know, I say that I have this belief that it's a young earth that was created mature because God's creation wasn't a creation of soil, seeds, and saplings.

That wasn't the creation of the six days. It was actually a creation of plants, trees, and fruit. They were fully grown animals that were created. And so when Adam and Eve were created, they weren't created as toddlers or teenagers.

[9 : 22] They were created as mature man and mature woman. It was a young earth created mature. And if the Hebrew year for 2024 is 5,784, that's 5,784 years old for the earth, then you work out that the creation, which is, this is the Jewish scholar's view of working out the Bible.

The creation took place in 3761 BC. Jewish scholars, they sometimes go too far. And they believe that the exact date of creation, the exact date that the creation took place, I don't know how they work it out, was the 7th of October.

So if your birthday is the 7th of October, 7th of October, 3761 BC. That's what they say is the exact date of the creation. What's more is that when you follow the biblical timeline given here in Genesis 5, you can not only work out that the earth was 1,056 years old when Noah was born, you can also work out that when God called and commissioned and commanded Noah, there in verse 32, to build the ark, we're told that he was 500 years old.

So the earth was therefore 1,556 years old. When Noah entered the ark 100 years later, he was 600 years old and the earth was 1,656 years old.

You work it all out, some people would believe that the flood took place in the year 2,105 BC. Of course, all these dates, they've all been discussed, they've all been debated, they've all been doubted over the years.

[11 : 12] But you know, it's interesting to study it. And yet, regardless of all these thoughts, all these theories about God's creation, it doesn't change our understanding of God's salvation.

It doesn't change what the gospel is and what the gospel is able to do. But into our world of darkness, destruction, devastation, and death, God has provided the means and the method of deliverance through his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so that's the context of the history of Noah. Secondly, we need to consider the culture. So the context and then the culture. The culture, that's where we go into chapter 6.

Look at chapter 6 at verse 1. When man began to multiply on the face of the land, and the daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive, and they took as their wives any they chose.

Then the Lord said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh. His days shall be one hundred and twenty years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man, and they bore children to them.

[12 : 34] These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. Now, as you know, the culture impacts and influences the contexts and concepts of people.

The culture, the culture around us, always impacts and influences our context, and even the concepts of people. Whether the culture is entertainment, whether that culture is sport, or news, or politics, or technology, or social media, whatever it is, the culture always will impact and influence the context, and even the concepts of people.

The culture will impact and influence our beliefs and our behavior. And we see that all around us. Our culture impacts and influences our beliefs and our behavior.

And that's what we see here. Because the culture in Noah's day was a culture of intermarriage. The culture of Noah's day was a culture of intermarriage.

Now, the opening verses of Genesis 6, I don't know why I started this evening here, but the opening verses of Genesis 6, they've often been interpreted with all, if you've read up on it before, you've been interpreted with all sorts of weird and wacky ideas.

[13 : 55] Where they emphasize and they explain that the Nephilim were either fallen angels, or they were demons, or some think they were aliens, and they intermarried with humans that produced giants, or the Nephilim.

And in order to push and promote these wild and wacky ideas, well, what do you do? You produce a film. And that's what happened again last year. 2023, they produced another film, another sci-fi film that was produced with the attractive and the attention-grabbing title, The Nephilim, Sodom, and Gomorrah, which is crazy, really, for a title.

They're in two separate parts of the Bible, although they're both taken from the book of Genesis. But, you know, sadly, far too often, our interpretation of the Bible comes from other and outside sources rather than from the Bible itself.

And yet, our confessional position, based upon the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, is that when we come to difficult passages, we are to use Scripture to interpret Scripture.

We're not to use outside sources. Sometimes history is helpful, but we're to often use Scripture to interpret Scripture. And when we use Scripture to interpret Scripture, we can actually work out who the Nephilim were and what was going on in the context and culture of Noah's day.

[15 : 19] And I say that because if we take a step back from these verses, and if we actually think about the story of the Bible, we think about the story of the Bible, we can see that the story of the Bible is a story of seed.

The story of the Bible is a story of seed because right at the beginning of our Bible, here in the book of beginnings, in the book of Genesis, that's where the story begins.

And then in Genesis chapter 3, we have the fall of mankind, where our catechism, it helpfully tells us and teaches us that the covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, his seed.

Therefore, we're told that all mankind, descending from Adam by ordinary generation, by his seed, they sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

In other words, the seed of Adam was corrupted by sin. That's why we call it original sin. It originated with the first man, Adam. And again, our catechism teaches us and tells us that the seed of Adam was so corrupted by sin that not only Adam, but all mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God.

[16 : 34] They're under his wrath and curse. They are so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. But the beautiful story of our Bible, and we always need to see this, is that into the problem of a sinful seed, God speaks with a promise of salvation.

Into the problem of a sinful seed, God speaks with a promise of salvation, because God spoke there in Genesis 3, verse 15, when he speaks to the serpent, the serpent who had deceived Eve, and he says to the serpent in Genesis 3, verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed.

He will bruise your head. You will bruise his heel. And from that point onwards, the story of the Bible becomes a story of seed, where there's the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, which ultimately is the seed of the Savior and the seed of Satan.

And so you see, the Bible is a story of seed. And as you follow this story of seed, as you follow it through the pages of Genesis into Exodus, Leviticus, and onwards through the story of the Bible, you see that it follows the story of the seed of the woman.

That's what we read in Genesis 5. It follows the seed of the woman from Adam to Noah's eldest son, Shem. Then you go to Genesis 11. It picks up the story of the seed of the woman from Shem to Terah's eldest son, Abraham, who became Abraham, who was promised that through his seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

[18 : 21] And it was all because the seed of the woman was being followed through from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and to Judah. And you know that through the line of Judah, the Savior would come to crush the head of this satanic serpent at the cross.

And you know, you look at the Bible, you step back from the Bible and you see that the story of the Bible is a story of seed. And so when it comes back to Genesis 6, and when it comes to the Nephilim and the context of Noah's day and the culture of intermarriage between the sons of God and the daughters of men, we have to see that the sons of God, they were not aliens or angels or demons.

The sons of God were the seed of the woman. They were the seed of the Savior. They were the seed of the Savior, which was the Son of God.

And the daughters of men, they were the seed of the serpent, the seed of Satan. Therefore, the Nephilim were told they were the result of a culture of intermarriage between the sons of God and the daughters of men, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between the seed of the Savior and the seed of Satan.

There's intermarriage going on. Now, some Bible versions, they translate the word Nephilim. Maybe you're using the authorized version. It will translate it as the word giant or giants, which is what it seems that the Nephilim were.

[19 : 55] They were, boys and girls, they were tall. They weren't small. They were tall. And we know this to be true because Scripture interprets Scripture. The Nephilim, they're mentioned in one other place in the Bible.

They're mentioned in Numbers chapter 13. And they're mentioned there in Numbers 13 when the Israelites, they're on the border of the promised land. And you remember, they've been in the wilderness for 40 years.

They're on the border of the promised land. They're waiting for the command to go into the promised land. But before they cross the Jordan River into the promised land, the Lord commands Moses to send out 12 spies to spy out the promised land.

And you remember that Joshua and Caleb, they came back with their good report saying, let's occupy the land. We can overcome them. But then the other 10 spies, they gave a bad report saying that we can't occupy the land.

We'll never overcome them because the Nephilim are of great height. So they're tall. But you know, I don't believe that the height of the Nephilim was the problem.

[21 : 05] Their height wasn't the problem. Their holiness was the problem. It wasn't the height of the Nephilim that was the problem. It was their holiness.

And this was a problem because as you know, the seed of the woman who were the seed of the Savior, the sons of God, the people of God, they were all commanded and called to be holy.

It's not what the Lord said to His people time and time again throughout the Old Testament. Be ye holy for I am holy. But the Nephilim, they were far from holy.

They were the result of intermarriage between the seed of the Savior and the seed of Satan. And you could say that the Nephilim, they were the result of a contaminated and confused seed.

The Nephilim were a confused culture. The Nephilim were a confused culture. And as we said, it's the culture that impacts and influences our behavior and our beliefs.

[22 : 06] And this is important to understand. I hope you're seeing this, if you're seeing it at all, see it slightly because it's important to understand because the Nephilim, they were the result of contaminating and confusing the worship of the Lord and pagan idols.

The Nephilim were the result of contaminating and confusing the worship of the Lord with pagan idols. And you know, it makes sense because again, when you step back from the Bible and you remember that the book of Genesis has Mosaic authorship.

Moses wrote the book of Genesis. Moses was told what to write in the book of Genesis. And Moses, as the author of this book, he sought to use this passage in Genesis to warn those in his day, the Israelites.

And he was warning them not only about the dangers of the Nephilim, but also that when the Israelites enter into the promised land, one of the things they are told right from the outset, do not marry them.

Do not intermarry with the Canaanite women because if you marry them, if you have intermarriage, if the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent are intermarried, it will corrupt your relationship with the Lord.

[23 : 31] And that was the warning throughout Israel's history. They were told time and time again not to intermarry with those who worship pagan idols. You see it throughout the history of Israel.

their downfall was always because they went to intermarry with other women. That's the warning throughout Israel's history. That's the warning we're being given here.

That as God's people, as God's people, we're called to be holy. But we're also not to confuse or contaminate the seed of the Savior with the seed of Satan.

we're not to mix and mingle our worship with the world. We're not to allow this confused culture around us to impact and influence our beliefs and our behavior.

And you know, it makes so much sense when you actually follow it through the story of the Bible because you come to the New Testament. And Paul, he's there, he's teaching the church in Corinth.

[24 : 34] He's telling the church in Corinth, a church that was completely contaminated, a church that was confused in their worship with the worldly culture around them.

And yet Paul asks them, and I love the way Paul asks them, because Paul, for Paul, a spade is a spade, and he just says it as it is. And he asks these Christians in Corinth, he says, what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

How are the two to mix? what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Satan? What portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

And Paul says, none. So he says, don't mix and mingle your worship with the world. He says, no, no, be ye separate from the world and come out from among them. Touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you.

And you know, Paul is reminding us, and the Bible as a whole is reminding us that this contaminated and confused culture around us will impact and influence our beliefs and our behavior if we mix and mingle with it.

[25 : 47] You know, I learned something a long time ago and I've said it so many times before and I'll say it again and I'm sure I'll keep saying it until my dying breath, that the Christian life is separation, is not isolation, it's contact without contamination.

Separation is not isolation, it's contact without contamination and that's what we see in Noah. My friend, Noah lived in a confused and contaminated culture much like our own because we live in a very confused and a very contaminated culture today where good is called evil and evil is called good.

But as we'll see next Lord's Day when we consider the captain of this ship and his crew, when we consider Noah, we see that Noah was very different, very distinct from the culture around him because Noah, he didn't concede, he didn't conform to the culture of his day because he was committed to the Lord.

He was committed because for Noah, separation is not isolation, it's contact without contamination. But you know, I read a quote the other day and I thought it was very telling.

John Stott, he was a preacher and minister down in London in All Saints Church for many, many years and this is what he said. He said, the greatest tragedy of the church throughout its long and checkered history has been its constant tendency to conform to the prevailing culture instead of developing a Christian counterculture.

[27 : 25] It's a great statement. The greatest tragedy of the church throughout its long and checkered history has been its constant tendency, you see that throughout the whole of the Old Testament, its constant tendency to conform to the prevailing culture instead of developing a Christian counterculture.

And it's so true because, you know my friend, far too often the church is conforming to the culture around it. and we're conforming rather than being transformed as Paul teaches us, being transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Far too often the Christian is in the world and the world is in the Christian. Far too often we're being impacted and influenced by the confused and contaminated culture around us rather than conforming to Christ and his Christian counterculture.

And when we consider Christ's culture, the counterculture he sets for us as those who are part of the kingdom of heaven, you see it all in the Sermon on the Mount, he sets for us the Christian counterculture.

And how does it look? It's a counterculture that's loaded with love, grounded in grace, and full of forgiveness. That's the Christian counterculture.

[28 : 47] That's what it means to conform to Christ, to be loaded with love, grounded in grace, and full of forgiveness. My friend, the context and culture of Noah's day was confused.

It was contaminated completely and continually corrupt. That brings us lastly and briefly to the concern. The context, the culture, and then the concern.

The concern, look at verse 5, and it's a real concern. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land.

Man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found favor or grace in the eyes of the Lord.

[29 : 54] You know, boys and girls, I believe that Noah was a Calvinist. I do. I believe that Noah was a Calvinist. Now, I say that because, as you know, a Calvinist or Calvinism, it's a term often used to describe and define the theology of the reformer John Calvin.

Although Calvin himself, he never came up with a term and he would have probably shuddered at the thought that anyone would ever describe themselves as a Calvinist. And yet a Calvinist or Calvinism, you could say that it's summarized by five points.

The five points of Calvinism or tulip, T-U-L-I-P. So T is for total depravity, U, unconditional election, L, limited atonement, I, irresistible grace, and P, perseverance of the saints.

And I believe that Noah was a Calvinist not only because, well, we read there in verse 8 that he found grace in the eyes of the Lord so he knew what irresistible grace was, but also because when Noah looked around and when Noah considered the confused and contaminated culture of his day, Noah could say and see just like the Lord said and saw that it was completely and continually corrupt.

And for that reason, Noah believed in the total depravity of humanity. That because of original sin descending from Adam through the seed of the woman, this world was in ruin.

[31 : 23] Absolute ruin. So much ruin that the Lord regretted. If you're using the authorized version, it says, repented that he had made man.

He regretted and repented that he made man. Not that God changed his mind and thought, I shouldn't have done this because God is unchangeable. He doesn't change his mind. But he, the language there is to express that the depravity of humanity grieved God in his heart so much that he was sorry that he made man.

So sorry that he decided and determined to blot out humanity by bringing judgment. Which is why God said, as we read earlier in verse 3, my spirit shall not always strive with man.

His day shall be 120 years. So a very solemn verse. My spirit shall not always strive with man. His day shall be 120 years.

Prior to this point in Genesis 6, people lived hundreds of years. We read that in Genesis 5. We read that they lived hundreds of years in Genesis 5.

[32 : 41] But because of sin, because of sin, God shortened the span of life. Because of sin, God put a time limit on life. And by the time of Moses, you remember in Psalm 90, Moses wrote Psalm 90, Moses writes in Psalm 90 that because of sin, more sin, God shortened the span of life even more from 120 to 3 score and 10.

And you know, and with this I'll conclude, we'll probably come back to it again as the weeks go on. But you know, the solemn thing about sin is that the wages of sin is death.

Therefore, whether long or short, there's a time limit on our lives. There's a time limit. I don't need to remind you of that. We are reminded of that almost every week.

We see funeral notices on We Love Stornoway and Heb News every week because there's a time limit on our lives. And that's the glaring message of Genesis 5.

We read through the whole of Genesis 5 and we saw there that whether long, which some of them lived really long, or whether short, there's a time limit on life because the wages of sin is death.

[33 : 55] And you know, I want us to see always come to Genesis 5. I think it's actually the most solemn and sobering chapter in the Bible is Genesis 5. It's a graveyard of names.

Genesis 5 is a graveyard. And you come to all these solemn and sobering statements that are repeated again and again and again. Three words.

And he died. And he died. And he died. And he died. My friend, it doesn't matter what context or culture we live in.

The concern we should all have, and I hope and pray it's your concern, is that there's a time limit on your life. There is a time limit on your life.

And we are reminded far too often that we do not know what a day nor an hour will bring in our life. Which is why our beautiful Bible calls us and commands us to seek the Lord while he is to be found and to call upon him while he is near.

[35 : 15] God. My friend, as we go through this study, I want us to see that as in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man.

And what Jesus emphasized in Matthew 24 is you need to be ready. You need to be ready.

So seek the Lord while he is to be found. Call upon him while he is near. Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for being able to come to thy word again this evening and to know that wherever we open it and whatever part of Scripture we turn to, we can find Jesus there on every page and that even in the life of Noah, we can find a type of Christ, one who was called to save a people, to deliver a people and to do it all to the glory of God.

And Lord, help us, we pray as we begin this study, to be reminded that as in the days of Noah, so will it be with the coming of the Son of Man. Help us then to be ready, to be watching and to be waiting, to know that he will come at an hour when we think not.

[36 : 39] Lord, hear us then we pray, bless us we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 18. Psalm 18. It's on page 218 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 18. We're singing from verse 3 down to the verse 6. But before we sing, we have some questions.

I know you've all missed this. So question one, what is the Hebrew word for day? Yom. Good. So you remember that. A yom is a yom. So a day is a day.

Question two, according to the Bible, how old was the earth when Noah was born? A, B, or C? A. Well done. 1,056 years old.

[37 : 48] Complete the sentence. The Nephilim were A small, B tall, C strong. Tall. Yep, they were tall. They were high in stature.

Question four, complete the sentence. This is my view in a way, okay? Noah was A, a tourist, B, a journalist, or C, a Calvinist. A Calvinist, yeah.

It's good to be a Calvinist too. There you go. Well done. You did very well. So Psalm 18, we're singing from verse 3 down to the verse marked 6.

Upon the Lord who worthy is, of praises will I cry, and then shall I preserved be safe from mine enemy. Floods of ill men affrighted me, death's pangs about me went, hell's sorrows me environed, death's snares did me prevent.

In my distress I called on God, cry to my God did I, he from his temple heard my voice, to his ears came my cry.

[38 : 48] So sing these verses of Psalm 18 in conclusion to God's praise. upon the Lord who worthy is, all praises will I cry, on edge of I preserve it be, safe from mine enemy.

Bloods of ill men have righted me, their spines above me went, hell's sorrows me and barrenet death's snares did me prevent.

In my distress I called on God, cried to my God did I, he from his temple heard my voice, to his ears came my cry.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.