

A rebooted world

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 September 2024

Preacher: Brian King

[0 : 0 0] Let's come to the Lord. Let's ask him to speak to us today. Heavenly Father, as your word is God-breathed, we want to trust that everything you say is true and powerful and is sufficient to make us wise for salvation and to equip us to live for you.

So give us ears to hear, minds that understand, hearts that are changed, and desires that are newly shaped to want to live for you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. What does the future hold for our world? If you watch a certain kind of movie, you know that we shouldn't be too optimistic.

The world these movies tell us will one day either be smashed by an asteroid or invaded by aliens or zombies, or perhaps just so completely filled with garbage while one lonely robot tries to tidy up one piece at a time.

And we say, oh, those are just movies. But the reason they're so popular in part is because they reflect a certain kind of anxiety we have about our future, doesn't it?

[1 : 1 2] This year I noticed that there are quite a number of articles in the news about the declining birth rate in many countries, in Japan, in Korea, and yes, in Malaysia too. And when they interviewed younger couples to understand why, it was quite interesting that it wasn't just about the economic challenges.

Quite a number of them, and yes, Malaysians too, said they just didn't want to bring kids into a world which they thought would get worse. They were afraid things like climate change meant that the future of our world is inevitably downhill.

So are they right? What does the future hold for our world? Well, today we'll find out. When I was first conceiving of this series, I wondered how and where to end it.

Should we stop at Genesis 3 with how things have gone wrong? But it didn't seem right. It seemed to leave things hanging a bit too much, like a TV show that never got to the end.

And so that's where Noah comes in. We mainly think of Noah, of course, as one of those classic Sunday school stories, great for children, since that means we can show them cute animals and get them marching around along in pairs while singing.

[2 : 3 4] But I don't think we see it as a story for adults. I've actually never heard Genesis 6-9 taught life in an adult setting myself. But as we'll see in a moment, this is really no kids' story.

It should, by right, get an 18 rating. And it is a story meant to get us looking to the end. It will deliver some bad news, sobering news, but thankfully that is not the whole story.

Today's passage will show us that there's good news too, good news about our future. For it will show us three things God is committed to. Let's find out what they are.

Firstly, God is committed to giving us an uncorrupted will. An uncorrupted will. The story begins from God's point of view.

Verse 12. God saw. Now, way back in the very beginning, what did God first see? Let me read Genesis 1 verse 31 to you.

[3 : 44] God saw all that he had made and it was very good. God looked at what he had designed and he was delighted with it. He was pleased with it. All was wonderful, beautiful, magnificent.

But the next time Genesis tells us what God sees, it's all a very different picture. Here is Genesis 6 verse 5. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

And then a little later, back to verse 12, God saw how corrupt the earth had become for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.

Everything is corrupted. Sin, you see, is extensive. It extends to all the world. Think of a car.

When there is a bad accident and it tips over to one side and rolls over more than once, that is when the damage is most severe.

[5 : 00] It isn't just a scratch or a dent on the side door. Rather, damage is often found on both sides. The roof can be crushed. Body panels can be ripped off.

The windshield is shattered. The stuff in the undercarriage, you know, like the exhaust system, the suspension and so on, are also broken. The damage extends to the whole car.

And that car is our world. Sin is extensive. And it is intensive. It has spread to the depths of our hearts.

Again, think of a car. But this time, imagine that it has hit a big pothole or perhaps it's driven over a curb. As a result, its wheels are forced out of alignment.

So whenever the driver is driving the car down the Pan-Boneo Highway, the car constantly pulls off-centre. Without regular attention and constant adjustment of the steering wheel, the car tends to drift off the road.

[6 : 07] It becomes impossible to drive straight. And over time, if not fixed, things will end up really badly.

And that's what has happened to our hearts too. It's completely out of alignment. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race is and how every inclination of the heart is evil.

It's not that we are incapable of goodness, but that every fibre of our being is touched by sin. Our thinking strays to places that it shouldn't.

Our words can have unpleasant double meanings. Our actions can be tainted by wrong motivations. I don't know everyone in this hall this morning, but I can safely say this about you.

You are not pure. Because I have to say that about myself too. I'm not pure. As the prophet Isaiah once famously said, even our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

[7 : 26] And that often shows up in our world as violence. Even today. I don't know if you've heard about that ongoing criminal case in France where a senior respected man was found over a period of time to have drugged his wife, whom he has been married to for 50 years, so that many other respected people in society, such as journalists, IT experts, trade workers, could rape her.

Just this past week, I and a few others had to intervene in a case where a vulnerable young person was in danger of being exploited. And when we hear about such evil, or indeed even experience such evil personally, we all know what our reaction to it is, right?

We want it gone. A corrupted world is horrible to live in. That's why we want in our movies for good to ultimately triumph over evil.

It's what we want in real life. And God wants evil all gone too. That is precisely why he says 6 verse 13 to Noah, I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.

I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. The reason is clearly stated. Humans have put themselves on a path to destruction, so God will hand them over to their destruction.

[9 : 12] There has to be judgment. No judgment means God doesn't care. But judgment means God cares. God cares when a little girl is being ill-treated.

God cares when a wife is being abused. God cares when a worker is being defrauded. And a God who cares will be a God who judges.

But what will be the nature of this judgment? It will be water. Lots of it. And that is appropriate. Do you remember how God created?

In Genesis 1 verse 6 to 7, we are told that God separated the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth. And then chapter 1 verse 9 to 10, he made and caught the dry ground land and the gathered waters seas.

He brings order from a watery chaos. And then remember how in Genesis 2, there was no water, no rain.

[10 : 22] But then God made sure there was water so that Eden can be a place full of life. And those waters became four great rivers so that the whole earth can also be a place full of life.

But the nature of this judgment is to put that into reverse. Jump ahead to chapter 7 verse 11.

In the 600th year of Noah's life, on the 17th day of the second month, on that day, all the springs of the great deep burst forth and the floodgates of the heavens were opened and rain fell on the earth 40 days and 40 nights.

The floodgates of the heavens, that is the waters from above, and the springs of the great deep, that is the waters from below, are unleashed.

And the dry land in the middle begins to disappear. Chapter 7 verse 17. And in fact, the waters rose so greatly that, 7 verse 19, even the mountains are entirely covered to a depth of nearly 7 meters, verse 20.

[11 : 39] The picture here is one of the creation. It is like the earth is returning to its condition before God did all that separating of the waters with the dry land.

It is back to chaos. And this place of life has become a global graveyard. It is actually a horror movie.

You know, we think of Noah's story as one where the animals go on a nice outing in a cruise ship on a calm sea. But it is really one where there is a ferocious storm as the raging waters spit out corpses here and there.

For no one outside the ark is spared. As of April 2024, just over 7 million people worldwide have died from the COVID-19 pandemic.

If we take the world's population to be 8 billion, that is 0.000875% of the world that has perished. But the death toll of this flood outside the ark is 100%.

[12 : 54] Listen to me, read chapter 7, verse 21 to 23, and notice the repetition of every and all.

Every living thing that moved on land perish. Birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swam over the earth, and all mankind.

Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out. People and animals and the creatures that moved along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth.

Why? Because God is 100% committed to an uncorrupted world. Perhaps a good analogy is that of cancer treatment.

Tell me, if you are a cancer patient, when you undergo chemotherapy or radiation, what percentage of cancer cells do you want gone?

[14 : 06] 90%? 99%? Is it okay just to have a couple of cancerous cells hanging around? No. You want it all gone.

100%. And that is God's attitude to sin. It shows his utter commitment to an uncorrupted world, one where no harm can be done.

And God is no politician. Politicians promise such things all the time. Vote for me for a clean government. Vote for me for a reduction in crime.

But politicians who promise zero corruption cannot follow through on their promises. They just don't have the capability. But God not only says what he will do in Genesis 6, he actually follows through with it in Genesis 7.

And so will we recognize God's uncompromising commitment to an uncorrupted world? Because today he still promises this.

[15 : 13] Look at what Jesus says in Matthew 24 verse 37. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In other words, though it might not look like it, Jesus will eliminate evil, evil, eliminate evil one day, just as God did during Noah's time.

And Jesus does so because he cares. When he meets with Mary and Matar in John 11, upon hearing the demise of their brother, what does he do?

He weeps. He is indignant at the way sin has introduced pain and death into all our lives. And so he wants sin all gone.

Jesus is committed to an uncorrupted world, so he gives us advance warning. Sin will not be tolerated forever, as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

[16 : 21] And if we know that, would that not give us fresh, fresh motivation to make sure that our conduct is blameless? Would that not give us confidence not to give up on pursuing righteousness?

For that is what our future looks like. God is committed to an uncorrupted world. Secondly, God is committed to giving us a rebooted world.

A rebooted world. I wonder if hearing about that uncorrupted world so far has left you with a sort of bittersweet aftertaste. Yes, we all want an uncorrupted world, but if that just means judgment and the extinction of humans, how can that be good news?

Well, thankfully, there is more to the story. Look at the end of chapter 7, verse 23. Only Noah was left and those with him in the ark.

And so there is one person who is saved together with his family. But why? Well, today our Bible reading started at chapter 6, verse 9, but perhaps we could go back one more verse because it establishes some very important context.

[17 : 40] So look at chapter 6, verse 8 with me. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Now, Noah had not earned this favor.

He found it because it found him. You could say grace found Noah.

That's the reason Noah is alive. And grace found Noah because God found Noah. In verse 13, it is God on his own initiative who comes to Noah and speaks to him.

He tells him what he's going to do. And then verse 14 tells him to build an ark. In other words, God is telling Noah there is judgment, but he's also telling him the means of salvation through that judgment.

Because God's vision has not changed from the original design of Genesis 1 and 2. He still wants a good, good world with very good human beings.

[18 : 52] And Noah is his new Adam. So how does Noah respond? You see, God doesn't just tell Noah to build a boat.

He also gives him a very detailed blueprint. In verse 15, he says this is how you are to build it. And then he shows Noah this boat is not just a sampan.

It is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, along with a few other features. And it all sounds a bit crazy.

Put yourself in Noah's shoes. He is in Middle Eastern country. Rain and flood are not exactly a threat. So Noah has a choice.

Should he listen or not? Look at 6 verse 22 and see what Noah does. Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

[19 : 52] Or look down to chapter 7 verse 5. Noah did all that the Lord commanded him. In other words, Noah took God at his word.

God said, judgment is coming. Flood is coming. And this is how to be saved. So are you on board? And Noah said, yes, he took God at his word.

Never mind that by building this ark, it must have looked weird to everyone around him. Never mind that this meant by devoting his time to doing this, he was therefore not devoting his time to alternative pursuits.

God said it. He did it. And this, my friends, is what faith is. People sometimes think of faith as some sort of strong emotion that they must feel.

But faith is simply taking God at his word and acting in accordance with it despite the opportunity cost. And that is why 6 verse 9 describes Noah as a righteous and blameless man.

[21 : 08] It's not because he's sinless, but it is because he is not like the world. He listens to God. So my friends, are you exercising biblical faith today?

As you read your Bibles, are you trusting what God has to say, even if it sometimes seems so different to our natural instincts? Noah did.

And because he took God at his word, look what happened in chapter 7 verse 7. And Noah and his family can enter the ark to escape the waters of the flood.

This is a picture of saving faith. That's the point God is making. Because Noah had faith, he is saved.

He is saved by grace through faith. And that is how God has always worked, even from the very beginning.

[22 : 13] And God saves because he wants to reboot the world. Now I want you to listen as I read chapter 6 verse 19 to 21. And once again, notice the repetition of every and all.

Here's God speaking to Noah. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.

Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal, and of every kind of creature that moves along to the ground will come to you to be kept alive.

You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them. So every part of creation is represented.

Now this of course is a famous part of the story, but have you ever wondered why this instruction? It's because God still wants to keep alive all the diversity of life on earth.

[23 : 18] He's not after destruction, but recreation. Where every animal of every kind will still be there and able to reproduce after the flood.

And that is what happens. Jump ahead with me to chapter 8 verse 1. But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark and he sent a wind over the earth and the waters receded.

The idea here, of course, is not that God forgot about what he had done and suddenly remembers in a bit of panic, like when we forget that we left the stove on in the kitchen and now we rush to turn it off.

No, to remember here means to act on what he has said. It is to act in accordance with his promises.

God has judged as he said he would do and now he intends to save Noah and all the humans and the non-humans under his care as he said he would.

[24 : 30] And notice the way this story is told. In chapter 8 verse 1, he sends a wind and the water recedes.

And that word wind in the Hebrew is the same as the word for spirit. Now remember Genesis 1 verse 2. The spirit of God, we're told, is hovering over the waters.

And then, chapter 8 verse 2, we're told that the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens are close. In other words, there is separation of the waters above and the waters below, just like in Genesis 1 verse 6 to 8.

And then, chapter 8 verse 3 to 5, the waters continue to recede until the tops of the mountain become visible. Dry land appears, just as in Genesis 1 verse 9.

And then later on in chapter 8 verse 12, the dove flies off into the sky and does not return. Just as in Genesis 1 verse 20, where the birds fly across the earth above the sky.

[25 : 44] And then, chapter 8 verse 17, the animals are let out of the ark and back onto the earth to be fruitful and multiply. Just as the earth is to be populated with animals back in Genesis 1 verse 24.

And then, in chapter 9 verse 1, what does God say to Noah? Exactly the same thing he does to Adam back in Genesis 1 verse 28.

You see, the story is told in such a way that after the flood, it is almost as if a recreation is happening. Genesis 1 is happening all over again.

God is aiming to reboot the world. And that's how he sees our future. And all that I've mentioned so far is not just true for Noah and his family, it is true for us today.

God still wants an uncorrupted world, it's true. So, he cannot withhold judgment. He must judge. As 2 Peter 3 verse 6 to 7 tells us, by these waters also, that is the flood, the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.

[27 : 04] By the same word, the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. The flood of Noah's day, in other words, is a preview of the final day of judgment.

The same kind of destruction is awaiting the ungodly in our world. But God also wants a rebooted world with human beings at its heart.

And so he tells us how they can be salvation through judgment. There is refuge, but only in one place.

For Noah, it is the ark. But for us, I hope you know what it is. It's the cross. Move on from the ark, and you'll be destroyed.

Move on from the cross, you'll be destroyed. Or as Proverbs 22 verse 3 puts it, the prudence danger, and take refuge. But the simple keep going and pay the penalty.

[28 : 17] And so if we want to be part of that rebooted world, we need to ask, are we taking refuge in God's means of salvation? Are we putting our faith in Jesus?

Or if we are already doing so, we need to ask, are we tempted to seek refuge elsewhere? Perhaps in another religion?

Or are we tempted perhaps to leave the refuge to pursue something else, thinking, oh, we'll still be okay outside that refuge? That would be foolish.

There is only one place of safety. And so be prudent, and don't abandon the cross, lest you pay the price.

And don't try to provide your own means of salvation. You know, imagine if Noah heard what God said, but he decided he will do things his own way, say by building a fortress, or something like that.

[29 : 18] That wouldn't have saved him when the floods came, would it? And many Sarawakians, they still believe in a God. They probably believe in a day of accountability.

But many might try to provide their own means of salvation. Do some religious duty. Do good to someone. But that will not save when judgment comes.

Only Jesus does. That is God's promise. And as we take refuge in Jesus, he promises we will be part of a brand new, rebooted world.

Listen to 2 Peter 3 verse 13. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

That is what the future holds for Christians. So that is great. And all would be well, except there is one more sticking point.

[30 : 27] There was a pastor who once told of another pastor teaching a Sunday school class. And he asked the kids, class, what was inside the ark?

And of course the kids said, Noah, the family, lots of animals, lots of poop. It's true, isn't it?

And he said, yes, but what else? And then he answered, sin. Sin was on the ark.

And because sin got on the ark, sin also got off the ark. Look at the middle of Genesis 8 verse 21.

And notice what God says. Every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. In other words, the problem of the human heart, even after the flood, is still not resolved.

[31 : 31] God has uncorrupted the world. God has rebooted the world, but what is going to stop humanity from making a big mess of it all over again? Looks like God did all this for nothing.

But this brings us to God's third commitment. Thirdly, God is committed to giving us a rebooted humanity.

A rebooted humanity. That's what the Noah story tells us. You see, it's not that God sent the flood and was taken by surprise that after he did all of that, oh, humans are still sinful.

No. God knew that sin would be present on the ark and present after the flood. Yet, in his mercy, God still chooses to save the guilty.

That is the point. Dwell on that for a second. When we understand that God is grieved by our sin, that he weeps for our brokenness, yet, in his mercy and grace, he chose to save us, because he loves us, we have begun to understand the gospel.

[32 : 51] And what God is really doing at this point is preserving humanity. It is step one of a two-step plan.

Throughout 8 verse 20 to 9 verse 17, he shows us that it's his plan and because of time, we will only look at two ways he shows us that. So come back with me first of all to chapter 7 verse 2.

7 verse 2. Did you notice something interesting? You know, we associate this story with two of each kind of animal, but in chapter 7 verse 2, God asks Noah to take seven pairs of every kind of clean animal.

Why? At that point, it is not clear. But it does when we get to chapter 8 verse 20. God is preparing Noah to make sacrifices.

He's making sure he has adequate supply. God knows humanity will continue to sin and it is sacrifices that will help a sinful humanity continue to relate to him and not daily be consumed by him.

[34 : 04] That is what we deserve, but God promises not to do so. Never again, he says. Why? Because where there is sacrifice, judgment can be averted and peace with God is possible.

That's what 8 verse 20 to 22 communicates to us. Humanity can be preserved, the sun will keep rising and setting, the world can keep on going because God has provided a means by which humanity will not be instantly wiped out because of their sin.

And the second way he does that is via the covenant he makes in Genesis 9 verse 8 to 11. Let me read it to you. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants of the ewe and with every living creature that was with you, the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you, every living creature on earth, I establish my covenant with you.

Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood, never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. And so God is making a covenant not just with Noah but with all the animals.

This is what theologians sometimes call a common grace covenant. And God is extending his grace not just to humans but to everyone and everything.

[35 : 33] And once again, he says in this covenant, never again. I will not judge you in this way. I am preserving you.

And what kind of sign does God choose to signify this covenant? It's a rainbow. But actually in the Hebrew it is literally a war bow.

You know the bow with an arrow? It is a weapon of war. And it is as if God is hanging his weapon of war, the bow, in the clouds to remind him and us that he will never do this again.

So God is preserving humanity but here is the thing. You preserve something that is spoiled and broken only if you think you can fix it. You preserve your broken down phone rather than throw it away only because you think it can be repaired and rebooted.

And it is the same with human beings. And in those two signs, the sacrifice and the rainbow, God is hinting that his commitment goes beyond preserving humanity.

[36 : 44] It will be to reboot humanity. That is step two of God's plan, step that is still future at the time of Noah but has been fulfilled in our time.

For although the Noah story will not say anything more about sacrifice, the rest of the Bible will. And it will tell us that animal sacrifices are actually useless in themselves.

They can't atone for sin. But they are important because they act as a visual aid. Every time someone sees a priest killing an animal as a sacrifice, he'll be reminded of the seriousness of sin and the need for a substitute.

And that visual aid became reality when the Lord Jesus came and gave himself up as a sin offering so that we will become a new creation, a rebooted human, a human like Jesus.

Jesus. Or take the rainbow. And here I defer to the great Baptist preacher Spurgeon. He asks, why is it that God hangs his bow pointing upwards with the arrow facing the heavens?

[38 : 08] It's because, he says, it is aimed at God's heart. It was done intentionally. He says we would be anxious within it if it was aimed at us.

But here it's as if God is saying, the next time I'm going to bring judgment on the whole world for their sins is going to be on myself. The arrow of my judgment will go into me, not into humanity.

It will go into my only begotten son. And God did what he said. Jesus, the only perfect, righteous man, was nailed to the cross, dying a violent death, taking our punishment.

Sometimes, like in Luke 12 verse 50, for example, Jesus' death is described like a baptism. For Jesus went through the waters of judgment and came through on the other side as the first fruits of a new creation to bring us new life and a new world.

So my brothers and sisters, what does the future hold for our world? We actually know the answer. Know what tells us. Gloriously, there will be an uncorrupted world.

[39 : 26] Evil will be no more. Judgment will come. And there will be a rebooted world because God has provided a means of salvation through judgment. And he seeks to preserve his original design.

And if we are in Christ, our future is that of a rebooted humanity, never to fall again like the original Adam, and instead made to rest forever with God.

And it is this message that the world needs to hear. 2 Peter 3 tells us that some will scoff and mock this message and do nothing about it. But there will be others who are thirsting for hope, who long to hear that good will triumph over evil, and who would turn to the God who can accomplish this.

So let us be brave and tell others that judgment is coming, but there is hope, there is refuge, there is a God whom we can turn to. And for ourselves, what should we keep doing in light of this future?

I will let Peter have the last word. 2 Peter 3 verse 14. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him.

[40 : 47] And then down to verses 17 to 18, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that all of your word is inspired and we thank you that even in this story that we often think as just a Sunday school story, you actually have a serious message for us.

Lord, we help us not to take for granted your coming judgment, your commitment to holiness, to an uncorrupted world, but help us also to rejoice knowing that there is salvation in that judgment, there is refuge, and there is a brand new world awaiting us.

So please help us to keep finding refuge in Jesus and keep being obedient to what he says. In all this we pray for his name's sake. Amen. thank Yanninge.

Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. We open this together on God Would ■ or don't hear ■■ pag as Trainer in ourringe