

God's Answer to the Spirit of the Age

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[0 : 00] Well, brothers and sisters, I'll encourage you to turn to Genesis 6 as we move right along in our praise and worship of Almighty God.

The title of my message this morning, God's Answer to the Spirit of the Age. I'm going to take you back into a passage that we have worked through in a fashion.

So much more could be said, and I want to say a little more today before we move on, and I think you'll see why by the end of the time. So we'll be in Genesis 6, and I would like to begin in verse 9. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among those in his generations. Noah walked with God, and Noah became the father of three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Now the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

[1 : 19] Then God said to Noah, the end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. And behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood. You shall make the ark with rooms, and you shall cover it inside and out with pitch. Now this is how you shall make it. The length of the ark, 300 cubits.

Its breadth, 50 cubits. And its height, 30 cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and complete it to one cubit from the top. And set the door of the ark in the side of it.

You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. 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. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.

[2 : 32] And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.

Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive.

As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself, and it shall be for food for you and for them.

Thus Noah did, according to all that God had commanded him, so he did. Now, in the coming passage that we will look at probably in a few weeks, the Lord is closing the door on the ark so that He can bring the great flood on the earth.

Now, what I'm doing here is I'm revisiting a section of Genesis chapter 6 where I hope to convey some defining elements in how you and I need to understand the events of God's judgment by the flood.

[3 : 50] I don't want to rush through this, not that we would do that anyway, but I especially don't want to rush through this, that just because I'm not taking a bunch of stuff that's been written to do an apologetic up here and defend the flood and all that kind of thing.

I may bring a little bit of that in here or there, but I don't want the fact that I'm not doing that to take away from what God wanted the Israelites to understand through this event and therefore what He wants His people today to understand through this event.

This is a very, very critical passage of Scripture helping us to know and understand our God and His view of sin. And we want to adopt more and more God's view of sin on our life.

It makes the Gospel shine brighter, doesn't it? For us to appreciate better how God's seriousness about sin caused Him to send His Son to die in our stead to free us from that sin.

That ought to tell us something about how He feels. Now look, I've tried to make a clear case for the flood as a world-defining event to this point in my preaching.

[5 : 03] I believe the Bible reveals a global flood. One of the reasons that I believe that is I think the Scripture makes it abundantly clear, so you have to do all kinds of gymnastics to change it up.

If you just take the normal meaning of the Hebrew here as the Bible is written, I think that we can see it. But let me put this up here so that you'll see what I'm talking about. The impact of the flood on God's entire world reflects how pervasively sinful and universally wicked society had become. And therefore, why God acted with a worldwide judgment on society's sin. If you want to see how bad the problem is, look at what God did to remedy it.

A worldwide flood suggests a worldwide judgment, which is what the Bible, in terms of the passage I just read, clearly spells out for us.

The entire earth is corrupt. Now, we're not talking about a little segment of population of people in the Middle East. We're talking about a worldwide pervasive issue.

[6 : 20] And so God is going to send a global flood. The fact that God sent a flood of water across the entire surface of the planet tells you and I in terrifying terms how grave this evil is in God's sight.

It tells us how serious God is about human evil. Now, we on this side of all of these events have a sobering kind of impact about these things.

Why? Because we have the cross to put all this in perspective for us. That God had to send His own Son to deliver us from the power of evil in our own heart.

Your own heart had to be delivered at the cost of God's Son. That's how bad it is in you, in me. I have the same need for God to forgive my sin in that way.

So we can take the cross and superimpose it over all of these events and we can get a clearer biblical perspective on just how serious evil is in the mind and heart of the Lord.

[7 : 27] At this particular time as Moses is writing to the Israelites and they're wandering in the desert, God is bringing this into focus for them because they've already endured several significant events where God has judged them for their sins.

And He's not finished with it yet. God has shown great, great mercy to these people. At the same time, here's what I want to do with this.

The question as we think about how terrifying this evil was and how serious God was about that human evil, the question then that begs for me is this, how serious are we about our sin?

Alright? Are we allowing this to sober us in that way? Because I believe that's exactly what Moses is doing here. He is showing the mercy of God through the ark no doubt.

But what is He showing them through the flood? That God will punish sin and that God's patience has a limit. These are sobering things for us.

[8 : 33] Now, I want to throw some questions up here that follow on this one. How serious are you about your sin? And will you allow this passage to help you with that today? So let me throw these up here.

How does God's view of the sin and evil in this passage help us be more spiritually sobered to hate and to fight against our own sin?

We tend to coddle our sin. We tend to justify, rationalize. We are self-deceived in our sin. That goes along with what Paul has told us on a number of occasions.

These are deceitful desires that hide and masquerade and camouflage themselves to be legitimate. And so when we deal with sin, our first reaction typically is by bent not to own it and humbly confess it, call it what it is, and then follow the Lord in a repentant attitude toward it.

Our initial bent is to justify, rationalize, or do some but, but, but, but. Well, that's true, that's true, but, but, but, but, but. And that's where we get in a lot of trouble and the Lord is telling us through Moses here and the events of Noah and the ark with the Lord there is no but, but, but, but, but.

[9 : 47] There's none of that with the Lord. So we want to be sobered by this. Let me throw another one up here for you. How can we more fully adopt a biblical approach?

That's the issue. How can you and I more fully adopt a biblical approach, a biblical understanding to dealing with the dangerous and death-producing depravity living in the hearts of humanity, your heart, my heart, and driving people to express that depravity in such shockingly corrupt and violent ways?

While we should be shocked by the kind of sin that we see in the world, we shouldn't struggle to explain it. We shouldn't struggle to try and offer a biblical understanding of what we're seeing going on in front of us and where it's coming from.

It's coming from the hearts of human beings who are full of darkness. Some of us have been in positions where we have been exposed to that darkness more deeply and pervasively than others. I'm thinking about some of our military men who have actually put themselves in harm's way to stand against this kind of evil. And they've seen some horrific things.

[11:02] Things they don't even talk about. You've seen it though as you stare in the mirror and realize things that you've said and things that you've done and things that have wedged in your heart.

Thoughts that come into your mind and you think, Land's in, where'd that come from? These are issues that are serious for us. Alright? Let's ask another one.

What is God showing us is at work in this passage? What's going on here? What do we need to perceive about evil as it works in the human heart?

It would be very easy for us to read this passage and go, tsk, tsk. You know, they deserved it. Really? Well, they did. And so do we.

And the fact that we get cross and grace and mercy should cause us to want to get on this floor this morning weeping with the joy of Jesus in our heart and then standing to sing as robustly as our lungs could possibly fill and do it for.

[12:09] Where we owe God everything. And we should never get over it. And when I come to preach, I preach as if this will be the last time I stand in this pulpit because it could be.

You could get news tomorrow that I'm no more. I'm with Jesus and you're going to be looking for another guy to do this with you. And don't mourn for me. I'm fine if that's the case.

So I want this to be something that helps us navigate these issues. Finally, how can my understanding of this passage help me better guard my own heart?

Against what? Against the hardness, self-deception, and self-justifying lies fueling the corruption and violence that brought God to send the flood on humanity.

You want to believe in your heart that if these people had really, truly believed and understood and taken into their hearts the truth that Noah and Enoch were preaching to them about what God was about to do in judgment on this society, they would have ran into the ark.

[13:15] Or they would have repented and made the ark unnecessary. But they didn't because they were deceived and because they justified their sin in their own minds.

And that put them in a very dangerous place. And so the Hebrews who are hearing this for the first time from Moses himself recounting these particular incidents, the Hebrews need to consider this. when we are justifying and hiding behind our sin, we are not dealing with it in the Lord. You can't have it both ways.

So to better value and understand both God's attitudes and actions against the depths of mankind's sin and depravity and to also come to terms with God's incredible mercy toward humanity because we see both of those happening.

The flood is judgment, the ark is salvation. What I'd like to do then is take you into the New Testament and give you a view of how God sees the root, the root of the unrestrained wickedness, corruption, and violence behind the sins we commit against each other and what we're seeing in this passage.

[14:31] It's one thing for us to come to this passage of Scripture and say, oh my goodness, this is terrible. The flood was terrible. Perhaps millions of people died in God's judgment. The Lord said that they're going to breathe their last.

The end of all of this has come before me. As far as I'm concerned, it's a done deal. We're just marking the days now, Noah. Get the boat done. Yeah, well, that's fine.

But what's the root behind all that? How'd these people come to this place? I want you to have this in your back pocket, folks, because of your own sin, but also because of what you see going on in our world.

I want to help you understand what you're seeing biblically. So these are not about conspiracy theories. This is about the truth of the Lord helping us to discern the times.

What it does is it impresses on us even more the critical nature of your gospel testimony and your sphere of influence. Who do you work with? Who do you encounter on a daily basis or a weekly basis in your travels, in your comings and going, in your sphere of influence?

[15:41] Who are those people? You think about those people and think, Jeff and Greg will probably never meet these people. Most of them. Maybe some of them if we go to the same

grocery store or something like that.

But I'll probably never meet the people you work with. Well, are they hearing and seeing the gospel from you? In the way that you're living your life, are you bringing them the hope of Jesus Christ and forgiveness for sin?

Because they're in their blindness and their sin, they don't see and recognize the truth of how much danger they're in. What are they doing? They're doing exactly what these people are doing.

They're getting up to play. that life. When their souls hang in the balance. So what I'm saying to us is, I don't want this to make you feel guilty.

I want this to encourage you to live a life for Jesus by opening your mouth and sharing the truth of who He is. By testifying to your hope in Christ.

[16:44] And realizing that people are going to hate you for it. People are going to ridicule you for it. People are going to think you silly for it. This is exactly what it was like for Noah, only a hundred times worse because his life was threatened every day.

God's not saying that this was a violent time for nothing. And Noah was standing up in the midst of that violence and calling these people to repentance. And God preserved his life.

So these are the issues we want to deal with. And I'm going to take you to the New Testament to see it. Now my prayer is that this exercise in truth will help each one of us more soberly guard our hearts against our own sin while also at the same time pursuing a life of humble obedience.

Just like we see in Noah's relationship with the Lord. We're going to take some cues from old Noah here. Now what I'd like to do then is ask you to turn to the book of James.

We're going to camp out in James for a minute so you can just kind of mark something there in Genesis. What does Brother James have to tell us about the root of the problem that we see in Genesis 6 with this corruption and violence going on in society so that God would have to bring a global flood to wipe out everything across the planet.

[18:15] In the book of James we have God's stinging assessment of what is behind all the disorder and evil in our world to include our own hearts.

And so we're going to pick it up in verse 13. James chapter 3 verse 13. Who among you is wise and understanding?

So right out of the gate James wants to challenge us with us saying to ourselves I've got this. That's what he's asking. Do you really? I've got this.

Oh yeah? Who among you is wise and understanding in the ways of the Lord? Let him show by his good conduct. Good would be expressed as something that God would consider good.

This would be holiness. His good conduct, his works in the gentleness of wisdom. Wisdom of the Lord leads us in a gentle way in the way that we live around others and with others.

[19:18] Notice verse 14. Now he introduces the problem. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

In other words you're just deceiving yourself. This wisdom that you're living by is not coming down from above but is earthly natural demonic.

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist in our heart there is disorder in every evil practice.

Now contrast again but the wisdom from above is first pure then peaceable considerate submissive full of mercy and good fruits without doubting without hypocrisy.

Boy you just go through verse 17 and you ask yourself in terms of any situation circumstance that you're in with another person and you ask am I peaceable?

Am I pursuing peace? And am I doing that in a considerate? That is am I doing that in an others centered way? am I submissive?

[20:35] First of all to the will of the Lord moving forward and submissive to the peace in this relationship. Am I ministering to this other person in a way that is full of mercy and good fruits?

Am I looking for ways to be good to them? And am I doing this without doubting? Without second guessing? Without harboring? And of course without hypocrisy?

Do you see what that helps us do? Verse 17 helps cut right into this self-justifying self-deceiving way that we want to rationalize our sin and go our own way in our relationships.

And so verse 17 becomes very important but we've got to go back up and we've got to focus on what the Lord's telling us in 14 15 and 16 because that is where he's telling us where the problem is and where the problem is in Genesis 6.

This is what was going on in the heart of these people. I'm going to throw it up here on the screen for you because I want you to see how I emphasize the verse itself. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

[21 : 54] This wisdom is not coming down from the Lord. No. It is earthly, natural, demonic. for where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder in every evil practice.

Folks, whenever you see disorder and evil in the way that human beings treat each other, you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in heart.

And this is the evidence of it. Period. Period. Just put a period on it. That's the way it is. this disorder, this chaos, this corruption, this evil and violence just prior to the flood was birthed from the human heart being full of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

Those are the twin pillars of the issue that God is about to bring the flood to judge. Mankind justified it all as their own wisdom, as their own acceptable way to live.

You understand, they rationalized it. They justified it. They got comfortable with it. And boy, that is dangerous. Life was hard under the yoke of sin and death just like it is now.

[23 : 11] It wasn't any different in this time. Perhaps the biggest difference that we could talk about and we did is the fact that they have longer to live in it.

How would you like to go hundreds of years like this? I think a hundred years is just enough. Don't you? I think if we're dying around age 80, we're good. Would you want to do this for 800 years?

Yeah, me neither. Me neither. So maybe there's a difference there. But people felt the oppressive weight of sin. And as they felt the oppressive weight of sin and death on their life, they responded by doing what was right in their own eyes.

That's how they responded. That's what's going on in Genesis 6. Life's hard. It was hard then. This is why Lamech, as Noah's dad said, this one is going to give us what?

Rest. Or comfort. That's what his name means. Noah. This one's going to bring us rest from our labors. This is hard. Life is hard. Noah's going to bring us rest.

[24 : 19] What he didn't realize was through Noah's line, there is going to be one that will come to give soul rest to humanity. And it's still going to be hard. You're still going to have to work long hours.

It's still going to be tough. People are still going to be harsh, full of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. It's going to be a tough thing. But these people responded to all of that by doing what was right in their own eyes.

Is that any different than we see today? No. But the Lord didn't see it as wise. In Genesis chapter 6 verse 5, I won't read it right now, in Genesis 6, 11 through 13, that we just read, 11 through 13, makes God's view clear to us.

The earth is filled with nothing but corruption and violence. in Genesis 6, 5, they can only do evil continually because that's what's in their heart.

That's all they know how to do. It's like people had just become brute beasts in the way they lived their lives. And so, if you'll look with me a little bit deeper into these three verses from James chapter 3, 14, 15, 16, we'll just look at this real quickly and I want to break it down for you so that you can see how God is identifying this as root causation for every disorder and every evil that we see going on around us and that we ourselves are capable of doing toward other people.

[25 : 57] So, please don't let this just be a Genesis 6 judgment for flood thing. Think about this in your own life. So, let's start off and see how this works.

This wisdom in verse 15 is not coming down from above. It is earthly, natural, and demonic. Alright, that's fine. Well, what kind of wisdom are you talking about?

Well, if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, you're not living according to the truth. And that's not the wisdom of the Lord. That's coming from somewhere else.

Bitter is pikron. It's from the root pikros. And it means resentful or harsh. Have you ever dealt with another human being resentfully?

Have you ever dealt with another human being in a harsh way? Have you ever had someone deal with you out of resentment or harshness? Well, here you go, folks. Here's where that's coming from.

[26 : 53] Bar none, period. No rationalizations, no but, but, but. That's where it comes from.

Resentment and harshness are coming from a place of bitterness in the heart.

Sayeth the Lord, not Jeff. I'm not trying to just get on your case here. I'm trying to let you know this is where this comes from. And God takes it very seriously. Here's what I hope will happen by the

end of this sermon.

I hope you will be even more encouraged in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the absolute mercy of the Lord and say to yourself, oh my goodness, why did God ever take time to send his son to do that for us?

Why did he even bother? That's one thing. The other thing I hope you'll see is this. I hope you'll say, you know what? I need to up my game against my sin. I need to learn to hate my sin like God hates it.

I need to see my sin the way the Lord sees it. And I don't need to coddle it. I don't need to do anything to further it. I need to see this thing killed in my life.

[27 : 55] Anything that opposes the Lord, I want to see it dead in my life. And I want to learn how to take care of that. We start with this bitterness. Bitter. Bitter.

And then we move to, what does he say? Jealousy. Jealousy is zelon. It's from the root zelos. And it means eager, envious.

It means contentious rivalry. You see yourself in competition with this other person. You see yourself in opposition with, almost at war with this other person.

You don't, anyway. When you take bitter jealousy and pull them together, here's what you get. Bitter jealousy is a resentful, harsh, competitive, and contentious opposition issuing from an embittered heart.

Here is the first diagnosis from the Lord about what was going on in Genesis 6. This was what was going on in the hearts of these people. I'm giving you a behind the scenes here about what's fueling what the people are doing in Genesis 6 that would cause God to bring a flood across the entire globe.

[29 : 07] This must be pretty bad. Well, here it is. This is pretty bad. I think anybody that would look at this and take it apart and rationally think about this would go, yeah, that's pretty bad.

Everybody living in an embitteredness toward each other, a competitive harshness toward each other, everybody stepping on each other trying to get what they want and justifying it.

Opposition across the globe at this level of the heart, yeah, that's pretty bad. Yeah, it is. What about the next one?

Selfish ambition. Selfish ambition. It translates from one Greek word, erytheia. And it means putting yourself forward without moral inhibitions.

This is you rationalizing your sin. That's what that means. Selfish ambition, putting yourself forward without moral inhibitions, selfish ambition is the idea of personal gain at the cost of someone else or others in general.

[30 : 19] So we come to justify and rationalize a looking out for myself. I'm just looking out for myself. I'm just protecting my best interests because I can't trust this other person or these group of people to do that for me.

And that sounds great. What if Jesus had had that attitude about the cross? Was there anybody standing around the cross that said to the Lord Jesus, we appreciate what you're doing and we love you and we wish we could take your place?

What were they doing? they were spitting on him and mocking him and calling him names. This is our Lord.

Listen, I want you to come out of here hating sin. I want you to hate your sin today. The intensity in me is intended to help you hate your sin with intensity.

Hate it. It put your Lord on the cross. Don't play with it. Don't justify it. Don't rational it. Don't hide behind it because that's not dealing with it.

[31 : 25] Brothers and sisters, I fear for you. I fear for you in the moments that you would hide behind your sin rather than repent of it. I fear for what your pride will do to you and where it will take you.

It is an ugly, terrible, sickening thing to our God and I want you to adopt that and see it. I think to myself and I think, oh, if the people of Israel would have taken this to heart, how different could the Old Testament read in all the times that Israel walked away from the Lord?

And what did he say? You're breaking my heart and acting like a harlot. That's God saying that.

What does that tell you about how God views our sin?

sin? This is how bad it can get for us. James says that this jealous and selfishly ambitious approach to life reveals our own arrogance as we lie to ourselves against the truth.

That's what he said. You're lying to yourself. It's our own brand of wisdom. It's not from above. It's our own brand of wisdom. It's self-protective.

[32 : 45] It's punishing. It's distant. It's cold. It's harsh. And it's full of bitter jealousy. You say, Jeff, how does it get bitter?

I mean, I get jealous. I get being jealous and even zealous for ourselves. I mean, is that so bad? Well, look, I want to help you with that. It's bitterly jealous because we aren't getting what we want the way we want it and when we want it.

But we are self-deceived in pursuing this kind of wisdom. In other words, I want you to think about it this way as the Lord presents it to us. You're thinking, well, bitter, like fermenting, right?

Yes, yes, but don't think in terms of years. Think in terms of weeks and months of allowing something like this to stick in your craw, as it were, to stay in your heart and not dealing with it.

And what's going to happen? It's going to get bitter. It is going to ferment. It is going to get to the point where it's sour. And it sours you.

[33 : 55] It sours you on life. Now, here's one of the things that it does to us as Christians. It turns our mission field into our enemies because we get soured on them.

we get bitter toward them because they hurt us and they mock us and they take advantage of us. And we can do that with each other too, can't we?

You've hurt me one too many times. You've let me down one too many times. I know that feeling. I've been married for 40 years. My wife and I have had to struggle through times like this together. I don't ever want you to look up here and think that as a pastor, I'm immune to life. Remember, I'm challenged to live this before I ever bring it to you. God working in my heart and convicting me. That's why it gets bitter. We're self-deceived in pursuing this kind of wisdom. Why? Well, James tells us that this wisdom is earthly, it's natural, and it's demonic.

[35 : 01] It's the kind of wisdom forged in the furnaces of hell. So by justifying our approach as wisdom, we're keeping ourselves in bondage to satanic lies.

While at the same time, we tell ourselves it's the best way to protect ourselves and to gain some kind of value in life. And as your pastor and your friend, I want to say to you, that's a lie, don't believe it, that's bondage.

That will throw you into chains. And I don't want to see that for you. All right, now look, what do these heart issues produce in our relationships?

What do these kind of heart issues of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition produce in our relationships? Well, James tells us in clear distinction, doesn't he? Look, disorder.

Disorder is the first thing. Disorder is the word akatastasia. Akatastasia. That's a cool word to say, isn't it?

[36 : 07] It means instability, confusion, insurrection. Are you hearing me, church? Instability, confusion, insurrection.

That's the heart and the root of that meaning. So, disorder then refers to a state of violent group disturbance and disorder, especially in politics or social conditions generally.

How about that? So, as you see the disorder in our world, now you know the root problem in that disorder. It's the heart of human beings full of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, which leads to disorder in society.

It'll lead to disorder in your marriage. It will lead to disorder in a church. Think if you're coming in here with a bitter jealousy toward a person or two in our church or some selfish ambition about why we gather.

You don't think I've ever seen that before in a church? I've seen it many times. Where we had somebody come into this church wanting to be a big fish in a little pond and thinking they were sent by God to straighten us out.

[37 : 19] And Greg and I were having to say, whoa, time out, dude. That's not how we swim here. And they swam away somewhere else. That's not how we roll.

This leads to disorder. Society's experiences, marriages experience it, friendships experience it, churches experience it. And then he says this, every evil practice.

Every evil practice is from pon foulon pragma. Pon foulon pragma. Now here it is. I'm breaking this down for you to see how the Lord is dealing with this.

Pon means all or every. Foulon, worthless, wicked, base, bad, foul, all those root words. And then finally, pragma.

A matter or a thing or a deed or a practice. And so you bring pon foulon pragma together. What is God saying to us? Here it is at the bottom of the screen.

[38 : 25] Every single worthless wicked practice. That's how God sees it. that's what bitter jealousy and selfish ambition lead to.

People had so given themselves over to demonic deception and to their own ways of defining and living life that they came to easily throw off any aspect of right that might restrain them.

There were no restraints. They threw all that off. So they were living in this uncontrolled, unbridled wickedness against each other. They were turning on each other.

Gnashing of teeth against each other. They came to the point where everybody was the enemy.

Society had come to the place where nothing from without and certainly nothing from within was serving to limit them and how they express their selfishness, their lust, their pride, their greed.

If the human heart could conceive it and the demons could encourage it, the people lived it out on each other. Now is that terrifying? This is the only alternative to following the Lord.

[39 : 39] If people abandon their hearts to what they think is best apart from a close, humble, and teachable walk with Jesus, they will give themselves to lies. You want me to tell you why people divorce? Because of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

Period. There could be so many other things going on and I get that, but in somebody's heart, if not both of their hearts, there's bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. And so the only thing to do is to cut myself off from my enemy.

You see? Why do churches split because of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition? Why do nations go to war because of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition?

selfish ambition? We know that the bitter jealousy and selfish ambition are the defining factors of this particular time in society in Genesis 6 because we have the results of it in the disorder and every evil practice dominating their lives.

That's what God says. This is what's dominating their lives. There's nothing but evil continually in their hearts. And that has led to an entire planet full of nothing but corruption and violence.

[40 : 53] It's everywhere. And you know what, Noah? I'm going to take them out. I'm going to judge them. That just gives me chills.

This is a world so sinful and so self-possessed that corruption and violence seem normal to them. when you think about an entire world, folks, where everybody is doing this at some level or another, you don't have anything to check it, do you?

It's not like you can go down to this place over here or come to a place like this on Sunday and take a deep breath and go, oh, yes, okay, this is reality.

Like, this is a haven, isn't it? It's supposed to be. You're supposed to be able to come here and be reminded about what truth and reality are. Because you're going to go back up out into there and it's going to be nothing but lies and pursuing self.

So you come here to be reminded we're practicing heaven in here. Now take that out there and remind people that there is something better and His name is Jesus. That's what we're doing.

[42 : 07] That's what we're doing. People here, violence, normal, nothing to check it. And then you got poor old Noah standing up there calling him to repentance as a faithful preacher of righteousness.

I love that. Well, this is what's defining the spirit of this age just before the flood. People have given themselves over to bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and it has led to a world dominated by corruption and violence.

Dominated. That's the order of the day. Now, as we move through the biblical narrative about the flood, about, you'll see the covenant that God makes with Noah. It's been hinted at here.

It'll be fleshed out. As we see the Tower of Babel, and then we move into the life of Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant, there are two truths that I want to encourage you to keep in mind.

I've already been talking about them. The first truth is this. I want to help ground you in your faith in a faithful God. That's number one. I want you to see that with all this going on in the world and all the chaos that's going on all around Noah, God is in control.

[43 : 17] God is sovereign. He hasn't gone anywhere. It's all part of the plan. He's got this. That's a faithful God. And what's he doing with Noah? Keeping Noah faithful. Right?

There's no panic. We see nothing in the text to help us think that Noah was panicking. As we read through all of the things that Noah's doing, we don't get any hint that Noah's running around going,

oh, did I forget anything?

Did you make sure that you got and did the ostrich get here? I don't see the ostrich. We don't have any of that. We have a man faithfully following what God's given him to do.

And so what's Noah doing? This is Noah. Noah's just like, well, I'll just take the next step. That's enough. All right? Tomorrow, what's the next one? There you go. I'll take the next one. That's me and the Lord.

I'll just take the next step. No, I don't know what the next one's going to look like. I don't know. Tomorrow, I don't know. I'll just take the next step. You see? That's a man following the Lord. That's a woman following the Lord.

[44 : 18] This is what Moses wants the Israelites to realize. I know there's a lot of unknown across that river. I know we've gotten all kinds of reports about giants and fortified towns and all that.

None of that's bigger than your God. We're good, folks. We're good. And so he points the Israelites to the ark and says, look to the Lord.

He knows what he's doing. That was enough. So that's the first truth. While the world around all these people is full of evil, corruption, and violence, God is working His purposes in and through the actions, listen to this, of mankind.

None of this is surprising the Lord or getting in His way. Second thing I want you to hold on to, I want to help ground your faith in God's wisdom. Ground your faith in a faithful God, ground your faith in God's wisdom.

Hear me now, in terms of what's wrong with us. We're letting God diagnose this thing. We're asking God to blow through our bias, our prejudice, our rationalizations.

[45 : 34] Especially as that wisdom leads us to God's instructions for our response to sin. How do we respond to the sin within us, the sin I do, and how do I respond to the sin that I see at work in other people, especially when they sin against me?

Because I have a whole mission field out there that's going to sin against me. Just give them time. Am I going to get bitter about that? Am I going to run? Am I going to hide? Am I going to cower in my house and say the world's a big bad place and so I don't go share Jesus?

Look, I get that. I totally understand that. Where it really gets weird is when you walk into a place they call themselves the church and you get the knife. That's when it gets really hairy.

You're like, whoa, what's this? Well, that's the world. That's the broken place we live in. So folks, listen, as we look back into the text of Genesis 6, if you go back there with me, Genesis 6, and revisit a few verses with me here, 11 through 13.

Now the earth was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence. Notice the earth, the common understanding of the entire earth, the planet.

[46 : 59] And God saw the earth and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, the end of all flesh has come before me.

Now there's God's judgment decision. That's the done deal aspect of this. For the earth is filled with violence because of them and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

This is very strong. As we read through that, we can begin to see the strange but I think profound depth of God's word giving us his wisdom to discern our times.

This is a wisdom that transcends eras. This is a wisdom that transcends circumstances. Your circumstances. Mine. Different people's circumstances.

Different generations. What was going on 300 years ago or 3,000 years ago. This blows through all of that. Here's an example of what I mean.

[48 : 03] If you look with me again at 11. Now the earth was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with what does it say? Violence. Here's an example of what I mean about it helping us discern our times.

Now some of you might know this. Some of you might not. So I'm going to throw it up here on the screen for you. The word for violence in Hebrew is the word Hamas.

Hamas. In Hebrew it means violence, cruelty, or injustice.

In Arabic it means zeal. The Hamas of our day is actually an acronym describing their movement. But in Arabic it could be broken down into the word zeal.

The world in the time of Noah was defined by Hamas. That is a violence driven by bitter jealousy and selfish ambition fueled by a dominating zeal for self.

[49 : 08] Sound familiar? Sound familiar? And while the flood was an unprecedented catastrophic disaster of God's judgment on the violence and corruption of a bygone age in our time we have ominous rehearsals of the same spirit which birthed the corruption and violence mentioned in Genesis 6.

Same spirit. Same problem. What are you talking about Jeff? Last October the Gazan political faction known as Hamas invaded Israel in a vicious cruel blood-soaked attack on the civilian population.

The terrible truth of the events stunned and numbed our senses people around the world. As civilians were primary targets in the attacks there is no rational way of denying the inhuman despicable and demonic nature of the violence that was put on our TV screens and posted in our papers around the world.

The violence was so bad folks that I'm constrained to refrain from detailing it from the pulpit. I can't do it. I can't do it. But I'm sure you've heard or read of some of the accounts that went on and we have a few men in here who have even more insider information on just how sickening and bad it was.

no one of any age or gender was spared in the sadistic rampaging of vile thugs intoxicated with evil. The cruelty defied any rational understanding or explanation.

[50 : 52] It left much of the world in tearful shock and disbelief that people could do such horrible things to their fellow man. And what happened was in our generation we tasted the bitter shock of what many had known when the cruelty of the Nazis and their torturous death camps were revealed to the world for what they were.

Yeah I'm putting it on that level. It's barbaric. It's inhuman. It's demonic. But not everyone reacted with shock.

Not everyone reacted with sorrow or horror or indignation. Thousands of people around the world and in our own country looked on and applauded the violence.

Many people rallied together to dance in the streets and even after the shocking truth of the barbarity was clearly reported. So there was no denying it. People justified it and violently rallied to encourage more of it.

Did you see that? Did you see that? I did. Now think back on the book of James and what he says to us.

[52 : 14] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exists there is what? Disorder in every evil thing. And remember the definition of disorder? A state of violent group disturbance and disorder especially as in politics or social conditions generally.

That's what we saw on our TVs. That's what we saw online. When you and I consider God's warning to us inherent in this passage we do well to pay attention to the spirit of the age that moved an entire civilization to become so corrupt and violent as to bring about God's judgment with a global flood.

This is one of the reasons I believe it was global. I believe the punishment matched the crime. It's very chilling in the way of truth that we can look to our own time and we can see the same spirit and heart that fueled and fuels this kind of depravity.

Isn't it? It's chilling. But I can't stop there. I need to tell you a couple more things. This is the spirit of the age being described for us in Genesis 6.

It's just what the Lord tells us is coming to every society on earth which turns away from God to do what's right in their own eyes.

[53 : 43] This is what you can expect in your marriage, your family, and in our church, and for sure in our nation, if we turn away from the Lord's wisdom.

The only other alternative is it's natural, it's earthly, it's demonic. And that's what we see. I want to show you one passage.

I'm going to take you there. I'm not going to put it up on the screen. It's in 2 Timothy. And it's in chapter 3, verses 1 through 5.

But know this, that in the last days, that's our time, the time after the cross, difficult times will come. Okay, so there's a promise from the Lord.

There's a statement from God that in the days in which we live on this side of the cross, difficult times will come. Why? And here's the explanation in verse 2.

[54 : 45] For men will be lovers of self. That's the explanation. Now, everything that follows after that is the result of men being lovers of themselves. Here's the problem.

This is selfish ambition. They will be then lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, without gentleness, without love for good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, but having denied its power, keep away from such men as these.

Now, we read that list and we realize that's what's coming. That's what's here. And we ask, well, should this fill us with fear and dread? Is that what it's supposed to do? Fill us with fear and dread? No, look, it shouldn't or it should if we didn't have any other truth to help us understand God's heart and purposes for His world. If God said that and we didn't have anything else in Scripture to help counter it, to give us hope, then yeah, I would be like, oh man, go find a hole and hide in it. But no. In the context of Genesis 6 and God's judgment, we have verses. Go back to Genesis 6 with me if you would. here's the hope. We have verses like chapter 6 verse 14.

[56 : 26] Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood. You shall make the ark with rooms and you shall cover it inside and outside with pitch. There's God making provision, isn't it? That's God taking care of His people.

We have verses like verse 18. But I will establish my covenant with you and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. That's God making provision for salvation.

And then finally look at chapter 7 verse 7. Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him did what? They entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

They entered the ark. This is God making provision for the salvation of His people. This is God doing what He needs to do and promised to do to take care of us.

Well, where is your God today in all the chaos and threat of war and all the harshness and disorder that you see all around you? Where is God? Is He sleeping? He's on His throne.

[57 : 26] Thank you. He's on His throne and He's doing what kings do on their thrones. He's ruling. And this is all moving toward what you just read with me in Timothy.

It's all moving toward judgment. And Peter tells us that in the second judgment, God will do the same thing that He did with the flood, except He'll do it with fire. That's where we're moving.

And God's people will be rescued as we look to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Friends, listen please. The ark of God reveals and foreshadows a very different spirit, the Holy Spirit, at work in the hearts of God's people as they live in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

We do not live by the spirit of the age. We live by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. So, what is God's answer to the selfish spirit of the age that lives in every single human being without Jesus Christ?

Well, look, I'll put it up here for you. The ark tells us that the cross is what we need to be saved from our own bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

[58 : 40] Just as the wooden ark of God was the symbol of God's salvation through Noah, it pointed the way to the wooden cross of Calvary as God's symbol of salvation through Jesus Christ.

This is the clear message of the entire Bible pointing us to Jesus. This is Genesis 3.15 telling us God made a promise.

I'm going to send my deliverer and he's going to break the power of sin and death over your life.

And so, I'll end with this verse. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from what?

All lawlessness. That is, all bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. And purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works.

Will you pray with me? dear Lord, thank you for this message, as intense as it is.

[60 : 15] When we sit down as your people to read the Bible, and we read about the God of the universe sending judgment across the entire globe, so that millions of people are put to death and eight people are saved, we sit up and take notice.

And we see in these acts both the judgment of your heart against sin and the mercy of your heart to save us from it. And so, God, we are compelled by love for you to say thank you for saving us from

sin and death.

thank you for Jesus and him coming, crucified, buried, and raised again that we might have life in his name. I pray for my brothers and sisters here.

I pray for my fellow human beings within the sound of my voice. And I ask that you will have mercy on their souls. I ask, Almighty God, that you will open up their hearts to see their own need to be delivered from bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.

I pray that you will teach my brothers and sisters to hate with a red hot hatred the sin that wants to separate them from you. The sin that wants to deceive them away from being devoted to Jesus every moment of their lives.

[61 : 38] Whether it be greed, pride, lust, fear, whatever it is, help us, God, to attack these things with the truth of the Lord, living in the truth and dispelling the lies.

I pray that you would give your people great mercy and grace, the power on high to meet the needs of these challenging times.

And as we see our world in turmoil, as we see the threat of war among nations, and as we see other nations threatening and posturing, I pray that you will give wisdom to our leaders, that we might be a people prepared to answer to bitter jealousy and selfish ambition as it raises its head against peace, against the cross of Christ, and against the truth.

Help us to be a people who are committed to Jesus, and help us to be that people looking to Him as our Savior and not to a man, or even to ourselves.

We thank You for Jesus, and we thank You for what You teach us in Your truth. May You be glorified and honored. In Christ's precious name, Amen.