

150 Changing our minds V – Flood

The friend who challenges my sloppy thinking, asked about my ‘God is not a smiter’ insistence: So how do you interpret the Flood? Good question... and look what I found!

The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and **his heart was filled with pain**. So the LORD said, “I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – **for I am grieved that I have made them.**”

Gen 6:5-7 (my bold)

Wow, I’d never seen that before! Despite the view of those through whom the book of Genesis came, that God was angry and needed to be propitiated, look at what this passage says about the pain and grief in God’s heart! Remarkable! That **does** sound to me like the God-I-see-in-Jesus: *God feels pain when we sin.*

OK, so was there an actual literal flood? I don’t know, but given all the flood stories in various cultures, I’m guessing there probably was. But, as with the Genesis 1 texts,^[130–133] if we stop asking, “Is this literally true?” and concentrate on, “What is God trying to teach us?” then the Flood story can be very powerful.

What is God trying to teach us? One point, of course, is that sin matters. Sin ruins our relationship with one another and with God. But if we **trust** God, if we have **faith** in God (point two), and if we **work together** (point three) – God will protect us in life’s storms. (I said, ‘in’, not ‘from’.)

So yes, we do *our part* – get together and build the boat (Noah didn’t build that ark on his own!) and we **trust** God and actually get into the boat.

And God does *his part*: he protected them from the adverse weather conditions. “Then the LORD shut him in.” (v16), i.e. God sealed the boat from the outside to **protect** it and them.

Then maybe the main point is the covenant: “I will establish my covenant with you” (v18) – God’s one-sided promise of protection. **Not**, “If you do so-and-so then I will look after you...” Again, what a counter-cultural image of God!

“But you’ve avoided the issue, Paul. You used **bold** in that first quote to avoid us noticing ‘*I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals...*’!” There’s the smiter! That doesn’t sound like God-in-Jesus.”

Exactly! I see that as the voice of the author(s) of Genesis, viewing God the way everyone did at that time.

We have to interpret the **meaning** behind each Bible passage in the light of the fact that the author(s) had a wrong view of God; thus we catch glimpses (through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration) of the real, loving, dying, self-sacrificing God (see Boyd’s *Cross Vision*^[124–129]).

And today, are we humble enough to admit that we too have a wrong view of God? If so, as we read our Bibles and if we ask, “What meaning does God want us to see?”, we will be able to

interpret the passages, through the Spirit's inspiration, and pick up the meaning that God wants us to get from it **today**, which might be different from people's previous views.

Can our view of God get less wrong, century on century?

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