

Dr. Kenneth A. Mathews, Genesis, Session 8, Noah and the Flood, Part Two (Gen. 6:9-9:29)

NotebookLM's 6-min. Video Overview

Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Welcome to the Explainer. So we all know the story of Noah's Ark, right? The massive flood, the animals, two by two. But today we're focusing on the part that often gets skipped: what happened after the boat landed.

We're going to lean on the analysis of biblical scholar Dr. Kenneth Matthews to break down the promises, the problems, and the pretty shocking family drama that went down on a freshly rebooted earth. Let's get into it. So picture this: the flood is over, humanity gets the ultimate do-over, a totally clean slate.

You think everything will be perfect from here on out, right? Well, as we're about to see, wiping the world clean doesn't automatically fix the one little flaw that caused the whole disaster in the first place. Okay, so first thing Noah does when he steps on dry land, he builds an altar. It's this powerful moment of worship and just relief for being saved.

And God's response to this is a truly monumental decision, one that's shaped the future of this new world. Now the reason God gives for making this promise is what's absolutely fascinating. It's this incredible moment where God kind of takes a step back and acknowledges that, you know, a global flood as a solution has its limits.

So here's the heart of the issue. The flood washed away all the wicked people, but it didn't wash away wickedness itself. And Dr. Matthews points out that this phrase, every inclination of his heart is evil, is the exact same reason God gave for starting the flood in the first place.

The core bug in the human operating system is still there. As the reformer John Calvin famously said, without God's new promise, a flood might be necessary every single day. Right, so since hitting the reset button with a flood isn't the long-term plan, God pivots.

He decides to set up a formal binding agreement, what the Bible calls a covenant, that's going to lay out the new rules for this new era. And this covenant comes with some new terms and conditions for life on earth. First, humanity is told again to be fruitful and multiply, just like Adam was.

But some things are very, very different. Animals are now going to have a natural fear of people, and the human diet gets a major upgrade. Meat is officially on the menu.

But with great power comes great responsibility, so there are new rules too, specifically against consuming blood as a sign of respect for life, and a very strict new law against murder. And this gets to the absolute core of why murder is such a big deal. The reason isn't about someone's social status, or how much money they have, or where they come from.

It's grounded in this deep theological idea. Every single human being is made in the image of God. So to murder a person isn't just an attack on them; it's an attack on God's own reflection in the world.

It's the highest possible offense. You know, something Dr. Matthews points out is that if you read this section closely, you see God using the word I over and over again. I establish.

I promise. This isn't a two-way negotiation. It's a one-sided, rock-solid promise, from God to Noah, to all of his descendants, which, hey, that includes us, and even to every living creature on earth.

It's totally universal and unconditional. So what's the sign of this unbreakable promise? A bow in the clouds. But here's the cool part.

The original Hebrew word isn't for a rainbow; it's for a weapon. A battle bow. Now, scholars see this in a couple of ways.

One view is that God, the divine warrior, has literally hung up his weapon, signaling that the fight is over. The other view is that he's put his weapon on display like a war trophy, a sign of his victory over all the violence. But either way you slice it, the message is the same.

The war against humanity is over. Okay, so God has promised to keep the natural world stable, but the human world? Well, that same old sin problem comes roaring back with shocking speed, and it happens right inside the tent of the most righteous man on earth. And the story starts with a serious case of déjà vu.

Noah is described as a man of the soil. Sound familiar? That's the exact same phrase used for Adam. He's a farmer, working the ground.

And just like with Adam, a plant, this time the fruit of the vine, is about to be at the center of a brand new human failure. So here's the scene. Noah has a little too much wine from his new vineyard, gets drunk, and passes out naked in his tent.

It's a moment of total human vulnerability. Then, his son Ham walks in, sees him, and instead of helping, he goes outside to gossip about it to his brothers, Shem and Japheth. But they have a completely different reaction.

They grab a cloak, walk into the tent backward so they don't see their father's shame, and gently cover him up. Now, to us, this might just sound like some really awkward family drama, but you got to understand, in the ancient world, this was a massive deal. Dr. Matthews explains that Ham's sin wasn't just seeing his father; it was his response.

By going out and publicly shaming him, he was violating the absolute core principle of honoring your parents, which was seen as a direct attack on the entire family structure and God's authority. So when Noah wakes up and finds out what happened, his reaction is swift, and it is severe. But the way he directs it is, well, it's something that has puzzled people for centuries.

This is the million-dollar question, isn't it? Noah doesn't curse Ham, the guy who actually did the deed. Instead, he curses Canaan, who is Ham's son, Noah's own grandson. What is the deal with that? Why does the punishment seem to skip a generation? Okay, so Dr. Matthews offers a really crucial clarification here.

This curse is not about creating some kind of predetermined racial destiny, not at all. It's better to think of it as a prophetic warning, based on a kind of like-father, like-son principle. The curse on Canaan acts as a moral map for the future Israelites, warning them about the kind of moral corruption they would later encounter in the Canaanite culture.

It's a commentary on future behavior, not an ethnic sentence. Noah's words here are actually framed like a prayer, an invocation asking God to set up a certain order in the world. And what comes out of it is a very clear hierarchy.

Shem is put at the top, blessed through the Lord. Japheth is blessed to live in fellowship with Shem. And Canaan, who represents Ham's line, is put in the position of a servant to his brothers.

This basically lays the political and social groundwork for all the family struggles that are going to dominate the rest of the book of Genesis. So when you step back and you look at this whole post-flood drama, this powerful recurring theme just slaps you in the face. The global reboot didn't work.

Why? Because the problem was never the world. The bug was inside of humanity all along. And the parallels are just, they're undeniable.

Dr. Matthews frames Noah as a new Adam. Think about it. Both are called a man of the soil.

Adam's fall involved a plant, the tree of knowledge. Noah's fall involved a plant, the vine. Adam's fall led to jealousy and murder between his sons.

Noah's fall led to shame and rivalry between his. It's the same story, different chapter, proving that even a worldwide flood couldn't change human nature. Then the chapter just wraps up by telling us that Noah lived to be 950 years old, and then he died.

Now this isn't just a random piece of trivia. Dr. Matthews points out that this little phrase, and then he died, is the exact formula used to end each entry in the family tree back in Genesis 5. It's a clever literary trick that structurally sandwiches this entire epic flood story right inside humanity's ongoing family history. And that leaves us with the really profound takeaway from this whole story.

Noah's family drama doesn't end with a nice tidy solution. It ends with a deeply unsettling question. If a global flood and a divine promise couldn't fix the brokenness in the human heart, what possibly could? And it's that question that sets the stage for the entire rest of the biblical story, the search for a very different kind of rescue.