

East of Eden
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Genesis 4:1–7 (ESV)

¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” ² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”¹

Over the last few weeks, we have been looking carefully at the beginning of the story of the Bible. That’s important to do, because the beginning of the story sets the stage for everything else that comes afterward. In the first week, we saw that God created the world to be a sacred space, his temple, a theater for his glory. In the second week, we saw that God created human beings in his image, to represent him, worship him, know him, and obey him. God made a covenant with Adam, the first man, and he made a wife for him. Last week, we saw that Adam and Eve sinned. They didn’t trust God. Instead, they trusted the words of the serpent, the mouthpiece of Satan. Because they doubted that God is good and they disobeyed his commandment, they were forced to leave the garden of Eden.

Today, we’re going to see what life is like “east of Eden.” How do people act in the world once they have turned away from God? What is God’s response?

We have a lot of ground to cover, so we’re going to jump right in. Let’s start with the verses we just heard. Here we see that Adam and Eve have children. Remember back in Genesis 3:15 that God told the serpent that the woman’s offspring would bruise his head. This is a promise that some child—or perhaps a more distant descendant—of the woman will put an end to the serpent and his evil. If you were Eve, you might imagine that if you had a son, he might be the one who could do the job. So Eve says, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” That man is Cain, the first human born of a woman. Will he be the serpent crusher?

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Adam and Eve had two sons: first, Cain, and, second, Abel. They both brought offerings to God. Some people have assumed that because Abel brought an animal sacrifice, it was superior. But that's not the case. Both Cain's offering of fruit and Abel's offering of an animal are referred to as an "offering." The Hebrew word² is usually used of the grain offering, which was presented as a tribute.³ It was presented as a gift to God, an acknowledgement that everything comes from him. Since the same word is used of both Cain's offering and Abel's offering, the problem wasn't the gift. The problem was the giver. The New Testament sheds some light on this. Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts." Abel had faith and Cain did not. Abel's heart was right before God, but Cain's was not. That is why God accepted Abel's offering.

This passage teaches us about worship. First of all, we're not told why Cain and Abel bring offerings to God. But I think it's simply because human beings are, by nature, creatures who worship. We will worship someone or something. Second, what matters most in our worship is our heart. That's an important concept in the Bible. If people pray or sing or offer sacrifices while they have hearts that are distant from God, or while they are failing to live righteously, God will not accept their worship. In Isaiah 29:13, God says "this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me." Jesus quotes this passage with reference to unbelieving Jews (Matt. 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-7). Proverbs 15:8 says,

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.

In Amos 5:21-24, God says,

²¹ "I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
²² Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
I will not look upon them.
²³ Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.

² מִנְחָה.

³ "With this offering, the giver acknowledges the superiority or rule of the receiver (Lev. 2:14; 1 Sam. 10:27; 1 Kings 10:25)." Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 97.

24 But let justice roll down like waters,
 and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Where is your heart today? Is your attitude, “Well, God, I showed up. That’s good enough,” while you daydream of places you’d rather be? Or do you desire to worship God and be with his people? There’s no fooling God. He knows our hearts. He knows if we’re worshipping for the right reasons or not.

Cain was angry when he found out that God wouldn’t accept his offering. But God is gracious; he warns Cain about sin. It is “crouching at the door.” This shows that sin isn’t just a set of wrong actions that we do. It’s a destructive force. It wants to devour us.

Did Cain heed God’s warning. Unfortunately, no. Let’s look at Genesis 4:8-16:

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰ And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. ¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” ¹³ Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. ¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Cain kills his own brother. The fact that it’s his own brother is an important point for the author, because it is mentioned seven times (vv. 2, 8 [2x], 9 [2x], 10, 11). This is the first homicide in history. We’re not told why Cain did this, but he must have been jealous. In the New Testament, we are told, “We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12).

This is what happens east of Eden. When people turn away from God, they are alienated not only from God. They are also alienated from each other. When our vertical relationship with God is not right, our horizontal relationships with each other won’t be right. The ultimate cure for our broken relationships with each other is to reestablish our relationship with God.

Notice that in this passage, there are many echoes of Genesis 3. Just as God called to Adam, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9), here God asks Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” God knows all that has happened, but he is giving Cain a chance to tell the truth. But Cain lies. Because of what Cain has done, he is cursed. He will be hidden from God’s face, his presence. When he tries to work the ground, he will have no success. He will be forced to wander the earth to look for food. But God is gracious to Cain. Even though Cain is a murderer, God protects him by putting a mark on him. We don’t know what that mark was, but that doesn’t matter. This is similar to God providing clothing for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). Though Cain is forced to leave, God protects him. God gives good things to those who reject him. That says a lot about God’s character.

A theme starts to emerge in Genesis, and it’s one that runs through the entire Bible. There are people who are God’s people, and there are people who are opposed to God. Abel and Cain had the same parents, but they responded in different ways to God. Abel had faith, but Cain did not. We may say that there are some people who are the seed (or offspring) of the woman, and some who are the seed (or offspring) of the serpent. Earlier, I quoted from 1 John 3:12, which says that Cain killed Abel because his deeds were evil and his brother’s were righteous. Right before that verse, in 1 John 3:9-10, we read this:

⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

We see these two lines of people in the verses that follow. Cain marries and has children. One of his descendants is named Lamech. We’re told (in verse 19) that he took two wives. This is not the way things were supposed to be! The pattern for marriage was established in Genesis 2: one man and one woman (v. 24).

Lamech then gives us a little speech in verses 23-24:

²³Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.

²⁴ If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold,
then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.”

We're not told much about this Lamech person. But what we're told is important. The line of Cain has turned further away from God. Not only is Lamech a polygamist, he's also murderous. He said he killed a young man who wounded him. Lamech more than repays for what the young man did. He explains that his revenge is "seventy-sevenfold." Cain's was "sevenfold." That means that if someone murdered Cain, God would ensure that the murder would be completely punished. Seven is the number of perfection or completion. Lamech's revenge is "seventy-sevenfold." It's over the top. It knows no bounds. Mankind east of Eden can be evil and bloodthirsty. It's significant that when Jesus speaks of forgiveness in the New Testament, he says that we should forgive seventy-seven, or "seventy times seven," times (Matt. 18:22). Jesus uses the same words (of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament) used by Lamech. God's grace outweighs the vengeful spirit of mankind.⁴

Cain's line leads to Lamech. But there's another line. Adam and Eve have another son. We read about that in verses 25-26:

²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him."²⁶ To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD.

The third child of Adam and Eve is Seth. In a sense, he is a replacement for Abel. He is the beginning of the line of the "seed of the woman," the people of God. And it's no accident that after he is born, people begin to call upon the name of the LORD. That means these people worshiped God.

Genesis 5 presents a genealogy that lists some of Adam and Eve's descendants through the line of Seth. One of the interesting people listed is Enoch. This is what Genesis 5:22-24 says:

²² Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters.²³ Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years.²⁴ Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

All of the people mentioned in Genesis 5 have unusually long lives. But each one of them died—hence the refrain "and he died." But there's one person who doesn't seem to die, and that's

⁴ An interesting observation: Cain's line includes creative people. Cain built a city (v. 17). Lamech's son Jabal "was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock" (v. 20). Another of Lamech's sons is Jubal, "the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe" (v. 21). Another one of Lamech's sons is Tubal-cain, "the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron" (v. 22). Lamech himself presents his words in verse 23-24 as poetry, or a song. This shows that sinful man made in God's image has the ability to create. This is good. Yet when that ability is directed toward ungodly goals, it is very bad.

Enoch. We hardly know anything about him, but he knew God. That's what "walked with God" means. And then "he was not, for God took him." It does not say, "and he died." In the New Testament, we find a bit of commentary on Enoch. In Hebrews 11:5, we read, "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God." Like Abel, Enoch was a man of faith, but unlike Abel and almost everyone else who has ever lived,⁵ Enoch didn't die.

This is hard to imagine. Clearly, it's a miracle. It's supernatural. But the Bible begins with a statement that God created everything, and the implication is that he created everything out of nothing. That, too, is a miracle, a miracle of universal proportions. So why did Enoch not die? I think God gave us a hint that death will not always reign. There will be a day when no one dies. It was a long way off from the days of Genesis, though. Still, this was a hint.

However, this hint of eternal life isn't the main point of the story. The story moves on to Noah. Earlier, I wondered if Cain would be the offspring of Eve who would crush the serpent. That answer is obviously no. In fact, Cain seemed to be under the influence of the serpent. But now we encounter the next hope. We see this in Genesis 5:28-29:

²⁸ When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son ²⁹ and called his name Noah, saying, "Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands."

When Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, the ground was cursed, and God told Adam that his work would be toil (Gen. 3:17-19). Now, Noah's father, Lamech (not the Lamech of Genesis 4), believes that Noah is the one who will reverse the curse. Will Noah be the promised offspring of the woman?

Many of the elements of the story of Noah are well known. But the meaning of the story may not be well known. It's certainly not a children's story. In fact, it may one of the most inappropriate stories of the Bible to tell children.

Before I start the story of Noah, I want to stress a concept that is found in the Bible. In order for us to understand the story of Noah, we need to understand this: God seeks a human being who will be his covenant partner. A covenant is a binding agreement made between two parties. It's a relationship that entails law and love. In the Bible, it's a relationship between God

⁵ Elijah did not die, but was taken up into heaven (2 Kgs.2:1-14). Christians who are alive when Jesus returns also will not die.

and his people. God wanted a relationship with Adam. He was the first man, and he was made to represent all human beings. (Corporate representation is also an important concept, and one that seems foreign to us.) So God made a covenant with him. If he obeyed God's commands, then there would be blessings for all people. But Adam disobeyed, and therefore there were curses. For blessings to come to all mankind, there would need to be another covenant partner, someone who was righteous, someone who would obey God.

So, that's one important concept. We've already seen another one in Genesis 3: those who fail to obey God will be removed from his presence. They will be exiled. They will be judged.

The story of Noah teaches us that God will judge all mankind. And it teaches us that those who are aligned with a righteous one, those who belong to his family, will be rescued from his judgment. But it also teaches us that the righteous one, the true covenant partner of God, isn't Noah. It will have to be someone else.

Now, with that in mind, let's look at the story of Noah. It begins in Genesis 6:5-8:

⁵ 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. ⁶ And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷ 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." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

When God fashioned the world to be his temple, he saw that it was good. And now he sees that it is filled with wicked people. When God saw this, it grieved him.

Now, this doesn't mean that God didn't know that this was going to happen. Other parts of the Bible show us clearly that God is omniscient: he knows everything that will ever happen. And it doesn't mean that things were happening beyond God's control: other parts of the Bible show us that God is sovereign, that he reigns over all his creation, and that he's in control over all his creation. I think this is what it means: it's one thing to know something is going to happen, and to have control over it, and it's another thing to experience it when it's happening. For example, when Kathy and I got our first dog, Jasmine, I knew someday that the dog would die. And when Jasmine had a serious medical issue that was getting worse, we made the decision to bring her to the vet to get her euthanized. But even though we knew this would happen one day, and at least some of it was under our control, it still grieved us. I think that's what is

happening here. Somehow, part of God's plan included the day when there would be wicked men. And because God is a holy judge who must punish evil, he had to judge the world. He knew this would happen. But when the moment arrives, it grieves God. God does not take delight in punishing evil. Ezekiel 18:23 says, "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" God would rather people turn from their wickedness and to him, but he also knows that many won't do that. In order for God to protect his creation and his people, he must judge the wicked.

(By the way, this shows that the goal in the story of the Bible is not to escape from this world, or be rescued from it. Some Christians view life that way. But the goal is to restore this world, and to remove the evil from it.)

That is why God said he would "blot out man." But Noah found favor with God. The word "favor" can be translated as "grace."⁶ Noah was a recipient of God's grace. That means that Noah didn't earn his good standing with God. Whatever else can be said about Noah, his relationship with God was a gift from God.

The story continues in Genesis 6:9-13:

⁹ These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. . . ."

Then God gives Noah instructions to build an ark. And, beginning in verse 17, God says,

¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive.

²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve

⁶ The Hebrew word is **חֵן**.

as food for you and for them.”²² Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

God has found a new covenant partner in Noah. God would save Noah and those who are associated with him, his family. God also instructed Noah to take animals on board the ark, to save them, too.

Since many of us know the story of the flood, I’m not going to repeat it here. It rains, and everything that isn’t in the ark perishes. Between the days when it rained, the time the water stood on the earth, and the time it took for the waters to recede, Noah and his family would have been on the ark for about a year. But when the waters go away, it’s almost as if the earth were being recreated. We see that at the beginning of Genesis 8, when it says, “And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.” The word translated as “wind” is the same Hebrew word that is translated as “Spirit” in Genesis 1:2.⁷ There it says, “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The author wants us to know that this is basically a recreation of the earth.

When the waters dried, God told Noah to release the animals, “that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth” (v. 17). This reminds us of Genesis 1. And then God makes his covenant with Noah. We read about that in Genesis 8:20-22:

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

God promises that he will never curse the whole world or destroy every living creature. He will sustain his creation as long as the earth remains.

And then God gives to Noah a commandment that was very similar to the one he gave Adam and Eve. Genesis 9:1 says, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”” That’s what we find in chapter 1, verse 28. Except in Genesis 1, it said that man would have “dominion” over the earth, and here it doesn’t say that.

⁷ The Hebrew word is רִיחַ.

That's a hint that humans cannot rule the way they could have if sin hadn't entered into the world.

Still, God is gracious. Again, he promises that he won't destroy all life through a flood. We read about this in Genesis 9:8-17:

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

Most of the covenants in the Bible have a sign. The sign of this covenant is the rainbow. What's interesting is that in Hebrew, there is no special word for "rainbow." "The word that is used here is the ordinary term for an archer's bow."⁸ The curve of a rainbow looks like an archer's bow. But what way is it pointed? It's pointed up at the sky. If you could imagine an arrow being launched by a rainbow, the arrow would be facing up. The arrow isn't pointed at earth, or at us. It's pointed toward God. It's as if God is saying, "If I break this covenant, I'll take the arrow." Of course, God doesn't break his covenants, but this hints at the covenant that God will make that will really rescue his people.

So now that God has judged all the wicked people, and he is starting afresh with Noah and his family, we should expect a happy ending, right? After all, wasn't Noah the one who would bring relief? Let's see. In Genesis 9:20, we read, "Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard." This reminds us a bit of Adam, whose name sounds a lot like "soil." The

⁸ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 170.

Hebrew word for “the soil” is *hā^a dāmā*.⁹ And Adam was supposed to work a garden, which is similar to a vineyard.

Let’s read verses 21-25:

²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. ²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said,

“Cursed be Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

It’s a bit unclear what happened here. But remember that Moses, who wrote Genesis and the next four books of the Bible, wants us to see a connection to Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed before they ate the forbidden fruit. After they ate, they realized they were naked and they were ashamed. Noah gets drunk on the fruit of the vine and he gets naked. When he comes to, he is ashamed and he curses the son of Ham, the one who saw him naked.

We should also remember that the initial audience of Genesis would have been familiar with the other books that Moses wrote, including Leviticus. In Leviticus “uncovering nakedness” refers to forbidden sexual acts. So Leviticus 18:6 says, “None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD.” And if you read Leviticus 18, it is clear that God thinks these acts are “an abomination” and “perversion.” If Ham had merely seen his father naked, it’s hard to understand why Noah would curse his offspring. After all, if he simply stumbled upon his drunk father, that wasn’t his fault. One theologian suggested that Noah’s being naked might have been with his wife, and that Ham looked at his mother with lust, and then told his brothers about it.¹⁰ Another theologian thinks that Ham looked at his naked father and was attracted to him.¹¹ Still another theologian—and these are all evangelical theologians I’m referring to—thinks that it’s possible that Ham raped his father. After all, the text says that

⁹ **חָמָא**.

¹⁰ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 348.

¹¹ “His voyeurism, however, is of the worse sort. Voyeurism in general violates another’s dignity and robs that one of his or her instinctive desire for privacy and for propriety. It is a form of domination. Ham’s, however, is perverse, for his is homosexual voyeurism.” Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 149.

“Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son *had done to him*.”¹² Whatever happened, it was clearly serious, and it brought shame on Noah and it earned Ham’s family a curse. Yet the two sons who clothe Noah—like God clothed Adam and Eve—are blessed by him (vv. 26-27).

So after the cataclysmic judgment of the flood, it seems like we’re back to square one. Or, more to the point, we’re back to Genesis 3. It seemed as though God began again with Noah and his family, and after the flood, we find that sin is still in the world. People are still being cursed.

The story of Noah and the flood shows us that God cannot tolerate wickedness and that there will be a judgment. This is the first of a number of judgments in the Bible: Sodom and Gomorrah; the plagues that God sends on Egypt, including the Passover; the holy wars against the Canaanites and other people who dwell in the Promised Land; the judgments brought on the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah for their idolatry; the judgment brought upon Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70; and the final end-time judgment.

But we must remember there is another judgment. When God wanted to judge the sins of his people, yet also spare the eternal lives of his people, he sent his Son. When Jesus died on the cross, he absorbed God’s holy, righteous punishment for the sins of all his people. Everyone who has put their faith in Jesus doesn’t have to be hidden from God’s face, as Cain put it.

This story of Noah also shows that judgment isn’t enough. We need transformation. The problem with the flood is that Noah and his family weren’t transformed. They still had sin inside of them. Even though the rest of the world was destroyed, they still carried their sin with them. That should be a warning: there is no utopia, no paradise, that will arrive short of God transforming the whole world, including his people. Even if we removed all the “bad guys,” whoever they are, we still have to deal with our main issue, which is the sin inside of us. That is why the giving of the Holy Spirit is so important. The Holy Spirit causes transformation and renewal. We also know that one day, all evil will be purged from this world, and the process of transformation and renewal will be complete.

¹² The evidence for this view is presented thoroughly and compellingly in Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 63-71.

The story of Noah also shows God needs a perfect covenant partner. It wasn't Adam, and it wasn't Noah. Noah was a good man. He was a man of faith.¹³ But he wasn't perfectly righteous. He wasn't sinless. God needs a perfect covenant partner, one that we can be represented by. We need a covenant representative who is perfectly righteous, so that when we're associated with him, we are viewed by God as being perfectly righteous. That's what Jesus does for us. He is the only one who is truly righteous. Everyone who puts their trust in him is considered righteous, just as he is righteous. He doesn't like fail like Adam and Noah.

So, which way will we go? Will we be like Cain, who was warned by God and yet still turned away from him? Or we will be like Noah, who, even though he wasn't perfect, was a man of faith. He trusted God enough to build an ark and get on board. His faith led to obedience. Will ours? We will walk by faith, or will we walk away from God?

¹³ Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."