

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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Did God Regret Making Man?

Biblical language indicating that God is sorry for His actions taken earlier could imply that He makes mistakes—or it could point us toward something far more remarkable.

“And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them’” (Gen. 6:6-7).

The statement that God was “sorry” (other versions read “repented” or “regretted”) that He had made man raises a number of thorny questions. First, it sounds like God is admitting having made a mistake in creating humanity, as though His grand experiment got out of control and He was struggling to deal with the messy aftermath. Furthermore, this language seems to contradict other passages that say God cannot repent or change (e.g., Num. 23:19).

There are other examples of this sort of behavior in God. Consider His regret at appointing Saul to be king (1 Sam. 15:11), or His relenting from His promise to destroy Nineveh—a walk-back that really frosted Jonah (Jonah 3:10).

So what kind of God are we serving anyway?

To understand the meaning of this language, we need to look at the larger picture. God’s dealings with the human race are based on a master plan that has been in place from before creation (Eph. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9). This plan included the redeeming work of Christ, which anticipated the universal corruption of mankind. So whatever God’s reaction to the evils of Noah’s generation, this was not some kind of roll of the dice that turned out badly; He *knew* this would happen even before He created the world, and had prepared for it. So whatever this language means, it can’t mean that God made a terrible mistake and now regretted the whole enterprise.

Look at how the rest of the story played out. In sending the Great Flood upon the earth, God wrought a terrible judgment upon mankind for their sins. But God did not completely annihilate the race. Instead, He spared righteous Noah and his family, and from that tiny seed He repopulated the earth. God’s eternal plan was still on track to completion. In other words, if God really did view mankind as a colossal mistake, He

missed a golden opportunity to correct His error by wiping them all out. Clearly, He had another idea in mind.

God’s sorrow (or regret, or grief) was not at His own error, but at the breathtaking depth of evil to which His creation had sunk. When man used his free will to reject God, it was a major disappointment—but it was not unexpected. Even then, His solution to the problem was not to *destroy* mankind, but to *redeem* it. He still cared.

God was not being capricious in His treatment of the antediluvians, nor of Saul or the Ninevites. He has a standard of righteousness that He expects all men to live by, and when they violate that standard—especially in such an outrageous fashion as Noah’s generation had—God has no choice but to act. Likewise, as Jonah learned, when men repent of their evil God will relent in administering punishment. It’s only fair!

Whatever regret God may have felt over humanity’s condition in Noah’s day, what He did later in sacrificing His Son for us should remove any doubt as to what He thinks of His creation.

– David King