

How Low Can We Go?

This world is a mess, but it could be much, much worse. That it is *not* worse is a testament to God's care and provision for His creation. We should respect that.

“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 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. 6:5-7).



How many times have we muttered to ourselves that this world is getting more wicked and depraved than it's ever been in the past? Before we get carried away with our negativity, we should spend a few moments reflecting on some ancient history.

The Great Flood of Noah was an apocalyptic judgment upon the earth unlike anything humanity has experienced before or since. It was disaster on an unimaginable scale, wiping out all life on earth, except for a tiny fraction on the ark. Why did God go to such an extreme length to deal with mankind's sin problem then? And why won't he do so again?

Notice the escalating language that the text uses to describe humanity's condition in the days of Noah. The extent of mankind's evil went beyond their behavior to the very *intent of their hearts*.

They were guilty, not just of occasional mental lapses, but of a full-blown rebellion against God— *every* intent of the heart was *only* evil *continually*. Evil was all they could think about. This language describes a world populated by creatures whose entire existence was dedicated to one objective: How wicked can I be today?

Daily life in that environment must have been awful. “The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was *filled with violence*” (v. 11). The level of brutality and mayhem must have been off-the-charts bad. When we think of murder, assault, rape, rampaging, genocide, and similar acts of antisocial behavior, we think of them as aberrations from the norm, isolated exceptions to the general pattern of civilization. But prior to The Flood, civilization didn't exist. Violent lawlessness was the norm that everyone lived with.

Shortly after The Flood, at the Tower of Babel, God confused human language, thereby creating nationalistic barriers that would prevent humanity from ever again uniting in such an orgy of self-destruction. God promised that He would never again destroy the world with a flood, not because we are no longer capable of such depravity, but because He has put processes in place to ensure that runaway evil is checked before it can reach that level. History has given us numerous examples of this principle in practice.

It's easy to complain about how bad everything is in today's world, but it's nothing compared to what Noah had to contend with. We should temper our complaints with gratitude that God has put in place a system of checks and balances that prevents such an earthly hell from ever emerging again. God is still in control. If He could deal with the runaway depravity of that age, He can certainly deal with the lesser evils that we encounter in our modern world.

On a personal level, this should challenge each one of us to take a closer look at our own hearts and lives. If I chose a life of rebellion against God, I will not win. I can have my way for a while, but eventually God will come calling. And when He does, it will not be pleasant for me. It is in my long-term best interest to cooperate with God's instructions now, while I can.

How low can we go? The story of Noah's generation says that humanity is capable of descending into a madness far beyond anything we can imagine today. But God will never allow it to get that bad again. And for that, we ought to be thankful.

— David King