



The Story + 7|15|18 + Pt 2 + *Why Did God Kill All the Animals?*

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We have THE most thoughtful, creative kids at The Story, and for the past several weeks, I've been talking to them and their parents about the questions they have about God and the Bible. All month long, I'm tackling their toughest questions with these sermons. One important note: these are kids' questions, but my sermons will be geared toward adults for two reasons: 1) on some level, these are questions people of all ages are asking, and 2) I want to help prepare parents (and all adults at TSH) to respond to the questions our kids are asking about God and the Bible. So let's get to it! Today's question: Why did God kill all the animals?

**THE CRUX** (A SUMMARY OF THE BIG IDEA):

While not the original "Great Flood" narrative, *Noah and the Ark* tells the story of the original God, who surpasses the gods of ancient Mesopotamia in character and concern for His creation. Because He is love, God allows us to choose our own destiny, which sometimes leads a hell of our own making.

**ON THE CONTRARY** (A SUMMARY OF OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES):

*Noah and the Ark*, like much of the bible, is just another example of ancient mythology that helped pre-scientific societies make sense of natural phenomena they could not otherwise understand. Calling natural disasters (floods) "acts of god" helped unenlightened people cope with fear and grief.

Genesis 6:5-8, 13-14, 17-22 The Lord saw that humanity had become thoroughly evil on the earth and that every idea their minds thought of was always completely evil. The Lord regretted making human beings on the earth, and he was heartbroken. So the Lord said, "I will wipe off of the land the human race that I've created; from human beings to livestock to the crawling things to the birds in the skies, because I regret I ever made them. But as for Noah, the Lord approved of him. God said to Noah, "The end has come for all creatures, since they have filled the earth with violence. I am now about to destroy them along with the earth, so make a wooden ark. Make the ark with nesting places and cover it inside and out with tar."

"I am now bringing the floodwaters over the earth to destroy everything under the sky that breathes. Everything on earth is about to take its last breath. But I will set up my covenant with you. You will go into the ark together with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. From all living things - from all creatures - you are to bring a pair, male and female, into the ark with you to keep them alive. From each kind of bird, from each kind of livestock, and from each kind of everything that crawls on the ground - a pair from each will go in with you to stay alive. Take some from every kind of food and stow it as food for you and for the animals." Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him.

Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation."

How do you tend to interpret ancient stories like *Noah and the Ark* - as *true* stories, or make believe? Why do you think that?



What do we know about other popular flood stories that existed prior to the time of Moses (c.1200 BC)?  
 What do you think the existence of those stories means for the way we understand *Noah and the Ark*?

<u>Utnapishtim (from <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i>)</u>	<u>Noah (from Genesis 6-9)</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Written c.2000-1800 BC</li> <li>2. A god told Utnapishtim to build a ship (14,400 sq cubits)</li> <li>3. Utnapishtim was told to gather his family and whatever living things he could find</li> <li>4. The gods flooded Earth because humans were too loud and they couldn't sleep</li> <li>5. As the waters rose, the gods shrieked like women in childbirth and retreated to heaven</li> <li>6. After the flood, the gods were "starving" b/c there were no humans left to "feed" them</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Written c.1200-700 BC</li> <li>2. God told Noah to build a ship (15,000 sq cubits)</li> <li>3. Noah was told to gather his family and two of every species</li> <li>4. God flooded the Earth because humans had become inhuman: completely evil, filling the Earth with violence.</li> <li>5. As the waters rose, God remained steadfast and sovereign; He "remembered Noah".</li> <li>6. After the flood, God set the rainbow in the sky and offered Noah a new covenant.</li> </ol>

What do these comparisons between *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Bible mean to you?

What do you think Moses and the early Hebrews were doing when they retold the well-known Flood story, casting God (instead of "gods") and Noah (instead of Utnapishtim), and redefining the cause of the flood as inhumane violence and sin instead of "the gods couldn't get any sleep"?

As Christians, we interpret the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus - his life and teachings, as well as his death and resurrection. We believe that Jesus embodied the fulfillment of all the Hebrew scriptures: Jesus is the new Adam (Romans 5:12-18), the new Law (Matthew 5:17), the new Moses (all of Matthew's gospel, really), the new Joshua ("Jesus" lit. means "Joshua"), the new High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16), the new Jonah (Matthew 12:40), etc. What do you think it means for Christians to interpret *Noah and the Ark* through the lens of Jesus?

1 Peter 3:19-21 After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...

Critics of Christianity will say that any god who allows (or causes) human suffering is outdated at best and evil at worst - certainly not worthy of our allegiance. For instance, in his book, Letter to a Christian Nation, atheist author and podcaster Sam Harris wrote: "The choice is simple: we can either have a 21st Century conversation about morality and human well-being...or we can confine ourselves to a 1st Century conversation as it is preserved in the Bible. Why would anyone take the latter approach?" How do you think Christians should respond to educated, thoughtful people who share Harris' sentiments?