

Compassionate Obedience

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. God saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth. Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth...And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him. – Genesis 6:11-13, 22 HCSB

There are two very famous examples of God warning a human being of coming catastrophes. In both cases, the calamities were not the general kinds that randomly occur in a universe characterized by chaotic entropy, but were instead judgments for immorality.

In the first case, God decided that humanity was so corrupt, so afflicted with violence and evil that He needed to simply wipe mankind out and start over. He selected one man, Noah, and told him in advance what would happen and gave him a plan to follow so that Humanity would survive the coming onslaught.

In the second case, God decided that one particular group of cities (principally Sodom and Gomorrah but there were others) was so wicked that they needed to be wiped out before they infected everyone else. He selected Abraham as the one man with whom He would share this information.

Both men were considered righteous in their generation. Both men exercised faith in obeying God's commands. There is one notable difference, however. Genesis 6:32 tells us that Noah simply did what he was told, while Abraham argued.¹ Noah simply shrugged his shoulders and started buying lumber, but Abraham pleaded with [Yawheh Shaphat](#) for leniency on behalf of the wicked cities.

Remember that Abraham had already gone to war to protect those cities and rescue his nephew Lot. He knew perfectly well how wicked they were and had refused any remuneration from Sodom's king so that his integrity would remain intact² – and yet he begged God for mercy on their behalf.

God still ended up imposing the sentence in both cases. The flood came, wiping out all the humans except for Noah's family. The fire came, destroying the cities in Sodom's valley with the exception of the little hamlet of Zoar where Lot hid with his daughters.

However, when you look at the long run, Abraham became known as the spiritual father of all those who by faith obey God.³ Noah was simply known as the survivor of the Flood who got drunk and cursed his grandchildren. The spirit each possessed was as important as their obedience. One obeyed, but without compassion. The other obeyed while demonstrating pity and compassion for his fellow humans.

In this regard, Abraham imitated God's heart. You know – the God who cried out "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing"?⁴

¹ Genesis 18:16-32

² Genesis 14:21-24

³ Romans 4:11-16

⁴ Luke 23:34