

## MOURNING THE WICKED

### A Devotional Meditation on Noah (Rest)

Genesis 6:9-11:32; Isaiah 54:1-55:5; Proverbs 30:20; Ezekiel 33:11;  
Romans 3:1-2, 9:1-5; Revelation 2:18-29, 19:6-8

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The harsh realities of unrestricted warfare dawned on me long before I witnessed them with my own eyes in Iraq. The accounts recorded by witnesses and historians through the ages imparted an understanding of war that my battlefield experience only confirmed. Among those accounts was John Toland's book, *The Last 100 Days*, in which he told the story of the conclusion of World War II in Europe. That story included the firebombing of Dresden, Germany, in February 1945. Dresden was a legitimate target, but the continuous bombing raids on the city created a firestorm that consumed the lives of some 35,000 people in the most horrendous ways.



*Aftermath of the bombing of Dresden, Germany, February 13-15, 1945. Original photo by Richard Peter, September-December 1945, Deutsche Fotothek, Dresden. Colorized version by Cassowary Colorizations, August 8, 2017, [via Flickr](#).*

How do we justify such a thing? Is the necessity of war sufficient justification to satisfy our misgivings of such violent measures that conflict with our inborn desire to preserve life? Does it matter that Dresden, and every other German city, was governed by National Socialist party members who had sworn allegiance to Adolf Hitler? What about the children of those party members, who never had a chance to vote, and perhaps never reached an age to understand that they were German? What about the Germans who never voted for Hitler, never joined the party, and did what they could to free their homeland from Nazi tyranny? Did they deserve the total destruction of their city, and perhaps the loss of their lives?

And yet, Germany as Hitler's Third Reich was undeniably evil. Demonic wickedness engulfed a great and noble people, compelling them to inflict the most outrageous horrors on all who opposed them, and on all whom they considered lesser human beings. If left unchecked, Nazi ideology would have consumed the whole world with its violence, and eventually consumed itself. That's the nature of evil. It covets that which it doesn't have, and what it can't get, it destroys so that others can't have it. That kind of evil knows no mercy. That's why it must be eradicated without mercy, which, ironically, is the best way to extend mercy to the entire world.

We don't like to think about these things. That's because we're decent people who would rather not harm anyone, or see harm come to anyone. Or at least that's how we view ourselves, and how we hope others see us. But what if others see us differently? What if our efforts to live good, decent lives come at the expense of the lives of others?

What if our happiness comes at the price of the happiness and freedom of others? Are we still decent people if we are ignorant of these things? And do we remain decent people if we do nothing about these things even after we learn of them?

This is the impossible muddle that happens with a world of human beings who live according to their individual definitions of good and evil. When we get down to the hard truth, we appreciate God's definitions of good and evil only so much as they coincide with our own. When they do not coincide, then we have a choice: we can adjust our thinking to match His, or rationalize our way into compromising or ignoring what He says is right.

That's how Nazis come to power, by the way. While decent people debate about what is right and wrong, bloodthirsty, wicked people keep that debate going, using it to their advantage to seize the controls of society. Before too long, the decent people are shut out of the debate. The only choice they have is to go along with the agenda of the wicked, or resist it, even to the point of death.

I imagine that's what happened in the days before Noah was born, when evil had its way over the entire earth. The scriptures present a bleak description of Noah's world:

Now the earth was ruined before God, and the earth was filled with violence. God saw the earth, and behold it was ruined because all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh is coming before Me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Behold, I am about to bring ruin upon them along with the land.

Genesis 6:11-13 TLV

Imagine the entire earth devastated by that kind of corruption, to the point that no one was capable of discerning between good and evil. That's the kind of world that is filled with violence, in which every man, woman, and child chooses to seize whatever they determine is good, or, if they don't have the power to seize what they want outright, manipulate others to get it by intrigue. That's the kind of violence named by the Hebrew word *hamas*. It means sinful violence perpetrated by extreme wickedness. It's the wickedness of an adulteress who eats, wipes her mouth, and says, "I have done nothing wrong."

Is that kind of wickedness redeemable? Yes, if it wants to be redeemed. That's just the problem: after a thousand years of striving with the whole world, God finally determined that there was no point in trying anymore, and that the most merciful thing He could do was eradicate the population that had made themselves unredeemable. As always, He worked through human agents – namely, Noah's family – to provide a way of escape. Yet, once the world was cleansed, God saw that Noah's descendants had set out on the same course of wicked rebellion that would eventually lead to their destruction. That's why He delayed the progress of that rebellion by confusing their languages so they couldn't cooperate anymore in their collective sinful violence. And then He made another way, by calling a man named Abram to father a nation that would teach the world the better way of choosing God's definitions of good and evil, right and wrong, life and death.

This is why it's taken 5,000 years to get the point of a world once again filled with *hamas*-style violence. The remnant of Israel, the Jewish people, continue to stand against that kind of violence just by their existence as the people of the Righteous God. It's not

that they are entirely righteous, but they have the oracles of God that remind us what His definitions are, and that He will call us all to account for how we respond to His definitions.

The adopted people of Israel, the Christians who have pledged allegiance to the one we know as Israel's Messiah, have inherited those same holy definitions. Together, Christians and Jews have held the sinful violence of extreme wickedness at bay for two millennia – when we aren't fighting each other, of course. That's why the satanic forces of darkness have always targeted genuine Christians and observant Jews because we alone stand for the righteousness of the Holy God. If anyone is going to do whatever possible to rescue those trapped in the darkness, it's us. If anyone is going to mourn – as in, truly be grieved – at the loss of life required by God's judgment on wickedness, it's His people who carry His compassion in our hearts.

And yet, it's also His people who must be the most firm when it comes to standing against that wickedness. Perhaps it means taking up weapons and going to war against the Nazis of every age when they become too strong, and perhaps it means resisting the Nazis by sheltering those in harm's way, or supplying the warriors, or standing for God's truth even when such a stand is unpopular and life-threatening.

God's people must also be the first to bring relief to the hurting, and to begin rebuilding and restoring when the evil is vanquished – or at least smitten to the point that it slinks away to the darkness again. It will return, of course, as it always does, until such time as our God makes a full end of it. In the meantime, we're His agents, grieving just as He does over the inevitable deaths of the unrepentant wicked.