Weekly Bible Study
group – October 29, 2008

This week's reading assignment: **Genesis 5-11**

What on earth are we supposed to do with this text?!

Many of us grew up with the story of Noah and the Ark. Cute little boat, happy animals streaming across the plains to find refuge in the floating zoo. Noah praising and obeying God – even though, gosh darn it, it just seems so wacky and silly to build a boat in the desert. Noah is the model of faith, he'll obey God even when he doesn't understand fully. What a grand moral lesson this is for us! We know this story, right?

This week I'd like to invite you to read it again, with grown-up eyes. Oh wait, this is the story about how God decides to crush his whole creation. Babies and birds and trees and rats floating face-down in the water. If we're serious about knowing the Christian story, we'd better be prepared to sit in discomfort for a while as we ponder this horrible passage.

Some of us may think that "Noah and the Ark" is a fictional work of literature designed to teach us something. Some of us may think that this is actual world history, and this event really happened several thousand years ago. Christians have held both opinions over the years. Regardless of how we answer that question, if we think hard about this text I think we might just discover that the story of Noah and the Ark was placed in these chapters of Genesis for a very particular purpose. And it has *everything* to do with God's ultimate plan to redeem the whole world…not destroy it.

1) In the beginning of chapter 5, we find the re-assuring words that God created and loved and blessed the whole creation. But by the beginning of 6, we find that God is terribly dissatisfied. Chapter 6 actually lists some of the reasons for this. According to this chapter, why is God upset?

2) In response to the corruption of the world, God chooses to destroy it. But he saves a few of the best, "most righteous" people so that the world can be re-populated by them. In this way, God seeks to restore what was corrupted. Question: according to the text (especially chapters 9-11), did this plan work? Was this method of "redemption" successful?

3) Look ahead to chapter 12. Here God embarks on a whole new plan of redemption. Instead of destroying evil, he sends his chosen people out to "be a blessing to all nations." Very different from the story of Noah! Why do you think these two stories are placed back-to-back in the text?