

GOD REMEMBERED NOAH (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 7:1-8:19

We mentioned in the last chapter that the flood account is a reverse creation/re-creation narrative. Once again, as in Genesis 1:2, waters cover everything, but after the waters subside a new creation springs forth. Therefore, entrance into the new world is through water. It was the same with Moses—whose life was spared by an ark—when he led the Israelites through the Red Sea. It happened yet again with Joshua leading the Israelites into the Promised Land through the Jordan River, which was at flood stage at the time (Jos. 3:15). And, it happens today when we go through the waters of baptism. For unbelievers water brings judgment and death, but for God’s people it brings salvation and new life. This is the big picture of what God is doing in the flood.

You’ll notice based upon the diagram provided for you that the flood account is arranged in a chiasm with its focus on Genesis 18:1a.

- A The Lord resolves to destroy the corrupt race (6:11-13)
- B Noah builds the ark (6:14-22)
- C God commands Noah’s family to enter the ark (7:1-9)
- D The flood begins (7:10-16)
- E The flood prevails 150 days, and the mountains are covered (7:17-24)
- F God remembers Noah (8:1a)
- E’ The flood recedes 150 days, and the mountains are visible (8:1b-5)
- D’ The earth dries (8:6-14)
- C’ God commands Noah’s family to leave the ark (8:15-19)
- B’ Noah builds an altar (8:20)
- A’ The Lord resolves not to destroy humankind (8:21-22)

The details of the flood cover several chapters, and much takes place, like the building of the ark, the pronouncement of judgment, the collecting of the animals which came to Noah, etc. However, at the center of all this is God’s covenantal remembrance of Noah.

God may condemn the whole world, but He will always watch over the righteous. The flood is a vivid illustration of Psalm 1:6: “for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.” Notice carefully what perishes. Not just the wicked, but the *way* of the wicked. The very road that the wicked are walking down will perish beneath their feet—even the world of the wicked will be destroyed. This is why the apostle John warns us: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn. 2:15-17). John Calvin wrote of Noah: “He is commanded to forsake the world, that he may live in a sepulcher which he had been laboriously digging for himself through more than a hundred years. Why was this? Because, in a little while, the earth was to be submerged in a deluge of waters” (John Calvin, *Genesis*, p. 264).

Noah is called to leave the world behind and not look back. Remember Lot’s wife? She looked back and was destroyed, because her heart was worldly, and she didn’t want to make the necessary break. Our delicate and dangerous vocation is to be in the world, without being of the world; to enjoy and own the things of this world, without them owning us.

Noah was righteous before God “in this generation” (Gen. 7:1). Think about Noah’s generation. It was the corrupt generation of those whose thoughts were only evil continually. The bloody generation that lauded and celebrated violence. The perverse generation that gloried in its shame. The fleeting generation whose mind was set on earthly things. The ungodly generation God could no longer tolerate.

When Peter preached his first sermon on the day on Pentecost, he exhorted the people, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40). And he meant every word he spoke, because he remembered that Jesus called that generation, his generation, “an evil and adulterous generation.” Furthermore, Jesus prophesied in the Olivet Discourse that “this generation” would experience God’s wrath (Lk. 21:20-33). Teenagers, as morality in America continues to plunge, with every succeeding generation descending deeper into the abyss, Peter’s words increase in relevance for you especially.

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GOD REMEMBERED NOAH (2)

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The LORD instructs Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household...For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground” (Gen. 7:1-4). Then, sure enough, verse 10 says that the flood waters came upon the earth after seven days.

Can you picture the scene? Most likely it had never rained upon the earth before (see Gen. 2:5, 6). Nevertheless, Noah, in faith, is convinced it is going to rain. His neighbors of course laughed at him and mocked him, especially after the ark was completed, and Noah and his family hid inside the ark for seven days while the sun was shining. Can't you hear the mockery? “Well, he's finally lost his mind. What he really built was an insane asylum. I hope it has padded walls.” Then there was a light drizzle. Wrong! That's what I used to believe. Actually, the flood began from below, and not from above. The text states that the flood began when “the fountains of the great deep burst forth” (7:11). Some scientists have estimated that this “explosion from below” may have been the equivalent of thousands of atomic bombs exploding. This was followed by a torrential downpour (or perhaps they both occurred at the same time) that lasted for forty days and forty nights. If, and this is a big if, there were any people still standing after the initial explosion, they would have ran to the ark. But it would have been too late. God Himself had shut the door. The LORD watched over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked perished.

According to Genesis 7:11, the deluge is from below as well as from above. R.J. Rushdoony notes, “The Flood began when all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and then the rains began. This points, as Henry M. Morris has pointed out, to volcanic activity that led to explosions and eruptions that poured forth great tidal waves of water, both hot and cold, over all the earth. Expanding and cooling gases, with endless ash and dust in the air, led to torrential downpours of rain all over the earth. The words in v. 11, ‘broken up’ are in Hebrew ‘cleaving open.’ Such volcanic activity, and the gasses from it, would have killed all who were in the areas of occurrence. The high waters covered the earth, very hot in some areas, radically cold in others, killed the rest. The source of the Flood waters was thus both subterranean and atmospheric” (R.J. Rushdoony, *Genesis*, p. 70).

Interestingly, Rushdoony also observes, “The New Testament, instead of using the Greek word for *flood*, uses *kataklysmos*, cataclysm, to describe this event (Matt. 24:39; Lk. 17:27; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6). Thus, while it was a flood, it was much more” (Ibid). And this cataclysmic flood continued for 40 days and 40 nights (Gen. 7:12).

Backing up a little chronologically, Genesis 7:16 states that all flesh, male and female, entered the ark. “And the LORD shut him in.” James M. Boice states, “When the Lord shut Noah and his family up in the ark, they were totally secure and thereby become an illustration for us of the believer's *perfect security* in Jesus Christ. The rains would come. The floods would rage. But nothing would touch these who had been sealed in the ark by Jehovah. It is interesting that God did not say, ‘Noah, it is time to shut the door. Get your sons to help you slide it closed and throw the lock.’ The Lord does not place the safety of his people in others' hands. He himself throws the lock. It is said of him, ‘What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open’ (Rev. 3:7). The shutting in of Noah was the equivalent of our being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). Like him, we are not only saved; we are secure as well” (James M. Boice, *Genesis*, p. 344-345).

Typologically, the ark represents the church, which is not a physical building, but the spiritual body of Jesus Christ. Thus, to come to “church” every Sunday is to come to Christ's body. This is mysterious, but all Christians are in union with Christ. When Jesus confronted Saul on the road to Damascus, He said, “Saul, Saul, why to you persecute *me*?” (Acts 9:4). To persecute the church is to persecute Christ. Additionally, to love the church is to love Christ; to give to the church is to give to Christ. People say, “I can be a Christian without going to church,” which is like saying, “I can be a Christian without being connected to His body.” But how can that be? Biblically, to sever yourself from the people of God is to apostatize (1 Jn. 2:19).

When the waters prevailed above the mountains “all flesh died...all mankind...every living thing...Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark” (7:21-23). One church father stated graphically, “The church is like the ark, if it weren't for the judgment on the outside, you could never stand the smell on the inside.”

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