

REVERSE CREATION/RE-CREATION (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 6:9-22

God created the world and saw that it was good. This was His repeated evaluation during the six days of creation. At the end of the six days, He “saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was *very good*” (Gen. 1:31). Then we had the fall of Adam, with Adam and Eve cast out of the Garden to the east (3:23-24). Following the fall of Adam came—what we could call—the fall of Cain, and he was cast out of the land of Eden, moving still further east (4:16). Then we have the fall of the sons of God, and they will be cast out the world altogether by the flood. First, man is cast out the Garden, then he is cast out of Eden, finally he is cast out of the world. This is the progressive judgment of man as he moves away from God.

You might be wondering why I highlighted this movement to the east. Isn't it just a geographical reference? Yes and no. Yes, it is a geographical reference that can be located on a map; but no, it isn't *merely* a geographical reference, it is also a spiritual reference. To move east is to move away from God. Thus, traveling west is returning to God. Peter Leithart writes, “After the fall, cherubim are placed at the gate of the Garden, which is on the east side (Gen. 3:24). This means the entrance to the Garden is toward the east. If you want to return to the Garden, you have to travel west, and moving east is moving away from the Garden. All through the Bible, east and west have this meaning. Cain is cast out of the land and wanders in Nod, which is east of Eden (4:16). Lot moves east and settles near Sodom (13:11). When Israel enters the land from Egypt, they circle around to Moab and cross the Jordan from the east. This shows that entering the land flowing with milk and honey is like returning to the Garden. Later, when Israel goes into exile, they are taken to the east, away from the land, and to return they travel west. In the New Testament, the wise men come from east to west, seeking the Garden and Jesus, the real Tree of Life” (*A House for My Name*, p. 53).

Now we need to consider another biblical symbol, namely water. Genesis 1:2 says, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” So before creation, all we have is waters. In Genesis 1:6-7 God separates the waters above from the waters on earth. Next, God separates the waters on earth, and brings forth dry land on the third day (vs. 9). Thus, out of the waters God brought forth the world, His creation. The story of Noah could be titled “Reverse Creation/Re-Creation.” By flooding the world God is returning it to its original state, when there was nothing but waters. However, it's also through these waters that a new creation will emerge, with a new Adam.

It's fascinating how God uses water to bring an end to the old world, and an entrance into a new world. We have the Flood account of course, but we also have Moses, whose life as a child was spared when his mother put him in *an ark covered with pitch* (Ex. 2:3). Later, he brought the Israelites through the Red Sea; the waters brought an end to the old world, Egypt, with thousands of Egyptians drowning, and that same Sea was also an entrance into a new world. We have another water episode in the book of Joshua. Before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the new world, they had to go through the waters of the Jordan River, which incidentally were at flood stage (Jos. 3:15). Time after time, God makes it clear that entrance into His land or world is through water. Therefore, when we get to the NT we shouldn't be taken aback to find God's people going through the waters of baptism to enter a new life. And the connection between Noah and the ark with baptism is made explicit in 1 Peter 3:20b-21a: “God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you.*” Likewise, Paul describes the Exodus through the sea as a baptism (1 Cor. 10:1-2).

God destroys the old world with water, and then re-creates it out of the waters, with Noah as the new Adam. Like Adam, Noah is commanded, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1; cf. 9:7). The LORD used Noah, because he “was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God” (6:9). Noah's righteousness is an indication of his faith in God. “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Heb. 11:7).

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Noah was “blameless in his generation” (6:9). There was no legitimate charge that Noah’s contemporaries could have brought against him. Note carefully: Noah was blameless *in his generation*. The most corrupt generation ever. John Calvin writes, “The clause, ‘in his generations,’ is emphatic...nothing was more corrupt than that age. Therefore, it was a remarkable instance of constancy, that Noah being surrounded on every side with the filth of iniquity, should hence have contracted no contagion. We know how great is the force of custom, so that nothing is more difficult than to live holily among the wicked, and to avoid being led away by their evil examples. Scarcely is there one in a hundred who has not in his mouth that diabolical proverb, ‘We must howl when we are among the wolves’” (John Calvin, *Genesis*, p. 252). Calvin then says, “If *he* could bear up against the corruption of the whole world, and against such constant and vehement assaults of iniquity; no excuse is left for *us*” (Ibid).

“In the beginning” God saw that His creation was good. Now, we’re told, “God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” (Gen. 6:11). God’s people are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; the devil’s own bring depravity and darkness. Due to the vacuum of righteous people, corruption was the inevitable outcome.

The more wicked the generation in which we live, the more necessary is the need for clinging to a Christian community for fellowship and encouragement in righteousness. “So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, *along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*” (2 Tim. 2:22). Calvin also observed that Noah “had not even one associate in the worship of God, and in the pursuit of holiness” (Ibid.). Imagine, no church to go to for worship, no Bible study to attend, and not even a single brother to pray with.

God tells Noah that He has determined to make an end of all flesh, and to destroy them with the earth (Gen. 6:13). God frequently makes His intentions known to His servants (Amos 3:7; Gen. 18:17). Then, before Noah can even respond, God tells him to build an ark (Gen. 6:14-17). God’s judgment will prove to be—simultaneously—a curse as well as a blessing. “For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land. In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace...for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off” (Ps. 37:9-11, 22). Noah was empowered to tirelessly labor for 120 years on the ark, because every day the blessing of the covenant to preserve his family was before him, as well as God’s curse to destroy all the rest of humanity.

“Most Bible scholars believe the biblical cubit to have been about eighteen inches, and it is on the basis of this assumption that the translators of the New International Version give the dimensions of the ark as ‘450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high’ (Gen. 6:15).

“Several things can be said about these measurements to begin with. First, if this was the size of the ark, it was of great proportions, greater than the size of any ancient vessel. In fact, it was not until 1858 that a vessel of greater length was constructed: the *Great Eastern* (692 by 83 by 30 feet). Second, it can be shown through simulated tests in water that a boxlike structure of the ark’s dimensions is exceedingly stable, indeed, almost impossible to capsize. Whatever our judgment about the carrying capacity of the ark, therefore, there is an obvious presumption in favor of the design having come from God. For how would Noah or anyone else at that time know how to construct such a large craft except by revelation?” (James Boice, *Genesis*, p. 327-328).

Concerning all the animals in the ark, Boice says, “although we usually think of large animals when we think of the ark (elephants, hippopotamuses, giraffes), most land animals are in fact quite small. The average size is less than that of a sheep. Since 240 sheep fit comfortably in an average size two-deck railroad car and since the volume of the ark would have been equal to 569 such cars, calculations show that the animals to be saved would have fit into approximately 50 percent of the ark’s carrying capacity, leaving room for people, food, water, and whatever other provisions may have been necessary (Ibid).

Two by two, the text seems to indicate, the animals came to Noah (vs. 20). Finally, the passage concludes by telling us that “Noah...did all that the LORD commanded him” (vs. 22).

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