

\* The Heights Baptist Church \* Series: Genesis—The Book of Beginnings \*  
\* Topic: The Flood (Part 2) \* Scripture: Genesis 7:1—8:20 \* 7/16/2023 \*

## MAIN POINT

God calls us to faithful living, even in difficult times, and He promises to give us grace in the storms we face.

## INTRODUCTION

**Were you ever caught in some sort of storm or natural disaster? How did you respond to that situation?**

**How do you think non-Christians might view these natural disasters differently than Christians do?**

The account of Noah and his family waiting in the ark through the 40 days of torrential downpour and the ark being lifted up on the rising floodwaters, then remaining on the ark for over a year before being able to exit the ark during the time it took for the floodwaters to recede teaches us that there is grace in the storms of life. God has promised to look after us if we follow him and give us the grace we need to live faithfully in the midst of life's storms.

## UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 7:1-24

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

**Noah actually took seven pairs of every clean animal into the ark (Genesis 7:2).** This may have some spiritual significance, but it also would allow for Noah to offer sacrifices without causing a kind of animal to go extinct, and it would also provide food for carnivores while ensuring the clean animals would procreate. Mankind was not authorized to eat meat until after the flood (Gen. 9:3), but it isn't clear whether carnivory started after the flood, or whether it began with the curse.

**Noah and his family did not have to round up all of the animals to bring them to the ark.** Genesis 7:8-9 and 15 tell us the animals came to Noah and entered the ark.

**After Noah, his family, and the animals entered the ark, God shut the door (Gen. 7:16).** Up to this time, anyone could have entered the ark. And we read last week that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). After this, the wicked people were locked out, and Noah and his family were safely sealed in. This is a great picture of the fact that God's offer of grace only extends until people die (Hebrews 9:27), and in Christ, we are eternally secure. The door of the ark is similar to the picture of the door to the wedding banquet in Matthew 25, where the wise virgins were closed in, and the foolish ones were locked out. Jesus called himself the gate for the sheep. The only way to God is through Jesus.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 8:1-20

**How important to this account is Genesis 8:1?**

"But God remembered Noah..." God in his holiness and justice remembers to show mercy to those who seek him.

## SPIRITUAL PICTURE: THE DOVE AND THE RAVEN

### ASK A VOLUNTEER TO RE-READ GENESIS 8:6-11

The Old Testament Law views doves - who are herbivores - as clean; and it views ravens - who eat the flesh of dead animals - as unclean. These two birds can represent saved and unsaved people. When Noah sent them out into the world, the raven found a place to rest. Perhaps it was on the floating, bloated carcass of a dead animal from which it would eat. The dove, on the other hand, found nowhere in the world to rest, and returned to the safety of the ark. When the dove was sent out again, it returned with an olive branch, symbolizing demonstrating that new life was springing up on the earth.

The dove with an olive branch is now an iconic religious symbol representing God's purity, and the olive branch his offer of peace, hope, restoration, and life. In 1 Corinthians 10, Christians are warned not to fall back into their old way of life. What an amazing picture of this we get from these two birds. Both were on the ark when God's judgement fell on the rest of the world. And yet in the end, the raven chose to leave, go back to the world, and not return to the ark. How fitting are the words of 1 Corinthians 10:11-12; "These things happened to them (Israel in the wilderness) as examples, and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" The church includes both true believers and false professors. Some people in church may think, "I go to church, and I've been baptized, so I'm good." Others may think, "I said the words in the sinner's prayer, I'm good." Others, "I go to church most Sundays, and I do good works, so I'm good." Just because we are onboard the ark doesn't mean we have a personal relationship with Christ.

## SEEING THE PHYSICAL WORLD THROUGH BIBLICAL GLASSES

In public schools, and in "educational" TV shows, we are told (more like brainwashed) that the physical world around us is the result of billions of years plus random natural processes. In this section, we will briefly look at why the world looks like it does based on the history of the world presented in the Bible.

- Three major events created and shaped the world we see today.
- First, there is the creation week described in Genesis 1 and 2. This explains the creation of the heavens and the earth, the sky, land, and oceans, and all creatures living on the earth.
- Second is the fall and resulting curse described in Genesis 3. This resulted in death, disease, decay, carnivory, genetic defects, wickedness, imperfections, etc.
- Third is Noah's flood. This results in the geology of the world we see today. We will now briefly consider the effect the flood had on the earth.

### ASK VOLUNTEERS TO RE-READ GENESIS 7:18-23 AND 2 PETER 3:5-7

One of the attempts some Christians make to try to get the history of the Bible to match the creation myth of the atheists (The big bang, biological evolution, billions of years, etc.) is to try to make Noah's flood a local event in Mesopotamia. When someone is conveying the idea that a universal term really represents a universal event (unlike saying something like, "**everybody** likes sweet tea" even though they don't really mean everybody), they use multiple universal terms.

### **How many universal terms do you see in Genesis 7:18-23?**

All the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered.... Every living thing that moved on land perished... all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life int its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out..."

Another way to demonstrate a universal term truly means universal is to "deny the opposite". After all the universal terms, we read in Genesis 7:23 that, "Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark." This clearly speaks of a global flood.

## **What does 2 Peter 3:5-7 add to the description of the flood in Genesis?**

The words “deluged” and “destroyed” are violent, destructive terms. This wasn’t a gentle rain. Also, the word “world” is the Greek word from which we get the word “Cosmos”. This is describing a global flood.

So what would a violent, year-long, global flood do to the surface of the earth? Dr. Henry Morris (who majored in hydraulics and hydrology, with minors in geology and mathematics) greatly expanded our understanding of the effect a global flood would have on the earth in his groundbreaking (pardon the pun) book, *The Genesis Flood* (1961), used laws of hydrodynamics to show that a worldwide flood would distribute the vast quantities of sediment in horizontal layers, separated based on particle size, shape, and density. This is the same principle that can be seen in a gold miner’s pan, where sediment is washed around in a pan, and it separates into layers, with the gold on the bottom, then a layer of black iron dust, then the larger gravel pieces, and then the finer sand on top.

And this is exactly what we see on earth. The majority of the earth is covered with layer upon layer of sedimentary rock, separated into different types of material (such as a layer of sandstone under a layer of limestone), with billions of fossilized creatures buried within the layers. These layers can be seen beautifully in places such as the Grand Canyon. Secular “science” tries to interpret these layers as representing billions of years based on their starting assumption that there was never a global flood, but this creates significant difficulties in trying to match what is seen with their model of how it formed.

## **OTHER EVIDENCES FOR INTERPRETING THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH THROUGH A GLOBAL FLOOD RATHER THAN BILLIONS OF YEARS**

- Fossilized sea creatures are found in the sedimentary rock layers deep inland on every continent. (Andrew Snelling, PhD, *Answers* January-March, 2008)
- Flood legends are found in the histories of almost every people group on the earth. One example (many could be given) is from the Hawaiians; which says that long after the first man, the people of earth became wicked. Only Nu-u remained righteous. He built a great covered canoe and stored food on board, then brought animals, plants, and his family on board. God sent a flood that covered all the earth, killing everyone except Nu-u and his family. After the flood subsided, God sent a rainbow as a sign of his forgiveness. (Byron Nelson, *The Deluge Story in Stone*, 1931)

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 PETER 3:3-7

**These verses tell us that in the last days, scoffers will come. What three events will they scoff at, and deliberately forget?**

Creation, the flood, and the second coming of Christ.

**Why do you think they choose to deliberately forget these three events?**

Creation means God exists. The flood shows God judges sin. The second coming of Christ means God will judge their sin.

## **APPLICATION**

**Noah and his family went through quite an ordeal for over a year while they were on the ark. What lessons can we learn from their story?**

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ HEBREWS 4:14-16, PSALM 94:18-19 AND ISAIAH 46:3-4

**What comfort can we gain from these verses?**

Corrie Ten Boom, her book, *The Hiding Place*, tells of the time she as a child expressed fear of death to her father. Here is his wise response.

“Father sat down on the edge of the narrow bed. ‘Corrie,’ he began gently, ‘when you and I go to Amsterdam-when do I give you your ticket?’

I sniffed a few times, considering this. ‘Why, just before we get on the train.’

‘Exactly. And our wise Father in heaven knows when we’re going to need things, too. Don’t run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need-just in time.’” Corrie Ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*

While we know we don’t have the strength in ourselves to deal with impossible situations, we can know that God will provide us with all the grace we need when we need it, if we are walking faithfully with him.

#### PRAYER

Thank God for the grace He continually shows us, even in the storms of life. Thank Him that He loves you enough to cause you to wait on Him so that you might grow and move forward in new life. Ask Him to help change your heart and mind in the ways it needs to be changed so that you might be focused and committed to His kingdom purposes when life returns to “normal”.

## COMMENTARY

8:1a. Just two words, “God remembered,” explain the reversal in the flow of the waters and thus the flow of the narrative. “But God” contrasts the destruction brought by the Lord and the deliverance of Noah and the ark’s occupants that will ensue. As the Lord had promised (6:18; 7:1), the floodwater’s cessation and recession begin, but only because “God” ( ’ēlōhîm) took the initiative to save the eight souls in the ark (1 Pet 3:20). Receding waters became testimony to God’s faithfulness to Noah and “all” the animals in the ark. The expression “remembered” ( zākar) does not mean “calling to mind” here; it is covenant language, designating covenant fidelity (e.g., the Fourth Commandment, Exod 20:8; cf. Luke 1:72). God is acting in accordance with his earlier promise to Noah (6:18).

8:1b-2. “Wind” ( rûah) echoes the description of God’s “Spirit” ( rûah) hovering over the “waters” at creation (1:2c). Elohim, as in Genesis 1, brings this to pass, indicating that the wind is the renewed work of the Creator. “Remembered” in the previous sentence reflects the covenant name Yahweh, who is faithful to his promise, and by Elohim we find that the divine power of creation is unleashed anew to the ends of accomplishing that covenant pledge. As he had superintended the conditions of the “earth” at the beginning, the divine mind plots a destiny for the second beginning of the earth, which will be delivered from the clutches of deathly waters.

V. 2 describes the reversal of 7:11–12, which told of the earth’s bursting “springs of the great deep,” the opened “floodgates of the heavens,” and the falling “rain.” Now the deep is no longer “great”; it and the floodgates are “closed,” and the rain was “stopped” (i.e., “restrained”).

8:3–5 “Little by little” ( NJB) the diminishing waters safely “receded” ( šûb, v. 3), unlike the torrent of water that “returned” ( šûb), drowning the Egyptian armies (Exod 14:26–28). This idea of “returned” is continued in the subsequent paragraph by reference to the “returning” ( šûb) of birds to the ark (vv. 7, 9, 12). Significant time periods and dates are often cited in chap. 8, acting like milestones in tracing the water’s steady regression. The flood’s inversion of mounting waters to receding waters is perfectly paralleled by the number “a hundred and fifty days.” The ark at last comes to rest on the “seventeenth day of the seventh month” (v. 4), giving a five-month period from first rains (7:11) to the ark’s grounding. The same five-month period extends from the first sighting of the mountains (8:5) to the completely dried earth (v. 14). The seventh month in the religious calendar of the Hebrews was Tishri, the most important month of the sacred convocations; it included the Day of Atonement as well as the Feasts of Trumpets, Tabernacles, and Sacred Assembly (Lev 23:23–36). It was appropriate, therefore, that the ark should find refuge in the cultic month celebrating atonement and God’s provision.

Some seventy-two or seventy-three days (counting the first day) after the vessel landed, the waters had sufficiently retreated so that the peaks of the Ararat mountains became “visible” to Noah (v. 5). It was the first sign of land, no doubt a solace for the weary sailor. Whereas it took but forty days for the rains to submerge the earth, it would be five lingering months before the waters would completely subside. So Noah befriended patience and “waited” (vv. 10, 12). When troubles come, they advance swiftly but retreat slowly. Our verse alludes to creation’s gathering of waters on the third day when the “dry land appeared” for the first time (1:9–10). Both verses have the verb “appeared/ visible” ( r’h), and creation’s “dry land” ( yabbāšâ) is echoed later in our narrative by its verbal forms “dried up” (v. 7) and “was dry” (v. 14, yābaš). The emerging “earth” would once again support life as it had at the beginning. With each new stage of its drying, the heart of the captive inmates could leap with the hope that their deliverance was nearing.

8:6–12 Following the first appearance of land, the drying of the earth continues, taking five more months to complete (vv. 5, 14). A raven and a dove, the latter three times, are released by Noah to measure the water’s retreat, apparently in intervals of seven days. Forty days following the disclosure of the mountain peaks, Noah releases first a “raven.” “At the end ( qēš) of forty days” echoes God’s intent to put an “end” ( qēš) to all peoples (6:13) by “forty days” of rains (7:4, 11, 17). 72 This the Lord had accomplished, and the period of vengeance had come to its “end” with the release of first life from the ark. The allusion to “forty” was also the period of Israel’s captivity in the wilderness until God’s wrath was satisfied (e.g., Num 14:33–34; see 7:4 discussion).

The foremost significance of the raven is its symbolic value as an “unclean” bird, unfit for consumption (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14). According to rabbinic tradition, the raven was released first as expendable since it was neither good for food nor sacrifice. Also Isaiah, in predicting Edom’s desolation, drew on the symbolic raven and on the creation language of 1:2, *tōhû* (“wasteland”) and *bōhû* (“empty”), to depict its demise (34:11). Its departure from the ark signified that the impurities of the past had been removed and the creation of the new world had a fresh start.

Second, a “dove” is released, probably seven days later, but it cannot find a place to alight (vv. 8–9). Noah commissions the dove to “see” as the eyes of the patriarch in order to discover if the water “had receded” further (v. 8). Noah is imprisoned in the ark and must depend on his animal shipmates until later he “saw” the dry land firsthand (v. 13). The bird conveys for the ark’s inhabitants the opposite meaning to the raven. It was commonly found in the sacrificial legislation for rites of purification (e.g., Lev 12:6, 8; cf. Num 6:10; Luke 2:24) and was appropriated for the “burnt offering” and “sin offering” among the poor (e.g., Lev 1:14; 5:7; 14:22).

After waiting another seven days, the second release of the dove proves promising because it returns with the first testimony to life, “a freshly plucked olive leaf” (8:10–11). As a fresh leaf, it was newly born and thus was confirmation that the earth again was yielding its herbage (as 1:11–1230). The detail of an “olive” leaf too may have caused early readers to reflect on connections with the tabernacle, where olive oil fueled the menorah in the tabernacle (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2–4) and was added to the mixture of perfumed oil for anointing tabernacle and furnishings (Exod 30:24–29). It was obviously something that pleased God. By this sign Noah “knew” that the waters had receded; this emblem of life and prosperity gave this second Adam reassurance of continued life and safety. Both anointing oil and dove had symbolic value in Israel for the empowering presence of the Spirit, especially the ministry of the messianic figure (e.g., 1 Sam 16:13; Ps 89:20; Isa 61:1). Jesus of Nazareth took up that ministry (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), and at his public baptism all four Evangelists note that the Spirit came upon him in the form of a descending “dove” (Matt 3:16 pars.). After yet another seven days, the bird is released a third time, and at last the dove does not return (v. 12). “By not returning it proclaims this freedom to those who are still shut up in the ark.” 77

8:13–14 One year and eleven days since the initial outpouring (7:11), the last vestiges of the waters disappeared. Again the narration ties the flood deliverance to the worship activity of Israel by drawing on tabernacle jargon for the “cover” (*mikseh*) of the ark (v. 13). It was not the side “door” noted in 6:16 but another opening. With the exception of Noah’s ark, the term designates exclusively the “covering” (tanned animal hides) for the “tent of meeting” (e.g., Exod 26:14; 36:19; Num 3:25). Even as God was with Israel in the wilderness sojourn, he was with Noah in the midst of his watery voyage.

8:15–17 The third divine speech instructs Noah to disembark from the ark, one hundred and seventeen days after entering it. It parallels the command to enter the ark (7:1), except the configuration of the family is cited specifically here. These eight are the new humanity, and the future of the blessing remains with them. Those who entered the ark successfully rode out the storms and were delivered intact by the mercies of God. For the long year of rising and receding waters, Noah received no word from the Lord. He had waited and waited yet did not anxiously exit until given the heavenly word to disembark. As the second creation, God instructs Noah to bring out the animals so that they might “multiply,” “be fruitful,” and “increase” on the earth.

8:18–19 These may be taken by the Western reader as tedious repetition, but the report style of Hebrew narrative shows Noah’s obedience, a feature repeatedly ascribed to him throughout the flood account. In contrast to his generation, Noah as a “righteous man” believed God and obeyed his command both in entering the ark (7:1) and in departing.

8:20 Noah’s first act following his departure from the ark was to worship God by giving a burnt offering. Since every kind of clean animal and bird—that is, one of every mammal that chewed the cud and possessed split hoofs, as well as one representative of every kind of bird that did not eat carrion—was offered, it must have been an impressive sacrifice.

8:21 Using anthropomorphic language—words that describe God’s actions in human terms—the text notes that the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma. The phrase means that God accepted Noah’s sacrifice. Elsewhere

in the Torah, God's refusal to smell a sacrifice meant he rejected the offering (Lv 26:31). Acceptable offerings in other parts of the Bible are said to have a pleasing aroma (Ex 29:25; Lv 1:9; 2:2; 3:16; Nm 18:17). Following Noah's sacrifice the Lord made a solemn promise never again to curse the ground as he had done following Adam's sin (Gn 3:17; 5:29). Almost with a sense of resignation, God noted that the inclination of the human heart was evil from youth onward (Ps 14:1; Rm 3:9,23). The flood did not significantly change the human heart (cp. Gn 6:5). Yet in spite of humanity's sinful nature, God's grace and love would prevail: He would never again destroy all life as he had done in Noah's day.

8:22 The terrifying chaos of the flood would give way to the predictable, comforting rhythms of life—the harvest, the seasons, day and night—for as long as the earth endures.