

The Genesis Flood

Genesis 8:1-22

With a Bible story as familiar as Noah and the flood, it is easy to miss a lot of the details that are in the biblical account. We can read it over many times, over many years, and still not be entirely aware what exactly took place during that great flood. So when you study the biblical account, word for word, verse by verse, you might find details that you had simply overlooked. How easy it is to read the Bible on the surface while ignoring many of the details. It is some of those details that I want to study with you this morning.

It is those details that will keep this story from being just another children's story. It is the infallible truth of those details which keep Noah's Ark from being a mere fable. And it is an understanding of those details that will help you give answer to the absolute foolishness of modern science and geology in their conclusions about the origin of the world.

Let me say it again, as clearly as I can. We are reading history. These events actually happened, and they happened exactly as they are described in the Bible, in this simple and straightforward account. And in so far as these verses describe scientific and geological phenomena, they are true and accurate. We cannot write an entire textbook on Geology from these verses, but we can sure eliminate most of what is written in the ones that do exist!

But let me start with my main objective. The main point of chapter 7. And it's not Noah. It's not the ark. Chapter 7 isn't ultimately about either of them. It's a chapter about God. God's faithfulness. God's grace. The first thing we read in this chapter is that,

I. GOD PROVES HIS FAITHFULNESS TO NOAH.

v.1

"God remembered Noah."

Let me tell you first what that does NOT mean. It does NOT mean that God had forgotten Noah! Rather, it means that God began again to act on his behalf. God was ready to start him on his way to the new life he would find in the new world after the flood. God remembered Noah, in his kindness, granting Noah his requests, protecting and delivering him from all his troubles.

It is a word of personal attention and tender care. God remembered Noah. And everyone with him--all his family and all the animals. Actually, Noah had become almost a second Adam, that is, a representative for all creation, so everything I say about Noah today also refers to all his family and to all the animals contained on the ark.

God proves his faithfulness to them. He remembered them. Specifically,

A. God caused the floodwaters to recede.

Now, here is where it is easy to miss some of the details. We all know that it rained for 40 days and 40 nights; further, you might remember that there was 150 day period involved. Then Noah sent out a raven and a dove, and eventually the earth dried out. But what actually happened when the floodwaters went down. Let me explain it to you, in the words of Scripture.

v.1-5

Let me explain that as best I can, and I will carefully venture into the realm of geology, for although this chapter doesn't fully describe the geological processes taking place, yet there are clear geological implications here that can be suggested to define scientifically what actually took place.

God used three things to cause the waters to go down. He sent a wind over the earth. He closed the fountains of the deep. And he closed the floodgates of the heavens. Let's think about each one. First, the wind.

v.1b. "And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided."

God made use of a natural force. Now, the Hebrew word for wind is the same word as the word for Spirit, and some would say that verse 1 actually refers to the Holy Spirit. Though I can't absolutely say that that interpretation is wrong, there is nothing to indicate a reference to the Holy Spirit. The context strongly favors the translation "wind," which all our English Bibles give us.

Yet, remember that with the vapor canopy in place before the flood, there would have been very little temperature differentials and very little air movements. There would have been no cold fronts and warm fronts like the ones we experience today. The earth could have been described as a huge greenhouse. But with the vapor canopy gone, with the waters above the expanse falling to the earth during those forty days of rain, there would be strong winds. There would be temperature changes, and sharp differences in temperature between the equator and the poles. Since the flood, actually beginning with this great wind, the present complex system of atmospheric circulation has been in effect.

But wind, by itself, producing waves and evaporation, couldn't possibly account for the realization that thousands of feet of water receded, unless the winds were so strong as to somehow sweep the water off into outer space. But nothing in the text suggests such a strange occurrence. Something else is suggested, and the idea confirmed in Psalm 104. Look first at,

v.2

God closed the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens, the two sources of water in the great flood. God had originally opened those two reservoirs of water, as we read in,

Gen. 7:11 "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12 And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights."

So the flood wasn't just a really heavy rainstorm. It was a catastrophic change in the very nature of the earth and sky. That great canopy of water above the sky and the great collection of water in the earth both emptied, for the first time. The earth was emptying itself of water, through volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and all the deep springs bursting forth. And the water above the sky was emptied, forever changing both the atmosphere and the earth's crust. This was a cataclysmic event, the proportions of which had never been previously seen nor never again will be seen.

And finally, God closed those two great water sources. How could all that water, covering the highest mountains, recede? Where would the water go? The suggestion given to us from Psalm 104 is that there was a drastic rearrangement of the topography of the earth. The land masses making up our continents would have risen up from the waters and the ocean basins would actually deepen and widen to receive the waters draining off the land.

Ps. 104:1 "Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, 2 Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. 3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, 4 Who makes His angels spirits,

His ministers a flame of fire. 5 You who laid the foundations of the earth, So that it should not be moved forever,”

Then notice especially verse 6, speaking of the earth,
Ps.104:6 “You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains. 7 At Your rebuke they fled; At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. 8 They went up over the mountains; They went down into the valleys, To the place which You founded for them. 9 You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, That they may not return to cover the earth.”

How can we explain that? Well, under the mountains had been great caverns of water. And when the flood began, the pressure in those caverns pushed the water out onto the surface. “God opened the fountains of the deep.” So those empty caverns underground collapsed. They were planed off by the flood erosion, and they became the great ocean basins after the flood.

And as the water started to drain into those new, huge oceans, the sediment which had been deposited during the flood in the seas was left suspended above the seas. And that sediment quickly fossilized, that is, turned to stone. And with increased pressure in the ground, the mountains were actually uplifted, as Psalm 104 indicates.

And so we have layers of fossilized rocks all over the earth, deposited by the flood waters of Genesis. Those layers of fossils don’t begin to prove evolution, but rather demonstrate that there really was a worldwide flood! And as a result, there was then a entirely new environment upon the earth, with much more extensive oceans, much less extensive land areas, large temperature and climate variations because of the loss of the

vapor barrier above the atmosphere, mountain ranges uplifting, wind and storms, rains and snow. ice and even glaciers, and an extremely unstable earth crust which was subject to both volcanic eruptions and seismic movements we call earthquakes.

And when Noah first encountered it, it was barren, for all life had been destroyed. Now, I can’t fully explain it, but what we have described in the Bible is something like what I’ve just attempted to define. And all of it brought about by the hand of the Lord as proof of his faithfulness to Noah! Remember the context for this description,

v.1a. “Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark.”

v.1b. “And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. 2 The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. 3 And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. 4 Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. 5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.”

Then what happened? Noah sent out a raven and a dove.
First the raven,

v.6-7

v.8

And the dove came back to the ark,

v.9

Then, v.10-11

Then, finally, v.12-14

What's going on in that? Basically, Noah is obtaining the necessary information to know when it was safe to leave the ark. He uses the raven and the dove to make that determination, though in this context, God is actually the one providing the information, for "God remembered Noah." The raven and the dove were the means by which God provided that information.

They just couldn't go outside after a rainstorm like we do! Remembering what I just described about the conditions on the earth, realizing that it was barren and lifeless, it good to realize that,

B. God provided the information necessary to know when it was safe to leave the ark.

First, the raven. If the raven had flown away and not returned, then Noah would have known that there was some food supply available, that the waters had subsided enough. The raven was a predator, and could survive if some food source existed.

What suspense there must have been. They had already been in the ark for the 150 days of high water, including the actual 40 days of flooding. That's five months. Three months later, the tops of the mountains became visible, we read in v.5. Forty days later, he sent out the raven. They had been on the ark over 9 months!

But the raven didn't leave. It flew back and forth, coming and going, always returning to the ark. Obviously, it wasn't safe yet to leave. So then he sent out a dove, apparently one week later. The dove was a clean bird, who would look for a place to set its feet, a clean place, like a tree!

The dove returned. Noah took the dove back into the ark.
v.9

Seven more days passed, and the dove went out again. Now we're about ten months into this adventure. This time more good information came,
v.10-11

Then, v.12

So it was safe for the dove to survive. The waters had virtually subsided. A month later, we read that the surface of the ground was dry.
v.13

Nearly two months later, the earth was completely dry, and it was finally safe for Noah and everyone else to leave the ark.
v.14-15

The total duration had been one year and ten days. Can you imagine Noah's patience? After just 5 months, 150 days, the waters subsided. But it was over 7 more months before they could leave! And they knew when to leave because God provided that information. "God remembered Noah." "And every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark."

All of this is traced to God's faithfulness, and therefore provides us with incomparable encouragement in the midst of the struggles of our day. God is faithful. Let God's faithfulness to Noah be an encouragement of his faithfulness to you. And like Noah, be patient as you wait for him to act. And worship him.

To quote again Psalm 104, this time the conclusion of that Psalm, notice how the Psalmist applies his knowledge of God's sovereign control and personal care for all the world which he created,

Ps. 104:31 "May the glory of the LORD endure forever; May

the LORD rejoice in His works. 32 He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke. 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34 May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD. 35 May sinners be consumed from the earth, And the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!”

That response of praise and worship is precisely what we see in Noah, for the first thing he did was to build an altar to sacrifice to God, but before we look at that, let’s look briefly at the covenant which God renewed with Noah, a covenant we’ll study more in depth in Chapter 9. But here we do see that,

II. GOD RENEWS HIS COVENANT WITH NOAH.

The basic idea of that covenant, as we saw in chapter 6, was the promise of life.

Gen.6:18 “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

All the world would be killed, but Noah and his family would live, along with every kind of animal which God had created. God’s word was true. He was faithful to keep his promise. Everyone, and everything, on the ark survived.

v.15-19

As we will see more clearly next Sunday,

A. God renews the covenant promise of life.

God says, “Come out of the ark and live.” Though the world was desolate, though the climate was now harsh and unpredictable, though he now had to contend with all sorts of strange new phenomena like rain and snow, cold fronts and

recurring volcanoes and earthquakes, still, they would live! Come out and live. And bring out the animals so that they can live.

And as one particular focus of that covenant of life,

B. God renews the covenant promise of fruitfulness.

Not just live, but reproduce. And not just reproduce, but be fruitful. In an incredibly gracious repetition of the promise made to mankind before the fall, God tells Noah to literally “swarm” upon the earth, to abound. Not just multiply, as verse 17 is translated, but swarm. Or teem, the same word being used to describe the plague of frogs which would swarm upon the earth during the time Israel was being freed from Pharaoh’s dominion in Egypt.

v.17

God tells his elect family, along with the animals, to be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly in number upon the earth. For the judgment is over. God renews his covenant upon the completion of it. And then, finally, we see an ultimate expression of God’s faithfulness and God’s amazing grace.

III. GOD ACCEPTS THE SACRIFICES OFFERED BY NOAH.

v.20-21

Let me keep the focus on God. We will look at Noah as the one who offered the sacrifice, but even then, you need to look at God as the one who accepted the sacrifice. Noah was a sinner saved by grace. That grace was not without effect, for we have read that he was a righteous man, that he walked with God. And that righteousness and godliness is clearly revealed by his eagerness to offer this sacrifice.

But with any sacrifice, even those offered in specific

obedience to the law, the only basis upon which God will accept them is his own grace! We need to remember that today, even as we worship and offer to God our sacrifices of praise. Don't ever think that God is obligated to accept what you offer. Don't ever think that what you offer is perfect, either!

Speaking of our good works, the Westminster Catechism contains these humbling and almost insulting words: "[God], looking upon them [our good works] in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections."

In other words, we can, at times, reach the place of sincerity. But even then, at our best, the good works that we do are still accompanied with many weakness and imperfections! But God, by his grace, accepts them anyway!

So it was with Noah. By grace, God accepted the sacrifices offered by Noah. Having said all that, let's look at the sacrifice Noah offered. It was sincere, it was godly, and it was a faithful act of worship.

v.20

Couple of important things in that verse. This is the first reference to an altar. And the first reference to a burnt offering. Both are crucial concepts in the ceremonial system of the OT. The altar is literally the place of slaughter, the place where the blood of the animal was shed. And we know that there had been sacrifices, going back to Cain and Abel. But the altar would become the centralized location for that sacrifice.

And the burnt offering would become one of the most important of the OT sacrifices. The distinctive element of the burnt offering is that the whole animal is burned. The whole

animal is presented as a gift to God, nothing is withheld for the priest or the people to consume, as some of the other sacrifices prescribed.

Actually, "whole offering" would give a better sense than "burnt offering," because the burning was more or less incidental. The main idea was the total consecration represented by the whole animal being offered. And the whole offering does come to represent the dedication of a man's whole life. And so,

A. Noah faithfully offered a sacrifice representing the dedication of his whole life.

As it is translated in verse 20, a burnt offering.

Let's think about this a little bit. First, remember that God had instructed Noah to take 7 of the clean animals and clean birds onto the ark, and that the seventh, presumably, was to be given as a sacrifice. Again, with some degree of presuming that which is only implied, the clean animals would likely be made up of the domesticated animals, the ones Noah would have likely made part of his flock. So he is, in effect, in offering up animals from his own flock.

We read in verse 20 that Noah "took of every clean animal." I believe that the implication is that he took one from all of the clean animals on the ark, that is, one animal from every kind of animal which had entered the ark in a group of seven. In other words, most simply, he offered 1/7th of all his flocks!

And that this sacrifice took great faith and devotion is obvious, for remember the condition of the earth's crust and atmosphere. This was a forbidding and unpromising scene which Noah encountered. It was desolate and dangerous. Certainly, Noah must have felt his very life and survival in danger. We're not

talking about the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock celebrating Thanksgiving with the Indians after a tough winter! It's not just that a heavy rainstorm passed through.

Instead, the environment of the whole world had changed drastically, making life even more difficult. And there were only four couples alive to make order of the situation. So the first thing Noah did, with every sense of his own human danger, was to offer sacrifices to God.

What a blessed act of faithfulness. Noah faithfully offered a sacrifice representing the dedication of his whole life. And the idea of the burnt offering is brought over into the NT in the words of,

Rom. 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

This act of Noah's was a sacrifice of great pleasure to God. And in his great delight, even in the act of a sinful man saved by grace, God responds so graciously to Noah's faithful dedication.

v.21-22

The point is that,

B. God graciously promised to preserve and provide for his people.

God smelled the pleasing aroma, and made a promise. There would never again be a universal flood of judgment, never again a catastrophic event bringing death to the whole world. That promise is a promise founded upon grace. And it is a promise that grants to man, even to our day, great security.

v.22

The seasons will come. The years will follow, one after

another. The days and nights will come in succession. There will be a predictable pattern and order to this world, necessary for our survival. God will preserve and provide for his people. But then notice the reason why this promise is given,

v.21

The word "although" could actually be translated "because," but then the sentence doesn't seem to make sense.

v.21

It might seem that, if man is still sinful, God would actually bring another judgment like he did in Noah's day. But still I think the better translation is "because." "The Lord will never again curse the ground because of man, BECAUSE he is evil and wicked."

The Lord uses this universal judgment of the flood as an example of the final judgment at the end of the age, but the point here is that God understands that the sin-problem in man will never be cured by judgment and curse. The flood didn't cure the sinfulness of mankind. It didn't redeem mankind. It didn't change the heart of mankind. So he won't bring another universal judgment, because the problem of man is his sinfulness. And the only cure for the sinfulness of mankind and the only solution to the wickedness of the human heart is the work of Jesus Christ.

Judgment wouldn't change man's sinful heart, so God promised never to bring a similar judgment. He promise to preserve and provide for his people in order that, in the fullness of time, he could send his son to accomplish what the flood was unable to accomplish. Redemption and salvation.

So, after the flood, God graciously promised to preserve and provide for his people. And that, for one purpose. To send his

son. To say it again, clearly, I hope. The judgment of the flood is an expression of God's wrath and justice. But the judgment of the flood would not and could not change the sinful heart of man. Therefore, God promises never again to repeat it.

Instead, in the fullness of time, he would send his son to do what the flood could not do—to change and cleanse the sinful heart of mankind.

How, then, should we respond? Simple answer, the same way Noah responded. With the sacrifices of worship offered to God. So we offer our burnt offerings to God this morning, the living sacrifice of your whole life!

God has sent his son. The work of Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption, and changes our hearts. Jesus has done what this flood could not do. And he did it by offering his body as a sacrifice for our sin, and shedding his blood as the penalty for our sin.

Today, as you partake of these elements of the Lord's Supper, faithfully offer to God the same sacrifice Noah offered, the sacrifice of your whole life. That sacrifice for us is a sacrifice of praise, well expressed in those words I read from the end of,

Ps. 134:31 "May the glory of the LORD endure forever; May the LORD rejoice in His works. 32 He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke. 33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. 34 May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD. 35 May sinners be consumed from the earth, And the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!"

May God be pleased with our sacrifices as he was with Noah.