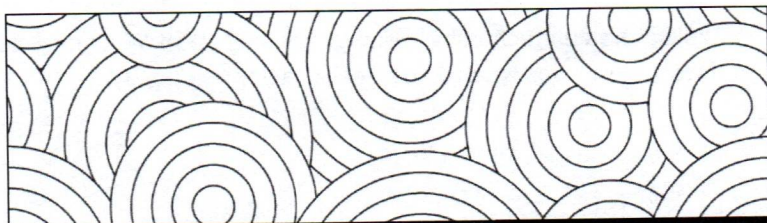


LESSON 7

GOD REMEMBERS NOAH

GENESIS 8:1-22



OPEN IT UP

Noah and his family rode a wave of emotions in the ark. They first contended with the sadness that their friends and family were being drowned just outside the door of the ark. Then they lived with the anxieties of hearing hard rain pound the ark and feeling waters carry it along, uncertain of where they were going. Finally, when the rain ceased after forty days and nights, they had to deal with boredom. The last verse of Genesis 7 tells us the floodwaters were on the earth for 150 days, although dry land would not emerge for much longer. Like a doctor's office, where you wait for an hour to see the doctor for five minutes, Noah and his family spent much longer waiting for the waters to recede as they had witnessed them rise. Much of life is about being prepared when opportunity comes. And Noah's family was prepared to do whatever God commanded whenever He commanded it.

THE ARK RESTED • GENESIS 8:1-5

The opening verses of the chapter explain the process by which the waters receded. Scripture tells us first that "God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1) and those on the ark. This does not imply that the Lord

had forgotten Noah for a time. Rather, this expression is used to mark occasions when God acts to help people (19:19; 30:22; cf. Exodus 2:24). Second, Scripture reports, “God made a wind to pass” (Genesis 8:1), using the same language found in the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:26, 28) and the damming of the Jordan River (Joshua 4:18). Water is one of the most powerful of nature’s forces, but strong wind can displace even the strongest rush of water. The floodwaters were able to cover the tops of even the highest mountains (Genesis 7:20), and thus miles of water had to be moved. This is a nearly impossible feat, but nothing is impossible with God (Mark 10:27). In fact, the miracle of removing the waters is even more impressive than the flood itself.

Third, Scripture reports the ark rested “on the mountains of Ararat” (Genesis 8:4). Note that the Bible does not give the precise location of the ark’s resting place. “Mount Ararat” is a common misquotation of what the Bible says. Urartu (from which the word *Ararat* comes) was a mountainous region in Armenia mentioned in Assyrian sources (cf. 2 Kings 19:37; Isaiah 37:38). So we know well the region where the ark rested but not the exact location. All claims to have found Noah’s ark have been disproven. But we should not doubt the flood simply because Noah’s ark has not been—and likely never will be—discovered. Virtually no serious historian denies the crucifixion of Jesus, but we don’t have even a piece of the cross (please, don’t buy a “splinter of the cross” on eBay!). While we welcome any discovery that confirms the Bible, we do not *need* the Bible to be confirmed. As the Word of God, Scripture stands true as written, whether something outside the Bible proves it or not (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE • GENESIS 8:6-12

After “the tops of the mountains” (Genesis 8:5) had been visible for “forty days” (verse 6), Noah “sent out a raven” (verse 7). The choice of bird is unclear. Some have theorized that the raven, as an unclean animal, was of lesser value (Leviticus 11:15). Therefore, Noah was unconcerned with whether it might die. But this doesn’t seem accurate. An ancient superstition is reported by the Roman poet Ovid that the appearance of ravens was a sign of rain (*Art of Love* 2.6.34). One could understand how Noah might be interested

in knowing if any more rain was coming, but it is impossible to know whether this Roman superstition dates back to Noah's day. The most common-sense answer is that the raven was capable of traveling long distances without stopping. The Bible never says the raven returned but "kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth" (verse 7). In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* too, Utnapishtim (that story's "Noah") sends out a raven that never returns, on which basis he concludes that dry land has been discovered.

Next, Noah sends forth the "dove," who looked for land and "returned" (Genesis 8:8–9). The dove, too, is capable of traveling long distances but has a greater tendency to return than the raven. Perhaps this is the reason for Noah's change of bird. In any case, Noah waited one more week and sent the dove again, who now returned with "a freshly plucked olive leaf" (verse 11). On this basis, Noah understood the waters were receding. So, after another week, Noah sent the dove again, who this time did not return (verse 12).

THE ARK EMPTIED • GENESIS 8:13-22

Finally, the earth was once again capable of receiving land life. Removing the ark's "covering," Noah discovered "the surface of the ground was dry" (Genesis 8:13). This occurred "in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month" (verse 14). The calendar of the Old Testament was a lunar calendar. Since the lunar month was figured as thirty days (more accurately, 29.5 days), calculation of the total stay in the ark, the period from the seventeenth day of the second month (7:11) to the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the following year (8:14), gives 360 days (one lunar year) plus eleven days, or 371 days by the lunar calendar. Figuring the lunar month precisely as 29.5 days, one realizes that the stay in the ark covered one solar year.

Although Noah determined it was safe to leave the ark, he waited for God's command, as he had done previously (Genesis 8:16). After leaving, Noah's first act was to offer sacrifices to God. These were "burnt offerings" (verse 20), meaning the entire animal was consumed by the fire (Leviticus 1; 6:9–30). Burnt offerings were sacrificed in the tabernacle and temple every morning and evening (the so-called

“continual burnt offering,” Exodus 29:42). It was a way of opening and closing the day of worship, like opening and closing prayers are in modern worship assemblies.

Although people sometimes balk at the statement that God “smelled a soothing aroma” (Genesis 8:21), this is the standard language for God’s response to sacrifice (Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17). The “curse” of “the ground” (Genesis 8:21) dates back to Adam (3:17), but God here promises never to “curse the ground for man’s sake” again, nor will He ever “again destroy every living thing” (8:21). God instead vows greater patience with humanity since “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (verse 21). God recognizes humans are sinful creatures, seeking to do evil. There will always be more people doing wrong than right (cf. Exodus 23:2; Matthew 7:13). After the flood, God will no longer focus on the human race; He will turn His attention to a single individual and his family.

WRAP IT UP

The destruction of the world is an extreme step. God's love and patience mean He never acts impulsively or irrationally. This fact highlights how sinful the world really was. However, God promises the world will once again be destroyed. Peter promises, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). It won't be water that destroys. Next time it will be fire. Are we living in such a way that we are confident of our salvation?

**THINK ON IT**

1. What do you think it would have been like to be on the ark when the floodwaters rose? Imagine the sounds (you could see very little). What would they mean?
2. Where did the ark come to rest? Do you think we will ever discover Noah's ark? Would the discovery of Noah's ark (assuming it could be verified) make a difference in what you believe? Why, or why not?
3. How long were Noah and his family on the ark? How long did they wait after the rain stopped?
4. Discuss the importance of sacrifice as Noah exits the ark. Why do you think he offered sacrifices?
5. How does God promise to destroy the world again? Do you think the world today is different morally from the world of Noah? Explain why or why not.