

Open Heart, Open Bible

Genesis and Luke's Gospel

Linking Theme: Covenant

Passage for weekly reading (week 3):

Genesis ch.'s 6 – 8

Catastrophe and Condescension

What I sense powerfully as I read the first few verses in this week's passage is the increase in the forces of anarchy and darkness that are provoking the wrath of God in an unprecedented way. I know what is coming, but the increase of tension as the world goes on uncaringly to its God-ordained devastation is tangible. Various interpretations are given in the range of commentaries respecting v.'s 1-7 of ch.6, the more conservative suggesting that the godly line of Seth became corrupted, marrying more for gratification than for companionship. There is, however, something that is more than usually abhorrent to God about this passage that the scripture does not clearly specify, something which appears to go beyond the boundaries of man's disobedience. There are those who therefore feel that the "sons of God" of v.2 were, in fact, fallen angels, whose rebellion included sexual acts with the "daughters of men", producing an especially perverse and violent race of hybrid beings known as the Nephilim (v.4). Angels are referred to as the "sons of God" in Job 1 v.6, and there are references to such fallen angels in the N.T. (2 Peter 2 v.4 & Jude v.6), linking their disobedience with sexual deviance in a way which invited comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible does not give sufficient detail to be dogmatic, but the level of corruption is clearly horrific. Drastic circumstances call for drastic remedies.

Genesis 6 v.6 is one of the saddest verses in the Scriptures. The joy of ch.'s 1&2 and the ordered beauty of the creation have been completely lost because of man's faithlessness, and God's heart is "filled with pain". It has taken almost 1,700 years to bring about this judgment, and divine forbearance is at an end. Nevertheless, judgment is tempered by mercy (it always is!), that mercy being demonstrated here in the saving of Noah and his family. The Lord always leaves a remnant, and here we see the smallest remnant ever left, a family of eight, who would be the ultimate ancestors of the world's population as it fanned out from Babel in the ensuing centuries. God speaks of the covenant He will make with Noah (v.18), and the key element in His choice of man is Noah's commitment to righteousness (7 v.1).

Two particular questions are often asked from ch.7 :

a) **Where could all the water come from to flood the whole earth?** (Surely an instance of local flooding in the Mesopotamian region is far more credible!)

Ch.7 v.11 speaks of two sources of water – “**the springs of the great deep**” and “**the floodgates of the heavens**”. The springs of the great deep leads one to think of the fact that the earth was originally “formed out of water by water” (2 Peter 3 v.5), and the inference is that much subterranean water existed which could be released by act of God. The “bursting forth” of these springs could have involved volcanic eruptions with vast amounts of water pouring out on to the then dry ground. Such eruptions do in fact consist of about 70% water, usually in the form of steam. The marine geological shifts generated by this instability could have caused sea-beds to rise significantly and flood the land with massive tidal waves. Tsunamis are not just a modern-day phenomenon!

The floodgates of the heavens refers to the rain which fell for forty days and nights. The Lord Himself chose to open these “floodgates”, just as He chose to close them forty days later (8 v.2). It is thought by some that a “vapour canopy” covered the early earth, and that this suddenly condensed and fell as torrential rain at this point.

b) **How could all the animals fit into the Ark?** Only the original kinds of the many varieties of creature observable today were represented (i.e.- one pair of wild horses, from which have come the sub-species of donkey, zebra and so on). The N.I.V. gives us the size of the Ark as 450ft.long, 75ft.wide, and 45ft.high, which multiplies to a staggering 1.5 million cu.ft. of space. The Ark also had lower, middle and upper decks (6 v.16). One researcher has calculated that about 16,000 individual animals would have needed to be on board. On these reckonings, there is enough space, not only for the animals, but also for Noah and his family, for foodstuffs and for any necessary exercising.

Ch.8 begins with that lovely assurance of a God who cares – “**God remembered Noah**”. From our point of view, as we read these remarkable chapters, it is equally obvious that Noah remembered God. Imagine being shut up in that wooden box for almost nine months without any sight of land. Then there’s a wait of another forty days, with no communication from the Lord, just a raven to send out, which kept coming back, then a dove, which itself came back. So Noah waits another seven days before doing anything else - i.e.- sending the dove out again. How would he have felt as day followed day? This time, however, the dove returns with something special – surely now is the time to disembark! But....not yet!

Another seven-day wait follows before sending the dove out again, and this bird becomes the first living thing to re-settle on the devastated earth. Noah has had his six hundred and first birthday party on board ship, but it might have spoiled the celebrations if the family had realised it was going to be almost another two

months before going ashore! What was the state of Noah's emotions whilst this waiting was going on? What were the conditions that the family were having to cope with? What would life be like when they put their feet down on terra firma once again? How did Noah keep up the morale of his loved ones in the face of so many imponderables? All the six hundred and one years of his life have been preparation for these moments. Finally, he hears from God – "You can come out now"! (v.16) Can you feel the relief?

What does Noah do as soon as he is out again? He worships through a sacrificial offering of "clean" creatures to his Maker, which God is pleased to accept (cp. Abel's offering, 4 v.4). The Lord swears never again to destroy all living creatures in the way that He has, and never again to curse the ground which man must work, although the evil which has taken hold of him has not yet been dealt with (v.21). It will require One greater than Noah to break that stronghold. We now know from 8 v.22 that the earth will continue to uphold its peoples, for "as long as it endures". That is reassuring!

Three further questions often arise from this same passage:

a) 7 v.19 tells us that the waters "rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered". Could Mount Everest have been covered? The King James Version of Scripture (K.J.V.) translates the word "mountains" as "hills", and that is almost certainly a better version in this respect. The topography of the earth was probably far more gentle than we observe now, and a straightforward reading of Gen.1&2 would support this. It can reasonably be put forward that the mountain ranges of our day were only formed after the flood, with the deepening of the sea-beds and consequent upthrusting of rock strata happening simultaneously as the waters rapidly receded.

In a similar way, it is also likely that the earth's climate was more uniformly temperate than it is now. Creationists take the view that there was only one Ice Age, which occurred after the flood. Evolutionists believe that there were recurring Ice Ages, affecting the earth every 20 or 30 million years or so. The flood provides an easy-to-understand model as the cause of such a phenomenon. The oceans were warmer after the deluge, the land masses cooler, so that rainfall is experienced as snow rather than rain, and ice can quickly form. Animals coming off the Ark multiplied in succeeding centuries, but those which adapted in more extreme latitudes (woolly mammoths, rhinos, bison, antelopes, to name some), could not withstand the climate changes towards the end of the Ice Age as the seas cooled and droughts occurred with increasing frequency. They therefore became extinct. This one Ice Age is thought to have lasted about 700 years, the ice beginning to recede after approximately 500 years.

b) Clearly, such pre-historic creatures known as dinosaurs existed. Scripture makes no reference to them. Why not? Although the name “dinosaur” is never used in scripture, it is reasonable to understand that God made them, along with the other land animals and man on day 6 of creation week. Representatives of all these creatures, including the dinosaur kinds, went on to the Ark. The average size of a dinosaur is about the size of a sheep. Many of them were relatively small, with only a few growing to be exceptionally large (the “behemoth” of Job 40 v.’s 15-19 is a possible example). Only about 50 distinct groups or “kinds” of dinosaur would have had to be on the Ark. Many of them were buried and fossilized after the flood (i.e.- those which didn’t make it on board), and those which came out of the Ark and made their way to some of earth’s more remote regions perished in the climatic changes through and after the Ice Age. The world was a harsher place in which to survive.

c) 7 v.’s 21&22 tell us that “Every living thing that moved on earth perished” and “Everything on dry land had he breath of life...died”. What evidence is there to support these statements? One researcher says this: “All around the world, in rock layer after rock layer, we find billions of dead things that have been buried in water-carried mud and sand. Their state of preservation frequently tells of rapid burial and fossilization, just as one would expect in such a flood. There is abundant evidence that many of the rock strata were laid down quickly,...without significant time breaks between them. Preservation of animal tracks, ripple marks and even raindrop marks, testify to rapid covering of these features to enable that preservation”....etc. (Quoted from The Answers Book, compiled by Ken Ham, Jonathan Sarfati and Carl Wieland, p.145.)

If a world-wide deluge is to be taken seriously, then the evidence that can be observed has to support it. I have only touched very briefly on some of the issues in order to say that much evidence does support it. Creationists, nevertheless, cannot prove the age of the earth any more than evolutionists can. Creationists date the earth historically by using the chronology of the Bible. If the scriptures tell us all that we need to know regarding our origins, then scientific data should give weight to their authenticity. This has been happening in recent decades, as many things which lend credibility to creation science are being rediscovered and systematically documented. These are exciting times!

Food for thought / discussion / prayer

1) The Genesis flood gives us an awesome example of the power of an angry God in judgment. Nevertheless, we also see His merciful intervention, as He saves eight people out of that judgment who will repopulate the earth. The basis of that salvation is Noah’s commitment to righteousness (7 v.1). It is the same in principle today. I see in Noah a type of Christ. In present-day realities, only Jesus can rescue

us “from the coming wrath” (1 Thess.1 v.10). Righteousness in Him will be the criterion of deliverance (2 Cor.5 v.21). Just as there has been a fearful instance of God’s judgment in the past, so that same wrath will be manifest again at some point in the future. Does the reading of the Genesis account in this week’s passage make the coming wrath more real for us? It should! What form will that wrath take? (see 2 Peter ch.3. Both our Lord and the Apostle Peter teach us that there is a clear comparison to be made between the flood of Noah’s day and the judgment of the end-time.)

2) Noah’s first act on leaving the Ark was to worship the Lord through blood sacrifice. God covenants never again to destroy all living creatures, and never again to disturb the earth’s created rhythmic cycles “**as long as it endures**” (8 v.’s 21&22). Two things come out of this:

a) Noah’s worship is acceptable to his Lord and Maker. The Lord is very aware, however, that mankind’s bias towards sin has not changed. Here we see a foreshadowing of the law of Moses in respect of sacrifice and offering, and, after that, the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the sin of the whole world. We can only approach God through blood sacrifice that is acceptable to Him. Let’s thank the Lord in our worship that the price has been paid, and our reconciliation to Him is now made good.

b) The earth will not endure eternally. Because sin still devastates it, it can never become “the home of righteousness” (2 Pet.3 v.13). Man will not destroy this planet, God will, but He will only do this in order to recreate both the heavens and the earth, so that the latter can become that home. Here, His special creation, redeemed mankind, will dwell with Him forever. We need to “walk with God”, as Enoch and Noah did, to be there. Can we commit again to this walk in our hearts right now, remembering that this is a daily commitment and a daily sacrifice?

Next week’s passage: Genesis 9-11