
The Flood: Judgment Descends

Genesis 7:1-8:1

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So, here we are. We have seen the power and plan of God in establishing the world and placing the pinnacle of all creation, mankind at the center. Man is to reflect the character of the creator in being his image across the face of creation. Blessing, goodness and peace were the intended goals of the glory that God displayed even from the very beginning when things were “without form and empty.” But, the man sinned, rebelling against the plan and purposes of the creator. The story continued, demonstrating the pervasive wickedness of humanity. And now we have come to God’s decision to judge all mankind by washing the world clean of the sin and evil that is present. But, in the midst of this progression, we have been introduced to a righteous man, marked out by the grace of the creator to continue man’s image on the earth. He was called to build an ark, a boat, to survive the calamity and begin anew. So now, the judgment descends. We pick up the story in Genesis chapter seven and verse one.

The Remnant Enters the Ark

(v. 1-9)

Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. ²Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, ³and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.” ⁵And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. ⁷And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. ⁸Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.

Noah is commanded to enter the ark, taking all the animals by twos and seven of all the clean animals and birds. We know later from the Mosaic Law the purpose of these “clean animals”. God gives Noah seven days to complete the loading of the ark, and again, is warned about the global and cataclysmic destruction by water that is about to happen. God will send 40 days of rain and destruction that will wipe out all life.

Noah has a promise. Noah has a warning. Noah is obedient. When he is 600 years old, he enters the ark. He takes his family, his three sons and their wives on board. He finishes loading the animals. And just as God said, on the eighth day, the waters of the flood came.

The Flood Begins

(v.10-16)

¹⁰And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. ¹²And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. ¹³On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, ¹⁴they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. ¹⁵They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. ¹⁶And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the Lord shut him in.

The Bible tells us the exact day, month and year that the great Flood began. Noah was told in the second month the ninth day to board the ark. On the seventeenth day, the explosion of waters from beneath the surface and from the heavens erupted and poured across the face of the earth.

Verses 13-15 rehearse the catalog of all that entered the ark and were preserved through the flood. The description is somewhat expanded to point verbally back to the categories established at creation. Beasts and every winged creature are referred to. It is almost as though Moses intends to make sure that anyone hearing and reading the text gets the point. Every living, breathing thing on the earth is destroyed. All that went on the ark lived. The amazing diversity we see today came from all the kinds preserved through the Flood.

Now, there are several scientific objections to the concept of the flood occurring globally. The principle one goes like this:

There is simply not enough water on the earth for a global flood. The amount of water needed to cover all the mountains of the earth exceeds all the water on the earth. It is physically impossible that forty days of continuous rain would occur and would cover the earth with water.

First, let us remember that at some level, this is exactly the kind of uniformitarianism that was used in Peter's day to deny Divine judgment in the future. 2 Peter 3:3-7 tell us some very important things about the world that then was and the world that now is. There it states that the world before the flood was formed "by water and out of water" and by which waters it was destroyed at God's word (command). Our present world is reserved to be destroyed by fire. Peter implies that the world before

Noah was different in many ways, not the least of which was the storing of water at its creation which were used to destroy it at the Flood.

The witness of Scripture, from the Flood accounts themselves to the Psalms to the book of Peter, is that the Flood was not the product of just rain from heaven. We have already seen in our study of Genesis that the dry land was formed by taking the deep of waters and storing them in the earth and the sea.

Psalms 33:6-7 attest to this as well.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; He puts the deeps in storehouses.

As well as Proverbs 8:27-31, where wisdom is describing the creation.

When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man. [ESV]

The fountains of the deep were established at creation. The sea (and yes, it is singular, implying a single ocean and a single land mass) was given its boundary and the inner structures of the earth founded. Our text here in verse 11 says that "the fountains of the great deep burst forth." In other words, the great subterranean reservoirs of waters from the original creation exploded through the surface of the earth and poured across it. The massive destruction that can occur down-stream from a broken dam is devastatingly multiplied across the whole continent. The world of Noah's day was probably a single land mass likely without the height of the mountains of today and a single ocean. The destructive power of moving water, rapid division and drift of the continents, and the explosive force of likely volcanic action with dust blown into the atmosphere all bring about the destruction across the globe.

Then the Scriptures also say that God opened the windows of heaven so that it rained for 40 days across the earth. Here, we do not have much else in the Scripture to know what is meant here. Some have postulated a vapor canopy over the earth from creation to the Flood providing a universal tropical climate and radioactive shielding yielding the longevity of those living before the flood. The collapse of this vapor canopy could have been the source of the rain. There are many problems with this idea. It seems more reasonable to say that God had restrained rain from falling, initially caused it to rain and then the ordinary process of evaporation and rain took place with the waters from the deeps providing the moisture.

In view of the destruction that was about to occur, the last phrase of verse 16 is significant. God shut them in. The great door through which all who entered and were

to be saved was shut and sealed by God. All were safe and sound. God had closed the door.

The Flood Prevails

(v. 17-24)

¹⁷The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. ²⁰The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. ²¹And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. ²²Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. ²³He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

²⁴And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

As God promised, the flood came right on time and exactly as He said. There is no mistaking the mighty power of the bursting forth of the deeps and the pouring out of rain from the heavens. It was an explosive rush of water upward so that the ark was quickly carried up. In other words, it did not take very long for the waters at the construction site to reach the depth of 20-25 feet needed for the ark to begin to float. And those mighty waters covered all the hills and mountains. While we do not know what the height of those mountains in that day would have been, the text tells us the whole surface of the earth was covered, inundated, overwhelmed with waters.

The effect of this Flood is also recorded. All flesh, everything that had breath, died. God blotted out every living thing. The repetition here with variation is a Hebrew literary structure. Its purpose is to assert, absolutely, without qualification and without question, that every living thing on earth was swept away, blotted out, destroyed, died. Only those safe in the ark lived.

Moses tells us the waters overwhelmed the earth for 150 days. This would include the first 40 days in which the rain poured down and the deeps gushed upward. Many of you have seen the pictures of the tsunamis. The destructive power of the waves and the water was amplified by the scouring effect of the debris. Multiply this across the whole earth. Imagine the tsunamis that swept across rising waters of the seas as they crashed further and further inland. What an awful year of judgment as the wrath of God is poured out.

The old creation has been swept away. The chaos of the first orders in creation is now repeated as the world lies in chaos and destruction, covered in waters. Waters rage back and forth, feeding the rain, storms and waves that roll across a now shoreless ocean.

God Remembers Noah

(8:1a)

But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark.

This sentence is at the center of the chiasm, the structure of the Flood story. It is time for the new creation to begin to emerge. God remembers Noah and the rest of the inhabitants of the ark. This word does not mean that God had forgotten them. This is a Hebrew way of speaking that means “He began to act on their behalf.” He thinks about them, which leads to action for them.

Reflect and Respond

A Theodicy – Defending God’s Universal Judgment

Whew! This is a spectacular story and so much more could be said about it. But it is obvious that God is not a mere observer in this event. The literary artistry indicates that He is actively involved in the entire process. It is clear that man’s depravity has led to this global calamity. Man’s rebellion and blatant disregard for God’s rule and purpose is indeed the trigger point for this divine judgment.

Usually we stick pretty close to the text to make our final application about the use of the passage for our thinking and acting. But today we (Pastor Russ and myself) want to ask a different question. Why? I know the easy answer is man was very bad. But, “Why this at all?” Not just why this now or here but “why”?

Did God have to create a world that involved sin, rebellion, death and judgment? Could he not have prevented this with a “better” plan? Was he not able to make a world without sin and suffering? If he was then why didn’t he? This is one of the most problematic questions for all of Christianity. The ink spilled and rhetoric displayed either to promote this problem as proof that the God of the Bible doesn’t exist or is not worthy of devotion or to answer this objection to the character and purposes of God is immense and complex. It is often unsatisfying at best or compromising at its worst. I don’t have any designs that what I am about to say is going to be the last word on the issue and will make it all “right”. But we are going to be blunt here about what the Bible does say.

Interestingly there are a variety of passing comments in the Scriptures indicating that evil, sin and suffering in the world is ultimately and comprehensively under God’s order, purpose and plan. But the apostle Paul in his letter to the churches in Rome actually confronts this topic head on. Turn with me to read Romans 9: 14-18.

¹⁴What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means!

¹⁵For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in

all the earth.”¹⁸ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Notice how he phrases his rhetorical question dealing with God’s redemptive plan with particular concern regarding God’s history with the Jewish nation. “Is there injustice on God’s part” or to put it another way, “God is not fair!” The assumption is that God “can do” whatever he wants, the problem is whether what he has done and is doing is right.

The first part of the answer builds upon the acknowledgement of man’s sin and rebellion. Paul is consistent in indicating that God can have “mercy” on whomever because no one deserves even the common good. He has already in the preceding chapters clearly demonstrated that all mankind deserves nothing less than the death promised Adam we have already seen in the book of Genesis.

But that does not answer the full question. Paul is at the point and is poised to answer the ultimate question. The next logical answer is to “But why?” That is the question in verse 19. Why does he find fault when it is His will to start with?! Why?! Turn with me to read Romans 9: 19-24.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?” ²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” ²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

And he leaves it. Paul was at the point where he could have created a long, elaborate, philosophical discussion of the intentions and purposes of God. He could have discussed all the possible worlds that God could have made. Paul could have explained how God’s plan was inadequate, incomplete or could not have been coercive to the human will (if those ideas were really possibilities). But he didn’t. He simply says, “Who are you to answer back to God?”

Paul’s answer is that God is doing what God wants to do, in His own wisdom and according to His own purpose. He is assuming God is able to do whatever he wishes, is wise enough to accomplish it the best way and is good to do it in a manner that is just. All of this “to make known the riches of his glory.” Somehow this is THE way. The flood, the extermination of an entire planet of people with the exception of eight selected by God’s grace was just a foretaste of God’s justice and righteous actions. God saves in and through judgment. The greatest salvific act of God, the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son, was an act of

judgment of cosmic proportions.

We often ask “why” in many contexts. The easy answer is “sin.” But the more complex answer should cause us to pause in awe. Our recent study in Ecclesiastes confronted us with this again and again. In all circumstances, good and bad, blessing and trial, we are called to bow in reverent fear. We are to listen in humble silence. We are to serve in faithful obedience.

This chapter in Paul’s letter to the Romans, just like the Flood story in Genesis chapter 7, takes us back to Genesis chapter one where we began several weeks ago, “in the beginning, God...” The book of Genesis, the Old Testament, the entire Bible, all of history and all of life is about God.

Let us finish this morning as Paul does the section of Romans by reading these words from Romans 11: 33-36.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How
unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ “For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”

³⁵ “Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen.

