

## THE GREAT FLOOD

**PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.**

The universal flood in Noah's day was so catastrophic that it will be superseded only by the fiery destruction of the earth after the Millennial kingdom (2 Pet 3:7, 10; Rev 21:1). The cause of the flood was due to the increasing wickedness of men. It was so great that it threatened to blot out all those who trusted in the LORD (Gen 6:5, 11, 12). Only Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (6:8, 9). Only he and his small family, of all families of the earth, were spared from the flood. This flood still serves as a warning to all generations that God condemns and judges sin (cf. 2 Pet 3:3-9).

Amidst God's judgment, His grace was manifested in several ways. He commissioned Noah to preach repentance for 120 years and warn his generation of impending judgment before He sent the flood (Gen 6:3; 2 Pet 2:5). He instructed Noah in the preparation of an ark to save all those who would believe. He commanded Noah to gather into the ark pairs of all the animals, birds and creeping things to preserve these creatures for the world after the flood (Gen 6:19-20). He told Noah exactly when to enter the ark to protect him from the ravages of the flood (Gen 7:1-24). And He remembered Noah during the flood and cared for all his needs on the ark (Gen 8:1-19).

After the flood God established a new covenant with Noah. He brought about a new dispensation in which He gave man added responsibilities (Gen 9:1-7). Then He gave Noah the rainbow as a sign that He would never again destroy the earth with the waters of a flood (Gen 9:8-19). In spite of the greatness of the flood, it did not change the basic nature of man. He was still sinful and once more returned to his sin (Gen 9:20-27).

### I. God's Wrath — 6:1 - 7:24

#### A. Cause of God's Wrath — 6:1-7

##### 1. Conduct of men — 6:1-4

6:1, 2 — "Sons of God" - there are two prominent views concerning the identity of these individuals. Some identify them as fallen angels who descended to earth and cohabited with women to produce a wicked race. The two strongest arguments for this view are: (1) the phrase, "sons of God," normally refers to angels in the Old Testament (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7); and (2) it helps to explain the abnormal sins of certain fallen angels (2 Pet 2:4-5; Jude 6, 7). A strong argument against this view is Jesus' word that angels do not marry (Mt 22:30).

The second view identifies the "sons of God" as descendants of Seth or the godly line. Consider a few favorable arguments: (1) "sons of God" can refer to believers (Ps 73:15; Hos. 1:10); the context is speaking of the two contrasting seeds - Cain's descendants (v. 4), and Seth's descendants (v. 5); (2) "sons of God" never refers to fallen angels unless this is an exception; (3) God's judgment on angels was done before Adam sinned; this judgment on man came long after Adam sinned (vs. 5-7); and (4) the verb "took" is a common expression to refer to the normal marriage relationship.

There is a third view which identifies the "sons of God" as fallen angels that indwell men and these demon-possessed men could marry the daughters of men. By this means they could take the daughters of men to produce a wicked race of people that would pollute the whole world. This view combines some of the first two views.

If the second view is correct, the sin was with the male descendants of the godly line of Seth that chose wives for themselves without regard for their spiritual character. They married the ungodly daughters that descended from Cain. The distinction between the godly and the ungodly lines was gone. This is an illustration of what happens when the doctrine of separation from a sinful culture is repudiated and God is no longer obeyed. Lot learned this lesson the hard way by moving his family to Sodom.

"Took wives of all which they chose" — the men may have taken wives without concern for their sinful character. Or, it may refer to the men taking as many wives as they chose for their sexual gratification. Either way it corrupted the morality of the godly line and it earned the wrath of God.

6:3 — "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" - the most consistent understanding of this verse interprets this from the dispensational point of view; God is about to change His rule among men. The word "strive" means "to rule or sit in judgment." Recall that after Adam and Eve had sinned, they were no longer innocent. God began a new dispensation; it was the rule of man's conscience. God's fundamental rule was accomplished by the Holy Spirit's ministry upon the conscience of man; external forms of restraint were lacking. However, the wickedness of Cain and his descendants rendered the rule of the conscience as ineffective. Nevertheless, God used Noah to preach righteousness while he was building the ark (1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5). God was patient and allowed the dispensation of conscience to continue for another 120 years while Noah preached to their consciences. His preaching fell on deaf ears. After the flood God initiated the dispensation of human government (9:6). God showed that an effective rule among men could not be achieved through the conscience because man was totally depraved and corrupted. He needed to be ruled by government.

6:4 — "Giants" – some say the giants existed before these marriages, but others say the giants were the result of these ungodly unions. The term is used for genetic giants in Num. 13:33 and may indicate such here. So then, the greatness of the people may refer to their physical strength and sexual prowess. God saw these marriages were grossly immoral. For a divine commentary, see 6:11-13.

## **2. Condemnation by God — 6:5-7**

6:5 — God assessed that the wickedness of the world at that time was totally corrupt externally (v. 5a) and internally (v. 5b). What a contrast to Gen 1:31!

6:6, 7 — "It repented God" -- the idea of repentance is not that God changed His mind for God is immutable. Instead, it means that He changed His plan. He was grieved with man's rebellion. He had compassion upon man, but He would have to change His dealings with man because he had rebelled against God's standards. Therefore, God condemned man to be destroyed, including most of the animal creation.

## **B. Cure for God's Wrath — 6:8 0-7:5**

### **1. A righteous walk — 6:8-10**

6:8-10 — Noah found grace (unmerited favor) in God's sight because he refused to be part of the wicked society. Noah was a believer (righteous) who had matured (perfect) in the faith and was separated from the world (walked with God).

### **2. A repentant attitude — 6:11-13**

6:11-13 — From the New Testament we learn that Noah preached during the years he was building the ark with only a handful of converts (those in his own family) but he had a strong testimony (2 Pet 2:5). God always graciously redeems those who will repent of their sins. God's grace was manifested in giving these wicked people a preacher and then providing them 120 years in which they could repent. But God's evaluation of the people at the beginning of Noah's preaching still remained unchanged after 120 years.

### **3. An obedient walk — 6:14 - 7:5**

#### **a. Description of the ark — 6:14-16**

6:14-16 — Notice that Noah's faith required action -- he obeyed God's commands. At this time in his life he is characterized by obedience which is true of any dedicated believer (6:11; 7:5, 9). The ark was to be made of gopher wood (this wood is unknown today). It was not a ship, but more properly a barge. The word for the ark is most likely a word borrowed from the Egyptians which designated large barge-like ships to transport heavy cargo. Its overall size was approximately 450 feet long, 45 feet high and 75 feet wide, It had a draught of about one half its height (cp. 7:20). It has been

estimated that it could carry a cargo equivalent to that of 522 freight cars. The window mentioned in verse 16 was an opening at the top to provide light and ventilation. It had three stories. In light of the advanced technology of Cain's descendants (4:16-24), it is not inconceivable that Noah could have constructed such an ark.

### **b. Purpose of the ark — 6:17,18**

6:17 — God now explained the need for the ark to Noah. God had previously indicated He would destroy the earth, but now He reveals that He will do it through a flood. Only those in the ark would be saved from the ravage of the flood. The grammar literally reads, "Behold, I am about to bring a flood," indicating God's sovereignty and the universality of the flood.

6:18 — But God exempted Noah and his family from destruction by making a covenant with them. This is a beautiful example of God's reward to the righteous.

### **c. Contents of the ark — 6:19 - 7:5**

6:19ff — The ark was to provide protection for Noah and his family as well as a host of terrestrial animals. There was no necessary precaution needed for marine life. The distinction between "clean" and "unclean" indicates that God had revealed some characterizations, but a detailed codification awaited the Mosaic Law (Lev 11). There are several problems to be considered.

First, some argue that it would be impossible for an ark of this size to carry all of the various species in the world. But one must recall that a species in biblical thought includes all animals that are capable of fertilization while modern biology classifies animals according to external characteristics. Therefore, Noah would not be required to take every kind of cow into the ark, but only one productive pair. After the flood, man could reproduce this pair of cows and by a simple knowledge of genetics and breeding he could produce various breeds with distinct characteristics. Therefore, those brought on the ark were after the "kinds" of Genesis.

Second, many have wondered how all of the animals were gathered and brought to the ark. God, no doubt, caused them to come to the ark. If God could provide a great fish to swallow Jonah and cause that fish to spew him forth on dry land when he repented, He could certainly cause the animals to come to the ark. He also caused two cows to leave their calves and bring the ark of God back to Israel (1 Sam 6:7-12).

Third, the problem of food was probably minimal since the animals were probably in hibernation, either forced or natural. The dark atmosphere and the limited activity would have a natural tendency to decrease their natural appetites.

Fourth, the number of clean animals should be understood as seven pairs, that is, fourteen animals. Some interpret this to be a total of seven animals, three pairs with one left for sacrifice, but the Hebrew argues for seven pairs. These would be used after the flood for sacrifice, food, and multiplication.

## **C. Consequence of God's Wrath — 7:6-24**

### **1. Source of the water — 7:11**

7:11 — There were two sources of water which provided the massive amount that was needed to flood the earth. The first was the "fountains of the great deep" which were underground reservoirs. The water in these reservoirs was probably put under great pressure and spewed water through the earth's crust into the air causing it to rain for 40 days. Some believe the "windows of heaven" which were opened refers to a canopy of water vapor which surrounded the earth (cp. Gen 1:6-8). It took 40 days of rain to empty the water in that canopy. A second source of water would be the water in normal rain clouds.

### **2. Extent of the flood — 7:10-12,17-23**

7:10ff — Scripture indicates that the earth's mountains were covered by 22½ feet of water. It should be remembered that this was before the great geologic mountain building period; mountains of extremely great height were not then existent. Some have argued for a local flood rather than a universal flood, but consider several strong reasons that argue for a universal flood: (1) the duration

of the flood was a total of 371 days after which the ark was on top of Mount Ararat; (2) the purpose of the flood was to destroy all mankind, except Noah and his family - Gen 6:5-7, 11-13; (3) Jesus' testimony confirmed it - Lk. 17:26, 27; an ark would not have been necessary if this were a local flood; (5) the size of the ark could have been greatly reduced if it were a local flood; (6) the depth of the flood shows it was universal; and (7) the testimony of Peter proves it was a world-wide flood - 2 Pet 3:3-7.

### 3. Chronology of the flood — cp. 7:11 with 8:13-16; 7:24

7:11 — The flood came upon the earth in the 600th year of Noah's life and was completed in the 601st year of his life - 371 days later.

7:24 — "The waters prevailed" - literally, the waters were mighty. The waters continued in full strength over the earth for 150 days before they began to recede and then the ark rested on Mount Ararat (8:4).

Month/Day	Event	Days	Total Days	Reference
2 17	Enter ark; windows and fountains open			7:11
3 27	Rain restrained; fountains stopped	40	40	7:12, 17
7 17	Water prevails; ark rests	110	150	7:24; 8:3, 4
10 1	Mountain tops visible	74	224	8:5
11 11	Raven and dove sent out	40	264	8:6-9
11 18	Dove sent again (olive branch)	7	271	8:10-11
11 25	Dove sent again (no return)	7	278	8:12
1 1	Cover removed; face of the earth was dry	36	314	8:13
2 27	Earth fully dried; leave ark	57	371	8:14

## II. God's Love — 8:1-19

### A. Concern for Noah — 8:1

8:1 — "God remembered" — the word "remember" has the idea of special providential care. God did not forget about Noah and then recall his plight in the flood, but rather, God cared for Noah all during the flood. The same idea is found elsewhere in Scripture (cp. Gen 19:22; 30:22; Ex 2:24). This remembrance included His care both inside and outside the ark. No doubt special grace was given to Noah and his family as well as the animals to endure confinement for an entire year.

### B. Care of the Earth — 8:2-19

#### 1. Progress of the water's abatement — see chronology chart above

#### 2. Explanation for the water's abatement

There are two major causes for the drying up of the earth. God sent a strong wind (8:1) which would have produced violent waves and evaporation. Many geologists believe this explains the formation of the earth's great salt deposits. Second, this is probably the geological period of mountain building when ocean floors were lowered and mountains were pushed up higher than ever before known (Ps

104:6-9). True geology has developed explanations which adequately incorporate the Scriptural account of the flood and give us a young earth which is not millions or billions of years old.

### **III. God's Grace — 8:20 - 9:29**

#### **A. Consecration in the Noahic Covenant — 8:20-22**

8:20 — "Noah built an altar." The first act of Noah following his disembarking from the ark was religious in nature. He offered sacrifices to God (using the clean animals) which indicates Noah's dedication and consecration. The offerings all went up to God in smoke. Noah certainly had reason to offer such sacrifices to God. God was pleased with Noah's actions and made a promise to him.

8:21, 22 — God promised never to curse the earth with another universal deluge (cp. 9:9ff). A flood will not rectify man's wickedness; only God's salvation and ultimate sanctification can cure it. God promised seasons on earth for planting seeds and harvesting crops so people will have food to eat.

#### **B. Commands in the Noahic Covenant — 9:1-19**

9:1 — God's commands for this new dispensation included: (1) multiplication of life - 9:1, 7: Noah and his sons were to populate the earth; (2) dominion over the animal kingdom - 9:2: this was not the same as Adam's original dominion, because now God put a fear of man in animals which served to give man protection from them and to use them in laboring for them (this fear of man will be taken away during the Millennial Kingdom and replaced with a gentle existence with man - Ps 8:4-8; Isa 11:6-9); (3) a new diet for man - 9:3-4. Man now received official permission to eat animals, but not their blood, because blood was a symbol concerning their atonement for sin - Lev 17:11; and (4) the institution of capital punishment - 9:5-6:

The command for man to practice capital punishment indicates a new dispensation is initiated by God. A dispensation is a period of time during which man's obedience to some specific revelation of God is tested. This dispensation gave humans the responsibility to govern themselves by God's law. So it is called the dispensation of Human Government. An individual that intentionally killed a person was to be punished with death by the government of the people. The slaying of animals for food did not allow the slaying of people. Capital punishment was necessary because man was created in the image of God and any man who intentionally destroyed that image must pay for it by forfeiting his life. No society can long survive if God's supreme value is not placed upon human life.

9:8-17 — God unilaterally pronounced an unconditional covenant to Noah and his family. He announced that He would never again destroy the earth by a universal flood (Ps 104:9; Job 38:10). There is, however, an end-time judgment of the earth (following the Millennial Kingdom) at which time it will be destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:7ff), but never again will God destroy the world by a flood. The rainbow is God's sign or token of the covenant (9:12-16). This covenant is still in effect because it is an everlasting covenant, which is evident by the rainbow that is still seen in the cloud. All the commands of this covenant are still in effect including capital punishment. Capital punishment also is authorized in the New Testament (Rom 13:4-5), so the revocation of it is against God and His Word.

The rainbow is produced by the refraction of light through rain drops. It is possible that Noah never saw a rainbow before this time. It seems that there had been no rain on earth before the great flood, but it was watered by a mist from the earth (Gen 2:6).

9:16 — "That I may remember the everlasting covenant" - God is not forgetful of His promises, but this is anthropomorphic language which is used to tell man that God will not forget His gracious promise. It serves as a reminder to man of God's promise.

#### **C. Christ Prophesied in the Noahic Covenant — 9:20-29**

9:20-25 — According to 9:19, all genealogy descends from Noah. Noah began to farm and apparently was very successful (cp. 5:29). Enough time had elapsed after the flood to enable Noah to grow grapes and ferment wine. This episode indicates that even the most righteous may succumb to their Adamic nature and sin.

Ham, one of Noah's sons, saw his father in his naked and drunken condition. Rather than realize the abjectness of the situation and cover Noah, Ham reported the situation of Noah in disrespectful fashion to his brothers. Shem and Japheth responded the opposite of Ham by showing respect for their father and covered Noah. As a result, Noah pronounced a curse (really a prophetic announcement) on the Canaanites. The sin of Ham would characterize the Canaanites; hence, Ham's reaction to Noah's debauchery was really the occasion for the prophecy against Canaan, Ham's son. It is possible that Canaan participated with Ham in this disrespectful action. Canaan was to become a servant of servants - or the lowest form of a servant. His descendants became known for their sensualistic excesses (Gen 15:16). They settled in the land that was later promised to Abraham.

9:26 — “Blessed be the Lord God of Shem” – Shem was given a spiritual blessing because he followed God. This blessing was made clearer when God called Abraham, who was in the line of Shem's descendants, because God promised to send His Son through Abraham's descendants. So Christ came from the line of Shem and Jews are now called Semitic people.

9:27 — Japheth was blessed materialistically by occupying a large geographical area. He is the father of the Aryan peoples and was able to enjoy the spiritual blessings of Shem.

9:28, 29 — Noah lived for 350 years after the flood but he too died and went the way of all flesh. If there are no gaps in the genealogical record, Abraham was born 58 years before Noah died. After the flood, there is a sudden decrease in the longevity of life until seventy years was considered a normal life (Ps 90:10). Some attribute this to the removal of the vapor canopy which now allows ultra-violet rays to penetrate the universe and greatly accelerate the aging process. However, the longevity of men gradually dropped to seventy years, not suddenly as one would expect if the ultra-violet rays from the sun were responsible for the decrease in length of man's lives. A better reason for man's shorter life-span could lie in the deterioration of men's bodies caused by sin and was passed on to successive generations.