

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

Review

Last time, we looked at the corruption brought into creation by mankind's sinfulness and saw God's determination to destroy mankind and all terrestrial animal life by a flood. Recall that we pointed out that God's Word does not explicitly say **when** God made this decision. We also saw that the statement in Genesis 6:6 that ***the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth*** does not imply that God **came** to regret making mankind. Indeed, God **must** have known that He would destroy life with a flood even before the beginning. In truth, we cannot possibly understand or describe the great mystery of God's "decision making process," since we ourselves dwell within the confines of the time and space that God – who dwells both within them and outside them simultaneously – Himself created.

We saw God's sovereign selection of Noah and his family to provide the remnant of mankind who would survive the flood and carry forward the line which led to the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, noting that although God told Noah, "***you are righteous before me in this generation,***" Noah's righteousness wasn't his own, but God credited righteousness to Noah because he "***did all that the LORD had commanded him***" in faith. In this, we saw that Noah was the first mentioned by name of a long line of people extending until today whom God has saved by His grace through our faith.

Finally, we looked at God's instructions for the building of the ark, and for bringing the land animals aboard to preserve them "***according to their kinds.***"

The Flood Begins

Once construction of the ark was complete God commanded Noah to bring himself, his family, and the animals aboard. We take up the story now as the flood was about to begin.

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. Genesis 7:11-16 (ESV)

God's Word is very specific about the exact day the flood began. Thus, we can track the duration of the flood quite precisely. Notice that Genesis 7:11 mentions "***...the fountains of the great deep...***" This is quite intriguing, since scientists have recently discovered a vast reservoir of water estimated to be about three times the volume of all the earth's surface oceans embedded within the fissures of the rock below the earth's crust in the upper part of the earth's mantle some 700 KM below the earth's surface. God also says in this verse that the "***...windows of the heavens...***" were opened. Recall what God said about the firmament (ESV – expanse) of Heaven He created on the second day of creation...

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

⁶And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. Genesis 1:6-7 (ESV)

In Genesis 7:12 we find the first mention of rain – **גשם** *gešem* – on the earth. Although this is the first mention of rain in God’s Word, it doesn’t necessarily imply that it had never rained anywhere on earth before. God does say in Genesis 2:5-6 that it had not rained prior to His creation of mankind, but just because He doesn’t mention rain again until here in Genesis 7:12, doesn’t mean it hadn’t ever rained anywhere during the intervening hundreds of years. Certainly though, the forty-day rain we read about here is noteworthy. Nothing like it had been seen before or has been seen since.

Notice that Noah and his sons each had one wife. The only man with multiple wives mentioned in the preceding passages is Cain’s great-great-great grandson Lamech who you may recall recited that inspiring poem about revenge to his wives (Genesis 4:23-24).

Before we move on, notice in Genesis 7:16 that once all those God commanded Noah to bring had boarded the ark, ***the LORD shut him in***. This is a picture of God’s provision and protection for all His creation. Reading about God’s protection of those aboard the ark reminds us of several passages detailing God’s active participation in His creation and His loving care for His creatures.

***¹A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.
Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.*** Psalm 127:1 (ESV)

***¹⁵He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*** Colossians 1:15-17 (ESV)

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5 (ESV)

³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:31-34 (ESV)

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

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

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. Genesis 7:17-24 (ESV)

This passage is straightforward with little to be inferred from it except what the text plainly states. Of course, all people and animals who could not fly died in short order – certainly after no more than a few days. Many people might have had boats in which to float on the water, but they too would have perished within a few weeks from starvation and exposure. No doubt the birds and flying insects would have flocked to any boats or flotsam, eating each other, or being eaten by the remaining people. An obvious question is why the people couldn't have survived by fishing. Assuming the waters that inundated the earth were salt, after the rain stopped falling, everyone would have died of thirst very quickly. Although they certainly might have survived somehow, God apparently saw to it that they could not. God had ordained that every person except Noah and his family would perish in the flood, and so they did.

We can well imagine that the ark would have attracted birds and flying insects seeking a landing place too. Noah may have ended up with more birds than he initially brought aboard. Here again, God had previously ordained which animals would survive the flood, and which would not.

The Flood Abates

¹But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. ²The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, ³and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, ⁴and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat [ארָרָאט 'ārārāt]. ⁵And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen. Genesis 8:1-5 (ESV)

Here in Genesis 8:1 we find another example of anthropomorphism – assigning human behaviors, thoughts, and emotions to God. He couldn't possibly have “remembered” Noah and the animals because God is omniscient (knows everything) and **never forgets anything**. For the same reason, God can't ever be surprised, and can never learn anything new.

Furthermore, God is eternally unchanging. Thus, when Moses asked who he should tell the Israelites had sent him, God responded, “**I AM WHO I AM.**” In the only Psalm attributed to him, Moses reiterated this...

²Before the mountains were brought forth,

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

*or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.* Psalm 90:2 (ESV)

Thus, when God's Word speaks of God relenting from something He had previously determined or of God changing His mind, it can't really be. These figures of speech are humanity's attempt to understand and explain the works of our unfathomable and indescribable God. But let's get back to the story of the flood, shall we?

In Genesis 8:2 we see that God closed the windows of heaven and the fountains of the deep. Presumably that was after 40 days and nights of rain. And the waters of the flood continued to prevail over the earth for five months until the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The name אֲרָרָט *'ārārāt* means "the curse reversed." Mount Ararat is an extinct volcano in eastern Turkey, rising to over 16,000 feet, and is the highest mountain in Asia Minor. This mountain has only been known by this name since the Middle Ages, after the Biblical reference here in Genesis 8:2. It may or may not be this mountain where the ark made landfall. As the waters continued to recede, eventually the tops of the surrounding mountains appeared some 73 days after the ark came to rest.

⁶At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. ⁹But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. ¹⁰He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. ¹¹And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹²Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore. Genesis 8:6-12 (ESV)

The story of the dove Noah sent out is familiar. The ark displays in the kids' classrooms usually have the dove perched with her olive branch on Noah's outstretched hand or flying above the rainbow. Because of this story and the covenant with mankind symbolized by the rainbow that God was about to pronounce, the dove and olive branch have become universal symbols of peace. Somehow, God preserved plant life through the flood or reinstated it afterward, so the dove was able to find the olive leaf she brought back to the ark.

¹³In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. ¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out. ¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may swarm on

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark. Genesis 8:13-19 (ESV)

Recall that all the voyagers had entered the ark the very same day that the waters of the flood burst forth – in Noah’s 600th year on the 17th day of the 2nd month. Thus, they stayed aboard the ark for one year and 10 days according to the Hebrew calendar. This calendar is usually 12 lunar months measured from new moon to new moon. These months are either 29 or 30 days each making the year 355 days. At irregular intervals, an additional month is added to the year to realign the calendar with the solar year. Thus, Noah and his family stayed on the ark with the animals for just about one solar year (assuming Noah’s 600th year wasn’t a leap year with 13 months).

Once again, we see that Noah followed God’s command to depart from the ark just as he had when he built the ark by God’s command and direction, and did again when he and his family went aboard at the beginning of the flood. Presumably, God also broke the seal on the ark with which He had shut them in on the day they boarded.

The Noahic Covenant

In God’s Word we find several agreements or covenants between God and mankind. Each of these (except the new and final covenant in the blood of Jesus – c.f. Luke 22:14-23) consisted of one or more commandments for mankind from God along with one or more promises God agreed to fulfill in exchange for man’s obedience to the given commands. These covenants were often put into effect ceremoniously with specific actions or objects symbolizing the consummation of the agreement. In Genesis 8:20-9:17 God pronounced His covenant with Noah (and Noah’s descendants).

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.” Genesis 8:20-22 (ESV)

Noah recognized that the survival of his family and the animals through the flood was purely by God’s sovereign providence. Hence, he was inspired to worship God immediately after disembarking from the ark. We might infer from Genesis 8:21, that it was Noah’s worship that caused God to decide never again to curse the ground or destroy all life on the earth. But of course, we know that God’s provision for Noah, and His determination to first bring the flood upon the earth and then never do so again was determined and is determined by God since eternity past, now, and into eternity future. God has ordained His plan of salvation for mankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus – God the Son, and His subsequent resurrection, ascension, and promised return. He has fulfilled that plan of salvation through His preservation of Noah and his family through the flood.

Notice however in Genesis 8:21 that God has no delusions about Noah or any of us. He knows our hearts and fully understands that our intentions since the fall in the garden are continually evil. Yet

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

despite that (or more accurately **because** of that), He has ordained this plan of salvation because He desires our fellowship, love, and worship.

¹And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. ²The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

⁶“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

***⁷And you ^[אֲנִי 'atâ - y'all], be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.”** Genesis 9:1-7 (ESV)*

In this first part of the Noahic covenant, we find God’s instructions for Noah and his descendants. Alone of all God’s commandments, we seem to have little problem obeying His command to multiply greatly on the earth. Notice that the commandment God reiterates in Genesis 9:7 is directed toward Noah’s entire family, not just to Noah individually, and by extension to all of humankind even until today.

Along with this commandment, God gave mankind a blessing – placing us at the top of the food chain. Recall in Genesis 1:29-30 that God gave Adam, Eve, and every animal the green plants for food. Recall also from Genesis 3:21 that God Himself slaughtered the first animal to provide clothing for Adam and Eve after the fall. Although it is certainly possible that mankind slaughtered animals for food and other uses prior to the flood, here in Genesis 9:3 God explicitly gave mankind the animals for food. Of course, the animals also eat each other today as they have throughout human memory. Whether they did so before the flood is unclear, but certainly they must have refrained from eating each other for the year that they were aboard the ark!

NOTE – God’s gift of animals to human beings as food initially contained no explicit “clean” and “unclean” animals. Only later did God explicitly define which animals mankind could and couldn’t eat when He gave the covenant of the Law to Moses.

Although God didn’t forbid people to eat any specific types of animals in this Noahic covenant, He did give a very specific and stern commandment regarding the **manner** in which we might eat animals. We are not to eat animals which still have their lifeblood within their bodies. Certainly, this precludes eating animals while they are still alive, but it also requires animals to be drained of their blood before being eaten. Why?

God wanted to make the value of our lifeblood starkly clear. In this, He was pointing forward to the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross to atone for the sins of all mankind. The Hebrews writer makes this point clearly.

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Hebrews

9:11-14 (ESV)

It breaks my heart even to the point of tears when I ponder how different and wonderful our world today would be if mankind had simply taken God's admonishment in Genesis 9:5-6 to our hearts. Sadly, apart from the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, we are every one of us murderers of the blackest sort deep down in our hearts. Praise God that by Jesus' blood, we do not need to face the judgment for the shedding of each other's blood that God speaks of here in these verses.

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” Genesis 9:8-11 (ESV)

Having commanded mankind's responsibilities in this Noahic covenant, God then gave Noah and his family the promise He would fulfill as His part of the bargain – never again to destroy all life by the waters of a flood.

¹²And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.” Genesis 9:12-17 (ESV)

Finally, having defined the commandments for mankind and His own promises for this Noahic covenant, God established the formalizing symbol that would seal it – the rainbow. Of course, we know that the rainbow is due to refraction of sunlight by the droplets of rain in the air. Who knows whether a rainbow had ever been seen before on the earth, or indeed whether it ever rained on the

Genesis 7:11-9:17 – The Flood Part 2

earth prior to the flood. But regardless of that, God was now establishing the rainbow as a symbol of remembrance for this covenant.

Having said that though, the reminder of the rainbow wasn't needed by God who knows everything and forgets nothing throughout eternity. The rainbow was to serve as a reminder for mankind of God's promise in this new covenant. Interestingly, God Himself uses the mechanism of anthropomorphism to explain the meaning of the rainbow and its role in the covenant in a way that is understandable by us with our limited viewpoint and way of thinking.

Looking Ahead

Next time, we'll take a closer look at Noah's three sons – particularly the so-called "curse of Canaan" – in preparation for a detailed study of the "Table of Nations" found in Genesis 10.