

Rest and Rainbows 11-26-06

Genesis 8-9:17

I have been in awe as I study the literary work of Genesis. I thought I knew what I was going to preach on when we began in Genesis, but I have to tell you the Lord has been using this to renew my reverence for God's word. I haven't told you of but a small portion of the poetry and patterns that fill the stories in Genesis. The passage today is no exception. It begins in the middle of a symmetry of time spans. The flood began with two seven-day waiting periods, forty days of rain, and 150 days of the water prevailing over the earth. That is where chapter 8 begins. "God remembered Noah." Chapter 8 is a mirror image. The water recedes for 150 days. The ark lands and rests, and then after 40 days Noah sends out the raven, followed by two seven-day waiting periods.

Poetry is woven throughout the text. Word plays abound, like the name of Noah. The name means rest (Genesis 5:29), and he was saved from wrath as God brought rest to the violence filled earth. The ark rested on the mountain, and the pleasing aroma of the offering brought rest to the heart of God. There are parallels to other stories and details that could have one reflecting all day. Consider for instance that the word for the ship, *tebah*, or ark in Hebrew is only used in this story and for the little basket that Moses mother put him in. Both were coated with pitch. Both saved God's chosen servant from wrath by carrying them over the water that was meant to be their destruction. I could go on and on.

Let me tell you that the Bible is so rich and deep that you never need to be concerned about seeing it all. It is God breathed. (2Peter 1:21) I remember that when I was studying for ministry, one of my fellow students asked, "Don't you think we will run out of things to preach in a year or two?" I could preach every day for the rest of my life and always preach something new because the Bible is that rich! At our current pace, it will take another 70 years, but we might need some review by then.

The sacred patterns continue in chapter 8 and 9 in an exact match with the creation story of Genesis chapter 1 through 2:3. It is as if God is going through a re-creation. Chapter 8 begins with mention of the waters, wind or Spirit, the deep, and earth, just as chapter one does. You can investigate the rest of the parallels in wording on your own. Instead of going through all the pattern and parallel words now, I'll just point out the only difference. There is no need to redo day 4 because the flood didn't affect the sun, moon, and stars. (Genesis 1:14-19) We also see the repeated numbers of 7 and 10, but what humbles me is the fact that I never saw all this before. That means that I probably don't see many times what I've only recently discovered. What does all this mean? It means God is incredible! It means his word is, as someone has said, "Shallow enough for a babe to safely wade in and deep enough for theologians to dive in."

Commented [notes1]: 29 He named him Noah and said, "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed. Gen 5:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning--the fourth day. Gen 1:14-19 (NIV)

So we begin at that hinge in the middle of the flood. ¹ *But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.* God remembered. It wasn't like Noah was not in God's thoughts. The word remembered is covenantal language. We are commanded to "remember the Sabbath", (Exodus 20:8) and to "remember the Lord". (Deuteronomy 8:18) "Remembered" is used in Scripture when God is coming to the rescue because of His covenantal commitments. (Numbers 10:9) It implies that God is being faithful to His promises. (Luke 1:72) God remembers you! He acts in accord to His promises to you. No matter how long you've been locked up in that boat with all those stinky animals and your extended family, bilge water sloshing at your feet, God remembers the promises He has made to you in His word. Praise God? The waters are about to recede.

The wind blew over the earth. Now here is a parallel that I can't pass up. Do you remember when the wind blew to dry things out in Scripture? There was the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River. (Exodus 14:21; Joshua 3:17) The wind of God makes it possible for us to flee to safety on dry ground. In the first of those stories, the enemies of God were slain by water just as in the flood. Wind and spirit are the same word in Hebrew. Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters when dry land first appeared on the second day of creation, the wind was blowing again. (Genesis 1:2) The Spirit of God was moving again to prepare the earth for man and beast. (Psalm 148:8)

When we go through a purging time in our life, doesn't the Spirit of God blow on our situation and prepare things right in front of us? (John 3:8) And I remember a time in Scripture when the wind was described as a mighty and rushing sound. Pentecost! (Acts 2:2) We think we are all washed up and the wind blows and grace is manifested in our life. We start to believe we will put foot on dry ground again.

³ *The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down,* ⁴ *and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.* The Hebrew calendar was changed at the first Passover in Egypt. The corresponding day in which the ark landed on that mountain height is the very day that Jesus would rise from the dead. What's the connection? Judgment was over. The waves were no longer beating on the ark, the picture of Jesus. (Psalm 42:7) After Jesus bore the wrath of God He rose from the dead. He rose to a place of rest. Remember that He declared His work finished. (John 19:30)

What a relief when the ark quit bobbing! The journey was complete. Now there only remained a time of waiting and they could step into a new world. Incidentally this is what the disciples experienced as well after Jesus' resurrection, a period of waiting. (Acts 1:8)

There is an unnumbered time span given but dated in which the tops of the mountains could be seen. Why was this the only time span unnumbered? After forty days, Noah sent out the raven and the dove. Both returned. Then seven more days

Commented [notes4]: 8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Ex 20:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.
Deut 8:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 9 When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies.
Num 10:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 72 to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,
Luke 1:72 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided,
Ex 14:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 17 The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.
Josh 3:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
Gen 1:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,
Psalms 148:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."
John 3:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.
Acts 2:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
Psalms 42:7 (KJV)

Commented [notes15]: 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
John 19:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
... [1]

and he sent the dove out again, and it returned that evening with an olive leaf. Okay, lets follow the amazing parallel that could be orchestrated by none other than God Himself! Jesus died on Passover, was in the grave three days and rose victorious. (Mark 8:31) Forty-seven days later (the days that were numbered) what happened? Fifty days after Passover is Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came to indwell us with the peace of God, a confirmation that God has sealed us for the day of salvation. (Ephesians 1:13-14) Is that not what the dove and the olive leaf represent? We step into a new world, cleansed and sanctified.

Commented [notes17]: 31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.
Mark 8:31 (NIV)

We have gone through the flood of baptism in which we associate with the death of Jesus. We died with Him. (Colossians 3:3) The wrath was poured out on Him just like the waves pounded on the ark. Then we land in our place of rest, the resurrection of Jesus. Resurrection was the verification that His death in our place was accepted by God. (Romans 4:25) Then we are filled with the Spirit, the peace of God, peace with God, fills our hearts as we go forth into a new world. (Romans 5:1)

Commented [notes18]: 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.
Eph 1:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ *By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry.* For Noah's six hundred and first birthday he got to see outside the ark. Note that the word "covering", *mikceh*, is the same word used to describe the skins that covered the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. (Exodus 36:19) That was the place God dwelt. God was with them in the ark.

Commented [notes19]: 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
Col 3:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 25 He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.
Romans 4:25 (NIV)

Though God was certainly with them, we don't have any record of God speaking to Noah during that year and eleven days that Noah was in the ark. Noah had to walk with God by faith. (Hebrews 11:7) ¹⁵ *Then God said to Noah,* ¹⁶ *"Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.* Hallelujah! Finally. I think I would have been out of that thing the moment it touched down. But Noah walked with God. Noah didn't change course unless God spoke. He waited even after seeing dry ground until God spoke. How often we look at conditions and run ahead of God instead of walking with Him, waiting for His voice. (John 8:28) Noah, like a second Adam, stepped out onto a cleansed earth.

Commented [notes21]: 1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
Romans 5:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 19 Then they made for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of hides of sea cows.
Ex 36:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.
Heb 11:7 (NIV)

Then God repeated the original command to the animals to be fruitful and multiply. In gratefulness for being spared from the wrath of God and perhaps as a sin offering for the sins of mankind, Noah offered a whole burnt offering to the Lord. ²⁰ *Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.* He offered some of all the clean animals. The sacrifices would have gone on for days. How grateful he was to be the one God selected, for the salvation of the human race, and for seeing him through that time of wrath. A whole burnt offering is symbolic of complete dedication. How much more should we be dedicated to and grateful for Jesus who endured the wrath of God for us! Our sacrifices of praise should never cease. (Hebrews 13:15)

Commented [notes24]: 28 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [the one I claim to be] and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.
John 8:28 (NIV)

²¹ *The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.*

Commented [notes25]: 15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.
Heb 13:15 (NIV)

The Lord smelling the pleasing aroma is a Hebrew expression for the offering being accepted by God. God's response was to promise not to destroy the earth again, at least not until the time of the end. The promise not to curse the ground is not harking back to the fall, but to the curse of the flood. After catastrophic events, the survivors need some kind of assurance that it will not happen again so that they can rest. God graciously gave them and us that promise even though man had not changed. Man's heart was still inclined toward evil. It obviously remains so today.

In a Hebrew poem, God promised that the cycles of the earth would continue in regular progression until the end. ²² *"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."* You can count on the seasonal cycles as long as the earth endures. We do have local disasters and the constant consequences of sin on the earth, but God has promised that in spite of the evil in man's heart, He would not destroy all life as he did with the flood. He entered into a covenant to reassure them.

Man had entered a new phase on the earth. In chapter 9, Noah and his family are told to be fruitful and multiply, a repetition of the original command given to Adam and Eve. (Genesis 1:28) They are told that all animal life was given over into their hands. Animals would fear them. I can't say for sure if animals lived in a closer state with man before the flood, but we can say that after the flood they dreaded man. Part of the reason for that is that God said they were to be for food. Without the upper layer of water over the earth, dietary needs had changed. ³ *Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.*

To keep the world from returning to a state of violence again, God instituted capital punishment for man or beast that kills a man. ⁶ *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.* God requires that man judge and execute those who would murder their fellow man. The reason given is that man is made in God's image, reminding us of the original creation. (Genesis 1:27) God does not carry it out, but tells us that man will, *"by man shall his blood be shed."*

Then God established the covenant with Noah and his family and all the animals. ¹¹ *I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."* To set their hearts at ease, God established a covenant with all life. He calls it, "my covenant". Man was not required to do anything, and in fact couldn't as he is inclined to evil.

¹² *And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come:*

¹³ *I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.* There were probably rainbows before this covenant, but from that time on, the rainbow became a symbol of the covenant. Man does not need to fear a universal catastrophe.

Commented [notes26]: 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
Gen 1:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Gen 1:27 (NIV)

There was a series of specials on the nature channel of events that could destroy the earth, mega-disasters. No need to fear. God has promised it won't happen until time is up. (2 Peter 3:10) Peter describes that end as a great fire that melts the elements with a fervent heat. There is a lot that will take place before that day. But time is short for all of us. Life is short.

Commented [notes28]: 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 2 Peter 3:10 (NIV)

Once again in the Genesis' stories the goodness of God has shown through in spite of the depravity of man. The earth was cleansed of violence and the all-pervasive evil, but we are forewarned that the heart of man has not changed. Still, God has promised that the cycles of the earth will continue to the end.

What would God have us take home and apply to our lives in this story of the ark arriving safely on the mountains of Ararat? The focus is the faithfulness of God and the obedience of Noah. First and foremost is the character of God bestowing grace and providing a place of safety for those who would put their trust in Him. (Psalm 32:7) Peter tells us this is a key lesson in the story of Noah. If God could deliver Noah and his family from that kind of a world, He can deliver us from whatever we face. (2 Peter 2:9) God is good to all who call upon Him with a sincere heart.

Commented [notes29]: 7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah Psalms 32:7 (NIV)

If you have been wading through one of those mucky storms of life, remember, God is faithful. He remembers His promises to you. He will fulfill His word. You may need to wait patiently until you hear from Him, but know that He has not forgotten you. (Isaiah 49:15)

Commented [notes30]: 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. 2 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

The obedient heart of Noah is the second great light in this story. Not only was he faithful for the hundred years of building the ark, but he was faithful during the next year of floating with his family and the zoo. He was faithful to wait until the Lord instructed him to disembark. He didn't move without the Lord's instruction. While he waited, he faithfully did what the Lord had last instructed him to do. That is a life of faithful obedience. Keep on doing what the Lord has instructed until He gives you further direction. We have enough instruction already in the Word to keep us busy until His return. Amen?

Commented [notes31]: 15 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! Isaiah 49:15 (NIV)

Finally, I hope that you will remember the incredible design of God, to have the ark rest on the very day Jesus would rise and to have the dove bring an olive leaf a picture of the Spirit that would be poured out. Only God could orchestrate history with such amazing details. Only God knows how many more amazing details are in this story that we have yet to uncover. If God can be so detailed about this story, don't you think He is involved in the details of your life? (Psalm 139:16) What an amazing God we serve!

Commented [notes32]: 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalms 139:16 (NIV)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
Acts 1:8 (NIV)