

AFTER THE FLOOD

Genesis 8

In this chapter we continue the story of Noah. In the first verse we read, "God remembered Noah." God's thoughts always are for His own. Even the mother may sometimes forget her own child, but God will never forget us. He thought of us in eternity past and predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. When we were lost in Adam, He remembered us and sent His own Son to seek and to save us. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." He thinks of us every day as we pass through the dangers of this world and never for a moment remits His care of us. God remembers all who possess the life that is life indeed, the life that is to be found only in Christ.

God also remembers every kind of creature, but the Holy Spirit here singles out the cattle for mention. They represent the weak and the incapable of spiritual perception. In doing so it may be that He is meaning to turn our thoughts especially towards the masses of ignorant heathen who are cut off from the Gospel of Christ and the knowledge of the truth.

God remembered and preserved the living things, including the cattle, that were in the ark for Noah's sake. Even so, God remembers and saves us for Christ's sake, not for any merit or claim for our own, but simply because we are identified with Christ.

The wind was a symbol of the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life. When this divine wind sweeps over the heart of the sinner, which is like a troubled sea, the waters of sin and disquietude are assuaged, and the peace of God takes their place.

The safety of this man Noah, surrounded by nothing but death and destruction on the outside, was safe on the inside of the ark. He was safe because of his position. His safety was in the fact that he was in the ark. Perhaps Noah had a very trying time in the ark. He had quite a lot of animals with him. Some animals make a lot of noise, and other animals fight. Doubtless there were many things with which Noah had to contend during the time that he was shut in the ark. At times he might have been in despair, but there was never a moment when he was not safe. Your safety is not in your feelings, but it is in your position. When God saved you, He put you in Christ, and being in Christ is like being in the ark. In Christ we ought to be happy and satisfied. In Him we ought never to be in despair. But, we do get discouraged; we do become unhappy; we do wonder why certain things happen. Don't you think that Noah should have been happy during that time to know that he and his family were saved and safe? and don't you think you ought to be happy in Christ, the safest and the only safe place in the universe? Don't you see how much better position is than feeling? Folks want feeling. They run after an experience. Position is ten thousand times more important than feeling.

During the flood tidal waves swept around the earth. At this stage they were gradually subsiding. The divine judgment was drawing to its close. At length the ark rested in safety upon the mountains of Ararat. We should remember that Noah's ark, so far as man was concerned, was left alone upon the waters--no human hands steered it, and no human counsel guided it, and yet it was not tossed alone upon this solitary waste. There was an unseen arm directing it; there was unseen strength supporting it; and there was an unseen love that was wafting it. In God's own good time the ark rested in safety upon the mountain.

The resting of the ark corresponds to the resting of the Saviour in heaven at God's right hand. The resurrection of Christ and His passage into heaven as our Forerunner are certain signs that we shall follow Him there. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:19-20). The tops of the mountains were seen. That was visible evidence. In the

same way we can see certain pledges of the coming glory in the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming and sanctifying the lives of His people while they are still in the world.

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window and sent forth a raven. The raven is regarded as a croaker and a bird of ill-omen. It is an unclean bird. It is a picture of sin and the sinner. The raven "went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth." It evidently fed upon the carcasses which were floating about in the water.

Then Noah sent forth a dove, but the dove did not find a resting-place, so it returned to him in the ark. After waiting seven days, Noah sent forth the dove out of the ark. This time it returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, so Noah knew that the waters were subsiding. Seven days later Noah sent forth the dove a third time, and when it did not return Noah must have known that the day of deliverance was at hand.

The dove is the type of the Holy Spirit. In this symbolic form the Holy Spirit came upon our Lord.

What does the black raven represent? The raven is the type of evil, a representative of the god of this age and of the flesh which can enjoy what is here. What matters if the world is dead? What matters if the world is rushing to perdition? The flesh can still have a good time. This is a strange and peculiar age in which we live. God is not welcomed in the world that He created. Men are the creatures of His hand; the earth brings forth harvest, and men live on the harvest; men are living at the hand of God, and, if a single harvest should cease around the world and nothing would be produced, if God should withhold the harvest of the world for one season, the world would die. The whole world is living at the hand of God; yet, God is not welcomed here, and people will not listen to Him.

As the world lay under the water, the present world lies in the evil one and under the curse of the condemnation of God. It is uncongenial to the child of God because he belongs to the Father.

Perhaps you are interested in knowing where the dove got the olive branch since the whole earth had been flooded with water. This particular plant could live under the water for many months and retain its vitality and then when the waters subsided go to flowering and blooming.

In verse thirteen we have a reference to "the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth." This is the picture of a new beginning. In applying it to the lives of those of us who are Christians, it reminds us of a statement, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). He walks in newness of life. He puts on the new man. He has a new song in his mouth. The Lord has made a new covenant with him. It seems never to be God's purpose to patch up or reform what is old but to create something new in its place.

At length "Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry." Since only the surface was dry, it was necessary for Noah to wait a little while longer for full and final possession.

In verse fifteen we read, "And God spake unto Noah." Notice that during the whole story the initiative was always with God. All took place as He commanded. The initiative is also with God in our salvation. He foreordained us. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:4-5). He created us. He saved

us. He called us with a holy calling according to His own mercy and purpose and grace. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Timothy 1:9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). He has justified us and has promised to glorify us. "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:30). If Noah's salvation from the flood was the work of God from beginning to end, so is our salvation from His wrath and curse and judgment.

At last the time had come for Noah to leave the ark, so the God who had so clearly told him to enter, with equal clearness told him to come forth with his family, and to bring with him every living thing which he had taken into the ark with him. God never commands before the time required for obedience. Step by step He makes known His will. He is never too soon and never too late.

As Noah promptly and accurately obeyed God before the flood, so he did after the flood also. He went forth at once at the command of God. In order for obedience to be real it must be prompt and full. This is one of the supreme tests of genuine living.

When Noah came out of the ark, the animals came out with him. The purpose of their deliverance was that they might fulfil the intention of God at their creation, which was one of blessing. In the same way the purpose of God in redeeming humanity is that the redeemed might fulfil the function for which they were created, namely, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Upon landing on the earth, Noah's first act was to build an altar and to offer sacrifices. Thereby he testified to his gratitude to God for deliverance, to his need of sacrifice in approaching God, and to the dedication of his life to the service of God as symbolized by the burnt offering. In other words, Noah approached God as a sinner, making an offering.

Only that which is clean may be offered to the Lord. The division of the animals and birds into clean and unclean was a God-given picture of the real difference between holiness and unholiness in the spiritual sphere. No man has ever been clean in himself in God's sight except the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone was sinless. He suffered, the Just for the unjust. He was the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot.

There were two major parts in the making of the offering, namely, the killing of the victim and the burning of the victim on the altar. Both of these essentials were present in the one offering of Christ on Calvary. Christ was put to death. He died as the representative of and substitute for the sinner. His death, as the punishment of sin, vindicated the holy law of God which had been outraged by sin, and destroyed the barrier of enmity between God and the sinner. The Saviour died the death which we as sinners were due to die.

When Noah offered his burnt offerings on the altar, God accepted the sacrifice. Following the acceptance of the sacrifice was the divine assurance with reference to the future of the earth. There was not to be another curse in the form of a flood. There was to be an absolute guarantee of the permanence of the seasons, year by year, as long as the earth remained. Notice that the expression "seedtime and harvest" implies the cooperation of man. God gives the opportunity, and man must take advantage of it. If he does not sow, he will not reap, and, if he does not reap, he will not eat. It is the same with the spiritual sowing and the spiritual harvest. The seed is the Word of God. He gives the seed and the season, but we must sow. If we do so, we shall reap a harvest of souls in God's own time.