

Sunday, November 14, 2021 | Noah

Week 3 | Genesis 8 | “The First Thanksgiving.”

Announcements:

- KidzPointe worship takeover, Sunday, December 5.
 - Teen Girls Pain Night Sat., Dec 18th @ 4PM.
 - Christmas eve, Communion, Carols, and Candlelight, @ 6PM
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Two weeks ago, we started a new series that revolves around the story of Noah. And while the flood story has been a staple in children's church, I must remind you that this is NOT a kid's story. It's a cautionary tale *about* adults *in* adult situations *for* adults. We learned that as man multiplied on the Earth, his sinfulness did too. This then caused God's heart to turn from gladness to sadness. Yet, despite the wholesale depravity that was rampant on the face of the Earth, Noah's righteousness set him apart from those around him. And because God is merciful, he preserved the life of Noah and his family. Though Noah was surrounded by the floodwaters of death, God's grace still saves.

Last week, we were in Chapter 7. And we noticed that Noah was relegated to nothing more than a merely supportive role in his “own” story. By comparison, God shines as the primary mover in the actual flood narrative. He not only has the more significant speaking role; He is also the most active. After all, it was by His decree that Noah even built the Ark. And, as we’ll see in a moment, it was God alone who shut the very doors of that ancient boat. God is Lord of the Flood. However, when his Son comes on the scene, we notice that God is the bringer of floods and calmer from storms. He need only whisper a command, and the squalling seas hold their tongue (Mk. 4:35-41). The very thing that threatens life is like the ground beneath His feet (Jhn. 6:16-25).

Today, there is a significant shift in the story. We go from waters rising and conquering the Earth to receding like a defeated enemy. God is still at the center. He is the lead actor. And he acts with mercy towards His creation. He has not forgotten Noah, his family, and all the animals on the Ark. No. He has well-remembered them. His mind is full of grace for them. And so, the flood is dispatched never to overcome the Earth again. Thus, we're given an excellent example of thankfulness amid such miracles.

READ: Genesis 8 (ESV)

¹ But 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. ² The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,³ and the waters receded from the Earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated, ⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ And 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.

⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷ and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the Earth. ⁸ Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. ⁹ But 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. ¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the Ark.¹¹ And 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. ¹² Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.

¹³ In 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. ¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the Earth had dried out. ¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ "Go out from the Ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring 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 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.

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."

God, as the primary actor in this story, does three things in this chapter:

i. God *remembered* the Creatures.

READ: Genesis 8:1 (ESV)

But 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.

Reading that God "remembered" something leads us to conclude that God must've forgotten Noah. However, we know that can't be right. After all, God is all-knowing. He cannot forget anything since He has knowledge of all things. So, there must be some deeper meaning rather than what "remember" means at face value.

Interestingly, the Hebrew term translated as "remember" in our passage is *za-kar'*. And it can, indeed, have the connotation that someone has forgotten something and, thus, recalls it; or, depending on the passage, fail to recall something (cf. Gen. 40:23; 42:9; Num. 11:5; Deut. 9:7; Judge. 8:34; 2 Chron. 24:22). This is actually how it should be understood in most places. However, there are a few places where that word can also have the connotation that someone is being mindful, cognizant, or attentive (cf. Ex. 20:8; Ps. 20:7; 63:6; 103:14; 119:52, 55). This latter implication is how we should understand that God "remembered" Noah (cf. Gen. 19:29; 30:22; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; 1 Sam. 1:11, 19). It isn't that he had forgotten those on the Ark. Rather, it is that judgment had come and was now passed. The flood was done. It was now time for God to go about the business of rebuilding the Earth. When we read that God "remembered," we should understand that God turned his attention away from the things of the flood and turned to the remnant of His creation that was aboard the Ark.

READ: Psalm 8:3-4 (ESV)

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are **mindful** of him, and the Son of man that you care for him?

Rather than being some negligent father, God is a Good Father who is attentive to his creation. Sometimes, that means judgment; but that also means the Lord shows mercy. This is not because creation is worthy of such treatment. Instead, it is because our God is a gracious God.

ii. God *reopened* the Ark.

READ: Genesis 8:15-18 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ "Go out from the Ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring 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 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.

Before the invention of the compass and the sextant, captains used the stars to know their direction while at sea. But even those things made it difficult to see if they were close to land. And so, sailors would use birds to see how close they were to land. Noah must've been well-versed in such techniques because he not only had a hatch from which to gaze at the stars, but he also used both a crow and a dove to scout for land.

Now, why did he use two different birds? We have no idea. But what we do know is that even though the dove never returned, Noah didn't leave the Ark. Now, the dove could've died, but, really, its withdrawal from the Ark implied the Earth was safe enough for a bird to nest. And, if it was safe enough for that, it would be safe enough for Noah, his family, and the rest of the animals. Yet, even after getting such confirmation, Noah still did not depart from the Ark. It was only until *after* God commanded him to do so that Noah and all the rest left their escape capsule.

Even the worst sailor would assume that the dove's disappearance suggested that there was dry and habitable land somewhere close. However, even as good as that educated guess was, for Noah, still just that, a guess. He wouldn't risk the lives of his family and all the animals on some hypothesis. He would need some indisputable fact before venturing out into a world that had just come through a cataclysmic event. He did not need the "word" of a bird if you get my meaning, but a word from the Lord. After all, God told him to enter the Ark; as far as Noah was concerned, God would also tell him when to leave the Ark.

iii. God *revived* the Earth.

READ: Genesis 8:21-22 (ESV)

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."

In Gen. 1-2, God was the instigator of creation. In Gen. 6-7, God was the un-doer of creation. And now, in Gen. 8, God is the redeemer of creation.

The cycles of the planet were pushed out of sync. "Seedtime/harvest," "cold/heat," "summer/winter," and even, "day/night." All of those pairings make sense. A global flood would have the effect of disrupting farming and seasons. However, what do we make of the last pairing of "day and night"? Is this a poetic flourish by God to show that the basic function of the Earth would not cease, not even the passage from day to night? Or, are we to infer that day and night were also suspended during the flood along with agriculture and the changing seasons? We have no idea.

Whatever these phrases mean in the literalistic interpretations, at heart, is the principle that God will never again bring a global flood to the Earth. Or, in other words, all of creation will not suffer in this specific way again due to humanity's waywardness. And even though God readily admits that "[the intention of man's heart is \[still\] evil from his youth,](#)" the flood did not cure humanity's sinfulness, God, in His mercy and grace, limits how far He Himself will go in the future when dealing with man's sinfulness. Or, as one commentator put it, "...this verse functions as a ringing testimony to the mercy of God, who henceforth will not give man his just deserts. The punishable will not be punished."¹

So, what's the takeaway?

Thankfulness is the echo of God's extravagant grace.

READ: Genesis 8:18-20 (ESV)

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. 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.

Interestingly, only three sacrifices are mentioned in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. The first was performed by God, who clothed Adam and Eve after they sinned. The second was performed by Abel, who was promptly killed by his brother Cain. And the third was right here in Gen. 8 and was performed by Noah, who did so immediately after leaving the Ark.

¹ Hamilton, Victor P., *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), p. 310.

Now, living in the modern western world, it may come as a surprise that sacrifices were given for several reasons, and not all of them were to atone for sin. Most were, but not all. For instance, some sacrifices were for the purpose of dedication, as when Solomon dedicated the temple (cf. 2 Chron. 7:5). And others were for the purpose of thanksgiving (cf. Lev. 7:11-34).

Now, with those first two sacrifices we mentioned, we can safely assume that they would fall primarily into the sin-atoning category. In Gen. 3, the sacrifice was made to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness. And, in Gen. 4, Abel brought the firstborn of his sheep, an offering primarily associated with propitiation (cf. Ex. 12:1-6; Lev. 14:13). On the other hand, Noah's was not only for atonement purposes; it was also for thanksgiving. We know this because we're told that Noah offered "burnt sacrifices." The Hebrew term used for that phrase is *o-law'*, which meant that Noah burned the animal in its entirety. And that type of sacrifice, while made to cover sins, was also widely associated with the kind of sacrifices meant to show ***gratitude*** (cf. Lev. 22:17-25; Num. 15:1-11).²

Why do I bring this up? Because when we think of the first Thanksgiving, we often think of a scene that looked like this: <INSERT PICTURE>. When, in reality, the first thanksgiving looked something more like this: <INSERT PICTURE>. Hence, the first Thanksgiving didn't occur 400 years ago in 1621 somewhere around Plymouth, Massachusetts, but thousands of years ago in the 601st year of Noah's life somewhere in the mountains of Turkey. And it wasn't between some Indians and colonists but between Noah's family and God.

Thankfulness is the echo of God's extravagant grace. Everything we have has been given to us by God. We did not deserve it. Yet, here we are, recipients of divine charity. It is precisely because of this reality that we must remember to be thankful.

² Wenham, Gordon J., *Genesis 1-15*, The Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 1, General Editors, David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Baker, (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1987), p. 189; see also, Hamilton (1990), p. 307-308.

Video Description

Noah | Week 3 | "The First Thanksgiving."

TEXT: Genesis 8

Today, there is a significant shift in the story of the flood. We go from waters rising and conquering the Earth in Gen. 7 to waters receding and retreating like some defeated enemy in Gen. 8. God is still at the center. He is the lead actor. And he acts with mercy towards His creation. He has not forgotten Noah, his family, and all the animals on the Ark. No. He has well-remembered them. His mind is full of grace for them. And so, the flood is dispatched never to overcome the Earth again. Thus, we're given an excellent example of thankfulness amid such miracles.

Interestingly, only three sacrifices are mentioned in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. The first was performed by God, who clothed Adam and Eve after they sinned. The second was performed by Abel, who was promptly killed by his brother Cain. And the third was right here in Gen. 8 and was performed by Noah, who did so immediately after leaving the Ark. The first two sacrifices can safely fall primarily into the sin-atoning category; whereas, Noah's sacrifice wasn't only made for the purpose of propitiation but appreciation. Hence, the first Thanksgiving didn't occur 400 years ago in 1621 somewhere around Plymouth, Massachusetts, but thousands of years ago in the 601st year of Noah's life somewhere in the mountains of Turkey. And it wasn't between some Indians and colonists but between Noah's family and God.

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: