

Noah and the Universal Flood: Part I

Events Leading to the Deluge

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Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD (Genesis 6:1-8).

Introduction

One of the most interesting and richer sections of Scripture is the story of Noah, the ark and the universal flood on the earth. With it, the earlier lessons on the importance of faith, the devastating effect of the fall, the antithesis between the godly and ungodly lines and the judgment caused by sin, continue. This narrative brings to an end the history of the old world and reveals that the antediluvian era climaxes with the complete failure and wickedness of all mankind except one family touched by God's grace. Before we look at each verse in this amazing history, there are a number of introductory matters to consider.

First, contrary to modernists and higher critics, the flood narrative describes a real, literal history of events that actually took place on planet earth. This point is proven by the fact that Jesus believed in the flood story and used it as a fitting comparison to expected conditions at the time of the second coming (Mt. 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26, 27). If someone who claims to be a Christian regards the flood narrative as myth or legend, they call into question the divinity, omniscience and sinlessness of Jesus; the inspiration, infallibility and authority of Scripture; and biblical Christianity as a viable, trustworthy teaching. In addition, the New Testament epistles appeal to Noah as an example of faith and righteousness (e.g., Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5). If Noah did not exist and the flood never happened, this would be a lie or a delusion. Contrary to Christian liberals, the fact that *sixty-eight* different ancient peoples have flood legends is *not* evidence that the Hebrews adopted such myths and adapted them to their own history; but, rather, is proof that a worldwide flood did occur. But, the story became corrupted and perverted over time, as peoples who were separated from divine revelation embellished the original story

to fit their heathen worldview. There also is exceptionally strong archaeological evidence of a worldwide deluge. This evidence is almost always overlooked or ignored by modern secular scholars because of macro-evolutionary and uniformitarianism presuppositions.

Second, the context of the flood narrative is significant. In the two previous chapters, the inspired author traces the development of the human race along two distinct lines: an unbelieving wicked line and a believing godly line. The Cainites are shown in their development of a humanistic covenant-breaking culture and the Sethites are shown living in a radically different, faith-based manner. Up to this point, these two societies were moving along on completely separate paths. The godly were maintaining a separate culture by segregating themselves from the unbelievers. But with chapter 6, the two separate and distinct societies begin to merge together contaminating the Sethites and causing them to forsake the God of their fathers. This great apostasy, due to intermarriage, becomes so severe that unbelief, and the great moral corruption that attends it, becomes universal with the exception of only one family. This virtually universal wickedness leads to a worldwide judgment. In chapter 6, a new level has been reached in the progress of evil. So evil, in fact, that God will wipe the slate clean and begin again.

Third, the story of Noah and the flood is not simply a story of judgment but also of God's grace or unmerited, saving favor. The story of man's wickedness and apostasy in verses 1-7 which leads to God's decision to wipe out mankind is set forth as a sharp contrast to God's grace to Noah in verse 8: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." The gospel shines brightly against the pitch dark background of universal wickedness and judgment. The theme of God reaching out in grace and mercy to save a people for Himself out of the multitudes of depraved humanity, who are blindly rushing toward destruction, is even emphasized by the Hebrew poetic structure of verses 5-8 which form a rough palistrophe:

A The LORD sees mankind, 6:5

B The LORD regrets, 6:6

C The LORD says "I shall wipe out," 6:7

B' Because I regret

A' The LORD sees Noah, 6:8¹

The theme of the necessity to trust and obey or suffer the dire consequences that we saw in the Cain and Abel narrative is repeated here on a far grander scale. The author of Hebrews writes, "By faith Noah, being warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7). Noah, like Abel, believed in the word of God and thus obeyed this word. The proof that he trusted in God was his willingness to build the ark with no empirical evidence of a coming flood. The Old Testament Scriptures repeatedly point to two ways, two worldviews, or two faiths. One is trust in Jesus Christ and God's word;

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 136.

this faith results in obedience. The other is a trust in self and a religion of humanism, autonomy and self-reliance.

The Cause of Universal Apostasy: Mixed Marriages

The story of the flood begins with an explanation as to how the world became so evil: “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose” (6:1-2).

In this narrative, the first thing that the author notes is that there was a population explosion among men in contrast to the sons of God. In other words, the Cainites grew exceedingly. This forms the background of the activities in verse 2 and the scenes of the development of evil on a great scale. In the creation narrative, Adam and Eve were told to be fruitful and multiply in order to spread *godly* dominion in this world (Gen. 1:26, 28); but here we have the opposite. The wicked are multiplying greatly and creating a satanic, covenant-breaking, humanistic civilization. The ungodly line invented polygamy, which helped increase their numbers (Gen. 4:19). Since all men are born depraved rebels (there are rare exceptions such as John the Baptizer, who was regenerated in the womb), those who have faith have been a minority throughout history. This development was bad, but the intermarriage between the Cainites and the Sethites will make it intolerable. (Verses 1 and 2 serve as a postscript to the preceding genealogy and an introduction to the flood narrative.)

Verse 2 tells us the source of the problem that leads to worldwide apostasy and the deluge: mixed marriages. “The sons of God” intermarry with “the sons of men.” Since there have been a number of popular fanciful interpretations of the expression “the sons of God,” we will briefly examine the most common ones in order to contrast and justify our own interpretation.

(1) An interpretation that was popular with many of the ancient Jewish scholars, the early church fathers, and even many modern commentators is that the expression “the sons of God” refers to angels. “The ‘angel’ interpretation is at once the oldest [recorded] view and that of most modern commentators. It is assumed in the earliest Jewish exegesis (e.g., the books of 1 Enoch 6:2ff; Jubilees 5:1), LXX, Philo (*De Gigant* 2:358), Josephus (*Ant.* 1.31) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1Qap Gen 2:1; CD 2:17-19)... [T]he earliest Christian writers (e.g., Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen) also take this line.”² Those who hold this view speak about demons assuming a human form and breeding with human females, producing an even more degenerate-demonic culture.

The chief argument given in support of this interpretation is that the title “sons of God” is used in the Bible in reference to angels (e.g., see Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan. 3:25). This argument is exceptionally weak when we take into consideration the following counter arguments: a) The expression “sons of God” is not used exclusively of spirit beings but is also used to describe God’s people (e.g., see Deut. 32:5; Ps. 73:15; Hos. 1:10; cf. Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 4:5, 6;

² Ibid, 139.

Phil. 2:15; Heb. 12:7, 8; 1 Jn. 3:1, 2). b) In this context (e.g., the preceding and following chapters) the expression “sons of God” is not used of angelic beings. In fact, the context (chapters 4 and 5) describes the genealogy of Cain (4:17-24) and Seth (5:3-32). Angels are not even mentioned. The focus obviously is on the godly and ungodly lines. c) This unholy mixing of “the sons of God” and “the daughters of men” leads *not* to any sort of judgment upon demonic spirits but to a judgment on mankind. d) The idea that demons came down to earth and assumed human form with genitalia and the full ability to produce children is ludicrous and unscriptural. While it is true that holy angels often appear to the saints as men (e.g., Gen. 18:1-22; 19:1ff), there are no examples of demons appearing as men. Furthermore, when Jesus teaches that, after the general resurrection, marriage will no longer exist, He says, “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (Mt. 22:30). In the eternal state, the saints will be like angels *who do not marry or procreate*. e) The angelic beings idea is even more absurd when we consider the fact that the text assumes long-term marriage relationships and not brief encounters. This would mean that the demonic beings had to take on long-term economic duties such as farming and husbandry. The “angels as husbands” idea has more in common with pagan mythology than of the teaching of Scripture.

(2) Another view that became popular with Jewish exegetes around the middle of the second century is that “sons of God” refers to royalty or rulers. This view is accepted by some Christian interpreters as well. According to the Christian understanding, *rulers* of the Sethite line were marrying pagan women and this influenced and corrupted the societies of professing believers. This view is based primarily on Psalm 82, which calls princes “sons of the Most High” (v. 6). While far better than the angels interpretation, it does not adequately explain the universal apostasy.

(3) The preferred interpretation in this context is that the phrase “sons of God” refers to the godly line descended from Seth. This makes the most sense, for the following reasons. a) Believers and members of the visible church are frequently called “the sons” or “children of God” (e.g., Deut. 14:1; 32:19; Isa. 1:2; 14:11; Hos. 11:1; Lk. 17:27; etc.). b) This fits the broad and narrow context, for the children of God are those who “call upon the name of the LORD” (Gen. 4:26). This identification is followed by the genealogy of Seth and Enos, the godly line. c) The title “sons of God” is used as a contrast or antithesis to the designation “daughters of men.” The title “daughters of men” is defined in verse one simply as females (i.e. daughters) born to wicked men, the posterity of Cain (i.e. those who corrupt the sons of God). Since “the daughters of man” refers to the regular daughters of unbelievers, the logical parallel would *not* be godly rulers but believing sons, the males born among the godly line. d) A broad practice of intermarriage between professing believers and the heathen best explains the universal apostasy. A corrupt ruler who marries a pagan may corrupt some or even many who are under his leadership by his wicked example; but, he will not corrupt all. A widespread co-mingling of the covenant people and covenant breakers leads not only to the widespread apostasy of husbands but also children raised by heathen mothers. Consequently, over time, godly lines become ungodly lines. This occurred only until Noah and his family were left.

There are a number of things about these mixed marriages that merit close examination. First, the young men from the families that professed faith in the true God were motivated not by spiritual concerns, but rather based their decision on the *physical beauty* of the heathen women. They were directed by lust and not by the revelation of God. There is certainly nothing wrong with physical beauty; Jehovah made women beautiful. But a woman's faith, her worldview, her inner beauty must take priority over physical appearance. These men violated the biblical principle that believers must never be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). Amos asks, "Can two walk together unless they are agreed" (3:3)? Those who profess Christ should make sure that they keep within the bounds of their profession by only marrying other believers and only allowing their children to do the same. This applies not simply to obvious pagans, but also heretical forms of Christianity (e.g., Arminianism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Federal Vision, etc.). The history of mixed marriages bears this warning out, for the unregenerate covenant-breaker usually wins over the professing Christian spouse.

Note the similarity between the apostasy of "the sons of God" and Eve's sin in the temptation narrative. They saw beautiful pagan women and they chose to marry them autonomously, apart from God's word. They did not seek God's guidance on what they should do and they did not consult their believing parents either. They were so strongly guided by the lust of the eyes that they cast off all restraint in order to fulfill their fleshly desires. They acted like Eve, who saw that the tree was good and pleasant to the eyes and thus took of the fruit and ate contrary to God's revealed will. The biblical Christian must learn to look at every aspect of reality through the lens of sacred Scripture. Women who are beautiful physically but who are not Christians must be regarded as children of Satan; who live in bondage and darkness; who, therefore, are more dangerous than a deadly beast. They have brought multitudes of professing men straight to the pit of hell.

Second, the descendants of these mixed marriages were godless, violent thugs who spread destruction and lawlessness throughout the earth. In verse 4 we read, "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." The male children of these unholy, sinful marriages were called giants in part because of their unusual height, but primarily because of their incredible physical strength and skill in battle, whereby they used threats and force like gang members to oppress, tyrannize, beat and eventually kill those around them. Keep in mind, that the designation "men of renown" or "reputation" is a very negative designation in the book of Genesis. The expression mighty men (Hebrew *haggibborim*, *gibborim*) is often used in the Old Testament to describe soldiers (e.g., see 2 Sam. 10:7; 16:6; 20:7; 23:8, 9, 16, 17, 22; 1 Kgs. 1:10; etc.) or men of violence who sought fame by their mercenary pursuits. Intermarriage led to a society like South Central Los Angeles or Warez, Mexico, where robbery, rape, kidnapping, murder and gang violence was a normal part of everyday life. Therefore, after describing these famous men (brigands, gang leaders, or paramilitary groups), the narrative immediately turns to the widespread wickedness of man on

the earth. The history described in verses 1-4 is intended to set the stage for God's decision to wipe out mankind (vs. 5-7) and the flood story that follows.

The fact that these degenerate thugs are called "men of renown" tells us that the culture and society of that day was so corrupt, that rather than these men being thought of as vile and infamous criminals, they were looked upon as heroes. They were famous and were praised and lauded for their abominable lifestyles. The children of mixed marriages had become so accustomed to a lawless, violent lifestyle that all remnants of the faith and obedience of their ancestors was forgotten and now mocked. This narrative informs us that we can tell when a culture is in the final stage of degeneracy and the populace looks up to men and women for their achievements in evil. In America and all the nations that once professed Jesus Christ as Savior and King, the majority of people honor criminals, sodomites and lesbians, corrupt politicians and thoroughly debauched actors and music "stars." People who live in open fornication; who get or advocate abortion (infanticide); who get divorced on a whim every few years; who practice the abomination of homosexuality or lesbianism are honored by Hollywood, the news media, various magazines and tabloids and the civil magistrate. Biblical Christianity is very unpopular with most people, while the basest forms of hedonism and autonomous self-exaltation are praised in every quarter. Europe and America are ripe for judgment.

Excursus on the Dangers of Intermarriage

The "sons of God" did not understand the importance of marrying one of faith for the maintenance of covenant continuity and carrying out the dominion mandate. They did not heed the important teaching that God made men and women of faith *one* because "He seeks godly offspring" (Mal. 2:15). This subject is so important and intermarriage has been used so effectively by the devil against God's people throughout history that a brief study of God's teaching on intermarriage in Scripture is in order.

The Patriarchal Period

A study of the God-fearing patriarchs reveals a very negative attitude toward intermarriage with unbelievers. The fathers and mothers not only explicitly command their children not to marry pagans, they also show great displeasure when a son marries a heathen. Note the following examples.

When Abraham sought a bride for Isaac, he made his chief servant swear by God not to take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites (Gen. 24:2-3). Instead, the servant was to travel all the way back to Abraham's original country (Padan-Aram) to find a suitable mate for Isaac (Gen. 24:4ff.). Abraham is very aware of the importance of covenant continuity and dominion. His son must not intermarry with a heathen, not only because such a union would have disastrous spiritual consequences for Isaac's family, but also because the Canaanites are destined to disinherit the land. This is no future prosperity and dominion for those who reject

Jehovah. The fact that Abraham was willing to send his servant on a long journey to find a godly wife should serve as an example to all Christian fathers. Abraham gave top priority to finding a good wife for his son.

Interestingly, Esau (who we are told was not of God's elect even though a child of Isaac) did not walk in the ways of his father Isaac, but married a heathen local. "When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah" (Gen. 26:34-35). This brief section is placed in the narrative to emphasize that Esau was unworthy to be a successor to Isaac. It is strong evidence that he (at best) was indifferent to the religious convictions of his parents. He obviously had no scruples about taking heathen wives from the Canaanite people who occupied the land. Esau's rebellion against God is manifested in this passage in two ways. First, he married without the oversight, permission and blessing of his believing parents. Second, he intermarried with the local heathen women—the enemies of God. Esau's actions were a sign of his unbelief and were instrumental in ensuring that his posterity had no commitment to Jehovah. Subsequent revelation indicates that Esau's descendants were the enemies of God and His covenant people.

When a son or daughter marries an unbeliever it causes great grief to believing parents. In Genesis 27:46, Rebekah reminded Isaac of the pain and stress that had been caused by Esau's Hittite wives. She then painted a picture of total misery which would make her life unbearable if Jacob would follow Esau's example and marry a heathen. This reminder caused Isaac to give a special charge to Jacob saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother" (Gen. 28:1-2).

Immediately after this charge, Isaac blessed Jacob and confirmed the Abrahamic covenant unto him. Isaac understood the relationship between marrying a believer, establishing a godly household and the continuity of covenant blessing through history. The narrative of Genesis 27 and 28 not only reveals the lack of faith in Esau, who despised his birthright; it also shows how the lack of faith works itself out in family life. Jacob was faithful, obeyed his parents and married a believer. Esau was unfaithful and disregarded God by marrying heathen Hittite women. Esau was a very tragic figure. Even after he understood the great displeasure of his parents with his heathen wives, he only made matters worse by marrying into the rejected line of Ishmael (Gen. 28:9). He believed that marrying a descendant of Abraham would please his father (Gen. 28:8). The issue, however, was not simply a matter of race or genealogy but of faith. It is not enough to marry a child or grandchild of a believer. The children of believers must also believe themselves. If they do not, they are cut off from the covenant.

The Teaching of God's Law on Intermarriage

God's law-word explicitly condemns intermarriage with the heathen or unbelievers. The issue of intermarriage is so important for avoiding syncretism, idolatry and apostasy that Jehovah

makes His will known on this issue in the original giving of the law, as well as at the covenant renewal in Deuteronomy and at Joshua's farewell message where the covenant is renewed once again.

In Exodus 34:1-17 we read, "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods. You shall make no molded gods for yourselves."

In Deuteronomy, the grown children of those who left Egypt are given the same warning before they enter the promised land. In his covenant renewal sermon Moses says, "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

After the land of Palestine was largely subdued by God and at the end of his great ministry, Joshua made a covenant with Israel (see Josh. 24:25). This covenant is a renewal of the previous Mosaic covenant and thus has much in common with Deuteronomy 7 (cf. especially chapters 31-33). Joshua's challenge to Israel says, "Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but as for you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you. Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages

with them, and go in to them and they to you, know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you” (Josh. 23:6-13).

The exhortations related to the covenant between Jehovah and Israel all relate to or center around faithfulness to the Lord of the covenant. How are God’s people, who are surrounded by heathen nations, peoples, societies and cultures, going to remain faithful to Jehovah? What must the covenant people do to avoid the sins of syncretism and idolatry? Before taking into account the specific commands to the covenant people not to intermarry with the heathen, a consideration of the exhortations that surround God’s warning (i.e. the immediate context) is in order. The imperatives and warnings that are given in the context of the command not to intermarry are tangentially related in that they are all given to serve the same purpose. This purpose or goal is faithfulness to God and the covenant through history or multi-generationally. Children are part of the covenant and must continue covenant faithfulness from generation to generation. Note the following warnings and imperatives that serve the central purpose.

(1) There is an exhortation to love and cleave to the Lord (Josh. 23:8, 11; cf. Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; Josh. 22:5, etc.). The word cleave in Hebrews (*dabaq*) is used in Scripture to describe the husband and wife relationship (e.g., Gen 2:24). The language of marriage is deliberate. In Exodus 34:14 the people are even reminded that Jehovah is a jealous God. The covenantal language is a reminder that Jehovah saved Israel and established a personal, loving relationship between Himself and His people. The people are to delight in Him, depend on Him, and continually devote themselves to His glory. They are to serve Him with every fiber of their being. Motivations in Scripture to obey God, to be faithful unto Him are both positive and negative. Our faithfulness to God must be founded in our love toward Him. The threats of punishment should be our secondary concern. The church expresses its love and trust in God by obedience to His commands (see Ex. 34:11; Josh. 23:6, 8, 11; 1 Jn. 2:3-5; cf. Deut. 31-32).

(2) The covenant people are commanded to utterly destroy the heathen nations (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:1-2; Josh. 23:9-10). The best defense against apostasy and idolatry is a solid offense. Stagnation, compromise and lukewarmness are enemies of both personal and corporate sanctification. Obviously, if the covenant people are busy exterminating the enemies of God, they will not be making friends with them or compromising with their pagan worldview. For example, a Christian who in the presence of unbelievers discusses the things of God (e.g., the law; the gospel; the Christian worldview) will either see conversions to Christ or will be brushed aside.

The command to destroy the seven Canaanite nations by physical force typifies the Great Commission in the New Covenant. The church is to aggressively work for the extirpation of all false religions and idolatry throughout the whole earth by discipling the nations through the preaching of the gospel (Mt. 16:15ff.), teaching the nations Jesus’ law-word (Mt. 28:20) and by baptizing them. The Bible emphasizes that the extension of God’s kingdom in the land of Canaan

and throughout the whole earth is brought about through Jehovah's power (Ex. 34:11; Deut. 7:1-2; Josh. 23:9; Mt. 28:20; Jn. 16:13ff.; Ac. 2).

When God's law describes the responsibility to destroy the seven heathen nations, there is an emphasis on destroying their gods, altars, pillars, asherim, and sacred sites. All the monuments to idolatry and all the paraphernalia of false worship are to be completely obliterated in order to remove all the temptations toward syncretism and idolatry. The warnings against religious paraphernalia and intermarriage serve the purpose of maintaining loyalty to Jehovah, faithfulness to the covenant and the holiness of the covenant people *generationally*. Obedience to God's commands ensures covenant blessings and the expansion of God's kingdom. The wisdom and truth of God's law in this matter is demonstrated by the historical fact that the syncretism and apostasy of Christians has done far more harm to the church and society than have persecutions, famines, pestilences and so forth.

(3) There is a warning not to make a covenant with the heathen nations (Ex. 34:12, 15; Deut. 7:2). Any treaty or covenant with a pagan nation is an act of unfaithfulness to God who had commanded the total annihilation of the inhabitants of Canaan. This command applied to any kind of agreement whether political, religious or marital. Jehovah does not acknowledge the idea of spheres of neutrality between believers and the heathen. The Bible condemns the viewpoint which says that God's people can cooperate under some type of secular, humanistic or ecumenical umbrella. In the ancient world, politics, religion and marriage were explicitly related or interwoven. Thus, treaties between different nations or tribes with competing gods or religions were often secured by intermarriage of the royal classes. These syncretistic marriages would be followed by the inclusion of the new foreign gods within the land. The common people of the land follow the example of the leaders and participate in the new worship practices. The two religious systems are eventually merged into a new syncretistic religion that is not really faithful to either previous worldview. This political pragmatism in the area of treaties and intermarriage is the result of political leaders playing god in the area of ethics and doctrine.

(4) The reason for the commandment forbidding treaties and intermarriage with the heathen and commanding their total destruction and the destruction of their gods is to ensure the holiness of the covenant people (Deut. 7:6). In Exodus, Israel is designated "a kingdom of priests and a holy people" (Ex. 19:5-6). Salvation brings responsibility. The covenant people have been separated, sanctified or set apart from other peoples to serve the Lord. God's people are not to behave like or imitate the heathen but rather to obey God's covenant law as an example to other nations (Deut. 4:6 ff.). Believers are to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. "The Israelites were a *holy people* because of their relationship to God, which *separated* them, or cut them *off* (apparently the original sense of the root *qds*, 'holy'), from other peoples and practices. Their holy character does not indicate inherent merit, but rather divine choice."³

The idea of salvation and the responsibility to be holy; of covenantal union and communion with God and the necessity of separation from that which is evil or unclean runs through both the Old and New Testaments. In between a classic passage on justification by faith

³ P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 179.

alone and a reminder that God saved and separated the Ephesians from rank heathenism, Paul writes, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). After discussing the blessed union between God and His people (2 Cor. 6:16; cf. Lev. 26:11, 12; Ezek. 27:27) Paul argues that this union logically leads to separation or sanctification. “Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate’, says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’” (2 Cor. 6:17). Some Corinthians were maintaining close ties with the unbelievers around them and as a result were participating in heathen practices (pagan idolatrous banquets, temple prostitution, fornication, etc.). To counter this sinful behavior, Paul argues that Christ and Satan—good and evil—have nothing in common. He also appeals to the law and the prophets’ call to separation. Christians must direct culture. They must submit everything to God’s ethical standard and never, ever follow heathen culture or practices.

Why Intermarriage is Wrong and Dangerous

The commands not to intermarry with the heathen (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12) are followed by arguments why the covenant people must avoid such behavior. The primary reason is that intermarriage places a believer in the position of being drawn into idolatry (Ex. 34:16-17; Deut. 7:4).

Intermarriage with a heathen results in incredible temptation to compromise the faith in some manner in order to please one’s spouse. Solomon is a prime example of a person who sinned to please his wives:

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods (1 Kgs. 11:1-8).

Solomon loved his wives and wanted to please them and keep them happy by building them temples for their gods. The foreign women even turned his heart after other gods. The great period of declension for Israel that led to the destruction of the nation did not begin with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, but with Solomon. Solomon’s compromised, syncretistic family life led to the downfall of a whole nation.

When Nehemiah rebuked the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab, he reminded them of the wickedness of Solomon. He wrote, “So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ‘You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?’” (Neh. 13:25-27). After cursing the Israelites (i.e. in a religious, covenantal sense) Nehemiah tells the wayward men that, if even Solomon (the wisest most blessed of kings in his day) could be made to sin by his pagan wives, how will they be able to stand against this temptation?

All of this information regarding intermarrying in Scripture raises the question: Why is intermarriage so dangerous to the spiritual life of a family? There are a number of reasons why intermarriage is a snare of the devil.

(1) A Christian who marries an unbeliever is making a covenantal union with a person who has a contrary world and life view. Such a union raises some important questions: Can a solid spiritual foundation of a household be built with clay mixed with iron? Can unity of purpose be maintained when there is no unity of belief? Can a household serve two masters? Paul deals with this issue in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. He writes, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” The apostle supports his exhortation by asking a series of questions that reveal the inharmonious, inconsistent, absurd nature of such a relationship. Hodge writes, “Parties are said to be in communion when they are so united that what belongs to the one belongs to the other, or when what is true of the one is true of the other. Believers are in communion, or have fellowship one with another, when they recognize each other as having a joint interest in the benefits of redemption, and are conscious that the inward experience of one is that of the other. Incongruous elements cannot be thus united, and any attempt to combine them must destroy the character of one or the other.”⁴

Since good and evil, righteousness and lawlessness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial cannot coexist or live in harmony, what is the common result of such unions? Such unions invariably end up producing some form of syncretism. Syncretism is “the attempted reconciliation or union of different opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion.”⁵ When two opposing world views exist under the same roof, unbiblical compromises are made to keep the peace or at least the outward appearance of peace. Professing Christians

⁴ Charles Hodge, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974 [1857, 59]), 543.

⁵ Jessie Stein, ed. in chief, *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 1966), 1442.

who are married to heathen husbands or wives often compromise on crucial spiritual matters such as: family devotions, faithful church attendance, what is acceptable to watch on TV and in movies, how to spend money, monuments to idolatry (e.g., Halloween, Xmas, Easter), how to raise children (e.g., discipline, ethics, schooling, etc.), Sabbath observance and fellowship with other believers (heathen spouses have ungodly heathen friends and obviously do not enjoy discussing theology, homeschooling and the Bible). Indeed, every area of life becomes a struggle against unbelieving husbands' or wives' worldviews because in the philosophical areas of ultimate concern (epistemology, ethics, salvation, ontology) there is not one fundamental area of agreement.

In such households, the important issues in life are pushed into the background and are replaced with mundane, unimportant, trivial conversations and pursuits. In other words, since the husband and wife cannot agree on what God to worship, they will agree to root for the Yankees or enjoy golf together. But what happens in a household when the most important things in life are ignored or deemphasized? The result is that Christ is not glorified and the true covenant religion is not effectively passed on to the children. The attempt to live in peace with a pagan results in an explicit or at least implicit form of functional neutrality. This attempt is a failure to recognize and live in terms of the radical antithesis between God's people and the heathen. When people who profess Christ fail to place Him first in all things and live in terms of their God-given calling in life, they destroy their own future because they cannot effectively pass the faith onto their children. Intermarriage, syncretism, idolatry and covenantal death go hand in hand.

Given this sober reality, one is not surprised to find warnings against intermarriage throughout Scripture. God has made it very clear that He hates intermarriage and all syncretistic behavior. God identifies Himself as the only true God, as a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) who hates compromise with idols. Household religion can never compromise with idols by making peace with idolaters without dreadful consequences.

(2) A believer who marries a pagan places himself and his children in the fellowship and continual presence of a corrupting example. Paul warned the Corinthians that "bad company corrupts good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33 NASB). Can there be any more of a corrupting force on a believing spouse and covenant children than a godless Christ-denying husband/wife or parent living under the same roof? Thomas Manton writes,

Many times, by carnal choice, all the good that is gotten into a family is eaten out, and within a little while religion is cast out of doors: Ps. cvi. 35, 'They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works;' Neh. xiii. 25, 26, 'I contended with them, and made them swear by God, Ye shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons;' 2 Kings viii, 18, 'He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife.' Valens, the emperor, married with an Arian lady, and so was ensnared so far as to become a persecutor of the orthodox. The wife of the bosom hath great advantages, either to the perverting or converting a man's heart to God; or else, if they should not prevail so far, what

dissonancy and jarrings are there in a family when people are unequally yoked, the wife and husband drawing several ways!⁶

Everyone knows that husbands and wives often learn each other's patterns of living whether for good or ill. Also, children have a natural tendency to imitate their parents' behavior. A covenant child who must continually watch a heathen parent curse, lie, worship entertainment, profane the Sabbath, read perverted literature, etc. will at best have much more difficult time with sanctification and at worst will follow the unbelieving parent into heathenism and idolatry.

Further, Christian parents have a responsibility to not only set an example for their children of what a godly marriage ought to be; they also ought to show their children how Christian marriage (although imperfectly at best) mirrors the relationship between Christ and the church. If covenant children have a godless, irresponsible father or a worldly, rebellious mother, they are denied the benefit of a truly Christian, godly household. This lack of a proper example can have negative consequences for a whole life time.

Note also that even when an unbelieving husband or wife is willing to cooperate to a certain extent with a Christian spouse by attending church and going through various religious exercises, such behavior in essence sets forth an example of gross hypocrisy for the children. The children, who study their parents more than anyone else, know that a heathen father or mother really doesn't care about the things of God. Thus, the children don't really have a good example, but rather have the model of a Pharisee. These children are implicitly taught that going through the motions is enough, that outward rituals are the essence of religion. This is one reason why the children of these syncretistic, ungodly unions so often reject Jehovah and the covenant for the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life.

(3) A Christian who marries an unbeliever makes it virtually impossible to be faithful to the fundamental childrearing mandate in Scripture, which is to make God and His law-word central to everything in the child's life and education. Can a child be diligently and continuously (i.e. from the morning till the evening; cf. Deut. 6:19) taught to love God and obey His word when one parent doesn't care about God or the Bible at all? Obviously, biblical instruction cannot be integrated into all of life when one parent ignores God and worships self and pleasures.

Further, there is the inevitable conflict over how the children will be educated and how the children will be disciplined. This is another area where compromise and hypocrisy is unacceptable. Does a believing husband or wife expect their pagan spouse to just give in and permit an explicitly Christian form of education and discipline when an unbelieving spouse has a natural aversion and hatred for the things of God? Such a situation is especially bad for Christian women who are married to heathen men. Such women are not in any position to assert a God-given authority over the man. A Christian man can at least order his heathen wife to submit in this area. If she doesn't like it, she can leave. A Christian woman can respectfully disagree with her husband and even lawfully disobey him when he asks her to sin or contradict Scripture. But,

⁶ Thomas Manton, "A Wedding Sermon" in *Works* (Worthington, PA: Maranatha, n.d.), 2:164.

if he is determined to place the children in a satanic state school, what can the wife do to stop such a moral atrocity?

Given the scriptural study, we have seen that there is almost nothing more rebellious, foolish and dangerous spiritually than marrying an unbeliever. Cain's sin resulted in the punishment of an individual. But the sin of intermarriage and its dreadful consequences led to the destruction of all mankind. Intermarriage led to syncretism and the absorption of the godly community into the ungodly society. It resulted in an integration into judgment and death. Those in the evangelical community who practice what is called "evangelistic dating" are playing spiritual Russian roulette.

The Lord's Response to Intermarriage and Apostasy

After the intermarriage of the Sethites and Cainites is noted, the narrator tells us God's thoughts to Himself regarding this dire situation: "And the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed is flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years'" (v. 3). It is noteworthy that this word of divine displeasure comes between the intermarriage scene (v. 2) and the description of the children produced by this unholy union (v. 4). By placing the verse here, the inspired author is making sure that the readers understand that the forbidden marriages themselves are highly offensive to God, and not merely the fact that they produce degenerate, unbelieving offspring.

There are two different interpretations of this verse among Christian scholars. One view is that the 120 years refers to a period of God's long-suffering or kind patience before the coming of the flood. Jehovah will give mankind 120 years to repent before the deluge. The idea behind this view is that man has become so wicked and obstinate in his rebellion that a time will come when the work of the Spirit through the preaching of Noah will be withdrawn and/or the special revelations of the Spirit passed down over time would be completely lost and thus man who is flesh (i.e. fleshly; the human race at this time [except Noah and his family] were wholly given over to making provisions for the flesh to fulfill its lusts [Rom. 13:14]), is fully ripe for judgment. The word "flesh" refers not only to the condition of their sinful nature as fallen seed of Adam, but also to the baseness and corruption of their hearts and lives (e.g., see Jn. 3:6; Rom. 7:18; 8:5, 7; Gal. 5:17, where flesh is opposed to the Spirit of holiness). Those who hold to this interpretation believe that it took 120 years to build the ark, itself a picture of the gospel, which was obstinately rejected by the people. 1 Peter 3:20 fits well with this interpretation, for it speaks of God's patience while Christ, through Noah, preached to the wicked masses: "...[W]hen once the Divine long-suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (cf. v. 19). In spite of the Spirit's work in the preaching of the gospel, the typology of the ark and the warning of impending judgment, mankind followed the flesh and thus abandoned the way of truth and life.

The lesson of this interpretation is that God who is holy, righteous and just will only put up with sin for a time; then, when His patience runs out, the ax of judgment will fall. With Noah,

we must warn people to flee from the wrath to come by trusting in Jesus Christ and repenting of sin. The crucial question we must all face is: Are you prepared to meet God and stand before the judgment seat of Christ? “Note, the time of God’s forbearance towards provoking sinners is sometimes long, but always limited: reprieves are not pardons; though God [may] bear a great while, he will not bear always.”⁷

The second interpretation is that in response to the widespread rebellion and depravity, God decides to limit man’s life to a maximum time of around 120 years. God’s sustaining, life-giving Spirit will not remain forever upon man, but instead will withdraw, causing man to age and die much earlier than before. With this interpretation, “flesh” denotes not so much man’s moral depravity or tendency to sin; but, rather, man’s inherent weakness and mortality due to the fall. The Spirit will no longer let men live to be several hundred years old. This interpretation is often rejected because many of Noah’s descendants lived much longer than 120 years (e.g., Shem-500; Arphaxad-403; Salah-403; Eber-430; Peleg-209; Reu-207; Serug-200). The patriarchs even lived longer than 120: Abraham-175; Isaac-180; Jacob-147. It may be, however, that God implemented the 120 year lifespan gradually instead of instantaneously. The Genesis record after the flood does note a steady decline of life spans following Noah until 120 does become a rough maximum. After the time of Jacob, the longest-lived recorded people are Joseph (110, Gen. 50:26), Moses (120, Deut. 34:7), and Joshua (110, Josh. 24:29). Only Aaron (123, Num. 33:39) exceeds 120. The lesson here is that God has set a limit on our time upon this earth. Therefore, we must redeem the time and live every day for Jesus Christ. Note also that the time of man on this earth is *brief*. When men lived for centuries, the time of reckoning seemed far off. Men, thus, were arrogant and refused to submit to God’s rule as if they could live in rebellion forever. Judgment was remote and thus ignored. But from that time forward, God’s patience and long-suffering with rebellious men is greatly shortened. Men are forced to face their mortality and see loved ones around them die one by one. This should make men consider their own souls and the afterlife; but, instead most suppress the truth of this reality with entertainment, sinful pleasure, and useless distractions. With Paul, we should focus our attention on “righteousness” (justification), “self-control” (sanctification) and “the judgment to come” (Ac. 24:25).

A Reiteration of Predeluvian Wickedness

In verse 4, Moses emphasizes that the world before the flood became filled with great violence, crime, and tyranny: “There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” The word “giants” is *nephilim*. This word is used only in Numbers 13:33 to describe the inhabitants or warriors in Canaan, who in verse 32 are described as men of great stature. The Israelite spies who saw these men regarded them as so tall and strong that they regarded themselves as “grasshoppers” in comparison. The translation “giants” is based on the LXX, the Latin Vulgate (*gigantes*) and the context.

⁷ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:52.

Interestingly, we often encounter “giants” in the Old Testament who are described as the enemies of God’s people. “Og, King of Bashan, is described as a giant in Deuteronomy 3:11. Still later, we encountered Goliath [a great warrior] whose height is given as six cubits and a span (more than nine feet) in 1 Samuel 17:4. We read of other Philistine giants in 2 Samuel 21:16-22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4-8. In 1 Chronicles 11:23 we read of an Egyptian who was seven and one half feet tall.”⁸ The Scripture notes such men because they serve as the exemplars of a class of men who reject faith in God and a humble walk with Him; who consequently rely on their own abilities and strength to fulfill their own needs and desires. They are the heroes of autonomous man. There may also be a negative illusion in the etymology of “*nephilim*” which is the Hebrew root *naphal* “to fall [upon]” which implies an attack involving violence. The Hebrew readers would see these heathen giants as robbers or bandits who lived by oppressing those around them. The children of these mixed marriages had no fear of God and thus roamed the earth as gang members who lived by the sword.

The complete corruption and great wickedness of society and culture at that time is emphasized when the inspired author notes that these were “men of renown” or “famous men” in their generations. In a godly culture, such men would have been infamous as notorious God-haters and criminals, but in that period they were honored and looked up to for their stature and strength which was used skillfully unto tyranny and oppression. Verse 11 tells us that the earth was filled with violence in those days and therefore it is logical to conclude that these giants were popular heroes for their prowess in the use of extreme violence. As our culture has rejected Christ and the biblical worldview, the heroes of society have shifted from godly reformers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther to notorious unbelievers who are thoroughly wicked (e.g., Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Rousseau, Dewey, Freud, Roosevelt, JFK, etc.). For many, there is also an admiration of notorious criminals and members of the Mafia. A culture that worships unbelieving, fornicating, movie stars; sports figures; lying politicians; and open sodomites is a society rushing toward judgment. People who have a religious and moral hostility toward Jehovah idolize those who are debt and proud in the rebellion against God.

We should draw a number of important lessons from this verse. First, the pride that comes from a Christ rejecting self-reliance or an autonomous dependence on one’s own strength is the essence of humanism and is always the product of unbelief and contempt for God. The self-reliant humanist rejects the restraints of God’s moral law and becomes a law unto himself. Inflated by arrogance, he shakes off God’s transcendent, absolute laws and does what is right in his own eyes. America is following in the footsteps of these wicked predeluvians. Second, contempt of the true and living God leads to cruelty and oppression towards men. Those who are unwilling to submit to God’s rule and create fiat laws from their own depraved imagination end up lording it over others because they have already made themselves their own god. Because of their sinful natures and commitment to an arbitrary, positive law order, their rule is disdainful, cruel, oppressive and destructive. In the name of love and compassion, modern secular humanistic states murder unborn babies, destroy the poor and ruin their economies. Because their

⁸ G. Ch. AAalders, *Genesis*, 1:156.

ideas, motives and ambitions are man-centered and egocentric, their rule turns vicious toward the righteous and they lay the foundation of their own judgment and destruction. With this lesson in our mind, we should not be surprised that modern so-called “liberal” politicians progressively remove our God-given rights and trample upon all that is just and sacred.

The Divine Reaction to the Wickedness of Mankind

After the *cause* of mankind’s widespread wickedness and the *extent* of this evil are carefully noted by Moses, Jehovah’s reaction to this situation is recorded in verses 5-8: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” In these verses, the inspired author notes three things that God does which lead to the universal flood.

First, God observes the situation on earth. The phrase “Jehovah saw” is used a number of times in Scripture of a look of analysis leading to an assessment. Several times in the creation narrative, God saw His creative work and noted that it was good (1:4, 10, 12, 17, 25). When the Lord saw the completed creation, He declared that it was very good (1:31). No doubt, the expression “the LORD saw” is designed to invite the reader to compare the dark assessment of first 5 with the pre-fall assessment. God made everything very good but man, through sin, had turned paradise into a hell on earth. Often Scripture notes God’s looking upon something as prelude to taking action whether positive (e.g., Gen. 29:31, opening Leah’s womb; Ex. 2:29, acknowledging Israel; Ex. 3:4, the call to Moses) or negative (e.g., Gen. 6:5, 12, the universal flood; 18:21, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; 11:5, the destruction of the tower of Babel and the confounding of languages, etc.).

When Moses speaks of God seeing, being sorry, and grieving in His heart, he is using anthropomorphic figures of speech to describe the divine response to events in His creation. God knows and sees everything past, present and future all at once before time even existed and does not need to look at something in time to make an assessment. The anthropomorphic language is for our benefit to help us understand. The statement that “Jehovah saw” “does not denote sudden perception but the consideration of a state of affairs that had long been in existence, and on account of which a decision has to be taken.”⁹ As Calvin notes, “And he introduces God as speaking in the manner of men by a figure which ascribes human affections to God; because he could not otherwise express what was very important to be known; namely, that God was not induced hastily, or for a slight cause, to destroy the world. For by the word *saw*, he indicates long continued patience; as if he would say, that God had not proclaimed his sentence to destroy men,

⁹ Cassuto, as quoted in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 144.

until after having well observed, and long considered, their case, he saw them to be past recovery.”¹⁰

God observes “that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that the intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” The first part of the statement refers back to the previous verses. The Sethites had apostatized, leaving only one faithful family and thus had been incorporated with the Cainites. The result was an earth filled with crime, violence, bloodshed, murder and oppression. As noted, the wickedness of mankind is great indeed when society honors men for their crimes of violence and exalts murderers, criminals and dogs. Throughout the whole inhabited earth, an abundance of scandalous sins were committed everywhere—all the time. The inhabitants of the earth had no fear of God whatsoever and thus habitually practiced gross, heinous and provoking sins. A culture had developed that not only lived in defiance of God’s holy law, but which relished its own depravity. Wicked behavior was not only socially acceptable but was the norm. It was the popular way to live and thus there was no one to restrain and punish such sinful and criminal acts. The rejection of faith in Christ for the religion of humanism in all its forms leads to a flood of impiety that spreads and covers the whole earth.

In the second part of this sentence, Moses reveals why such universal wickedness prevailed: “[E]very intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” The nature and origin of human wickedness resides in the heart of man. In the biblical description of man, the heart is the center of human personality. It is the place where thoughts and actions originate. It represents every aspect of man’s nature, including the intellect, will and emotions. Consequently Solomon says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Given the biblical definition of the heart, we should not be surprised that the Scripture repeatedly describes the heart as the source of all men’s wickedness. “Perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually” (Prov. 6:14). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Mt. 15:19).

God has revealed to Moses a crucial theological insight into the effects of the fall upon man. Anyone who understood biblical ethics could look at the human race in the days of Noah and see that it was supremely evil. But only God, who can see the hidden part of man, can tell us why. Men do wicked things because their hearts are evil. This was the poison root, the corrupt spring: all the violence, oppression, injustice, unlawful hatred, murder and wars; all the sexual immorality, homosexuality, adultery and perversion; all the idolatry, false religions and philosophies, proceed from this corruption of nature. Thus Paul in Romans 3:9 says the whole human race (both Jews and Gentiles) are under sin: “As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 1:217.

destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10-18).

Moses’ statement about fallen man’s heart could not be more comprehensive. The expression “every intent of the thoughts” means every idea, plan or imagination of the human heart is nothing but evil all the time. “This text asserts that every human thought from its inception is intrinsically evil,’...a comprehensive and general term of condemnation, especially for things disproved of by God (cf. H. J. Stoebe, THWAT 2:794-803). Few texts in the OT are so explicit and all-embracing as this in specifying the extent of human sinfulness and depravity (cf. Ps. 14:1-3; 51:3-12; Jer. 17:9-10).”¹¹ Apart from regeneration or a work of the Holy Spirit in man, men are perpetually contriving wickedness in their minds. This is the doctrine of total depravity. Because of the fall men have sinful, anti-God natures. Everything that unregenerate man thinks and does is rooted in rebellious inclinations against God and sinful motivations that are founded upon a commitment to human autonomy.

When we read about evil thoughts or imaginations taking place all the time, this does not mean that at every moment every person is planning a scandalous sin such as robbery or murder. It does not mean that all men are wicked as possible. Total depravity means that, on account of Adam’s fall, all men are polluted by sin which extends to every aspect of their being and thus unregenerate man’s thoughts and actions are actuated by wrong, anti-God principles. “There is no spiritual good, that is good in relation to God, in the sinner at all, but only perversion.”¹² Reformed theologians recognize that unbelievers can do things that are outwardly good or activities called civic goodness. Pagan men often work hard to support their families, give to charity, are faithful to their wives and compassionate with their children. Jesus Himself acknowledged that evil men can give good gifts to their children (Mt. 7:11). Moreover, the fall has not destroyed in the image of God in the broader sense. Men still have reasoning capabilities and a conscience that discriminates between good and evil. But unregenerate man always reasons as a covenant-breaker and determines ethics from a position of human autonomy. Spiritually and ethically, he is like a saw that seems to work fine but can never cut in a straight line. The ability of unsaved men to do outwardly good deeds does not contradict his depravity; for his motives, presuppositions and beliefs are always corrupt and he has a fundamental *inability to be good*. A wicked person may volunteer to work in a soup kitchen in order to feel good about himself; but even this outwardly good act is done as a rebel, as a humanist who rejects God and Jesus Christ.

What this inward depravity does is make all unregenerate men hostile to God and to spiritual truth, and in love with sin and self. “Sin, and not righteousness, has become his natural element so that he has no desire for salvation.”¹³ Unregenerate men may act very religious and outwardly good, but these actions do not flow from a true love of God and His glory; they flow from selfish, evil motives. To the unregenerate man, religion is something to make himself feel good; or to receive glory from other men. The author of Hebrews says that “without faith it is

¹¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 144.

¹² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 247.

¹³ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, [1932] 1979), 63.

impossible to please Him” (11:6). Paul says, “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). The proverb says that even “the plowing of the wicked [is] sin” (Prov. 21:4). True faith in Christ, which issues forth from a regenerate heart, is the foundation of genuine virtue. An act which is really good, but done in the service of self and Satan cannot please God. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:7-8). Paul describes unregenerate man as continually suppressing the truth about God and replacing it with various forms of idolatry in order to serve his own sinful lusts (Rom. 1:18-32). Man is born a covenant-breaker with an innate hostility toward Jehovah. Man has a heart that at every moment suppresses the true knowledge of God. Therefore, apart from a work of sovereign grace, men are destined for judgment and destruction. This is the pitch dark background that justifies the universal flood. Without this description of the greatness of human evil, God’s grace toward Noah could not be understood or appreciated as it should.

There are a number of implications and applications that come from this doctrine.

(1) The fact that all men, except Jesus Christ, are born depraved teaches us that the best form of civil government involves checks and balances which deny men the ability of a tyrannical rule. Our founding fathers understood this to a degree and thus counterbalanced the president with a house of representatives and a senate. In addition, in a Christian Commonwealth godly citizens would remove unbiblical, statist leaders through the vote. The most important thing it implies is the necessity of the rule of law over the President, Congress and Supreme Court. By the rule of law, we mean the inspired, infallible word of God as the sole standard above all. The only way to really restrain wickedness in society is to have rules that are absolute, unchangeable and transcendent. There must be laws that are nonnegotiable; that cannot be changed or removed. The moment men are allowed to create fiat or positivistic laws from their own imagination, no one is safe from arbitrary, tyrannical rule.

(2) The most important implication of this teaching is the doctrine of salvation by God’s sovereign grace. Men, on account of the fall, are born *without* the ability to do any spiritual good; savingly believe in Christ; or do anything that merits or contributes to salvation. “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). “There is none who seeks after God” (Rom. 3:11). “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). All men, apart from a work of grace, are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5); hate the truth, God and Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:19-21); dwell in darkness (Jn. 1:4-5); have a heart of stone (Ezek. 11:19); are helpless (Ezek. 16:4-6); cannot repent (Jer. 13:23); are slaves of Satan (Ac. 26:17-18); and cannot see or comprehend divine truth (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, the work of salvation must be attributed entirely to God and Jesus Christ. As Paul says, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8). This is a foundational truth of Christianity that must be vigorously defended against the heretical syncretistic systems of Roman Catholicism, Arminianism or semi-Pelagianism and the Federal Vision.

Because of the fall, no man has the ability to originate the love of God or Jesus in his heart. He cannot come to Christ because he hates Him and cannot genuinely believe in the truth. Because he is in bondage to his wicked heart, he cannot choose the truth or regenerate his evil nature. He is helpless and hopeless apart from a sovereign work of grace upon His heart by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, regeneration is a gift of God that logically precedes or is coterminous with the exercise of faith. It is for this reason, that the Bible (unlike modern evangelicalism) never attributes salvation to an act of the human will. “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy” (Rom. 9:16). “Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn. 1:13). “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (Jn. 15:16). Jesus said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:15). The dark picture of fallen mankind that Moses reveals to us should cause us to give God all the glory in our salvation. As Paul says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6-7). Therefore, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD” (1 Cor. 1:31).

God’s Inward Reaction

After we are given a description of what God saw, we are told what God thought about the situation: “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (v. 6). Here the narrator, using anthropomorphic language, describes God’s feelings regarding the horrible situation of mankind on the earth. The KJV “the LORD repented” is better translated “Yahweh regretted [*yinnāhem*] that He had made man.” When we speak of a man repenting or regretting something, we are noting a real change in a person’s attitude. But when such language is noted of God, who does not and cannot change,¹⁴ it refers to Jehovah’s reaction

¹⁴ Louis Berkhof gives an excellent orthodox Christian summary of the doctrine of God’s immutability. He writes, “The Immutability of God is a necessary concomitant of His aseity. It is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change, not only in His Being, but also in His perfections, and in His purposes and promises. In virtue of this attribute He is exalted above all becoming, and is free from all accession or diminution and from all growth or decay in His Being or perfections. His knowledge and plans, His moral principles and volitions remain forever the same. Even reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, since a change is either for better or for worse. But in God, as the absolute Perfection, improvement and deterioration are both equally impossible. This immutability of God is clearly taught in such passages of Scripture as Ex. 3:14; Ps. 102:26-28; Isa. 41:4; 48:12; Mal. 3:6; Rom. 1:23; Heb. 1:11, 12; Jas. 1:17. At the same time there are many passages of Scripture which seem to ascribe change to God. Did not He who dwelleth in eternity pass on to the creation of the world, become incarnate in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit take up His abode in the Church? Is He not represented as revealing and hiding Himself, as coming and going, as repenting and changing His intention, and as dealing differently with man before and after conversion? Cf. Ex. 32:10-14; Jonah 3:10; Prov. 11:20; 12:22; Ps. 18:26, 27. The objection here implied is based to a certain extent on misunderstanding. The divine immutability should not be understood as implying *immobility*, as if there were no movement in God. It is even customary in theology to speak of God as *actus purus*, a God who is always in action. The Bible teaches us that God enters into manifold relations with man and, as it were, lives their life with them. There is change round about Him, change in the relations of men to Him, but there is no change in His Being, His attributes, His purpose, His motives of action, or His promises. The purpose to create was eternal with Him, and there was no change in Him when this purpose was realized by a single eternal act of His will. The incarnation brought no change in the Being or perfections of God, nor in His purpose, for it was His eternal good pleasure to send the Son of His love into the world. And if Scripture speaks of His repenting, changing His

against sin that leads to action in history. (Note for example Numbers 23:19, “God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent”; cf. 1 Sam. 15:29.) Obviously God cannot repent or regret, for He is outside of time and is never taken by surprise by anything.

The same can be said for the second expression, “God grieved.” “The root *atsam* is used to express the most intense form of human emotion, a mixture of rage and bitter anguish. Dinah’s brothers felt this way after she was raped; so did Jonathan when he heard Saul planned to kill David; and David reacted similarly when he heard of Absalom’s death (34:7; 1 Sam. 20:34; 2 Sam. 19:3 [2]). A deserted wife feels this way (Isa. 54:6). The word is used of God’s feelings and only two other passages (Ps. 78:40; Isa. 63:10).”¹⁵ The first statement is an intellectual assessment which essentially says that if men are going to live such wicked lives and consequently are only good for destruction and hell, it would have been better if they never even existed. Jehovah created man upright with true knowledge, righteousness and holiness to exercise godly dominion over this earth. They were given amazing gifts in order to invent good things and do good works that would glorify God. But due to sin and depravity, mankind used their gifts only for sin and inventing new ways to rebel against God. Therefore, Jehovah must deal severely with mankind. He must completely destroy them and cast their unrepentant souls into the abyss of hell. The Lord speaks here in a manner that shows that destruction is His “strange work.” He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:32); but, due to His holy and righteous character, He must mete out a just recompense of reward on all those who mock His majestic holiness. The anthropomorphic expression of regret is designed to teach us that the same God who is loving, compassionate, merciful and gracious must destroy the wicked because He has no other choice. His nature and character require it. Those who do not repent and trust in Christ cannot expect any mercy or compassion from Jehovah on the day of judgment. The Lord speaks as if he would rather the earth had not been created, then that it should have to be so utterly destroyed to cleanse it of evil. In a similar manner, our Lord notes that Judas’ sin was so great (the implication here is that his judgment would fit the crime), that it would have been better if Judas had never been born: “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Mt. 26:24). The wrath of God is so severe that the Lord Himself, speaking after the manner of men, speaks with a note of reluctance at the awesome destruction He is about to unleash.

The second statement regards Jehovah’s feelings. He is deeply grieved in His heart at the state of mankind. “This language does not imply any passion or uneasiness in God (nothing can create disturbance to the Eternal Mind), but it expresses his just and holy displeasure against sin

intention, and altering His relation to sinners when they repented, we should remember that this is only an anthropopathic way of speaking. In reality the change is not in God, but in man and in man’s relations to God. It is important to maintain the immutability of God over against the Pelagian and Arminian doctrine that God is subject to change, not indeed in His Being, but in His knowledge and will, so that His decisions are to a great extent dependent on the actions of man; over against the pantheistic notion that God is an eternal becoming rather than an absolute Being, and that the unconscious Absolute is gradually developing into conscious personality in man; and over against the present tendency of some to speak of a finite, struggling, and gradually growing God” (*Systematic Theology*, 58-59).

¹⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 144-145.

and sinners, against sin as odious to his holiness and against sinners as obnoxious to his justice.”¹⁶ God’s nature reacts with a holy hatred against sin and thus Scripture presents Jehovah as “weighed down” by Israel’s sin (Amos 2:13), “burdened” by iniquity (Isa. 43:24), “crushed” by His people’s idolatry (Ezek. 6:9) and “grieved” by the covenant people’s hard hearts and rebellious behavior (Ps. 95:10). As David says, “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked everyday” (Ps. 7:11). “Because the wicked are always wicked and because God is always holy, therefore his relation to them is ever one of opposition, of threatening, of anger.... *Every day* is equivalent to *all the time, unceasingly*.”¹⁷ If the wicked do not repent and turn to Jesus Christ, Jehovah “will sharpen His sword” and bend His bow and make it ready to strike (Ps. 7:12). The Lord hates “all workers of iniquity,” He “abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man” (Ps. 5:5, 6). Sin is directly opposed to God’s infinite, eternal, unchangeable nature. “So repugnant to God’s nature is iniquity, that he would not save even his elect, except in a way that should fully and forever put away both the guilt and stain of sin.”¹⁸ Jehovah never overlooks or ignores sin but rather punishes it either in the judgment of the guilty sinner or in His only Son as a vicarious sacrifice.

It is important that we recognize Jehovah’s intense rage or bitter anguish against all sin for three reasons. First, it explains the temporal judgments in history and the final judgment at the end of history. God’s dealings with mankind are not arbitrary or capricious but fully just. They flow from who the Lord is. The sooner that men and nations recognize this fact, the better. No one will get away with rebellion against God’s law. When Jesus returns in a flaming fire, He will take vengeance on those who do not know God or obey His glorious gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Second, the gospel cannot be understood without an understanding of God’s righteous and holy nature that hates sin with a perfect hatred. The soul that sins must die (Ezek. 18:4). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Everyone who does not embrace Christ will “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess. 1:9). The reason that God’s Son had to assume a human nature in order to suffer and die a bloody death was to satisfy Jehovah’s justice against sin on behalf of the elect. As Paul says,

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law (Rom. 3:21-28).

¹⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:53.

¹⁷ William S. Plummer, *Psalms: A Critical and Expository Commentary with Doctrinal and Practical Remarks* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1867] 1975), 118.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 81.

Third, when we see how God hates sin and how our own sins grieve the Holy Spirit, we should hate sin as well. When the Christian looks at God's holiness and his own remaining sinful nature and sinful deeds, he will be humbled and shamed. He will continually look to Christ for progress in holiness and he will daily confess his many failures to live up to God's perfect law-word. As Calvin writes, "Meanwhile, unless we wish to provoke God, and to put him to grief, let us learn to abhor and to flee from sin. Moreover, this paternal goodness and tenderness ought, in no slight degree, to subdue in us the love of sin; since God, in order more effectively to pierce our hearts, clothes himself with our affections."¹⁹ A main lesson of the flood narrative is that unless people repent and turn to Christ, they will certainly be destroyed by God. Those who really believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior will turn away from their old life of self-centeredness, human autonomy and fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh. "Those who truly repent of sin will resolve, in the strength of God's grace, to mortify sin and to destroy it, and so to undo what they have done amiss [i.e. make restitution whenever possible]. We do but mock God in saying that we are sorry for our sin, and that it grieves us to the heart, if we continue to indulge it. In vain do we pretend a change of our mind if we do not evidence it by a change of our way."²⁰

What God Intends To Do

In verse 7 we are told Jehovah's decision to bring judgment upon the earth: "So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'" The verb translated "I will destroy" (*machah*) is best translated "I will wipe out." This verb is used instead of rubbing out or erasing names from records (e.g., Ex. 17:14; 32:32-33; the letters are washed off with water), washing plates (2 Kgs. 21:13) and washing curses off a scroll (Num. 5:23). Clearly, the word chosen is designed to call to mind the idea of washing the earth clean of sinners. In Scripture the washing with water is a symbol of the washing away of sins (Ac. 2:38; Col. 2:11) or the cleansing from defilement (Ezek. 36:25; Jn. 3:5; Tit. 3:5). Here it is wicked mankind that must be wiped off the face of the earth. They are judged by a deluge of water. Another great symbol of cleansing and purification, fire, will be used on the final day of judgment. Apart from Jesus Christ, men are viewed as filthy spots and blemishes that defile God's good earth. Someday, all unrepentant sinners will be cast into the lake of fire and the righteous will inherit the earth.

The judgment extends not only to man, but the animals as well: "beast, creeping thing and birds of the air." The terms used reflect the creation account (Gen. 1:20-25). These terms together with the expressions "I have created" and "I have made" present the flood as a kind of a reversal of creation. The various animals whom God has made must suffer as a result of man's sin. The coming catastrophe is comprehensive. There will be a total annihilation of every living creature, except those saved on the ark. The cleansing precedes a new beginning, a kind of re-creation. The mentioning of creation once again calls to mind the tragic fact that man has rebelled against the very purpose of his existence: to trust, love, serve and glorify God.

The mentioning of God as Creator also justifies the Lord's actions of destruction, for the giver of life is the sovereign over life and death. The One who created the earth, and all things in it, has the right to destroy the work of His own hands. Jehovah created man for godly dominion,

¹⁹ John Calvin, *Commentary upon the Book of Genesis*, 1:219.

²⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:53.

but mankind had apostatized and formed a satanic dominion. If many godly people were left on the earth, the Lord would not have destroyed it (see Gen. 18:22-32). But with only one believing family left, the destruction of the human race will help God's purpose of preparing the coming of the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent and achieve total victory over Satan, sin and death.

Noah Found Grace

In verse 8 there is a sudden turn in the narrative from judgment to grace: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." God's destruction of the earth will not be absolute or final, for through His unmerited favor unto Noah, the earth will have a new beginning. Before we look at how Jehovah favored Noah, it is important to clarify the meaning of the Hebrew phrase "Noah found grace." This topic is important because the expression "found grace" is often misunderstood to the effect that Noah did something that caused God to show him favor. In other words, God saved Noah and his family because Noah was a righteous man or Noah made himself acceptable to God through good works. Some translations even reflect this idea, such as the New English Bible which reads, "But Noah had won the LORD's favor." The application of this translation is that Noah's righteousness or blamelessness was the foundation or basis of his election. In opposition to such ideas, we should note the following.

First, when the Hebrew says Noah "found favor" or "grace," it does not imply self-effort or a favor earned. In everyday speech, it was a formal expression used when asking for an *undeserved* request from a superior. Jacob used it when seeking mercy from Esau (Gen. 33:8, 10). It was also used of a superior extending kindness to an inferior without status, as in the case of Potiphar and Joseph his slave (Gen. 39:4). It is used in prayers as an appeal to God's grace to grant a request (e.g., Ex. 33:12, 13, 16). In addition, the expression is used of Moses in Exodus 33:17 and is coupled with an expression of saving love: "I know you by name." "Though the word [*chen*] is often used of the favor one man enjoys in the sight of another, such favor, when it flows forth from God, is that unmerited, rich favor we are wont to call 'grace.'"²¹

Second, the interpretation that Noah *won* God's favor because he was righteous, fails to recognize that verse 8 precedes verse 9. God's grace is placed first in order to supply the rationale for Noah's personal righteousness or sanctification. The Lord's grace is never won but is always received as a gift. Only in this sense is it found. It is found because Jehovah placed it in our possession through the gift of regeneration.

Third, even if one interprets this "favor" as rooted in God's being pleased with Noah's continued separation from the world through personal sanctification or personal righteousness (e.g., see 7:1), the analogy of Scripture makes it perfectly clear that sanctification or personal holiness is *always* the result of God's sovereign grace. A personal walk with God only occurs as a result of regeneration and justification by faith alone. Thus, even if one holds this interpretation, the idea presented here would be that Jehovah, having regenerated and justified Noah, kept him unpolluted by the world through a work of His preserving spirit; so that he would not perish with the rest of the world.

The story of Noah and the Bible as a whole is one of God's grace. God's grace was manifested not only to Noah, his family and the animals on the ark, but also to all the elect, for

²¹ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 262.

God's judgment was not total so that Jesus Christ could be born to save multitudes of people from every nation.

The History of Noah and His Deliverance

This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third *decks*. And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every *sort* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them." Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did (Gen. 6:9-22).

Introduction

The sentence, "This is the generation of Noah," opens a new major section in the book of Genesis. The biblical history of heaven and earth (2:4) and Adam (5:1) now turns its attention to Noah. We must always remember that the story of the flood is really Noah's story. Bible scholars generally regard Genesis "6:5-8 as a preview to the whole story, the main emphasis of which is to let us see the major actor in this drama—Yahweh," with a quick look at the head of a new humanity and godly line, Noah.²² In 6:9 and following, the focus shifts to God's saving of Noah and through him the whole animal world. The narrative of the history of Noah contains three main elements: (1) through direct revelation, God saves Noah and his family by having him build and enter the ark (6:9-7:9); (2) God sends a global flood that destroys the whole world of unredeemed humanity and the animals not saved on the ark (7:10-24); (3) after the flood waters recede, God reestablishes the dominion mandate with Noah and makes a covenant promise never to destroy the earth with a flood ever again. In the first part of Noah's story, God focuses our attention on Noah's uniqueness and piety; His decision to destroy the world; and, His instructions for Noah's and the animal world's salvation.

²² See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 276.

Noah's Uniqueness and Piety

In a world of violence, godlessness and great corruption, Noah stands out as a bright light in a realm of darkness. Interestingly, his wife and children are not discussed at all. This likely reflects the Bible's view of covenant headship and that the fact that Noah personally is responsible to build the ark for himself, his family and the animal world. In the narrative, Noah is presented as both a second Adam (he becomes the new father of the whole human race and the dominion or cultural mandate is restated to him after the flood) and as a type of Christ. (The ark that Noah made was the only available means of salvation from God's judgment. If one did not trust in the preaching of Noah and enter the ark, one was doomed.) The inspired text tells us three things about Noah's uniqueness and piety.

First, he is described as a "righteous" (*tsaddiq*) man. Although the word "righteous" can be used in a legal or forensic sense of a person who has been justified by faith alone and declared righteous by God solely on account of the imputed righteousness of Christ, here the term is used in a relative sense of Noah's personal righteousness or the righteousness associated with sanctification. This view makes sense when we consider that: (1) his behavior is being contrasted with the corrupt violent behavior of the unsaved world of humanity around him (in other words, the context here is not legal but behavioral); (2) the second clause, "perfect in his generations" (or to paraphrase "upright among his contemporaries") which is complementary to the term righteous and also indicates a personal walk not a judicial declaration; (3) when the word righteous is not used in a legal context in the Old Testament, it is frequently contrasted with the term "wicked" which refers to people with a wicked lifestyle.

The Bible defines a righteous person as one who keeps the moral law of God habitually or as a way of life out of love and gratitude for salvation. "Ezekiel defines the righteous man as one 'who does what is lawful and right' and then goes on to give examples of sins he avoids and good acts he does, e.g., clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, 18:5-9. Ezekiel's definition seems to fit very well the many references to the righteous in the Psalms. Negatively, a righteous man avoids sin; positively, he does good to his neighbors."²³ Although Noah, as well as all men, have "the work of the law written on the heart" (Rom. 2:15), he also had a good amount of special revelation, to which he conformed his life. What is remarkable is that he maintained his dedication to God's law-word in a world that had completely abandoned any regard for Jehovah and His special revelation. Because God had given him a strong faith, Noah studiously clung to the inspired teachings handed down to him by the faithful line. He emphatically rejected the human autonomy, debauchery, selfishness, and lawlessness around him. It is likely that Noah was a hated man because of his godly behavior and his testimony to the truth of the coming judgment of God. While the text speaks of the righteousness of sanctification, the broader context of Scripture makes it perfectly clear that no one can be really righteous personally who is not first justified by faith in the promised seed (the Messiah to come). Noah was sanctified and had the right principles and actions because the Holy Spirit had circumcised his heart and drawn him to the future Savior.

Second, he is described as "perfect in his generations." The word translated "perfect" or "blameless" comes from a Hebrew root meaning "wholeness" or "completeness." The same word is used to describe sacrificial animals without spot or blemish (e.g., see Ex. 12:5; Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; etc.). Regarding sacrificial animals, it refers to the absence of any physical defects.

²³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 169-170.

With Noah (given the analogy of Scripture), the term cannot mean that he was free of all sin (e.g., see 1 Jn. 1:8; note also that Noah gets drunk in 9:21). It means that he had a lifestyle free of scandalous sin. He, in contrast to his contemporaries, was wholesome, upright, honest or morally sound. He followed God and lived an exemplary life. “According to Ps. 15:1-2, only the blameless may dwell in God’s holy hill. The blameless are characterized by their abstaining from iniquity (2 Sam. 22:24; Ezek. 28:15) and walking in the law of the LORD (Ps. 119:1). Job is described as being blameless (12:4...), And Abraham (Gen. 17:1) and all Israel (Deut. 18:13) were told to be blameless. Blamelessness is the prerequisite for close fellowship with God. Every Israelite was expected to be righteous.”²⁴ The teaching of Scripture from beginning to end is that people are saved in order to serve God by leading lives characterized by holiness and obedience. Justification is always accompanied by sanctification. It is a tragic fact of history that, of those called by the gospel who profess Christ, few remain faithful to this requirement of personal righteousness.

It is very important today, as our society progressively moves to a position of hostility to the Bible and lawlessness, that churches and believers maintain a strict adherence to the requirements of Scripture. There has been a tendency on the part of many churches to ignore or water down the teaching of God’s law in order to appeal to our unbelieving, hedonistic, rebellious culture. Noah remained faithful through successive generations of widespread wickedness and churches must do the same. Most have not. Noah’s faith in and love of the truth preserved him in obedience and faithfulness for over 500 years.

Third, we also read that “Noah walked with God.” In Hebrew the word order is inverted for emphasis, “with God did Noah walk.” This expression was used of Enoch (5:22, 24) who while still alive was taken up to heaven. A similar phrase “walked before God” is used of Abraham, Isaac and the godly kings of Judah (e.g., Gen. 17:1; 48:15; 2 Kgs. 20:3). To walk with God indicates agreement, right behavior and fellowship. Noah believed in God’s word and thus thought God’s thoughts after Him. He had a biblical world and life view that led to a righteous life and a blameless walk. His faith in the seed to come and God’s revelation caused him to walk or live his life in the continued presence of Jehovah. His life was determined by his personal relationship to the Almighty. He was a devout believer who had what the Puritans called an experimental religion. He lived his life as one in God’s presence; as one always under the watchful eye of the Lord; as a person who took great care not to offend Jehovah but to please and glorify Him in all things. His daily behavior reflected his love and commitment toward the Lord. The expression “walk with God” reminds us of the New Testament expression, “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16), which refers to a life lived under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit. If we are to “walk with God,” we must submit to Christ in our thinking, conversation and behavior. Like Noah, we must disregard what the world thinks and says and fix all our thoughts on God, and make Him the sole authority and focus of our lives.

God’s Decision to Destroy the Earth

After noting the grace-directed character of Noah, God describes the blackness of the rest of humanity and announces to Noah His intent to destroy all men with the earth: “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to

²⁴ *Ibid*, 170.

Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth’” (6:11-13). In verse 11 we have the analysis of the Spirit-inspired narrator, while verse 12 tells us God’s direct analysis. The construction “God looked...and indeed” or “God saw...and behold” is often used in Scripture to describe God assessing something before judgment. “‘Before God’ means ‘in the judgment of God.’”²⁵ In the reasons that the Lord gives as to why He will destroy the earth, the emphasis is on two related problems: widespread corruption and violence.

The key term in these verses is the adjective “corrupt,” which occurs three times to describe the earth and mankind. The word translated corrupt (*sāhat*) when used of a pot of clay (Jer. 18:4) or a garment (Jer. 13:7) has the sense of something spoiled or ruined. To a Hebrew, this passage would convey not simply corruption but a corruption that has brought ruin to the earth and mankind. The word “earth” is mentioned six times in these verses and, thus, God is emphasizing that man, through his sin, has brought evil and a curse for the pristine creation that He had made. Jehovah had created the earth and man for a specific purpose, but man had ruined that original purpose through wickedness. As an example of man’s corruption or ruin, God notes that “the earth was filled with violence.” God created man to fill the earth with godly dominion, but he instead filled it with violence. Violence is chosen as a sample of mankind’s wickedness because it is an obvious and extreme form of antisocial, unloving, oppressive and exploitive behavior. God intended a community of faith, love, kindness and brotherhood, but sin turned humanity into a warring community of hatred, chaos, anarchy, mistrust and greed. The blood of those murdered cried out from the earth for vengeance.

After God looks upon a ruined humanity and earth He says, “I will destroy them [‘all flesh’] with the earth” (v. 13). The verb “destroy” is another form of the verb “to ruin” used three times before. “To capture the consistency of word choice we may render the above as ‘*gone to ruin* was the earth...indeed, it had *gone to ruin*...all flesh had *ruined* its way...I will *ruin* them.’” The choice of the same word to describe both the earth’s condition and the intended action of God must be a deliberate. God’s decision to destroy what is virtually self-destroyed or self-destroying already.”²⁶ God destroys those who, through sin, destroy themselves and those around them. “The flood is described as ‘burning the earth’ which earlier has been said to have ruined itself. This is a clear case of the punishment fitting the crime, a favorite principle of biblical law; cf. 9:6; Exod. 21:23-25.”²⁷ Jehovah’s just judgment of the world is a divine completion of what autonomous man has already started. Unbelievers, who do *not* understand God’s judgment and think it unfair, are blind to the fact that sinful men bring wrath upon themselves by their own wickedness. If God did not judge such wickedness and ruin, He would not be holy or just and would not be worthy of supreme honor, praise and adoration.

The judgment to come is upon “all flesh.” Although in the prophets “all flesh” can refer specifically to human beings (e.g., Jer. 25:31), here it almost certainly includes both men and animals (cf. 6:19; 7:16; 8:17; 9:16). This interpretation is supported by Genesis 9:16 where God speaks of His covenant promise between Himself “and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth,” never again to destroy all flesh by a flood (cf. 9:11-15). It is also supported by verse 17 where “all flesh” includes everything upon the earth that has the breath of life. “The animals of the dry land perished as a result of man’s sin and God’s response in sending the great flood. As subordinate to man, the creation necessarily shares in some of the blessings and curses

²⁵ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 267.

²⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 278.

²⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 172.

brought upon man. This is basic to covenantal life: *subordinates participate in the successes and defeats of their superiors in much the same way that low-level military troops are victors, prisoners, or corpses, depending upon the decisions made by their superiors in the chain of command.* The fact that nature suffers because of man's rebellion is evidence of nature's subordinate position under man, and therefore evidence of man's position of dominion over nature."²⁸

The Ark Commissioned

Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third *decks*. And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every *sort* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them." Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did (Gen. 6:14-22).

After God announces His assessment of the earth and His irrevocable determination to end "all flesh" and bring "ruin" to the earth, He issues an imperative to Noah to make an ark. It is noteworthy that throughout this section there is no mention of Noah speaking or of a dialogue between Jehovah and His servant. God orders Noah to build a gigantic barge and Noah does not object or ask any questions, but simply follows the Lord's instructions. Noah is a man of faith who fully trusts in God's just reasons for judgment and the certainty of the promised wrath. Faith in Jehovah and Jesus Christ always involves a belief or strong trust in His word, and this faith always leads to decisive action or obedience.

The command is given to Noah alone and thus one man is responsible for securing the salvation of the elect line and restoring the animals to the whole earth. This fact is not a historical accident, but is intended by God as typifying the saving work of the One Mediator between God and man—the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as on the day of atonement the high priest could go into the most holy place to make atonement for the people (Lev. 16:17), redemption was accomplished by Christ alone, "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24); who "redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). "In full harmony then with the Leviticus 16 type, and in perfect accord with its fulfillment in our gracious Savior, we find that the record in Genesis reads as though Noah was alone in his task and received no assistance in the work of providing a refuge from the coming storm of Divine Wrath."²⁹

²⁸ Gary North, *Genesis: The Dominion Covenant*, 145.

²⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Chicago: Moody Press, [1922] 1950), 99.

The Ark's Design

The word “ark” (*tēba*) is found in the flood story and Exodus 2:3, 5, where it signifies the floating basket used to save Moses from Pharaoh. Like the ark, this basket of bulrushes is covered with asphalt to seal it from water. Most scholars believe that the Hebrew word was taken from the Egyptian word meaning chest, box or coffin. Our English word comes from the Latin *arca* which refers to a covered receptacle.

The ark is to be made of “gopher wood.” Since this word only occurs here in the Old Testament, scholars can only speculate as to what type of board was used. Some favor a resinous, water-resistant wood such as cypress or cedar, while others favor oak due to its strength. No one, however, really knows. The translators of the Greek Septuagint did not know and translated the word as “squared” timber.

The ark is to have compartments built for the animals. The word used (*qinnim*) refers to nests for birds. In a vast ship with so many different kinds of animals, some kind of segregation and confinement would be necessary both for the safety of the animals and the balancing of weight within the ark. Noah had to provide shelter and an orderly existence for an amazing variety of animals. Some scholars think that *qinnim* “nest,” should be re-vocalized as *qānim* meaning “reeds” and think that dried reeds were used to tie the ark together and were shoved into gaps and cracks before the pitch was applied.

The ark is to be covered inside and outside with pitch. The word “pitch” (*kopher*) is only found here in the Old Testament. Pitch or bitumen in the Mesopotamian region was a gooey tar from areas rich in petroleum. It would be applied or smeared on the surfaces with a brush, rendering them watertight. The beautiful pictures of the ark that Christians see in books are generally inaccurate. The ark was not an attractive boat, but rather was a crude coffin shaped structure that was nearly black because of the coat of pitch. It essentially was the color of asphalt.

The dimensions of the ark are given in the cubits. One cannot be sure of the exact size of the ark due to the fact that the Hebrews had two cubit measurements: a common cubit of 18 inches (roughly the length from a man's elbow to the tip of his fingers) and a longer cubit of around 20 inches. If we use a common cubit, the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high with a total volume of just over 150,000 cubic feet. If the longer cubit is used, the ark was 510 feet long. Even if we use the shorter cubit no sea vessel “would have exceeded the length of the ark until the Cunard Line built the *Euria* in 1884.”³⁰ The size was vast but the design was simple. This giant floating barge did not have to sail or maneuver. It only had to stay afloat for a long period of time. “Ancient ships had a ten to one ratio in length and width; this made them fast but unstable, easily capsized in a storm. In Columbus' day, the ratio was four to one, which increased safety but eliminated speed. The modern ratio, which gives the best advantages, is six to one [300 cubits to 50 cubits], like Noah's.”³¹

The ark is to have a *sōhar* meaning either a “roof” or a “skylight.” “Those who opt for ‘window’...do so on the basis of the word's possible connection with *sāhorayim*, ‘noon, midday,’ thus an opening to let in the light of day.”³² There also is an appeal to Genesis 8:6, which mentions Noah opening “the window of the ark which he had made.” In 8:6, however, the

³⁰ H. G. Vos, “Flood (Genesis)” in gen. ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:316.

³¹ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Genesis*, 67.

³² Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 282.

author uses the normal word for “window,” *hallon*. The window interpretation is held by most translations and older commentators. Most modern scholars favor the interpretation “roof” based on the Semitic cognates meaning “back” and the obscure remark, “And complete it to a cubit upwards.” This statement apparently means either complete the roof to leave a gap of one cubit between the edge of the roof and the outer walls of the ark or complete the roof so that the roof extends over the edge of the walls of the ark by one cubit.³³

The ark is to have a door on its side which would be high above the waterline. This door holds a significance in that: a) it will be mentioned in the narrative as the only means of entering and leaving the ark (once the door is closed, there is no hope of salvation for those outside the ark); b) it contains a symbolic lesson in that Jesus is the only door or way to salvation and the Father’s loving presence. The Savior said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved” (Jn. 10:9). “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6). Christ is the door through which we enter all the blessings of salvation and find rest for our sin-burdened souls. The day will come when this door will be shut forever and those who have not entered in will perish not in water, but must contend with a fake of fire. Let us all make sure that we do not stand outside the door, being preoccupied with the cares of this world. Let us rather enter in immediately and be saved.

Within the ark there are to be three floors or decks. “The word for ‘floors’ is not provided, and all we have in the text is ‘lower,’ ‘second,’ and ‘third.’”³⁴ The description of the ark is general and does not go into detail regarding ventilation, lighting, stairways or ramps. If a large area was open in the center of each deck, there would have been excellent lighting and ventilation for all the creatures on board. That careful provision was made for the animals’ food, health and comfort should be assumed.

In verses 19 through 20, the reason for the ark and the provisions is mentioned. God is not only going to save humanity through Noah but also the animal world. Noah is to bring into the ark two of every kind of animal on the earth. This does not mean that Noah had to round up the animals, for the end of verse 20 indicates that the animals “will come to you to keep them alive.” God supernaturally directed the animals to the ark, up the ramp and into their quarters. The listing of the animals reflects the creation account and moves from the general to the specific: “‘male and female’ (cf. 1:27); ‘according to their types’ (1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25). Note, too, the same sequence ‘birds,’ ‘land animals,’ ‘creeping things’ (1:20-24).”³⁵ The flood story is a kind of re-creation of the earth and typifies the regeneration of all things through Christ. Jesus’ redemptive work will eventually result in the abolition of the curse on planet earth and the whole animal world (Rom. 8:21). Our Lord came not only to redeem His people from sin and guilt; but also to reverse completely the effects of the fall on creation. On the final day when Jesus returns, not only will the redeemed receive resurrected glorified bodies, they will also receive a glorified earth. The animals had to suffer because of the sin of man and thus God used Noah as a kind of mediator of redemption unto them.

The idea (commonly espoused by secular humanists) that the biblical world and life view, in which man is to have dominion over the animals (and lower creation), leads to the ecological destruction of the earth and the progressive extinction of animals explicitly contradicts Scripture. Man is a protector and benefactor of the natural order. Men have dominion over it, not to abuse it, but to use it for to God’s glory and improve upon it. Men are “to prune it and care for it. The

³³ See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 173-174.

³⁴ G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, 1:163.

³⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 175.

earth is not supposed to run wild in terms of its own nature, any more than mankind is supposed to run wild in terms of man's fallen nature. Nature, like man, is to be governed lawfully. Nature must not be allowed to remain autonomous and idle forever; neither is it to be destroyed by men in *their* pretended autonomy. Responsible pruning must not become irresponsible destroying.³⁶ The idea that nature must be divinized and worshiped to be protected is heathen nonsense. The secular world and life view where the earth, men and animals are simply a cosmic accident, a result of matter plus time plus chance, does not give man a sound or genuine philosophical platform for ecology, for in a chance universe life has no meaning or purpose. The Bible-believing Christian has a solid foundation for ecology, in that God created the earth and gave it beauty and meaning. He created it not for an eventual extinction with a supernova but as the eternal home for His saints.

Modernists regard the flood story as either complete myth or as an embellishment of a local flood tale. People think it is simply impossible for a large barge to hold all the world's land animals. Studies by creationist scholars have demonstrated that the ark contained ample room for every species and for a great deal of food. Around 4,500 species of mammals and some 8,650 species of birds exist on the earth today.³⁷ In Noah's time, these numbers would have been considerably higher. If the ark contained 50,000 animals the size of a sheep, the ark would only be around one third full—if they were carefully organized. “It has been assumed that cages for small birds or mammals were stacked to make maximum use of deck space.”³⁸ There are many factors that we do not know. Did God fill the ark with young, smaller, adolescent animals? Were only certain parent types (dog, cat, horse, cow) admitted or also their more numerous closely related species? In any case, we can be absolutely sure that the story of Noah, the ark and a worldwide, universal flood actually occurred because it is taught in the infallible word of God. The Bible is just as inerrant and reliable when it comes to history, geography, or science as it is with doctrine or theology.

The Lord's Plan of Judgment

In the narration thus far, the coming judgment has been mentioned in general. God told Noah that the end of all flesh is before him and told him to build an ark. God now makes His intent perfectly clear to Noah: “And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die” (6:17). There are a number of things about this verse that merit our attention.

First, the personal pronoun “I Myself” is used to emphasize that God is the author of the flood. He determined that it would occur and He sovereignly brought it to pass. As David noted, “The LORD sat enthroned at the flood, and the LORD sits as King forever” (Ps. 29:10). All attempts to explain the flood as a natural event are futile and do not take into account God's special providence in bringing about this worldwide judgment. What modern people call “natural disasters” do not occur by chance and are due to sin and the fall and thus really are not natural. Calvin writes, “I make the rejoinder; that this entire narration of Moses, unless it were replete with miracles, would be cold, and trifling, and ridiculous. He, however, who will reflect aright upon the profound abyss of Divine omnipotence in this history, will rather sink in reverential

³⁶ Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis*, 147.

³⁷ See H. F. Vos, “Flood (Genesis)” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:317.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 2:316.

awe, than indulge in profane mockery.”³⁹ Our central concern in all that we do should be on what God thinks of it. Does He approve or disapprove? Does He hate it or smile upon it? God’s determination to judge sin, and His awesome power in carrying it out, ought to cause all of us to fear God and bow in obedience, worship and reverence before His resurrected Son.

The flood is one of only two events in the Old Testament that our Lord appealed to as examples of God’s judgment: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Lk. 17:26-30). Because men refuse to see the hand of God in history, the judgments of God are unexpected by those who most need to divine revelation. Because people are committed to a false world and life view and thus are full of intellectual pride and the arrogance of sin, they reject all biblical warnings to repent. They are not ready to die and face their Creator. God wanted Noah and us to have a personalistic concept of history and events. Such a view increases our faith and devotion, as well as self-examination.

Second, here God tells Noah that the instrument of judgment will be floodwaters. The word for flood (*mabbul*) is only used in Genesis 6 to 11 and Psalm 29:10. It probably comes from the word *yabal* which means to flow or bring forth. It is coupled with *mayim*, meaning waters. The flood that destroyed the earth was not a gentle affair, but involved great forces of flowing and churning water. Creationist scholars are correct in their contention that the vast majority of fossils (e.g., dinosaur bones, perfectly preserved leaf imprints, petrified trees, etc.) are a direct result of this devastating cataclysm. The theories of uniformitarianism and gradualism presupposed by unbelieving geologists over the past two centuries have led scientist into the arms of atheistic naturalism and Darwinism; both of which are heathen, unscientific and easy to disprove.

Third, the purpose of the flood is to kill everything on the earth: both man and beast. The expression “to ruin all flesh” (found in the warning of verse 13) is made brutally specific: “all flesh in which is the breath of life.” Following a Hebrew style of poetry, this thought is repeated in different language: “everything that is on the earth shall die.” The word for “died” (*gava*) is unusual and means “to expire” or “breathe out.” It can refer to the spirit leaving the body. It is the same word used to describe the death of the patriarchs (Gen. 25:8; 35:29; 49:33). In creation, God placed within man the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). In this judgment which is a kind of de-creation, He takes the breath of life away. Mankind had so blatantly and continuously violated God’s law that Jehovah imposes the death penalty on all mankind. Tragically, as subordinates to man, the animals will suffer death as well.

The Lord Confirms the Covenant

After God reveals to Noah His plan of destruction, He sets forth the positive side of His determination, which involves Noah and his household’s salvation: “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (v. 18). This is the first time in Scripture that the word “covenant” (*berith*) appears. A

³⁹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 1:257.

number of commentators connect this covenant with the covenant made with Noah and the animate creation in 9:9-17. This view is in error. God is saving Noah because he already is in a relationship with Him. The first part of this verse could be translated, "I will confirm My covenant with you."⁴⁰ The covenant with creation in 9:9-17 involves a promise never to destroy the earth with water and the sign of the covenant is the rainbow. It is a universal covenant that applies to the redeemed and non-redeemed; the elect and non-elect; the godly seed and the ungodly line. While it is certainly true that God will never again judge the earth with a universal flood, Jesus will return "in a flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8). God is saving Noah and his family because of the covenant of grace. Noah will not only repopulate the earth, but will produce the coming seed that will crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

This interpretation can be supported in a number of ways.

(1) The whole point of mentioning Noah being a righteous and upright man, in distinction from the rest of wicked humanity (see Gen. 6:8-9), was not to teach salvation by works but to tell us that Noah was a saved individual. He had faith in Jehovah and the seed to come and consequently he walked with God.

(2) Noah had to take seven each of every clean animal, a male and female on the ark (Gen. 7:2) in order to offer blood sacrifices. In fact, Noah's first act when he leaves the ark is to offer burnt offerings to the Lord (8:20). Noah's relationship with Jehovah was established by blood atonement. The burnt offering revealed the patriarch's faith in the perfect sacrifice to come (who would expiate sin and propitiate God's wrath) and his thanksgiving for a salvation achieved by God.⁴¹

(3) It does not make a lot of sense to say that God established a covenant with Noah, all humanity and every living creature on earth not to destroy them with water in an anticipatory manner before He annihilates the whole human race and all the animals with water. If we connect verse 18 to 9:11-17, then the gist of this verse would be: "I will establish my covenant with you at a later time, but for the present, you must go into the ark. Then later, after you have left the ark, we will get back to the terms of the covenant I am making with you."⁴²

(4) The covenant of grace is the fountain and foundation of all unmerited favors from God. While the covenant with earth in chapter 8 is indirectly related to the covenant of grace, in that the earth is preserved for the elect to be gathered and the earth to be re-created in Christ, the story of Noah is first and foremost a story of redemption. As Peter says, God "did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness; bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5). The covenant with Noah stands in stark contrast to what God will do with the ungodly (v. 17) and "all flesh." "He is the chosen recipient. This emphasis is brought by the double use of *with you* (*'ittāk*). The second one sounds almost redundant: 'you shall enter the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives *with you*.'

⁴⁰ See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 175.

⁴¹ After Noah's sacrifice and the smoke of the burnt offering ascends to God, He smells the soothing aroma and promises not to destroy the earth as He had done, even though mankind was still just as wicked as before in his nature and character (Gen. 9:20-22). Even though the sacrifice of Christ possesses no saving or spiritual benefits for the non-elect at all, the redemptive work of the Savior has indirect benefits. It is on account of the coming death of the seed that history must continue and not because unbelievers have reformed themselves and become more civilized. Jehovah's statement regarding the wickedness of the human heart is designed to show us that, without the soothing aroma of Christ's death, the world would be destroyed repeatedly. God's temporal mercies in history are the byproduct of His special grace towards the elect in history.

⁴² G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, 1:164-165.

This use of the resumptive pronoun establishes Noah as the person of supreme significance in this paragraph.⁴³

(5) We must keep in mind that it will take Noah 120 years to build the ark, during which he preached righteousness and the judgment to come. He, no doubt, faced great opposition, mockery and persecution. God confirmed the covenant with Noah in order to encourage him in this long period of work amidst opposition, in order to strengthen his faith in God's salvation through the coming seed. This covenant was not a mutual compact or agreement but a one-sided covenant (monopluric) in which God promises that He will save Noah. Noah was a special object of God's grace in both this temporal deliverance and his eternal deliverance in Christ. Although this covenant was one-sided, Noah was still expected to lay hold of the promise by faith and then live in terms of it.

The story of Noah cannot be understood without an understanding of the story of Christ. Apart from the biblical teaching on Jesus' redemptive work and the covenant of grace, the flood narrative becomes a mere moralistic lesson that reinforces man's legalistic tendencies. With the atonement of the coming seed front and center, we see that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8).

The Judgment of the Old World

And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in. And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that

⁴³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 283-284.

creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days (Gen. 7:1-24).

Introduction

Chapter 7 sets forth a new scene in the story of Noah. The command and instructions to build the ark have moved to the time to enter the ark. We are told that Noah completely obeyed God's command (6:22); but we are not specifically told how long it took him to build the massive barge or how he built it. It is seven days before the flood. The ark is completed, the massive provisions are ready; it is time to take refuge from the coming storm. There are a number of important things to note about this section.

First, Noah is commanded to enter the ark with his household seven days before the beginning of the deluge. The patriarch was not using the ark for personal lodging, for it was only to be used as a vessel of salvation. The call to enter was a call of grace and mercy. We are reminded that Noah was spared because he was a righteous man. He was a man who had faith in Jehovah and the seed to come and thus obeyed the revelation of God. "Those who keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity God will keep safe in times of common calamity; those that partake not with others in their sins shall not partake with them in their plagues; those that are better than others are, even in this life, safer than others, and it is better with them."⁴⁴ The blessings of obedience to God's moral law and the curses that come with a flagrant, habitual breaking of the law are built into the fabric of creation and flow from Jehovah's special providence *before* the Mosaic covenant.

In 1 Peter 3:20, we are told that eight persons entered the ark: Noah, his three sons, and their four wives. Note that, unlike the posterity of wicked Cain, the godly line at this time was still practicing monogamous marriage, not polygamy. This is further evidence that God later tolerated polygamy but did not approve of it. If polygamy were the biblical ideal, this would have been the time to put it to good use, for the whole earth was about to be depopulated. Among the godly, polygamy does not appear until Abraham and *it was not his idea*. His wife Sarai (later Sarah) suggested it because of her lack of faith in Jehovah's promise (Gen. 16:1-4). Not only did Sarah regret her decision (Gen. 16:4), but God, after the birth of Isaac, cast Hagar and Ishmael out of Abraham's household. By the time of the giving of the law, it was firmly entrenched among the Jews and God regulated it.

The number eight has typological significance, for eight is equivalent to the first day and a cycle of seven days and thus is used in Scripture to call to mind newness, re-creation, redemption, regeneration and rest. This point is demonstrated in that the eighth day (which is the first day of a new week) is the God-given day of circumcision (Gen. 17:12), the dedication of the firstborn (Ex. 22:30), the resurrection of Christ (Mt. 28:1-7) and the Christian Sabbath (Jn. 20:19-26; Ac. 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). It was also the day of cleansing from defilement (Lev. 14:10; 15:14, 29).

The flood and the salvation out of it is a type of Christ's re-creation of the world. Christ's work is presented in the prophets in dramatic cosmic terms like the flood narrative because the Bible teaches that sin and the curse have permeated the old creation, reducing it to chaos. In

⁴⁴ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:58.

poetic language, Jeremiah describes the old creation as rendered dark and chaotic because of sin: “I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form and void; and the heavens had no light” (4:23). Jesus brings a salvific work of re-creation of a new heaven and a new earth: “For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind” (Isa. 65:17).

Second, now that the entrance to the ark is imminent, Noah is told specifically to admit additional clean animals and birds. There are to be seven pairs (male and female) of land animals and seven pairs of birds. The purpose is made clear after the flood when Noah offers a burnt offering. Additional clean animals were needed because Old Testament worship involved approaching Jehovah through the sacrifice of clean animals. If Noah did not take along extra sacrificial animals, each would go extinct the moment one was offered to God. Noah and his family were shut up in the ark for 371 days. During that time, the Sabbath was observed and blood sacrifices were probably offered on a regular basis. “As a righteous and blameless man, Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean and the necessity of sacrifice.”⁴⁵ This knowledge goes all the way back to Abel (Gen. 4:4) and even Adam (Gen. 3:21). The sacrificial system set up in Leviticus is merely an organization and expansion of a very old practice of the people of God. The verbal revelations of God were enscripturated and expanded at Sinai.

Third, the mentioning of a final seven days is significant. This was not merely a time to settle himself, his family and all the creatures in the ark, but also was the final week of the old world. It was the last call to repentance before the door of the ark would be closed. God gave the people of the old world one final Sabbath to turn from their ways unto Him. God’s knowledge that men will not repent does not alter His acts of patience and long-suffering toward those made in His image.

The Nature of the Flood

In verse 4, Noah is told by God that He will cause it to rain on the earth. Then, in verses 10 to 12, Moses gives us additional details as to the cause of the flood: “And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.” The expression “windows of heaven” (*hassā-mayim*) refers to the waters from above which fell in the form of an exceptionally heavy rain. “The word for ‘rain’ is a stronger word than used in 7:4. It actually means a ‘deluge.’”⁴⁶ It (*gesem*) “is ‘commonly used of the heavy winter rain’” and “signifies abnormal rainfall.”⁴⁷ It could probably be compared to an extremely severe downpour from a large thunderstorm or even worse. When the narrative says that “the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” it indicates that water gushed out of the subterranean oceans. (The verb *bāqa* appears fifty-one times in the OT, with the meaning ‘to break into something,’ ‘to break out of something,’ or ‘to break something’ ...”⁴⁸ The contention of modern creation scientists that great earthquakes and volcanic activity accompanied the flood is almost certainly correct. The flood was a massive cataclysmic event. The fact that God brought waters from above and below recalls the original creation of the

⁴⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 177.

⁴⁶ G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, 1:171.

⁴⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 181.

⁴⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 292.

waters (Gen. 1:7) and thus presents the flood as a kind of de-creation into chaos and destruction. The story is scientifically sound in that, in order to cover the largest mountains, rain would not have been enough.

The account says that it poured for forty days and nights until all the mountains were covered: “Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose above the earth. The water prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered” (vs. 17-20). These verses are intended to reveal the salvation and safety of the ark and the universal nature of the flood. The number forty often has symbolic significance in Scripture. “It was frequently used as the approximate time span of a generation and to designate an extended period of testing, repentance, vigil, or punishment. It is associated with important new developments in the unfolding drama of redemption (e.g., the Flood, the Exodus, Elijah and the prophetic era, the life of Christ, and the birth of the church).”⁴⁹

People are taught in our day that the story of the flood is absurd and impossible. Modernist churchmen take great delight in mocking this narrative as a primitive myth that only fools would believe. In order to counter such wicked unbelieving scoffers we need to make a few observations.

(1) A literal interpretation of the flood account can only lead one to the conclusion that the flood was definitely universal or worldwide. This point is proved by the following: a) The ark was at least fifteen cubits (22 feet) above the Ararat Mountains for over a whole year. Today the tallest of these mountains is around 17,000 feet high. Since gravity forces water to seek its own level, there is no way to restrict the flood to the area of Mesopotamia where the Middle East. b) Genesis 7:19 notes that “all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.” The word translated “hills” (*har*) in Hebrew means “mountains” or “hills” depending on the context. Here it should be translated “mountains.” The expression “the whole heaven” means what it says. c) The purpose of the flood was to destroy the entire antediluvian population. Since this population was likely dispersed widely, a local flood would not have accomplished this purpose. d) The massive size of the ark with three whole levels would have been completely unnecessary if the flood was local. In addition, all people, animals and birds could have simply migrated to new areas outside the flood zone, making a massive ark completely unnecessary. e) The length of the time on the ark before dry land emerged (371 darks), together with the fact that birds could not even find dry land, proves a local flood was out of the question. f) The apostle Peter, writing under divine inspiration (2 Pet. 3:5-6), accepted the universal flood; and used it as proof that men who scoffed at the teaching of Christ’s second coming to judge the world were fools. Jesus Himself, who was fully God and could not make mistakes, took the flood story literally (e.g., see Mt. 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26-27). g) The covenant with Noah immediately after the flood, in which God promises never again to destroy “the earth” or “all flesh” with water (Gen. 9:11), is clearly universal and would not be appropriate at all following a local flood. h) The flood had to be universal in order to uphold the integrity of the typology of the ark as symbolizing salvation through Christ alone. People either are saved by faith in Christ or they will perish in their sins and be cast into the lake of fire. Jesus came to this earth to save the whole world, not just people in Palestine or Mesopotamia.

⁴⁹ S. Barabas, “Forty,” in gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 76), 2:602.

(2) Those that look for reasons to reject the flood narrative as myth, legend or fiction do so standing on the *presupposition* that the Bible is not the inspired infallible word of God but only a creation of fallible, uninspired men. This assumption places a filter of unbelief on their analytical, reasoning and empirical abilities that causes them to reject the clear and abundant evidence of the universal flood in the biblical record as well as the amazing historical and archaeological evidence collected by creation scientists. Paul says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 2:16-17). If a person does not believe in the God of the Bible, who created the universe in six days, he cannot be expected to believe that the Lord could easily bring forth such a massive flood; could direct the animals of the ark; preserve marine life through the deluge and retract the waters after a time, all through sovereign acts of divine miraculous power. One needs the truth in order to believe and one must believe in order to know the truth. People do not reject the great truths of the Bible for a lack of evidence. They reject God’s word because they are wedded to their sin and are unwilling to part from their false, idolatrous worldviews. Men love darkness and therefore refuse to acknowledge the light. Modern unbelieving (naturalistic) science is only a sophisticated, modern sounding form of mythology and paganism.

Duration of the Flood

The beginning of the flood is dated according to Noah’s life. It began in the six hundredth year of his life, in the second month on the seventeenth day of the month (v. 11). “The fullness and precision of the dates in the flood narrative are astonishing (7:12, 17, 24; 8:3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14); only Ezekiel in dating his prophecies (e.g., 1:1; 3:16, etc.) approaches Gen. 7-8 in this regard.”⁵⁰ God carefully notes the time of the flood not only because He wants us to take this narrative seriously as real history, but also because this is such a crucial event in the history of redemption. The flood is the great dividing wall between two epochs in history. After the flood begins there are 40 days of heavy rain. One can assume that this period also includes a continuous release of the waters from the subterranean oceans. During this time, the tallest mountains are covered and all life is extinguished. The mountains become the measuring stick for the flood because the water is so deep (well over 3 miles at a minimum) that the mountains are the only available standard of measurement. Then, in verse 24, we are told, “The waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.” This description “functions as a kind of ironic ‘tranquil conclusion’” to the 40 days of destructive chaos.⁵¹ They tell us the length of time that the waters maintained a complete dominion over the earth. The waters do not begin to recede until 8:3. Expositors are divided over whether or not one should consider the 40 days and nights (7:4, 12, 17) as part of the 150 days or whether the 150 days of prevailing follows the 40 days. While a casual reading of the text makes it sound as though the 150 days follow upon the 40 (equaling 190 days), 8:3-4 seems to rule out such an interpretation. These verses say the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat in the seventh month, the 17th day of the month. The awe-inspiring picture of the waters covering the entire earth ought to bring to our minds the power of God and His hatred of sin. “We see water everywhere, as though the world had reverted to its primeval state at the dawn of Creation, when the waters of the deep submerged everything.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 179.

⁵¹ C Kessler, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 13; as quoted in Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 298.

⁵² Cassuto, 297; as quoted in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 183.

In 8:3, the waters begin to recede; then, in the seventh month, the ark comes to rest (likely on the tallest peak) in the Ararat mountains. Then, after three more months, the waters decreased to the point where the tops of the surrounding mountains can be seen. “Ararat is the Hebrew term for Urartu, a kingdom north of Assyria (2 Kgs. 19:37; Isa. 37:38; Jer. 51:27) later called Armenia, now part of eastern Turkey, southern Russia, and northwestern Iran. Various mountains in Armenia have been identified with the one on which the ark landed.”⁵³ Most modern scholars believe it was the tallest mountain, Mount Ararat (16,946 feet). For centuries, the locals have called Mount Ararat “the mountain of Noah.” Mount Ararat makes the most sense when we consider the fact that it took three months for the surrounding lower peaks to appear. Several expeditions have been taken to Mount Ararat since the 1950s (1952, 1955, 1969, 1974, etc.) with little to no results. The most promising was a French expedition, which in 1955 extracted a section of wood from a large wooden structure under the ice at the 13,500 level. “This was subjected to a variety of tests, such as lignite formation and fossilization, and was determined to be oak, hand tooled and partially fossilized, about 5000 years old. When carbon-14 tests were made, they dated the wood to the 8th century A.D.”⁵⁴

In 8:6, after 40 days, Noah opens a window in the ark (here the normal word for window [*challon*] is used) and sends out a raven to see if there is enough dry land to leave the ark. Some scholars think that the window may have been built into the roof structure which did not give Noah a complete view of the surrounding area. A much more likely explanation for sending birds is that, “the ark was lodged on a mountain peak which was part of a vast and rugged mountain range. From this vantage point Noah probably was not able to see what conditions were on the lower plains. He was literally surrounded by mountains.”⁵⁵ Generally speaking, ancient men were farmers or ranchers who lived on the plain so they could grow grain and raise sheep, goats and cattle. Noah would like to leave the ark, but wanted to make sure that conditions were safe for his family and the animals. The raven is a large, black, unclean bird (Lev. 11:15; Deut. 14:14) with high intelligence for a feathered vertebrate. It does not find dry land but decides not to return to Noah and its cage. The raven could feast on carrion or the carcasses of dead animals and apparently did not need the food on the ark. We know that it survived, for if it did not there would be no ravens today. It flew back and forth and perched either on the ark itself or a mountain peak. Then Noah chooses a very different bird—a dove, which is a white clean animal often used in sacrifice (e.g., Lev. 1:14; 12:6; etc.). The patriarch had seven pairs of doves and could take a risk on one not returning. The dove is sent out three times, with a week in between each mission. On the first, the dove returns because conditions are still not fit for even a seed-eating bird. With nowhere to go, the dove returns to the hand of Noah and is put back with the other doves (8:9). After seven days, the dove is sent out again and this time returns with a freshly plucked olive leaf (8:10-11). The fact that the leaf was fresh indicates that this was a living tree revived with fresh foliage after the flood. (That God supernaturally preserved plant life during the long period when water covered the earth must be assumed, for too much water will kill most plants and no sunlight for an extended period will eventually kill all plant life.) The olive tree is a plant that does not live on tall mountains, for it cannot survive the cold or the high altitudes. Noah, therefore, understood that the water level had dropped considerably. Each experiment yielded additional information. The fact that this dove returned is a sign to Noah that conditions

⁵³ Ibid, 185.

⁵⁴ H. F. Vos, “Flood (Genesis)” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:319.

⁵⁵ G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis*, 1:177.

are not yet ready for all the animals to depart. Therefore, he waits one more week and sets a dove free again. This time the dove does not return.

It is interesting that up to the time that Noah entered the ark, God communicated to him with direct revelations. He was told about the reason for the flood. He was ordered to build the ark and told the design of it. He was told when it was time to enter the ark and the destruction of the earth was described to him. But once the door of the ark is closed, direct communication ceases until Noah leaves the ark and God makes a covenant with him (8:15). The man who had repeatedly received direct revelations from God was dependent upon a dove to learn when it was safe to leave the ark. “The Creator speaks to Noah, but so does the creature. Moses receives direct revelations from God, but it is his father-in-law who gives him the information about the best and most efficient way to administer judicial matters (Exod. 18). Joshua receives a direct promise from God that he will be given all the land (Josh. 1), yet he still sends spies to reconnoiter Jericho and then to report back to him (Josh. 2).”⁵⁶ God revealed His plan of salvation to Noah. He took the initiative. Noah believed God; entered the ark; then waited patiently for the full deliverance that he knew would come.

In verses 13 and 14, the narrator tells us exactly when the flood came to a complete end: “And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried.” These verses use two different verbs to emphasize that the flood has ended. Verse 13 uses *hārab* which means that something is “free of moisture.” Verse 14 uses *yābas* which means the complete absence of water. It is the verb form of the noun *yabbāsa* used in Genesis 1 to describe the “dry land” separated from the waters. Moses is calling to mind the original creation. God has now reversed the destruction and watery chaos of the flood with a kind of new creation. “A new world is born from the watery grave of the old; a new era has begun.”⁵⁷

These verses give us what is needed for a detailed chronology of the flood:

Flood begins (7:11): 17th day/2nd month/600th year of Noah
Flood has gone (8:14): 27th day/2nd month/601st year of Noah⁵⁸

The flood lasted 11 days longer than the lunar calendar (354 days) which was used by the Jews and thus exactly equaled the solar year (365 days) which we use today. While the text tells us nothing significant about the beginning and ending dates, the fact that the period of judgment was exactly one year emphasized God’s special providence. He determined a specific period of judgment.

The Purpose of the Flood

The purpose of the flood was twofold. It brought judgment, death and destruction upon the unbelieving wicked members of planet earth. It also was a time of salvation and deliverance for those who believed in God and His word and thus were righteous.

⁵⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: 1-17*, 303.

⁵⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 187.

⁵⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: 1-17*, 305.

The purpose of judgment is brought out in 7:20, 21-23: “The waters prevailed.... And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive.” There is nothing in this description about drowning even though that is the manner in which life perished. The focus is on death (the fact that everything “died” or “expired” is emphasized) and destruction (the emphasis here is on the fact that *God destroyed* every creature and all mankind). The phraseology records the perfect fulfillment of the judgment that Jehovah had foretold.

No person will understand the flood or the purpose of Christ’s death who does not understand God’s extreme hatred of sin. His whole being reacts with indignation against it because He is holy, righteous and just. “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness” (Hab. 1:13). “He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offense to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice.”⁵⁹ That is why God cannot tolerate or overlook sin. As David said, “You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:4-5). The judgment of the flood teaches us a solemn, terrifying truth. Jehovah has a thorough hatred of men who commit sin and thus he has committed Himself to their destruction. The flood tells us that to be hated by God is a dreadful thing. It is terrifying for unrepentant sinners to fall into the hands of an angry God. All men who do not embrace Christ shall have their portion in the lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone.

The reason for this severe punishment is simple. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). “The soul that sins must die” (Ezek. 18:4, 20). The people who perished in the waters of the flood deserved to die because they were guilty of sin. They perished in the flood because they did not see themselves as God saw them. They were unwilling to assess their own lives and behavior by examining themselves in the light of God’s moral law. They measured themselves by their own standard of righteousness and thus saw no need to fear a coming flood. They were just like most Americans today who wink at sin and treat it as a light thing. If one asked most Americans if they believe they are going to heaven if they would answer, “Yes, I am a good person. I’m not a murderer or terrorist or a criminal.” Most people do not understand that God requires moral perfection. He expects a full obedience to the moral law in thought, word and deed. Any act, even acts that are morally good on the surface, that are *not* done because of one’s faith in Christ or for the glory of God are sinful and completely unacceptable to God.

When you see yourself in the reflection of God’s holy law, then you will understand that you need the ark; you desperately need the salvation that only Jesus Christ can provide. Look at the people in Noah’s generation. They did everything they could to save themselves. Some climbed up on their roofs. Others scrambled to the tops of trees. Some even fled to the tops of hills and mountains. They thought that their efforts could save them. But the waters kept rising. They were filled with terror as the waters approached them. As the water grew closer and the waves began to break upon them, imagine their thoughts. Many had heard Noah’s preaching. They had watched the ark being built. But they mocked the patriarch’s message. Now as death drew near, they knew that everything he said was true; but it was too late. The door of the ark was closed. The time of salvation had passed. God has shut the door and no one but God could

⁵⁹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 4:1357.

open it. “Our Savior tells us that till the very day that the flood came they were *eating and drinking* (Luke xvii.26, 27); they were drowned in security and sensuality before they were drowned in those waters, crying *peace peace*, to themselves, deaf and blind to all divine warnings.”⁶⁰ It will be the same when Christ returns again to judge the living and the dead. Those who believed in Christ will be declared righteous by God because Jesus’ blood washed away their sin and His perfect righteousness was imputed to them. But those who refused to trust Christ and follow Him, because they lived for self, will be damned to eternal destruction.

Consider for a moment this incredible judgment. It is not as terrifying as the final judgment when Jesus returns in flaming fire to execute vengeance on His enemies. Let our hearts meditate on the terror of not knowing Christ when He returns. The sin of sinners will be their eternal ruin without a redeemer. Now is the time to look to Jesus and His death and resurrection before it is too late. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:14-15). “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

This section of Scripture not only emphasizes death, but also destruction. The judgment of the flood points to the destruction of eternal torment. Hell is a place of eternal destruction. “The Lord Jesus [shall be] revealed from heaven with His mighty Angels, in a flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The terror of the flood for Noah’s generation lasted only days but the destruction of hell is never-ending. One can hope and pray that the Bible really teaches annihilationism; that, at the final judgment, evil men are simply burned up and go out of existence. But the terrifying fact is that those who reject the gospel and refuse to repent of their wickedness will be banished forever to a place of torment and suffering. A place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched (Mk. 9:49); where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mt. 13:40-42). Of those people who “set their minds on earthly things,” who therefore are “the enemies of the cross of Christ,” God warns that “their end is destruction” (Phil. 3:18-19). Unbelievers are the “vessels of wrath made for destruction” (Rom. 9:22).

Note that, like the flood narrative, Paul teaches that one must believe the truths of the gospel in order to obey the requirements of salvation broadly considered. Faith must issue forth into obedience and a changed life. Faith in Christ is crucial, for the punishment of the wicked will be destruction from God, not of one’s being or existence, but of one’s happiness, contentment, bliss, pleasure and joy. The destruction attends, Jesus said, to both body and soul in hell. “They shall always be dying, and yet never die. Their misery will run parallel with the line of eternity. The chains of darkness are everlasting chains, and the fire is everlasting fire. It must needs be so, since the punishment is inflicted by an eternal God, fastening upon an immortal soul, set out of reach of divine mercy and grace.”⁶¹ The door to the ark of God—Jesus Christ—will forever be closed at death. Are you ready to meet God?

The story of the flood emphasizes death and destruction because God’s judgment highlights the salvation and deliverance that He provides for His people; for those who regard all their own works as filthy rags and place all their hope and trust in Christ. We have already seen that the ark is a type of Christ and His perfect redemption. As there was only one ark and one

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 1:63.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 6:795.

door into the ark, there is only one way to heaven. If you believe in Jesus Christ (as He is revealed in the Scriptures), the wrath of God against your sins (the same wrath against iniquity that destroyed the human race in Noah's day) is placed on the Son of God on the cross. As Paul says, "Christ redeemed us from the curse [i.e. the full penalty for sin and rebellion that we deserved], having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). "But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:8-9). "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The story of the flood is the story of the gospel. Everyone who is guilty of sin deserves to die and go to hell because of their guilt, but Jesus paid the price in full. If you believe in Him, His righteousness is reckoned to your account before God judicially and thus you are regarded as sinless and you possess everlasting life. On the day of judgment, God does not see your mountain of filth and guilt. He only sees the perfect righteousness of His dear Son.

The story of the flood is not only a glorious picture of Jesus dying, suffering and bleeding for sinners; it also speaks of the Savior's glorious resurrection. The eight persons were shut up in an ark, just as our Redeemer was shut up in a tomb. After Noah's time in the ark, God opened the door and those eight souls walked out as a new humanity into a kind of new creation. Because our Lord's vicarious suffering achieved a perfect redemption, and was fully accepted by the Father, death and the grave could not hold Him. He walked out of the tomb victorious over Satan, sin and death. He exited the grave as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), who hold the keys of death and hell (Rev. 1:18) and who rules the whole creation at the right hand of God. His redemptive work is the foundation and fountain of a new redeemed humanity. He rode the waves and billows of God's wrath as the divine judgment burst upon Him during His suffering on the cross to emerge victorious on the third day. With this thought on our minds, we should note an interesting fact regarding the flood that is not an accident. William Lincoln writes, "There seems no reason to doubt that the day the ark rested on the mountain of Ararat is identical with the day on which the Lord rose from the dead. It rested 'on the *seventeenth day* of the seventh month.' But by the commandment of the Lord, given at the time of the institution of the feast of the Passover, the seventh month was changed into the first month. Then three days after the Passover, which was on the *fourteenth day* of the month, the Lord, having passed quite through the waters of judgment, stood in resurrection in the midst of His disciples, saying, 'Peace be unto you.' They, as well as Himself, had reached the haven of everlasting rest."⁶²

When we look at the story of Noah and the flood, we see clearly that the Bible is not a book of cleverly devised legends or myths but is the very word of God: inspired and infallible. We believe in it and look to it, for it reveals to us the words of life and the will of Jehovah—the true and living God. It points us from beginning to end to Jesus Christ, the divine-human Mediator. It is time to meditate on the judgment of God and His glorious deliverance of His people, for there are only two outcomes in history. One can reject Christ and serve self and be consumed by the wrath of a just and holy God; or, one can believe in Jesus and receive forgiveness, eternal life and the bliss of God's presence forever. If you have not embraced Christ, then you need to pray after this manner: "Lord, I acknowledge my sin and guilt before you. There is nothing that I can do, or have done, which measures up to the standard of your holy law. Therefore, I place all of my faith in Jesus the Messiah who was fully God and fully man; who suffered and died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day."

⁶² William Lincoln; as quoted in Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Chicago: Moody, 1922, 1950), 108-109.

God's Covenant with Noah and All Flesh

And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month*, the first *day* of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried. Then God spoke to Noah, saying, "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that *is* with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark. Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it." Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: "And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said: "This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth." And God said to Noah, "This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth" (Gen. 8:13-22; 9:1-17).

Introduction

After the great flood that destroyed mankind and all living things upon the earth, we are told of a new beginning for humanity and creation. The earth was now dry and the time for Noah and the animals to leave the ark has come. It is noteworthy that, just as God told Noah when to enter the ark, He also gives the order as to when it was appropriate to leave. This fact emphasizes both the sovereignty of God in redemption (i.e. salvation is something that God accomplishes) and Noah's faith in Jehovah and His word. The patriarch waits patiently for the Lord to speak

and tell him that it is safe to leave the ark. Noah already had a twofold empirical witness that the flood was over, in that the dove did not return and he looked and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. But, he did not depart until God ordered him to go. Noah walked with the Lord because he listened to what God said and followed it.⁶³ When the patriarch's family (and in them the human race) and the whole animal creation is at stake, he subordinates his own empirical observations to the revealed will of God. This is evidence that what is called natural theology must never be conducted *independently* of special revelation. Written revelation must be the lens by which we study the natural realm. Those who use natural revelation *independently* of Scripture have more often than not ended up coming to conclusions that are contrary to the Bible. Although we do not receive direct communications from God today, nevertheless, when we are not sure what we ought to do, we should study Scripture and pray until we can act with the assurance of faith, for whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

In this post-flood narrative, there are a number of things emphasized by the Holy Spirit. Let us consider each in turn for our own edification.

First, God is very specific in His instructions about the release of the animals and its purpose. All the creatures (the passenger list is extensive) are to be "brought forth" in an orderly manner. The purpose (like in the original creation narrative [1:20, 22]) is so that they can be fruitful and multiply on the earth. Before the flood, the creatures had multiplied exceedingly, but now that the earth has been swept clean of all flesh, they must repopulate. The wide open spaces full of food would have made this task easy. The ark served to renovate the whole earth. "The commands given originally just to the fish and the birds (1:20, 22) are here extended to all the land animals, one of the many hints in this story that the post-flood era represents the start of a new creation."⁶⁴

Second, the first thing that Noah does after leaving the ark and standing on dry ground is to approach Jehovah in worship through a burnt offering. This is the first time in Scripture that we read of a man building an altar. (Genesis 4 does not mention an altar, but it is likely that Abel used his father's family altar.) Noah picked up stones and formed a pile upon which to arrange wood and burn up the animals. The passage notes that only clean animals were used, indicating that, from the beginning, God revealed that only clean domesticated animals were to be used in sacrifice (cf. Lev. 11; Deut. 14). The fact that God required only clean animals from the fall to the death of Christ indicates that the typology of Jesus as an innocent, sinless sacrificial victim is upheld through the whole Old Testament. Noah acknowledges that the shedding of blood of the

⁶³ Calvin's comments on this verse are outstanding. He writes, "All ought indeed, spontaneously, to consider how great must have been the fortitude of the man, who, after the incredible weariness of a whole year, when the deluge has ceased, and new life has shone forth, does not yet move a foot out of his sepulchre, without the command of God. Thus we see, that, by a continual course of faith, the holy man was obedient to God; because, at God's command, he entered the ark, and there remained until God opened the way for his egress; and because he chose rather to lie in a tainted atmosphere than to breathe the free air, until he should feel assured that his removal would be pleasing to God. Even in minute affairs, Scripture commends to us this self-government, that we should attempt nothing but with an approving conscience. How much less is the rashness of men to be endured in religious matters, if, without taking counsel of God, they permit themselves to act as they please. It is not indeed to be expected that God will every moment pronounce, by special oracles, what is necessary to be done; yet it becomes us to hearken attentively to his voice, in order to be certainly persuaded that we undertake nothing but what is in accordance with his word. The spirit of prudence, and of counsel, is also to be sought; of which he never leaves those destitute, who are docile and obedient to his commands. In this sense, Moses relates that Noah went out of the ark as soon as he, relying on the oracle of God, was aware that a new habitation was given him in the earth" (*Commentary Upon the Book of Genesis*, 1:280).

⁶⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 187.

coming Seed is the sole source of cleansing (expiation), propitiation and reconciliation. Moreover, he understands that thanksgiving to God for his deliverance is also through the coming Redeemer. This offering makes it perfectly clear that the patriarch understood that his deliverance was on account of grace alone and not because of his personal righteousness or good works.

The narrative says that Noah offered a burnt offering: “the commonest and most basic sacrifice prescribed in the law.”⁶⁵ In the law, the animals offered were bulls, sheep, goats and even pigeons and turtledoves. A man would press his hand on the animals had before cutting its throat and spilling its blood. This symbolically represented the imputation of a person’s guilt due to sin to the sacrificial victim. It is important to recognize that Noah was not merely making a thanksgiving offering. He was acknowledging that he was guilty of violating God’s standard of righteousness and that he deserved to die because of his sin. He was, by faith, acknowledging that he needed a vicarious sacrifice in order to have a relationship with God. He understood that God put him in the ark because He had pardoned his sins through the Seed to come. The burnt offering was accepted as enduring in his place the punishment that he deserved. It was typical and pointed his faith to the true, real, perfect, sufficient, non-repeatable atonement made by Christ when He offered Himself on the cross.

The offerer would cut the throat of the animal and drain out its blood. As the animal died, some of the blood would be collected in a bowl and this blood would be splashed against the sides of the altar. In Leviticus 17:11, we learn why the blood of a clean animal was used: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” The blood is the essence of life of the sacrificial victim. So when the blood is ritually offered to God, it is a sign that the spotless animal had been slain.

The Old Testament (from the fall onward) is filled with blood sacrifices. The spilling, splashing or sprinkling and presentation of blood was the way Old Covenant believers expressed their faith in the Seed to come. The blood symbolized the sacrificial death and suffering of the Messiah. The apostles recognized this and thus repeatedly brought the terminology of blood sacrifice to our attention. John says that the blood of Christ “cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7); that our sins are washed away and thus we are set free by His blood” (Rev. 1:5; 7:14). Paul says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). Jesus has “made peace through the blood of the cross” (Col. 1:20). Peter speaks of Christians having their sins cleansed and forgiven by saying that the blood of Christ was sprinkled upon them (1 Pet. 1:2); that they were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19). In Romans 3:25, Paul says that Jesus’ blood propitiates (i.e. appeases and eliminates) God’s wrath. The author of Hebrews says that the blood of bulls and goats cannot really forgive sin (Heb. 10:4), but that Christ offered Himself and redeemed His people by His own death (Heb. 9:24-28; 10:10-21).

In the bloody crucifixion of Jesus we see the anti-type of all the Old Testament sacrifices. The Savior died a slow, agonizing death where His blood was poured out of His body. He endured intense suffering in body and soul and was separated from the loving fellowship of the Father. All the torments of hell that we deserved for our sin were burned out on Christ as He hung on the cross. He became a curse for us so that we do not have to endure the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). Your only hope of having the guilt of your sins removed (expiation) and God’s just wrath against your

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 189.

iniquities eliminated (propitiation) is to acknowledge and confess your sins and place all of your faith in Christ's suffering, bleeding and dying for sinners.

After Noah killed the animals, they had to be skinned and cut into pieces in order to be placed upon the wood and fully consumed by fire. This bloody butchering of the clean animals symbolized the incredible suffering Jesus endured on the day He was crucified. The scourging that tore apart His flesh, the pounding of the spikes through His wrists and feet and the crown of thorns reveal the slashing sword of the wrath of Almighty God who figuratively cuts His Son, the spotless Lamb, asunder.

Then, after the animals are properly butchered, they are consumed by fire on the altar. The use of fire calls to mind God's holiness and His judgment of sin. Repeatedly in Scripture, Jehovah is referred to as a "consuming fire" as an implied threat in contexts that call for the avoidance of sin and disobedience (e.g., see Deut. 4:24—keeping the covenant and avoiding idolatry; Heb. 12:29—the call to obey and revere God) as well as judgment on the wicked (e.g., see Deut. 9:3 where Jehovah goes before Israel as a consuming fire to judge and destroy the wicked Canaanite nations). When God first spoke to Moses, He spoke to him from a burning bush (Ex. 3:2ff). When Jehovah gave Israel the moral law, He did so from the midst of fire (Deut. 5:24; 9:10). The people were terrified that this great fire would consume them (Deut. 5:25). When God led the people out of Egypt, He protected and led them as a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:22). Elijah refer to Jehovah as "the God who answers by fire" (1 Kgs. 18:24). Jehovah is the true and living God who must be feared because of His awesome holiness. This is the One who consumes sacrifices on His altar.

The choice of fire for theophanies and threats of judgment points to God's absolute moral purity, righteousness and justice—connected to His infinite power. The God of Scripture is so holy and righteous that "He will by no means clear the guilty," unless first a complete satisfaction is rendered to His broken law and perfect holiness. He shows Himself as "a consuming fire" in various severe judgments in history, but especially in the fact that He punished His only begotten Son in the place of His people. "He shows Himself 'a consuming fire' in punishing with particular severity those who neglect and despise the revelation of grace.... The Gospel despiser, the impenitent apostate, will find that there is no wrath like the wrath of condemned, abused mercy and that it is indeed 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'"⁶⁶

With this connection in Scripture between fire and God's holiness, we should not be surprised to find that fire is the dominant biblical symbol of judgment. God rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah out of the heavens (Gen. 19:24). Jehovah sent hail mingled with fire upon Egypt (Ex. 9:24). When Nadab and Abihu offered profane fire (i.e. unauthorized fire not taken from the altar) before Jehovah, "fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev. 10:2). God's explanation of this judgment to Moses and Aaron is noteworthy, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy" (Lev. 10:3). In Joshua 7 those who transgressed the covenant, by taking valuable items from Jericho that had been placed under the ban (i.e. a special curse from Jehovah; cities placed under the ban had to be utterly destroyed and *burned with fire* [cf. Josh. 6:17, 24]) were to be stoned to death and then *burned with fire* (cf. Josh. 7:15, 24-25). When the enemies of God and his prophet approached Elijah he prayed, "And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty [soldiers]" (2 Kgs. 1:10, 12). After God spoke to Judah and Jerusalem of the reasons for their doom, He concluded saying, "Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have

⁶⁶ John Brown, *Hebrews* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1862] 1962), 670.

consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads” (Ezek. 22:31). When our Lord returns, He does so “with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:7-8). The wicked are gathered up on the day of judgment and are cast “into the furnace of fire” (Mt. 13:40-42). “They are to be tormented with fire and brimstone... And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10). The destiny of those who do not believe in Jesus is “hell fire” (Mt. 5:22; 18:9; Mk. 9:47) or “the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10, 14; 21:8). This fire will not be quenched (Mk. 9:46, 48). “As a fire consumes combustible matter cast into it, so God will destroy sinners.”⁶⁷

That the burning of the sacrifice symbolizes God’s wrath upon Christ instead of the offerer, who is sinful and guilty, is supported by the examples where God Himself consumed the sacrifice. When David was commanded to offer burnt offerings to avert the wrath he had brought on the nation by the census, God “answered him by fire upon the altar of burning” (1 Chron. 21:26). This signified “that God’s anger was turned away from him, the fire that might justly have fastened upon the sinner fastened upon the sacrifice and consumed that; and upon this, the destroying sword was returned to its sheath.”⁶⁸ After the temple was completed and Solomon dedicated the temple, the priest brought burnt offerings and sacrifices and when “Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (2 Chron. 7:1). The Shekinah glory of God’s special presence filled the temple after the sacrifice was consumed. Similarly, when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal, “the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice” (1 Kgs. 18:38). God only propitiates His wrath and reconciles with men on His altar. If men do not offer the appropriate sacrifice with faith, God will consume them with holy fire from His presence forever.

When we think of the clean animal, skinned, flayed and burning on the altar, we must think upon Christ who was stripped naked, tortured and crucified. All of our sin and guilt was, as it were, *burned out* and eliminated as Jesus suffered, bled out and died on the cross. The curse, judgment and wrath of God that should have *consumed* us, because of our sins, was placed upon Him. The soul that had perfectly obeyed the Father and dwelt in perfect communion with Him became an offering for sin and thus felt the fire of divine wrath. The burnt offering on the altar shows the complete doom of Jesus as a sacrifice for sin. His blood is poured out and the flame of divine wrath consumes Him. The full suffering of hell fire that His people deserved was endured by Him in the space of only a few hours. God’s awful curse against sin, as it were, turned His beautiful, spotless Son into ashes and the dust of death. “Christ’s whole manhood, body and soul was placed on the altar, in the fire, and endured the wrath of God.”⁶⁹

The ritual burning would produce large amounts of fragrant smoke. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for a whole burnt offering (*ōla*) comes from the verb *āla* meaning “to ascend” referring to the smoke ascending heavenward. The smoke that ascends is a “pleasing” (Heb. *rēah*) and “pleasant” aroma to the Lord. The word “pleasant” in Hebrew (*nuah*) comes from a root meaning “to rest.” The idea expressed here in anthropomorphic terms is that, as the offering in its entirety ascended to God, He acknowledged the expiatory sacrifice and His anger toward sin was appeased or propitiated. The whole animal is slaughtered, butchered and burned up, symbolizing the complete consecration of Jesus in His human nature to His work of atonement.

⁶⁷ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), 1102-1103.

⁶⁸ Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, [1846] 1972), 20.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Noah's sacrifice focused Jehovah's attention on the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ—His only begotten Son. The types have real meaning and significance because of their connection to the future reality and substance, the sacrificial death of the Savior. Paul says, "Christ...has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma" (Eph. 5:2).

The smoke ascends and soothes God's anger, teaching us that, in Christ's sacrifice, God's righteousness, justice and holiness is fully satisfied because His suffering and death fulfilled divine justice. Jehovah receives the completed sacrifice and thus His fierce wrath is calmed and put to rest. The sacrifice removes the guilt and penalty of sin (expiation) and thus God's fury at His broken law is removed (propitiation); and, consequently Jehovah has a joyful communion and fellowship with the believing sinner (reconciliation). The Father is well pleased with the sacrificial death of His Son and thus believers are justified and adopted into His own family. God can only find rest and satisfaction in the work of Christ. Therefore, our only hope of salvation is to look to Jesus who offered Himself to God as a sweet smelling savor for us. If we place our faith in Him alone, we will stand in the full measure of His acceptance. It is noteworthy that God's acceptance of the vicarious sacrifice of His son was demonstrated by Jesus' resurrection and ascension into glory. The glorification of Christ proved that God has made the suffering, humble Nazarene both Lord and Christ (Ac. 2:36).

The sacrifice of Noah immediately upon leaving the ark teaches us something very important about this scene of re-creation and the reinstatement of the dominion mandate (9:1ff). The new creation and the cultural mandate are allowed to continue only based upon the covenant of grace and the shed blood of the Mediator. In the original creation, man had to trust God; but as a sinless, rational creature he was under a covenant of works and was not dependent upon the shed blood of a clean sacrifice. But as a result of the fall, man had forfeited the blessing of a godly dominion as Jehovah's vice-regent on earth. The condition of the earth before the flood (apart from Noah) with its universal unbelief, wickedness and violence emphasized the fact that man was a failure and a rebel who deserved nothing but death and judgment. Noah's sacrifice in this context reveals that those aspects of the original creation covenant that continue after the fall do so only because of God's grace and mercy in Christ.

The Covenant of Preservation

This brings us to the covenant with Noah and the whole creation: "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done'" (Gen. 8:20-21).

Noah's sacrifice moves the Lord to make a crucial determination within Himself. There can be no question that God's resolve never again to destroy the earth with water flows directly from the smelling of the soothing aroma of the sacrifice. This observation raises the question: what is the connection between the future sacrifice of Christ and Jehovah's determination to preserve the earth? From the analogy of Scripture, we know that Noah's sacrifice did not apply *directly* to mankind in general, for the word of God emphatically rejects the idea of a universal atonement directed to all men without exception. The Bible is very clear in its declarations that Jesus died only for "His people" (Mt. 1:21), "the sheep" (Jn. 10:11, 14-16, 26-29), the "church"

(1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Eph. 5:25; Ac. 20:28; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Jn. 1:7; 4:9-10; Rev. 5:9), the “elect” (Rom. 8:32-35) or the “many” (Mt. 26:28; Heb. 9:28). He died for people of every tribe, nation or language but did not die for everyone in the world *without exception*. If He did, the Bible would teach universalism and the flood would have never even taken place. Moreover, our Lord did not die for the animal creation in any direct way; for animals are not rational creatures and they are not made in God’s image.

Consequently, the covenant of preservation must be seen as fulfilling God’s purposes in redeeming a people for Himself through Christ in history. This consideration of the covenant as an indirect benefit of particular grace can be seen in the following observations. First, the story of Noah focuses our attention on the particularity of God’s redemptive grace. The whole world was full of wickedness and violence, “but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). In a whole world of unbelieving, evil humanity, God directed his special grace toward one man and his household. When Noah offered a burnt offering to the Lord, he did so on behalf of himself and his family. The ritual was efficacious only because Noah had faith in the Seed to come. A sacrificial ritual without believing the truth does not pacify an angry God.

Second, in God’s revelation to Hosea, He expresses Himself in language similar to the language of the covenant of preservation in relation to His deliverance of Israel:

In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord. “It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer,” says the Lord; “I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, ‘You are My people!’ And they shall say, ‘You are my God!’” (Hos. 2:18-23).

The redemptive dealing with God’s people will lead to a covenant with creation. The sustaining of all God’s creatures by the grace of the Noahic covenant results in the continuance of a godly line that gives the world the Messiah. The New Covenant in turn brings redemption not only to God’s people but to the animal creation. The covenant of preservation points us to the ultimate accomplishment and victory of the covenant of grace. “The covenant with Noah binds together God’s purposes in creation with his purposes in redemption. Noah, his seed, and all creation benefit from this gracious relationship.”⁷⁰

Third, the design of preservation in this context indicates that a merciful, gracious promise not to destroy it was necessary due to man’s continued wickedness. Jehovah promises not to destroy the whole earth in this manner even though “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (v. 21). The wickedness of mankind that resulted in the flood continues after the flood because, without a work of the Holy Spirit, men are still totally depraved from birth. If God was going to give men what they deserved, the progressive unfolding of the covenant of grace could not continue in history, for the earth would receive one hammer blow of judgment after another. But, for the sake of the blood sacrifice that set Christ crucified before the eyes of Jehovah, the world must be preserved. “God understands that the sin-problem never will be

⁷⁰ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 111.

cured by judgment and curse. If appropriate relief from sin's corruption is to appear, the earth must be preserved free of devastating judgments such as the flood for a time."⁷¹

If the covenant of preservation is not seen as necessary to fulfilling the covenant of grace; or, the preservation of all life as a necessary condition for the saving of the elect and the whole created order through Christ, then the covenant with Noah makes no sense. Some commentators take the position that God was frustrated because even though He destroyed the human race, He realized that the flood did not change man. They were just as evil as before. Thus God makes this covenant because He saw that the flood was useless in the long term for really cleaning up the earth's depravity. This view is totally unscriptural and sees God as blundering and incompetent. The point of the flood was to show the Lord's attitude toward sin; His ability to execute a universal judgment when He desired; and His particular grace to the believing godly line, to all future generations. Such an awesome, horrifying catastrophe as the universal flood ought to forever shake the confidence of sinful men in the idea that nature (in an autonomous manner) by itself is sovereign, orderly, and could be trusted to continue in the future as it always had in the past. The flood destroyed the presupposition of autonomous sinful man's faith in the uniformity of nature; that divine judgment cannot intervene in nature or human affairs. This was a very potent message that continued on (albeit in a greatly corrupted form) in many ancient civilizations.

With all this in mind, we can see that the covenant of preservation is essentially a promise of regularity and predictability in the natural realm. The negative side of the promise is that never again will God curse the ground with such a universal judgment that destroys everything. The positive side of the promise is a basic uniformity in the natural realm that is designed to sustain human and animal life: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease" (v. 22). As long as the earth exists (or literally, "all the days of the earth"), Jehovah will maintain day and night and the seasons of the year so that the earth will be productive and provide food for man.

This teaching that God sovereignly controls every aspect of the creation for man and beast totally contradicts the pagan worldview of the ancient world, which taught that man had to do certain ritual acts to appease the gods because the gods controlled the seasons. The fertility cults believed that the gods could be manipulated through magic, ritual and works. It also completely contradicts the modern world and life view that nature is self-regulating and autonomous; that it can be trusted to continue on forever as it has in the past. The fact that the universe stands and the earth is not destroyed by a meteorite tomorrow is the result of God's controlling providence. The reality that some catastrophe will not cause all mankind and the animals to starve to death or die of some new disease is based on God's absolute control of all things. We must attribute the stability of the creation, the seasons, the rain and sunshine, the growth of plant life all to God Almighty and His undeserved kindness on this wicked world. When we see that God's promises to all the creatures are held fast in perpetuity, we can rest assured that His promises to believers will most certainly come to pass. To hold that things came about and continue as a result of chance is not only irrational but an insult to Him who upholds "all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3).

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 114.

The Renewal of the Dominion Mandate

After God sets forth the covenant of preservation, He has a message of blessing for Noah and his family: “So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’” (Gen. 9:1). It is interesting that God does not pronounce His blessing upon Noah until His work of salvation is over and the time to repopulate the earth has come. This fits into the pattern of a re-creation for godly dominion, in that the only blessing before this is upon Adam and Eve in the day that God created them (cf. 1:28; 5:2). When God “blesses,” He does not merely desire someone’s good but imparts something good. The essence of the blessing is found in the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Noah and his seed were saved for the purpose of propagating the godly line and filling the earth with people who will serve God. The divine command to Adam is restated but now it is done next to an altar covered by the ashes of a burnt sacrifice. What God told Adam to do will be accomplished through Noah because of Christ.

It is noteworthy that the restatement of the original command to Adam to have dominion over the creatures of the earth is given in different terms to Noah as a result of the fall: “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat the flesh with its life, that is, its blood” (vs. 2-4). Before the fall, men were to have dominion over the lower creatures but this did not involve the power to kill animals for food. After the fall, physical death is a reality for all creatures and now after the flood God permits men to kill and eat flesh as long as the blood is properly drained. The fall has resulted in an animosity between man and the animal world. Some commentators believe that God has placed a fear of man in animals to protect man after the flood. This view seems to be contradicted by the fact that in areas discovered where man had never lived or hunted, animals do not exhibit a fear of man. Moreover, animals can be trained and taught to regard man as friend instead of foe. It is likely that the fact that man’s dominion now involves killing animals for food teaches animals to fear man and regard him as an enemy. Interestingly, the expression “the fear and dread of you” is the same terminology used to describe the terror people have of powerful invading armies (cf. Deut. 1:21; 11:25; 31:8).

Before the fall, man’s dominion over the creatures was mild, friendly and harmonious. Animals could be used for plowing, travel and the making of textiles, but death and the terror of being hunted or killed was not part of the picture. But after the fall, when the harmony of nature is disturbed and thus crops can fail, scarcity can occur and various animals can turn on man, his dominion is to reflect to a degree this harsh new reality. His loving care over the lower creation must still exist but now he can use violence to take control and provide for his family. Although sacrifices in burnt offerings have taken place among the godly since the fall, this is the first time in history that God permits man to eat meat. Men have greatly abused this right to kill animals in history and continue to do so until this day (e.g., the ivory trade; the killing of tigers for superstitious medical practices; the wanton destruction of habitats for no good reason; the killing of animals not for food but for sport; etc.). Christians must avoid the pagan, vegetarian-animal worship, left wing, concept of the lower creation, while at the same time showing a love, concern and care for the animals under their rule. The fact that man is still lord over the lower creation is a result of the covenant of grace and the mediation of Christ (Ps. 8; Heb. 2). When Jesus returns and re-creates the heavens and the earth, completely reversing the effects of the fall on planet

earth, the harmonious relationship between man and the animals and between each species of animals that existed before the fall will return.

After the flood, God not only informs Noah of a new aspect of dominion over the creatures, but reveals a new power over man himself. This is the power of the sword or the institution of the death penalty for murder: “Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it” (Gen. 9:5-7). Before the flood, the world was filled with violence and murder. Jehovah thus makes provision to restrain that violence in the new creation by the establishment of an absolutely inviolable law regarding unlawful bloodshed. Murder was always unlawful and merited death; but, due to the fall, man needs a *special revelation* from God to make this point clear. God not only sets forth the requirement of the death penalty but gives the reason as well. This direct revelation from Jehovah, which is given in the context of a blessing to Noah and His family, proves the judicial laws and appropriate punishments cannot be determined from natural law. God does not leave the determining of the proper penalty for murder for man to discover for himself. He tells man precisely what to do. Biblical law comes from God. The laws of the heathen nations were often unjust and were always state-centered. The laws that Jehovah reveals to us are always just and God-centered. God’s law is different from humanistic law, in that it has reasons and motivations in it. Humanistic law is arbitrary, changing and local, while God’s law is absolute, unchanging and universal.

The command applies to animals (“from the hand of every beast I will require it”), who do not have a rational sense of right and wrong. The law of Moses elaborates on this principle in Exodus 21:28-29: “If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.” The fact that wild beasts are held accountable for taking human life even though animals are not rational creatures and many animals after the fall are wild carnivores that kill as a result of post-fall natural urges, the execution of the guilty animal is nonnegotiable. This fact indicates that when it comes to first or second degree murder circumstances such as age, mental state or “insanity” are not to be considered when determining the penalty. The guilty animal or human must die.

Human beings are given the freedom to kill animals in order to use their meat for food as long as the blood is properly drained. Animals are lesser creatures, that are not rational, are not given the same freedom with regard to human beings. The word of God places a sharp demarcation between man, who is made in His image, and the animal world which is not. The Bible emphatically repudiates new age mysticism or Hindu thought, which teaches that all creatures are part of God and all are intrinsically sacred. The strict vegetarianism of eastern thought is based on a pagan worldview. It also repudiates secular humanism or Darwinian philosophy which simply places man on a greater scale of being or a higher level of evolution than the animals. Such thinking places man in the animal realm and makes all the animals man’s relatives. It inevitably leads either to the exaltation of the animals and views akin to Eastern mysticism; or, it leads to the degradation of man as simply a sophisticated beast that can be manipulated, abused and even killed by the state if necessary. We must remember that virtually

all of the mass murderers of the twentieth century were fanatical and dedicated evolutionists (Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, etc.). “One of the illusions of the twentieth century held by many has been the idea that humane actions could exist without Christianity. With the Ten Commandments barred from state schools, the schools have been producing a generation of lawless youth. Murders have become commonplace.”⁷²

The requirement of the death penalty for murder is based on the biblical assumption that all physical life comes from a direct creation by God. Consequently, all life receives its meaning and purpose from Him. The creation is His work and it belongs to Him; not man, not the animals and not the state. The life of man is precious in God’s sight because man was made in His image. The secular humanistic idea that man’s life is intrinsically sacred as the pinnacle of evolution is irrational and idolatrous. Given these biblical realities, man has no right to kill another human being without proper biblical justification from God. Anyone who kills another man unlawfully will be accountable to God for his actions. “Life is created by God, and can be assailed or taken only on God’s terms. The terms of life are established by God. God as the giver of all establishes the laws of all of life, and for all things else. Hence, every aspect of this law is a religious duty. Both the giving and the taking of life are aspects of man’s religious duty. This means that a man must not only avoid committing murder, and seek the apprehension of a murderer, but he must also seek the death penalty.”⁷³

Modern Western nations have rejected the word of God and have adopted macro-evolutionary theory as a fact. Therefore, they have essentially adopted atheism as their worldview and regard the penalty for murder as purely arbitrary, as something that men can decide for themselves. Consequently, since the Second World War virtually all Western nations have abolished the death penalty and replaced it with prison sentences with parole or life in prison. Many states within America still have the death penalty on their books, but the penalty is rarely applied. (Most people would be shocked if they knew the number of murderers who were paroled and then committed more murders.) These policies reflect the rejection of God’s word and the absurdity and wickedness of unbelief. They are an explicit mockery of Jehovah and His law-word and will certainly result not only in many more murders in our society, but also the outpouring of God’s wrath upon our rebellious culture. Our land is defiled, for the blood of those murdered cries out from the ground for justice because there is no civil justice. For this unrequited blood, God will exact vengeance upon our whole culture.

The passage notes that capital punishment applies not only to guilty animals but also men who murder other men. God, in the flood, directed and executed judgment and death upon mankind because of their widespread violence and murder. Now He proceeds to set forth a law designed to restrain that violence and thus temper His judgments in history. Before the fall, there was no need of civil government and the rule in the earth was in families. This pattern continued after the fall, but this family authority was ineffective in restraining violence in the earth. Not only did family government not express the coercion and external threat necessary to restrain the wicked; but, after the fall, most families have not been objective when it comes to the misbehavior and crimes of their own children. The flood was, in part, a result of this lack of effectiveness. Consequently, after the flood, God makes explicit provision for a sterner rule with more effective punishments to restrain external violence. From the analogy of Scripture, we know that the power of the sword was given into the hand of the civil magistrate. The command to Noah is the great charter of all civil authorities.

⁷² Rousas John Rushdoony, *Genesis*, 78.

⁷³ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 221.

The statement, “At the hand of every man’s brother,” probably emphasizes the wickedness of homicide in that, since all men are created by God and descended from Adam and Noah, all men are “made of one blood” (Ac. 17:26), and have one Father or Creator–God (Mal. 2:10). For this reason, we find Scripture referring to men who are not related, who are even strangers as “brothers” (Gen. 29:4; cf. Lev. 19:17; 25:14; 26:37). “Not the animal, but man is the brother, the relative, of man.”⁷⁴ Humanity, from the perspective of the creation and re-creation narrative, is a family, a brotherhood. Interestingly, this is the first time the word “brother” has been used since the Cain and Abel narrative (cf. 4:8-11). It is likely that the word “brother” is used to call to mind the treachery of Cain’s action in spilling blood and thus highlight Jehovah’s hatred of murder.

The concise poetic formulation, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed” reveals the *lex talionis* (“But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” [Ex. 21:23-25]). “The penalty must be commensurate with the crime. A life taken demands the taking of another life.”⁷⁵

Because murder removes a person from the realm of the living permanently, there can be no monetary substitution or remission of the penalty under any circumstances. A monetary payment does not render justice or benefit someone who is dead. Consequently, in the law of Moses, the sentence of death is the only permissible penalty. In Exodus 21:12 we read, “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.” This first deals with intentional homicide (or what we call first or second degree murder). If someone is killed in an unintentional or accidental manner (e.g., an ax head flies off a defective handle and strikes someone on the head), the person who committed the accident can flee to a city of refuge and remain alive (cf. Num. 35:11-15). But if violence is purposely used against another and he or she dies, *no exception to death can be made*. One’s status, class, gender, age or mental state makes no difference; the murderer must die. The Hebrew “shall surely be put to death” is emphatic. Similarly, in Numbers the law says, “Moreover you shall take no ransom [i.e. a monetary payment] for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death” (35:31). If payment was accepted for homicide, then the rich would be able to get away with murder; but, since no payment can be accepted, both rich and poor who commit murder must die. This penalty is the only way that the shed blood would not continue to cry out for justice (Deut. 19:13). In Leviticus, the death penalty is stated again: “Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death” (24:17). In many ancient societies, the death penalty did not apply if one killed a foreigner or a slave. Biblical law does not allow such an injustice.

Given the clear and abundant testimony of Scripture on the death penalty, it is disturbing when Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders argue for mercy and leniency for murderers on death row because of some supposed special circumstance. We should not be surprised that Romanists and Protestant liberals are against the death penalty, because they despise God’s word. Romanists have rejected it for their human traditions and modernists have repudiated it for secular humanism and higher criticism. It is surprising when evangelicals who claim to believe in the inspiration and authority of Scripture treat these inspired commands as optional. Rushdoony has noted that contempt for the death penalty as set forth in God’s word is also contempt for the cross of Christ, “which sets forth the necessity of the death penalty in the sight of God.... The basic principle of the death penalty was undergirded and set forth by Christ’s

⁷⁴ Gispén, 1:295; as quoted in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 193.

⁷⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 315.

atoning death, which made clear that the penalty for man's treason to God and departure from God's law is death without remission. The blood of the altar and the fact of the altar are thus a declaration of the necessity of capital punishment. To oppose capital punishment as prescribed by God's law is thus to oppose the cross of Christ and to deny the validity of the altar."⁷⁶

The reason given by God is that man is created in God's image. Man's life has value because it is a reflection in finite form of Jehovah. The person who takes a man's life takes something exceptionally valuable. He that murders another man destroys God's image and thus insults Jehovah who made man. The crime is so great that such a criminal forfeits his own right to live. There can be no adequate restitution for the deliberate taking of another life other than capital punishment. We must always remember that "God is the Fountain and Author of *life*—no creature can give life to another: an archangel cannot give life to an angel—an angel cannot give life to a man—man cannot give life even to the meanest of the brute creation. As God alone gives life, so He alone has a right to take it away: and he who, without the authority of God takes away life, is properly a *murderer*."⁷⁷

Any state that applies the death penalty to areas outside of crimes that God has specified, or that removes the death penalty from areas to which God has applied it, is essentially proclaiming its own divinity. Scripture on this matter is clear. Capital punishment is by the express command of God and thus when lawgivers push it aside for life imprisonment or even worse prison with parole, they deny biblical justice and mock both God and man who is made in God's image. Our culture's refusal to execute murderers, even in cases where the evidence against the criminal is overwhelming, is evidence of a society that has rejected God and the Bible for human autonomy in ethics and civil justice. In our system, the rights of the victims are largely ignored in favor of the so-called rights of the murderer. This is done in the name of humanity and is regarded as compassionate. But, in reality, it is cruel to society and especially to victims' families who do not receive proper justice and proper closure. The argument that is often used for this practice that life in prison is worse than death presupposes an atheistic worldview in which death ends it all. The Christian worldview teaches us that murder is so reprehensible that the murderer is to be killed immediately after a fair trial and turned directly over to God for punishment. Hell is far worse than life in prison. Matthew Henry writes, "Man is a creature dear to his Creator, and therefore ought to be so to us. God put honor upon him, let us not put contempt upon him."⁷⁸

We need a biblical view of man in order to restrain violence in society. We are to love our neighbor and do good to him because he is made in God's image. Even though he has fallen and may be highly defective in many ways, we treat him lawfully for the sake of God's image. The men who have been guilty of genocide in history are those who have skillfully dehumanized their enemies and defined them as subhuman. The dehumanization has occurred on the basis of race (e.g., the holocaust), class (the Communist holocaust against the upper classes), and age (e.g., the unborn are murdered through abortion on a massive scale: 56 million children have been slaughtered and tossed into dumpsters in the United States alone).

⁷⁶ Adam Clarke, *Discourses on Various Subjects Relative to the Being and Attributes of God and His Works* (New York: McElrath & Bangs, 1830), II, 31; as quoted in Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 222.

⁷⁷ Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, 76-77.

⁷⁸ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1:70-71.

Other Applications and Implications

This command regarding the death penalty for murder has a number of important things to teach us regarding violence and civil rule. First, the fact that murderers are to be put to death (a violent act) indicates that there are just and unjust forms of killing. Just or righteous uses of violence would be lawful or legitimate warfare (i.e. a war of self-defense or a war against aggression), personal self-defense (i.e. physical and even deadly force is used to stop rapists, burglars, robbers, kidnappers, etc.) and the application of capital punishment by the state to lawfully convicted criminals who have committed crimes deemed worthy of death by Scripture. The slogan used by modernists and neo-evangelicals that Christians must be “consistently pro-life” by not only opposing abortion but also the death penalty is antinomian and anti-Christian.

Second, this law is the first indication in Scripture that God has placed the sword of justice, vengeance against evil and implement of civil protection into the hands of the civil magistrate. Men are given coercive power over other men’s lives under certain circumstances that are revealed by God. Civil governments are just as obligated to implement the penalties attached to moral laws as they are to adhere to the moral law itself. Civil rule is grounded not on a human contract or covenant or a vague natural law but *direct revelation from God*. While the Decalogue summarizes principles of personal morality, laws relating to punishment of violence speak to man in an official capacity. This teaching is the essence of the rule of law. God, not the state, defines what is a crime; and God, not the state, determines what is the just or appropriate penalty. Professing Christians who believe that the penalties in Scripture are optional; who give human rulers autonomy to decide for themselves what punishments are just or unjust have unwittingly adopted a form of statism, injustice and tyranny. When civil magistrates ignore the God-ordained penalties and seek to implement their own, they are implicitly saying that they are wiser and more just than Jehovah. Such men overthrow the pillars of justice and protection that God has erected for the welfare of mankind.

Third, the death penalty provision for murder, by implication, teaches us that men are not only obliged to do no injury to others but also have a moral obligation to defend the life of their neighbors. Similarly, Calvin applies the sixth commandment in two ways: “*first*, that we should not vex or oppress, or be at enmity with any; and *secondly*, that we should not only live at peace with men, without exciting any quarrels, but also should aid, as far as we can, the miserable who are unjustly oppressed, and should endeavor to resist the wicked, lest they should injure men as they list.”⁷⁹ This means that the person who does not defend someone under attack or who does not notify authorities immediately when violent oppression occurs is guilty of violating the sixth commandment. Moreover, any Bible-believing Christian who supports a pro-abortion candidate has the blood of infants on his hands. We see that it is a duty of all Christians to defend a biblical or Christian law-order (including the death penalty) in order to be faithful to the word of God. “God’s law is not a private matter; it is not for us to obey personally simply because we like it, meanwhile leaving other men to follow whatever law they choose. The law is valid for us because it is valid for all; to obey it means to accept a universal order as binding on us and upon all men. Obedience therefore requires that we seek a total enforcement of the law.”⁸⁰ The idea common among Christians that the Bible is for personal life and the church while the state can

⁷⁹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in a Harmony*, 3:21.

⁸⁰ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Institutes*, 220.

do almost anything it pleases explicitly contradicts the Lord's directive for mankind given to Noah.

Anyone who is against a just war, or capital punishment, or even the second amendment is in violation of our text and the sixth commandment. Liberals cannot distinguish between good and evil and have no concept of personal responsibility. Consequently, they live in a fantasy land of their own creation where criminals are taken lightly and law-abiding citizens are treated as criminals. In cities run by liberal Democrats that have strict gun-control measures, the rates of violence and murder are the highest. The compassion of the wicked is cruel (Prov. 12:10) and exceptionally foolish. The typical secular humanistic leftist views people in favor of the death penalty as vicious, out of touch morons. "By their offense against a man, they commit the unpardonable sin for humanism. In order to give man the preeminence, the humanist logically must destroy any concept of justice as a real and objective standard. Man must be above the law and therefore above justice."⁸¹

Fourth, God's teaching against violence also prohibits the many kinds of self-murder through the various forms of self-destruction. People who deliberately neglect their health or choose a lifestyle of laziness, gluttony, inactivity and excess are in a very real sense self-murderers. Men and women who choose a life of drunkenness, drug addiction and sexual promiscuity are not respecting God's image. They are deliberately and progressively destroying it. Those who engage in forms of recreation and sports that are dangerous and can easily cause death are guilty of a species of murder. We have been created in God's image to live for Him. We have been given the gift of life to serve and worship Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must think of our lives and use our lives only on God's terms. The body is to be kept clean and holy unto the Lord. Therefore, we do not treat it as a garbage dump or a chemical waste site. Moreover, as free men in Christ we are not to mark it with pagan scarring or tattoos. In addition, we have been bought or purchased with the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:20); we are now His servants. Therefore, we avoid worldly marks of slavery and submit to His sign: Christian Trinitarian baptism. "[T]o live is to worship God by using life on God's terms only. The law is total, because God is totally God, absolute and omnipotent. Health for man is wholeness in terms of God's law."⁸²

Fifth, the purpose of capital punishment is not simply to satisfy divine justice, but also to purge evil from one's nation. The Bible is clear on this issue: "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put away the evil from among you" (Deut. 17:7). There are some crimes that are so heinous in the sight of God that Jehovah demands that the guilty person be cut off from humanity forever. The execution of the evildoer is a form of excommunication from society. To allow such people to live, even in an isolated maximum-security prison, is not enough to satisfy this requirement of being cut off from the community. In America today serial killers are celebrities. They receive fan mail in prison. They have frequent visitors and many are permitted to get married to a woman on the outside. They have not been cut off and thus society has not purged the evil. A murderer should not be answering fan mail or watching television or getting a free taxpayer-funded higher education. His body should be rotting in the ground and his soul should be burning in hell (unless he turned to Christ before his execution).

Sixth, biblical capital punishment is clearly designed to serve as a deterrent to other murderers. This point is established in the manner in which murderers were to be executed. After

⁸¹ Ibid, 226.

⁸² Ibid, 223-224.

a trial with at least two reliable witnesses, the convicted person is to be taken outside of town (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35; 1 Kgs. 21:13) and then stoned to death by the members of that community (Deut. 17:7). The men who witnessed the crime are to cast the first stones of execution (Deut. 7:17). This procedure would instill in witnesses the serious nature of their testimony and would discourage frivolous testimony in court.⁸³ The casting of stones was personal, public and exceptionally painful and violent. The person who had inflicted horror and death on his victims would die a horrible death. This method rules out lethal injection, which is painless, bloodless and clinical, and also the drawn out torture killings of the Middle Ages which were not based on biblical law but ancient heathen methods of execution. Death by stoning would not take more than five minutes. Public stoning would force community members to note the dreadful civil consequences of such a crime and would point the public to the ultimate sanction given by Christ on the day of judgment: the lake of fire. The biblical method of execution serves as a lesson on the holiness of God, the establishment of justice in the community and the sanctions of God's law against illegitimate violence. Modern humanistic methods of dealing with murderers do not deter crime effectively and thus violent crime and the murder rate has risen considerably in the United States since 1960.

Seventh, under biblical law, only the person or persons who committed the crime are to be punished. This rule sounds obvious and logical but in the ancient world and modern tyrannical states a son, wife or daughter could be killed for a father's crime. "Under a pagan law, if a man killed your son, the proper punishment would be for the state to kill not the man himself, but his son. While Israel remained in Canaan, before being isolated from evil influence in Goshen..., Reuben had come under the influence of this pagan conception of justice: 'Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him [your son] back to you...."'”⁸⁴ In the Soviet Union under Stalin, a man considered to be an enemy of the state would be killed or shipped to the gulags often along with his whole family. The Nazis, during World War II, were notorious for murdering the wives and children of those who opposed Hitler. The great German Field Marshal Rommel agreed to commit suicide, after he was implicated in the plot to kill Hitler, under the condition that his family would be spared. Note that God says to Noah that the one who shed the blood is the one whose blood must be shed. This principle of justice is made explicit in the Mosaic law: "Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor shall sons be put to death for fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16). The individual responsible for a crime must accept the legal punishment under the law. The Bible treats people as responsible individuals. A son must not be slain for his father's treachery. If family members participate in the crime as in the case of Achan's sin, they must suffer the consequences. "While the family is very important in Christian civilization, it is not so absolute a structure that the state cannot deal with one member of it alone. The family does not die just because the head has committed a crime, nor does the head have the right to transfer guilt to some other family member. Children are not owned by their fathers, so that the loss of my child must be paid by the loss of yours; other children are persons in their own right, and if you kill mine, it is you who must die.”⁸⁵

⁸³ See Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), 44-45.

⁸⁴ James B. Jordan, *The Law of the Covenant: An Exposition of Exodus 21-23* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1984), 125-126.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Someone may object: but does not God sometimes judge children along with parents? Indeed He does, but we must keep in mind that Jehovah can judge anyone for the sin of Adam and even very young infants are guilty of actual sin. David says that they go forth from the womb speaking lies (Ps. 58:3). What God can do because of sin is far broader than what men are permitted to do because of crimes. Moreover, the civil magistrate can only mete out specific sanctions for specific crimes. God has the authority to pour out His judgment on whole nations and cultures. We must always keep in mind that everyone, apart from Christ, deserves to be judged by God and cast into hell at once. People receive time to repent and the outward blessings of life solely because God is not willing that any elect person should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). The world must continue until every single one of Christ's sheep is gathered into the fold.

Eighth, when considering the death penalty provision, it is important to note that the law teaches that no one can be put to death without a proper trial with the testimony of at least two witnesses: "Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness" (Deut. 17:6-7; cf. 19:5). "Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty" (Num. 35:30). This provision is designed to do two things.

First, it functions as a safeguard against mistaken testimony. The assumption is that at least two *independent* eye witnesses are in mind. This does not include hearsay evidence. The person who hears some gossip (which in itself is unlawful) does not qualify as a secondary witness. People can be mistaken about what they have seen and thus an independent witness is needed to verify the empirical data. The fact that the witnesses are the ones who are required to throw the first stones (v. 8) forces the witnesses to make sure their testimony is honest, accurate and reliable. The witnesses are responsible for the execution and, by casting the first stones, they are held responsible in God's sight for innocent blood if the accused is not actually guilty. Jewish courts were designed to get at the truth and thus potential witnesses would be questioned independently and extensively by the authorities before a matter went to trial. The modern practice of defense lawyers attempting to obscure, twist or rule out the truth is unscriptural.

Second, one witness is not sufficient because a person could easily lie and destroy someone with a false accusation. By having two reliable, independent witnesses, a court avoids the irreconcilable situation of having one word against another. This principle has not been practiced faithfully in the United States and thus men have been falsely accused of rape and child molestation and been ruined. This practice is common in divorce and child custody cases. The Bible recognizes that man is a sinner and cannot be fully trusted. Two independent witnesses that are subject to cross examination are necessary for corroboration. In Jewish judicial procedure, the witnesses served as the prosecution. Each gave his testimony to the judges *independently* of the other. The biblical standards of justice in court cases are very strict; they strongly put the burden of proof on the prosecution. In a Christian nation, the state is obligated to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt. The person accused is not obligated to demonstrate his own innocence. The civil magistrate must present witnesses as positive evidence that someone is guilty of a crime.

The biblical principle of two or more witnesses sounds rational and obvious to most Christians but it has been violated throughout history by many cultures. It was common in medieval Europe to use torture to extract confessions from people accused of crimes. This procedure was inherited from pagan nations. Torture as a judicial instrument for extracting evidence from unwilling witnesses or accused persons is very ancient. It was not invented during

the Middle Ages. (However, the Roman Catholic Church did perfect some ancient techniques and did invent a few of their own.) In ancient Athens, slaves were *always* examined by torture and oddly the evidence produced in this manner was deemed more trustworthy than a free person's voluntary testimony. Roman citizens, likewise, were exempt from torture until the rise of the more debased emperors. It became acceptable to torture citizens when people were suspected of treason or crimes against the emperor. The use of judicial torture became a part of the Code of Justinian (A.D. 529; revised A.D. 534), and was adopted by many of the European states with various changes during the Middle Ages. McClintock and Strong note its horrifying effect on European judicial procedures during that era:

It was adopted early and extensively by the Italian municipalities. In Germany elaborate apparatus for its infliction existed, not merely in the dungeons of the feudal castles, but in the vaults beneath the town halls of Nuremberg and Ratisbon, where the various implements used are yet to be seen. It continued to be practiced in the prisons of Germany until they were visited by Howard, in 1770. It ceased to be a part of the judicial system in France in 1789; and in Scotland it was still in frequent use after the Restoration, and was only abolished by 7 Anne, c. 21, sec. 5. In Russia it was done away with in 1801. In the United States it has never been reckoned an adjunct of judicial examination.

The first instance we have of its use in England is in 1310, in aid of the ecclesiastical law, during the struggle between Pope Clement V and the Templars. Edward II, when requested to sanction the infliction of torture by the inquisitors in the case of certain Templars accused of heresy and apostasy, at first refused, but, on a remonstrance by Clement, he referred the matter to the council, and on the recommendation of the council the inquisitors were authorized to put the accused to torture, but without mutilation or serious injury to the person or effusion of blood. During the Tudor period, the council assumed the power of directing torture-warrants to the lieutenants of the Tower and other officers against state-prisoners and occasionally also against persons accused of other serious crimes. Under James I and Charles I torture was less resorted to, and only in state-trials. It was inflicted for the last time in May, 1640. [During 1681-1688, however, a number of Covenanters in Scotland were tortured using "the boot" and the burning of toes etc. Eighteen thousand Presbyterians were murdered by the civil authorities during this period.] The worst application of torture was found in the hands of the Inquisition. In 1282 pope Innocent IV called on the secular powers to put to torture persons accused of heresy in order to extract confessions against themselves and others. The necessity of secrecy in the proceedings led to its extensive adoption, and to refinements of cruelty in its use before unknown.

The instruments of torture have been many and various. The scourge was the usual instrument of torture among the Romans, who also made use of the *equuleus*, a sort of upright rack, with pincers added to tear the flesh, etc. The most celebrated instrument was the "rack," known in the south of Europe as early as the second century, but introduced into the Tower by the duke of Exeter, constable of the Tower. The "boot" was the favorite French instrument of torture. In this rings of iron were passed around the legs, and wooden wedges driven between them and the flesh until the muscles were reduced to jelly. Among other means of torture were the "thumb-screw;" "iron gauntlets;" the "little ease," a narrow cell in which the prisoner was confined for several days, and in which the only position possible was one which cramped every muscle; the "scavenger's (properly Skevington's) daughter," the invention of Sir William Skevington, an instrument which compressed the body so as to start the blood from the nostrils and often from the hands. The torture by water, crucifixion, the fastening of limbs to trees

which were forced into proximity to each other and then suffered to fly apart, and pouring melted lead into the ears, are a few of the means by which punishment has been inflicted.⁸⁶

Professing Christian European states (at least in the early Middle Ages) were also influenced by old heathen practices in judicial proceedings. The early Franks, for example, would place a small rock at the bottom of a pot of boiling water. The man accused would have to retrieve that stone. After this barbaric procedure, the authorities would carefully examine the hand over time. If it began to heal the man was declared innocent, but if it festered or healed very poorly the man was declared guilty. Another procedure was to tie the accused up with a rope and throw him into a body of water. If he floated he was guilty and if he sank he was retrieved before drowning and declared innocent. Some of the Puritans in early America were influenced by heathen judicial proceedings and during the Salem witch trials tortured a few women who were completely innocent. The test involved placing the person under a large board and placing weights upon it. The person would eventually die from being unable to take in a breath of air.

The history of the church and the professing Christian nations during the Middle Ages demonstrates the foolishness and great dangers involved in not basing one's civil laws, including the penalties, directly upon the teachings of Scripture. Calvin's idea of natural law or the law of nations was biased and romantic due to his intensive study of medieval theologians and lawyers. The penalties of Scripture are neither too lenient like today (e.g., A pig farmer in Canada who murdered at least 29 women is eligible for parole after 25 years. A man in Ukraine who murdered 52 people had his sentence changed from the death penalty to 40 years with the possibility of parole, so that Ukraine could have closer economic ties with the European Union.); or too harsh as they were in much of European history. Moreover, the biblical requirement of two or more witnesses is much wiser and just than the practice of most nations in history and the United States today.

When nations do not believe that man is made in God's image or that righteousness, crime and justice are defined by God, they will drift upon a stormy sea of wicked human opinion. This will result in the gulags, the gas chambers of Auschwitz, and the abortion mills in America. The fact that much of the world has rejected God's requirement of capital punishment for murder tells us that the world is ripening for a great judgment of God.

The Covenant and the Rainbow

In 8:21-22, we are told of God's determination within Himself to preserve the created order in response to Noah's burnt offering. In 9:9-17, God speaks directly with Noah and his sons about this covenant of preservation. They receive comfort and assurance that the command to be fruitful and multiply will be accomplished. The dominion mandate to God's glory will be successful through their seed. It is Jehovah who establishes (lit. "to make stand, to erect") this covenant. (Since we have discussed this covenant extensively, I will only make a few comments.) The covenant of preservation is made with man and all the animals. "The thrust of this covenant is that the flood is unique: the possibility of future judgment is not eliminated, but that judgment will not be manifested as a flood. As if to reinforce the one-time sending of the flood, God twice in these verses vetoes the chance of a second flood."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1867-1887] 1981), 10:498.

⁸⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 316.

To remind mankind of this covenant, God gives Noah and his posterity a sign. The sign is the “rainbow” or “a bow” in the sky. Every time man looks upon the bow, he should be reminded not only of God’s gracious promises but also the reason behind the promises. God preserves the current order not simply so men can eat and drink and be merry, but so that the dominion mandate can be fulfilled. When we see the rainbow, we should be thankful to God and we should strengthen our resolve to live for Christ and His kingdom.

Scholars are divided as to the question of whether the rainbow was introduced to the created order for the first time at this point or whether Jehovah simply chose a pre-existing phenomenon. Calvin agrees with the latter view: “From these words certain eminent theologians have been induced to deny that there was any rainbow before the deluge: which is frivolous. For the words of Moses do not signify that a bow was then formed, which did not previously exist; but that a mark was engraven upon it, which should give a sign of the divine favour toward men.”⁸⁸ Whatever position one takes does not affect the purpose or meaning of the sign. If it existed from the beginning as a natural law, it was God who appointed those laws and maintains them by His providence.

The rainbow is a sign that the order of nature will continue. When we read this sign, we must always do so through the lens of Scripture. This awesome effect of the beauty of sunlight upon the clouds ought to remind us that the earth continues because of Christ’s mercy and grace toward His people. “The rainbow appears when one part of the sky is clear, which intimates mercy remembered in the midst of wrath.”⁸⁹ Everything will continue so that Jesus the Messiah—the eternal son of God—can be born and redeem a people for Himself. Everything will continue so that the earth can be leavened with the gospel. Everything continues as all enemies are subdued beneath the Savior’s feet. The covenant of preservation and the rainbow brings the flood narrative to a triumphant and hopeful conclusion. Everything will continue so the godly remnant can continue and the Seed to come can establish a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

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⁸⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Genesis*, 1:299.

⁸⁹ Matthew Henry, 1:72.

