

Genesis 8:15-22

¹⁵God spoke to Noah. He said, ¹⁶“Go out of the ark—you, your wife, your sons, and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing of every sort that is with you, all flesh, including birds, livestock, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may swarm over the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

¹⁸Noah went out with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives along with him. ¹⁹Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever swarms on the earth went out of the ship, species by species.

²⁰Noah built an altar to the LORD and took from every clean animal and every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹The LORD smelled the pleasant aroma. The LORD said in his heart, “I will never again curse the soil anymore because of man, for the thoughts he forms in his heart are evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike every living thing, as I have done. ²²While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

Gratitude

I.

Evil. An incredible evil filled the world. It often feels to me like the world has become more evil. For decades killing babies in the womb was completely legal in this country. Evil.

The Supreme Court overturned the ruling that had trumped states’ rights for decades and sent the matter back to the various states. Immediately, groups within Michigan sought signatures to put a referendum on the ballot this fall that, if passed, will enshrine abortion in Michigan’s constitution. The amendment to the Michigan constitution will be one of the most radical laws in the entire world.

There are all kinds of other evils in our world today. There has been a conscious effort to turn sins once seen by most as aberrational into acceptable, and even desirable, behavior. Those who would follow a Biblical perspective have been marginalized. It seems unloving to call a sin a sin.

Perhaps every generation of Christians takes a look around and believes the culture to be deteriorating. Perhaps every generation thinks things are more evil than they ever have been.

It’s not so. “The LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that all the thoughts and plans they formed in their hearts were only evil every day. “The LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with sorrow.” (Genesis 6:5-6, EHV). The wickedness of the pre-Flood world was more intense than anything we can possibly imagine.

“God looked at the earth and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh was corrupt in all their ways on the earth” (Genesis 6:12, EHV). There were precious few believers in the world at that time. “Noah was a righteous man, a man of integrity in that generation. Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9, EHV). Other great Bible figures, like Elijah, would think there were no believers left on the earth. Noah could have actually said it and have been right. Only he and his family still believed in God.

God told Noah that he was going to destroy everything because of the great, unchecked, evil that filled the earth. “I myself am about to bring a flood of waters on the earth, in order to destroy all flesh under the sky that has the breath of life. Everything that is on the earth will die” (Genesis 6:17, EHV). I wonder if Noah was grateful. After all, he and his family

were to be preserved.

Noah was to build an ark—really just a box that would float. It wasn't a simple project. The Bible doesn't say exactly when construction of the ark began. God told Noah his sons and their wives would be on the passenger manifesto. If the boys were married before construction began, it would have taken at least 50 years. If Noah began building when his sons were little, it could have taken up to 100 years. I wonder if Noah was grateful when he realized all the work building that ark would entail.

There were plenty of materials needed to build the giant box at the Noah compound. As materials were gathered and the project began to take place, questions were undoubtedly asked by the neighbors. Some of Noah's time was undoubtedly spent in warning the people about God's intentions to destroy the world.

The ark was to house many animals, including livestock domesticated for humans to use, and also every other kind of animal that humans would not normally welcome in close proximity. The Bible gives dimensions for the exterior of the ark, but not specifics about the interior. Perhaps God gave more detail to Noah than is recorded for us. Perhaps Noah was to use his own ingenuity and that of the world of his day to come up with other specifics for housing all the animals and making the systems that would sustain them through a world-wide flood event.

The Ark Museum in Kentucky has made some very scholarly guesses based on as much as we know about the pre-flood world. Their speculations about how Noah and his family and the animals survived is very interesting. Visit it sometime, if you want a detailed explanation of many plausible systems for the ark.

II.

The time came for God's plans to be fulfilled. Noah and his family and all the animals were loaded on to the Ark.

Do you think Noah and family were filled with gratitude as they loaded into the ark? God's stated purpose was to destroy everyone and everything. Did they take a last look at the faces that would soon be screaming in agony at God's judgment?

It began. "All the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened" (Genesis 7:11, EHV). The flood waters rose not just from rain pouring down from the sky, but also from the depths of the earth. The flood God sent on the earth completely altered the landscape. Mountains were undoubtedly pushed up by the waters of the deep flowing.

Inside the ark, were Noah and his family filled with gratitude? After all the years of preparation, could they just sit around on deck chairs having a nice vacation? 40 days and 40 nights rain poured from the sky and gushed up from the earth. There was no nice, dry deck to sit on. But there was also work to be done. Both during and after the rain the work was constant. Animals needed to be fed and their waste removed. Equipment needed constant mending. The people themselves had to make sure that everything was sustainable for the duration of their voyage.

Still, the water rose. "The water overwhelmed the earth. All the high mountains that were under the entire sky were covered.²⁰The waters rose more than twenty feet above the mountains and covered them" (Genesis 7:19-20, EHV). Even *new* mountains that were pushed up from the fountains of the deep were covered by at least 20 feet of water.

"All living creatures that moved on the earth perished...²³Every living thing that was on the face of the earth was wiped out, including mankind, livestock, creeping things, and birds of the sky. They all were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, as well as those who were

with him in the ark” (Genesis 7:21, 23, EHV).

God had said it would happen this way. The destruction he prophesied was complete. Do you think Noah and his family were filled with gratitude when the rains stopped? They could look out the little windows at the top of the ark, but all they could see was water. Everywhere.

For 150 days the waters stayed high above the highest mountain. Then: “God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. ²The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were also closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained. ³The waters kept receding from the earth” (Genesis 8:1-3, EHV). As the flood receded, the water did what flood waters do as they recede: it carved out rivers and canyons and further altered the landscape. This process took another 150 days.

Finally the floating box bumped into the top of a mountain. Noah and his family could finally see some land. They released some birds. A dove brought back an olive leaf, showing Noah that vegetation was growing on the earth once more.

III.

Then...it happened. “God spoke to Noah. He said, ¹⁶“Go out of the ark—you, your wife, your sons, and your sons’ wives with you” (Genesis 8:15-16, EHV). For the first time in over a year they were outside, on dry ground.

The cataclysmic event they had just lived through had altered everything they had once known about the landscape. Mountains had been pushed up where there had been none before. Valleys were carved out by the receding flood waters. Giant trees were gone. The abundance of wildlife was gone. New little shoots were beginning to grow and bud and the wild animals that were released from the ark began to spread out and move away from them.

Wouldn’t you think the first thing to do would be to look around and get a lay of the land? It was going to be necessary to assess the land and its resources and see what would need to be done to make a living. It would stand to reason that, after being cooped up for so long, the eight human beings who were now the only ones left on earth would be ecstatically checking out the surroundings.

Not so. “Noah built an altar to the LORD and took from every clean animal and every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Genesis 8:20, EHV). Noah and his family were filled with gratitude. The first thing they wanted to do was to give thanks to God. God had kept his promise. He had preserved them alive through the most momentous cataclysmic event this world has ever seen. That also meant that God’s original promise to the world was still intact—the promise to send a Savior. Those eight people were filled with gratitude that God’s promises were still as sure and certain as they had been when God first informed Noah of his plans.

God made a new promise. “I will never again curse the soil anymore because of man, for the thoughts he forms in his heart are evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike every living thing, as I have done” (Genesis 8:21, EHV).

Remember what God saw that made him decide that he would destroy every living thing on the earth? “The LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that all the thoughts and plans they formed in their hearts were only evil every day” (Genesis 6:5, EHV). Now he says: “I will never again curse the soil anymore because of man, for the thoughts he forms in his heart are evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21, EHV). God is both a God of judgment and a God of grace. Though he determined it to be necessary to destroy the world to preserve alive the promise of the coming Savior, he said that would

never again be the case.

Until Jesus returns at the last day, evil will always continue to permeate the world. News stories from Russia and Ukraine and the Middle East show the evil thoughts and plans of human beings. Shootings and stabbings right in our own community show us how close to home the evil thoughts and plans of human beings always are.

There was another way to deal with evil. God sent his Son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus took all the evil thoughts and plans of human hearts on his shoulders and carried them to the cross. He paid for them in full. In place of the evil thoughts and plans of human beings he gives us the promise of a heavenly home where no evil will destroy our pure joy.

Be filled with gratitude every day that you have yet another opportunity to share with others what Jesus has done. Despite the fact that every human being has evil thoughts in the heart from little on, God provides forgiveness in Jesus.

IV.

God had another promise for Noah and all those who have lived after him. “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22, EHV). No matter what modern science wants to tell you, God has promised that the cycles of our planet will continue until Jesus returns at Judgment Day.

We enjoy the turn of the seasons; some seasons we enjoy more than others. We are blessed by God by the cycles of seedtime and harvest to bring food to our tables. Nighttime refreshes us with a time to sleep so we are prepared for the next day. On and on God’s blessings flow.

Don’t wait for the door of the ark to open after a cataclysmic event to give thanks to God for his continued blessings. Don’t wait for the special day we set aside in this country to give thanks.

Noah built a special altar to worship the Lord at the end of many years of preparing and a year of enduring. We follow Paul’s direction to the Romans: “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship” (Romans 12:1, EHV). All that you are and all that you have belongs to God. Live in a cycle of gratitude. Every day give thanks to God for the opportunities he has given you. You are alive another day, another day in which to show your gratitude to him. Amen.