

Genesis 8

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 24 March 2015 16:47

“...Noah went forth.”

When a Christian does what is right, he is not guaranteed a good response from others... not even from fellow believers. Yet, like Noah, he has to leave his 'comfort zone' and go forth. Noah went forth into a brand new environment. Apart from his family, all the people he had come to know (including extended family) over a period of over 600 years were all gone, killed by God's wrath.

He went out into a land he did not know, complete with carcasses, obliterated plant life, and a very different topography. I have no doubt that he was filled with apprehension – no matter how great our faith is, we can still be fearful of something unknown or new.

But, Noah went forth. That was God's command, and Noah complied. It is how all Believers are to act – when God tells us to do something we must do it, whether or not we fully understand what is going on. This obedience is a prerequisite for receiving God's blessings.

I receive a stream of communications from Christians badly treated by their local churches, who, afraid of the consequences of leaving, stay and remain miserable. The principle applies, to individuals as well as to groups – God removes Believers from bad pastors and churches, and they are to obey. If they stay shackled to those who are bad, then they will never know what God has in store for them. Instead, they will continue in their anxiety and sadness. Or, just be unfulfilled.

David, before he became king, had to flee for his life, leaving behind family and friends. Unlike most who leave churches, he did not even have a place to stay. But, God is providential. For his faithfulness, David was soon joined by a few hundred others, who remained loyal to him for decades. In the end, the man who had no home or friends became king of all Israel. It is my personal belief, based on my own experiences, that when we go forth, even into hostile territory, we shall be upheld by God, and even rewarded. What we leave behind will be nothing compared to what we shall receive as a result of obedience.

When we step out in this way we are not going blindly; God is already before us, and His arm stretches back to us, though many times we do not realise it. We may not see the future consequences of our actions, by leaving a bad fellowship, but be assured that God has already

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set the banquet table for the faithful! As we enter the brightly lit hall of God's presence, from the dark tunnel we think leads us nowhere, we shall see why God sent us into the darkness – so that we can come out into a far better place!

Noah's new life was indeed brand new. He was starting from scratch. If Christians have to start again, they ought not worry. If they follow what God says (sometimes via conscience), they will not be disappointed. But, if they remain where they are, they will never know God's peace, but will, instead, continue in misery.

Very often, our Christian desire for God's peace is not matched by our will to move on. So, we are stagnant, sometimes for many years. In staying that way we deny God's movement in our lives and then complain that nothing is happening! We feel dread every day and become miserable. Far better to go forth like Noah. The evidences of death and destruction were all around him, but he went forth anyway, for it was God's command. It does not matter what God is leading us into, because the object of our existence is to obey the Creator. When we resist, we resist what God has in store for us, which is always better than what we have carefully lodged in our minds and hearts!

Is God calling you to leave a bad fellowship? Is He calling you to a new venture? Is what He asks you to do a brand new thing, maybe in a new environment? Then just do it! Many a calling is put aside by doubt or fear. Go forth. Only when you step out in faith will He reveal His treasures to you.

Verses 1-4

1.

“And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;

2.

The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;

3.

And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty

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days the waters were abated.

4.

And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.”

God remembered Noah. This does not mean God had forgotten him, or that He had been distracted by something else and suddenly thought, “Oh, Noah’s out there – I’d better talk to him!” It just means that God called Noah and everything on the ark to mind. To put it another way, it was now time for God to complete His work. The judgment had been made, and now the earth was ready for restoration.

This is qualified by the phrase referring to the wind. That is, ruwach, which, in this context, can have possibly two meanings, maybe combined: that of literal wind, and the other of life; that is, God was now to bring the earth back to a living state. Combined with this, the waters decreased and began to subside. Where did the water go? Some of it may have returned to the underground caverns from whence it came. The rest must have been evaporated by the sun to rise, not as a mantle all around the earth, but as clouds in the sky, ready to start a new cycle of activity, bringing regular rain. However, it would have taken a very long time to evaporate, so the true answer is that God caused the water to rise into the atmosphere by special fiat, rapidly.

We see that God stopped the water falling from the sky and closed up the ruptures in the earth’s crust under the sea. Note that these waters did not just stop of their own accord, they were ‘restrained’, kala, restricted, kept back, forbidden. These are words referring to personal intervention, by God, and reminds us that God has control over all things.

From that time, the waters began to go down. It took 150 days or about five months for the flood to ‘abate’, chacer – be without, to diminish. Then, the ark rested, nuwach – settled down – upon the mountains of Ararat, on the 17th day of the 7th month. This may, or may not, be the currently known Ararat in eastern Armenia. It might even have been in an area no longer known to us. Note, though, that this text speaks of plural ‘mountains’ and not a singular ‘mountain’, thus referring to mountainous terrain rather than one mountain.

Verses 5-7

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1.

“And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month,

2.

were the tops of the mountains seen.

3.

And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:

4.

And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.”

The text tells us that Noah was unaware of the actual state of the world at this time. He had a tiny window at the top of the ark, but could not see much but sky out of it. He knew that the buffeting of the waters had stopped, and could feel the gentle rocking of his floating box.

God did not let him know what was going on. We know this because Noah had to send out birds to discover fresh vegetation, before he would start to think the ordeal was over. The water slowly went down and, on the first day of the 10th month (about two months later), the level had gone down enough for the tops of the mountains to be visible. Obviously, this meant the tops of the highest mountains.

Noah wanted his safety confirmed and 40 days later (or was it 40 days after the ark rested on Ararat?), he opened the small window and sent out a raven, which did not land but continued flying because the water was still not subsided enough.

Verses 8-14

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1.

“Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;

2.

But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

3.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

4.

And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

5.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

6.

And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

7.

And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.”

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Then, he sent out a dove, which returned, unable to find a dry place to rest. So, the water had uncovered Ararat and other mountain tops, but the rest of the world was still under water. Possibly with a sigh, Noah took the dove back into the ark. Seven days later, Noah sent the dove out again (there were 7 in the ark). This time, in the evening, the female dove returned with an olive leaf in its beak. And so Noah knew the waters had at last gone from the ground.

Another seven days later, just to be sure, Noah again sent out the dove, but it did not return. This suggested to Noah that the bird had found trees in which to stay, so did not need to return to the ark.

By this time Noah was 601. On the first day of the first month, the water had gone. With what must have been a thankful and glad heart, Noah and his family began to remove the ark's covering. We do not know what these 'coverings' were, but the same word, *mikceh*, is used to describe the skin coverings of the tabernacle. Was the top made of skins, waterproofed with pitch? Or, would this not have protected the contents of the ark, so wooden planks were used? We cannot tell from the text; we just know that Noah began to dismantle the top of the ark. He took away enough to see that the ground was dry, so maybe he only removed sufficient to reveal the weather, and the state of the earth. Whilst the earth was mainly dry, it took until the 27th day of the following month for the flood water to completely disappear.

Verses 15-19

1.

"And God spake unto Noah, saying,

2.

Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

3.

Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

4.

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And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

5.

Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.”

God then spoke to Noah. He might have spoken to him during the many months of flood, but we are not told this. God told him to go out of the ark with his family, and to remove all the living beings within. It was time, said God, for them to breed and to refill the earth's stock again. So, Noah obeyed and they all left the ark. Once again, God reminds us in His word that the animals left 'after their kinds' – as distinct and complete species.

Verses 20-22

1.

“And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

2.

And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

3.

While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

Then came the first sacrifices to God in the new era. Noah built an altar to God. We are not told how soon this was after they left the ark. He took one of each clean animal and bird and sacrificed them to God, in thanks for His providence.

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BURNT....

“And the LORD smelled a sweet savour.” That is, God approved of Noah’s actions. The term ‘in his heart’ means His will, and we ought not think it means ‘heart’ in the human sense. God determined (a determination that had to be already made in eternity) that He would never again ruin the earth in the same way because of the sins of mankind.

We are told that the heart of every man is ‘evil from his youth’. In other texts we find that mankind is evil from conception. These are just human terms to show us that we are sinful from the very start of our lives. The next global ruination will only come when all men are removed from earth; the last day.

Rather, for the duration of earth’s time, God would send seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night. That is, He once again gave us due seasons and everything necessary for man to reasonably live and know the days.

This should make all men humble before God, for He need not have put up with us anymore. Yet, He did, and promised that we would have a suitable environment in which to live. God sometimes sends judgement upon our lives, both nationally and as individuals. We are not to cry and go into a dark corner, but must ‘take it on the chin’ and get up again, ready to do His bidding. We can do so, because, in Christ, we are safe and will enter heaven, even if some of us are struck down in this life for our sins.

How much better to live in obedience! Unless we know God has removed His active presence from us, we must recognise when we sin and repent with great haste, seeking His face and comfort, which He will give to all who turn to Him. Not for us the Romish error of being lost if we do not do this or that! God promises us His peace every second of every day, if we obey! Let us remember that and rest in the promise that our salvation can never be lost.

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