

Genesis 7-9

What a difference a week makes! Not only have we gone from the back half of the Bible to the front half, but we have also taken to reading 4 chapters daily as opposed to 2. The pace we're at now is what you can expect for the next 11 months. Hang in there. 15-20 minutes a day and you'll stay on top of things and in the game to finish the Bible on time (with one day to spare, actually).

Today our reading is Genesis 7-9. We pick up the story of Noah and the flood (already in progress from yesterday's reading). God has already pronounced judgment on the inhabitants of the earth for their wickedness. Noah has found favor in the Lord's eyes and will be rescued (along with his family). God has instructed Noah to build an ark in which he and his family will be saved. Noah has obeyed God and built the ark....

7:1-5

God commands Noah to bring seven pairs of all "clean" animals with him into the ark. It's interesting to me that God has not already revealed what animals are clean or unclean; that will come later in Exodus and Leviticus. But even though he has not revealed the specifics, we can see from this passage that some animals are clean; some are not. And don't forget: 7 and 40 are Biblical numbers J

7:6-10

Moses now lets us know that even the unclean animals were allowed in the ark, but only two and two, male and female. Apparently, not as many unclean animals were rescued as clean. Holiness or cleanliness is the means by which judgment was avoided, or survived. Let the reader understand.

7:11-16

On the one hand, you have the cataclysmic judgment of God against a fallen creation with the opening of the heavens and the 40 day-night downpour. On the other hand, you have the salvation of God, who shut Noah and his family in the ark. Judgment and salvation. It's no wonder that Jesus will allude to the flood when teaching about his return at the end of the age.

7:17-24

This is a "natural disaster" of such magnitude that we cannot imagine it. Of course some will say that there's not enough water to cause Everest to go over 20' underwater. This, of course, assumes that Everest is as tall now as it was then and that the amount of water on earth remains constant. But assume that Everest has grown over the last several millennia and that the atmosphere after the flood was completely dry. Also consider that as much as the rains fell, the water also came UP FROM UNDER THE GROUND.

There's an awful lot that could be said about this passage. How, for example, a cataclysmic flood like this could have easily caused things like the Grand Canyon

and be able to explain why fish fossils have been found on mountaintops hundreds of miles from the ocean. But this is enough for now.

8:1-5

It took a while for the water to recede. That being said, notice that God is the one responsible for the water to come and God is responsible for the water to recede. Again: salvation and judgment.

8:6-12

What's interesting to me is that Moses does not tell us about what life was like in the ark. All the animals of the earth in one place for almost half of one year and Moses does not tell us if they got along, if species died off, or how much procreation went on. Instead, he tells us extensively about Noah's "search party" that went out from the ark to look for dry ground. I think all of this is designed to build suspense and keep our attention focused on one thing: did the Great Flood wipe out the sin which prompted the Great Flood?

8:13-19

Again, I think Moses is slowing down the action on purpose for us to live in suspense: did the flood that killed everyone but one (and his family) succeed in ridding the world of sin?

Notice, again, the command to be fruitful and multiply on the earth. (This will come in handy when it comes to making sense of the city and tower of Babel. It was also the first command given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—1:28.)

8:20-22

Can you imagine how great this sacrifice would have been? A lot of animals were offered on that altar. Now, it's one thing when the Israelites offered countless offerings to the Lord when their temple was built (at a time when Israel was wealthy). It's another thing to sacrifice one of a handful of a species that survived a cataclysmic flood. The offering of Noah came from faith that God would see to it that the animals Noah had on the ark with him would repopulate the earth.

And, finally, our question about sin after the flood is answered. The death of all people but one (and his family) did not rid the world of sin. A couple of observations:

- Our sin condition runs deep.
- God will have to act again to rid the world of sin and change the nature/heart of man.
- All the world but one could not die to rid the world of sin; the death of only one did.

9:1-6

Again, the command to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth is given. This is the most repeated command in Genesis up to this point. You will see that the failure to obey this command lay at the heart of a rebellion that will soon take place (Thursday's reading!).

Remember that in the Garden, God gave Adam and Eve permission to eat any plant they wanted. Now, because he rescued the animals in the flood, God gave Noah (and his family) permission to eat animals.

Also, we see one of the verses from which we see legitimacy for capital punishment. We are allowed to kill animals for food (although I think you can make a case that Christians should never take pleasure in the taking of any life), but we are not allowed to kill people because, unlike animals, people are made in the image of God. Notice that this pertains to people who live on after the fall. Sinners are also made in the image of God.

9:7

Really? The same command? Again? Get it?!

9:8-17

This is the second object lesson God gives to his people. Every time we see a rainbow, we can remember with fear and trembling the cataclysmic judgment God leveled against sin by means of the flood. But we also rejoice in the promise of God never to judge sin like this again. In other words, we don't need to run for the hills every time we see rain clouds on the horizon (especially good for us 'Burghers).

The first object lesson was the serpent in the Garden (which Moses never calls the devil, Satan, or anything other than the serpent). The object lesson there was that anytime we see a snake, we are to remember the fall into sin. (It is the New Testament authors who will make oblique references to the serpent as the devil; but never directly.)

9:18-19

This is the first time we are told that Ham was the father of Canaan. We will learn how this came to be and why it matters in the rest of the chapter.

9:20-28

And just to drive home the point that sin existed after the flood, Moses tells us this story. Maybe not as significant to us as it was to Moses' intended reader is the explanation of the origins of the Canaanites. They were the ones who trace their ancestry back to Ham, who was the one who saw his father's nakedness and instead of covering his father, went out and tried to embarrass his father to his father's two other sons. The other two sons act honorably. There is enough here to preach a sermon on malicious gossip and what God thinks of it (cursing the one who did it and his descendants for hundreds... even thousands of years).

One other small point to make: Noah's intoxication does not incur God's wrath; Ham's disrespect and gossip did.