

**PREFACE**

In v4 of Chapter Seven Yahweh declared that “...after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.” In His longsuffering grace the Lord God had given the evil people of earth 120 years to repent; during this period of grace, roughly, Noah and his sons began work on the ark and, later presumably, began gathering the beasts that would ride out the flood inside the ungainly shoebox.

Now the ark and the beasts are ready and Yahweh affords the people of earth seven more last minute days of grace before He sends the rains. Yet still there are no takers; no one repents of their evil ways. By contrast, v5 tells us that “...Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.” Alexander MacLaren offers us a vivid picture of this contrast between people of faith in God and people who reject God.

*Alexander MacLaren: We may think, finally, of the vindication of [Noah’s] faith. For a hundred and twenty years the wits laughed, and the “common-sense” people wondered, and the patient saint went on hammering and pitching at his ark. But one morning it began to rain; and by degrees, somehow, Noah did not seem quite such a fool. The jests would look rather different when the water was up to the knees of the jesters; and their sarcasms would stick in their throats as they drowned. So is it always. So it will be at the last great day. The men who lived for the future, by faith in Christ, will be found out to have been the wise men when the future has become the present, and the present has become the past, and is gone for ever; while they who had no aims beyond the things of time, which are now sunk beneath the dreary horizon, will awake too late to the conviction that they are outside the ark of safety, and that their truest epitaph is ‘Thou fool!’*

In our last session I discussed the repetition that occurs in this narrative—and in the rest of Chapter Seven we get, as it were, a *boatload* of repetition. Using various colors I have noted the repetitions in Chapter Seven on the second page of the handout.


For example, the blue underline is associated with Noah's age and general time-marks; yellow underlines reference Noah's family; orange underlines refer to the animals. Note especially the purple underlining beginning in v17: not only are these related, but there is a built-in crescendo of sorts—a crescendo of intensity to the inundation with each subsequent verse through v20, and then v24.

### **Read Genesis 7:6-12.**

#### **v6**

**Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.**

Verse 6 offers two points for our consideration: Noah's age and the "flood of water." Let's first briefly consider the chronology of Noah's life.

His father, Lamech (LEH-mek), was 182 years old when Noah was born. Noah was 500 years old by the time—I would say, *around the time of*—his three sons were born (the ESV and NIVs have "After Noah was 500 years old...") That is, with the way it is phrased in Genesis 5:32, I'm not sure we can pinpoint his age when his wife gave birth to three, presumed sequential sons. The narrative in Genesis Six immediately has Yahweh declaring the 120-year grace period for the evil on earth, followed by instructions to Noah and his sons for the construction of the ark. Since Scripture declares flat-out in 7:6 and 7:11 that Noah was 600 years old when the inundation began,  we accept that as hard fact, adjusting backwards to allow for the 120 years (e.g., the 120 years may have begun *before* Noah had his sons). I take Noah's age at the beginning of the flood as the only hard and fast time-mark we have; the other information is a bit nebulous.

The Hebrew translated "six hundred years old" is literally "a son of six hundred years."

Now let's take the opportunity of v6 to take a closer look at the nature of this flood. (As you can see from the handout, we could do the same at v11b-12, and v17.)

#### **The Rain**

The question arose last week, *Would the people at the time even know what rain was?* Put another way, *Is it true that this was the first time rain had fallen on the earth?* Let's first look at the foundation for these questions.

A fair number of scholars hold to this position of the Flood comprising earth's first rainfall—not least John C. Whitcomb, author of *The Genesis Flood* (P&R Publishing, 1961), a respected, detailed examination of the biblical account compared to geological and scientific evidence. These scholars' starting point for this position is Genesis 2:5-6.

### **Read Genesis 2:5-6.**

That word in your version translated “stream” or “mist” is the Hebrew *edh* (AID), and is indeed translated variously as mist or vapor, such as fog; it does not seem to describe what we would think of as a stream, a babbling brook running through a forest glen.

Since it is the conclusion in this class that Chapter Two (vv4-25) is a recapitulation, not just repeating but adding more information to the account in Chapter One, vv5-6 of Chapter Two are easily woven into Chapter One at vv11-12, the third day.

### **Read Genesis 1:11-12.**

The Hebrew used in these two verses describes vegetation of a sort that was what we would term “wild,” or at least uncultivated. Note that man is not created until the sixth day, so these are wild grasses and foliage intended to feed the beasts and even man in his early days.

Verses 5 and 6 in Chapter Two are similar but different from v11 in Chapter One:

**shrub of the field** = *siach hassadheh* = field shrub or bush

**plant of the field** = *esebh hassadheh* = field plants, herb, or grass

That is, none of these—*cultivated* vegetation of the prepared and planted field—had yet been created because they required regular rain from the clouds and man to tend the field of crops. Put into a modern setting, the vegetation in Chapter One I can find by walking through the timber; the vegetation of Chapter Two I find by walking the rows of corn and soybeans in the adjacent farm field.

Verse 6 in Chapter Two explains how the earliest vegetation survived without rain or tending by man:

**But a stream [or mist or vapor] would rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.**

It is difficult to say whether v6 speaks of the vegetation in Chapter One or that in Chapter Two. Even so, it speaks of a time when the full atmospheric infrastructure was not yet in place and man was not yet on the scene. Because of that I would lean toward it applying to Chapter One, vv11-12.

And what *was* the atmospheric infrastructure? Back to Chapter One.

### **Read Genesis 1:6-8.**

We must remind ourselves of the current condition of the created earth, which is (at this point in the narrative) completely covered with surging water, and completely dark. Added to this is the Spirit of God taking part in the creative process.

### **Read Genesis 1:2.**

In two words, the entire earth is wet and dark. Now, in v7, something new is about to happen.

**So God made the expanse and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so.**

Up to this moment in the Creation the earth waters on the surface and the cloud waters (vapors), as we would recognize them, were contiguous—that is without any intervening clear space between them (Leupold). Remember, step-by-step, the Godhead is systematically preparing the surface of the earth for its inhabitants. With the surface of the earth, as we suppose, shrouded by continuous, impenetrable fog, it would be unsuitable for human habitation.

Similar to what was done with light and darkness in v4, the two “waters” are now separated—this time, however, they are separated by something: an expanse, a firmament, a vault. We know from practical experience that this expanse is not a rigid, impenetrable dome over the surface of the earth.

Clouds can ascend and descend through it, rain and hail and snow can descend through it, and rockets can ascend and descend through it. But there is a distinct layer of atmosphere between earth's surface and space, and during the Creation this meant a lifting of the vaporous clouds from the waters on the surface. ❏

**v8: And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.**

Used in v8 is a word that in Hebrew usage can be used to refer to either the sky or space—even God's dwelling place. But here, in v8, it refers to the sky—as in v20, a place where the “birds fly above the earth.” There is no water in space; but there is water in the clouds and the atmosphere immediately above the earth. We can agree that what is referenced in this passage is what we call, the “sky.”

This passage in Genesis One describes the “first heaven,” referring to it as an expanse. Elihu, the companion of Job 35 uses the same Hebrew word when he says,

**“Look at the heavens and see;  
And perceive the clouds—they are higher than you.”  
(Job 35:5)**

The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *samayim* is *ouranos* (ur-ah-NOS), and it is used in Matthew's gospel to denote the place where the birds fly—in all our common versions translated “air.”

What I find most baffling is to read some commentators citing the creation of the first rainbow in Genesis 9:13 as evidence that this means there was no rain prior to the Flood. In other words, *no rainbows = no rain; no rain = no rainbows*. But rainbows can be caused by many forms of airborne water. These include not only rain, but also mist, spray, and airborne dew. At the same time, it is common for it to rain without seeing a rainbow. Such reasoning by these commentators I find bizarre.

Then we add to this the supposed picture of thousands of years passing, with mankind spread out over and beyond the fertile crescent, building cities, planting crops, surviving and thriving all this time—and without any rain at all prior to the Flood? For me this is beyond comprehension.

### **below...above**

Note carefully what is being said here. Since I sometimes make this mistake myself, it is possible others do as well: The water we see overhead (in the form of clouds) does not dwell *in* what is called the “expanse”—the division being created here. No, they dwell “above the expanse.”

Thus my position is this: Based on the original text of Genesis alongside basic common sense, at least once Adam and his immediate descendants began planting crops, there was rain on the earth.

There was rain—normal showers—but, as we will see, the Flood will be a unique, extraordinary event combining literal *waterfalls* of rain with subterranean vaults of water simultaneously released. This had not occurred before—and will never again. Here is how the venerable Matthew Henry describes it.

*Matthew Henry:* The rain, which ordinarily descends in drops, then came down in streams, or spouts, as they call them in the Indies, where clouds have been often known to burst, as they express it there, when the rain descends in a much more violent torrent than we have ever seen in the greatest shower. We read (Job 26:8) that God binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them; but now the bond was loosed, the cloud was rent, and such rains descended as were never known before nor since, in such abundance and of such continuance: the thick cloud was not, as ordinarily it is, wearied with waterings (Job 37:11), that is, soon spent and exhausted; but still the clouds returned after the rain, and the divine power brought in fresh recruits.

In our next session we will continue our examination of this most extraordinary event: the Flood.

# SESSION 48

## It Begins, part one Genesis 7:6-12

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## Chapter Seven (LSB)

1 Then Yahweh said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.

2 "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean, two, a male and his female;

3 also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep their seed alive on the face of all the earth.

4 "For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made."

5 And Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.

6 Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.

7 Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.

8 Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground,

9 by twos they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 Now it happened after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the fountains of the great deep split open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

12 Then the rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

13 On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

14 they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind—every fowl, every winged creature.

15 So they came to Noah into the ark, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

16 And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him.

17 Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water multiplied and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth.

18 And the water prevailed and multiplied greatly upon the earth, and the ark went on the surface of the water.

19 And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

20 The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind.

22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.

24 And the water prevailed upon the earth 150 days.