

SESSION 49: IT BEGINS, PART TWO

Genesis 7:6-12

November 17, 2024

PREFACE

Quite often there is more than one way to organize, or evaluate, a story. We have already noted, in our last session, the structure of *repetition* in Chapter Seven. In the handout I used underlines of different colors to group the instances of repetition or topics. Later we will consider Chapter Seven from the standpoint of the *flood's impact on the earth*—it's geological scope and massive destructive power.

Before we get to that, however, I would like to evaluate the chapter from another angle, one that is perhaps the most important from a *biblical* perspective—that is from the perspective of God's word as a whole; or put another way, what is the story's underlying *moral*. To that end I offer a second grouping of the verses in Chapter Seven, on page 2 of the handout. To summarize this approach, we previously looked at *repetition*; now we look at *contrast*—the contrast between salvation, or life, and perishing.

Later Yahweh will formalize His commandments for the people of Israel, offering them a choice well-stated in Moses' final summation of the Law before his passing.

Read Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

Later still, this Law will be fulfilled in Christ, very Son of God; the rules will change, but the choices will remain the same: life or death.

Read John 3:14-18.

God says that if we believe in His Son we will be saved—which is another way of saying that if we *obey what God wants us to do*, we will be saved. That is what is going on in Genesis—and *has* been since the earliest days of Creation.

Read Genesis 2:16-17.

From Genesis to the Revelation, the Lord God has repeatedly offered humanity a choice: choose life in Him, or choose death. On page 2 of the handout look at the passages highlighted in gold, beginning in v1, with God's command to Noah to enter the ark. Even in those simple three words is the implication: enter the ark to live—do *not* enter, and you will die. And on through the rest of the chapter:

- Noah did according to all that Yahweh had commanded him.
- entered the ark
- as God had commanded him
- and only Noah remained, and those that were with him in the ark.

By contrast we see what happened to those who rejected God and His commandments, beginning in v4:

- I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.
- all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last
- All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

From beginning to end the consistent theme—the “moral,” as it were—in God's word is choose life, or salvation, or choose death. In Genesis Chapter Three we have the first rebellion against God by man, and the first judgment against him as a result: death—in this setting meaning *instead of living forever, you will eventually die*. But here, in Chapter Seven, the rebellious, those who have rejected God, will perish immediately, swallowed up by the deep waters of His wrath. They chose death.

Read Genesis 7:6-12.

v7

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

Even though the wording of this verse *sounds* like they entered the ark because it had begun to rain, the rest of the passage seems to say otherwise. Look at how vv16-17 read.

And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and Yahweh closed it behind him. Then the flood came upon the earth...

So I take it that v7 could be read, *they entered the ark because of the impending water of the flood*. But more importantly, they entered because they were trusting in God, who had told them there would be a flood. They didn't need to feel raindrops on their face to know it was coming. This was just one more act of obedience and trust.

vv8-9

Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, by twos they came to Noah into the ark, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

Just a couple of observations here:

- By my reckoning this is now the seventh time the phrase “male and female” has been used since Genesis 1:1—and there will be one more time in v16. This would seem to put the lie to today's fanciful notion that there exists an unlimited number of sexes. No, God seems to be emphatic: in the human and animal world there are only two.
- Note that in the eleventh hour the animals know: “they came to Noah.” Either instinct or God's Spirit is telling them to get inside with Noah and the other humans.

vv10-12

Though it will be reprised with more detail in vv17-20 and v24, now in these three verses the inundation officially begins.

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

In v4 Yahweh made the promise that “after seven more days” He would send the rain. Now the clock has struck and it is time. Notice that this statement in v10 is general, not specifying the source: just “water.”

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.

The obvious question that springs to mind is, *Why are you telling us this? What is the significance of these precise details about the beginning of the Flood?* Two reasons come to mind.

First, these details express the importance, the earth-shattering impact of this event. They drive a peg in historical fact to show that this is not just a dream, or a fairy tale, or an illustrative parable.

Second, by placing it at a given point within a patriarch's lifetime, it follows the pattern of antiquity to pinpoint events less on a specific calendar date than a year in a king or leader's life. For example, repeatedly that pattern is used in Kings and Chronicles, such as in 2 Kings 13:1.

In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel at Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years.

Thus our starting point for the Flood epoch is, as it were, *in the six-hundredth year of Noah...* This beginning point is necessary to offer a foundation for the time marks that follow. And here is as good a point as any to discuss the organization of the Flood epoch into a *palistrophe*—or *chiasmus*—an inversion of the relationship between the elements of phrases. This literary device is found throughout the Bible, more often than not in the Psalms, and I usually have small regard for it. But here, in Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, it is particularly precise and dramatic. We won't take the time to discuss it—it speaks for itself—but I have included it in the handout; just take a few moments on your own to look at it and marvel at the symmetry in God's word.

So what happened in Noah's six-hundredth year? Quite a bit, actually.

all the fountains of the great deep split open,

The word translated “split [or burst] open” is the Hebrew *baqa*, which means “to cleave asunder, to rend, divide; to lay open anything enclosed that it may break forth” (Wilson). Think a huge, highly pressurized pipe suddenly split open by a strong iron cleaver.

The great “deep” (*tehom*) refers to a surging mass of waters, an abyss, a subterranean water supply. You may wonder, *How did that subterranean water get there?* Turn back, please, to Chapter One.

Read Genesis 1:2.

That is, the surface of the earth was covered in a surging, rolling, tumultuous dark sea. Now, v9.

Read Genesis 1:9-10.

From the very beginning of this earth's existence in Genesis One to its ultimate demise in the Revelation—and several instances in-between—this globe has been subject to dramatic, surface-altering upheavals. In Chapter One, some of the earth's structure (today we would call them “tectonic plates”) beneath a globe of water, rise *above* the water to become dry land. Some of that replaced water flows into resulting seas, but some moves underground. Now, in one supernatural blow, it bursts free of its confinement. There is more to say about this moment—and we will—but for now let's move on.

and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

There are several scenes in William Wyler's 1959 *Ben-Hur* that take place in an upper room—something like a comfortable sitting room—in the wealthy family's home. One wall of this room consists entirely of latticed “windows” that can be angled open to regulate either incoming breeze or outgoing smoke—a common design in the Middle East even today—using not glass, but open wooden lattice.

This is why the KJVs and ESV faithfully translate the Hebrew *arubbah* “windows,” for that is the word: a latticed opening. But our other versions do a better job, I believe, of describing the *nature* of this supernatural event with “floodgates” of the sky or heavens. Either word is meant in a metaphorical sense, seeking to paint a picture of the sheer volume and intensity of this event.

Even though some commentators discount the impact of the rain in favor of the subterranean waters, I believe *both* were of a cataclysmic nature.

Thus far we have just teased that cataclysm; in our next session we will consider it in-depth. But for now, Moses closes this passage with a concise statement regarding the *duration* of the rain which cascaded out of the “windows of heaven.”

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

At our home our most desired spring or summer rain is a light shower of several days' duration. This allows time for the life-giving water to soak deeply into the ground without causing erosion or flooding. A hard "gulley-washer" may fill up the pond nicely, but can cause more damage to the soil without allowing time for it to soak in, thus harming the garden without nourishing it.

Here, however, in this dramatic event, it is precisely destruction and death that the Lord God has in mind. This is not a nourishing shower, but a destructive and drowning inundation that will wipe away everything in its path. That is (if my math is correct), 960 hours of waterfall-intensity rain upon the earth.

Now, *that'll* fill up the pond.

Matthew Henry: God made the world in six days, but he was forty days in destroying it; for he is slow to anger. But, though the destruction came slowly and gradually, yet it came effectually.

SESSION 49

It Begins, part two
Genesis 7:6-12

The Contrast between Salvation, or Life, and Perishing

From beginning to end the consistent theme—the “moral,” as it were—in God’s word is choose life, or salvation, or choose death. In Genesis Chapter Three we have the first rebellion against God by man, and the first judgment against him as a result: death—in this setting meaning instead of living forever, you will eventually die. But here, in Chapter Seven, the rebellious, those who have rejected God, will perish immediately, swallowed up by the deep waters of His wrath. They chose death.

The Flood Palistrophe, or Chiasmus

The tale is cast in the form of an extended palistrophe, that is a structure that turns back on itself. In a palistrophe the first item matches the final item, the second item matches the penultimate item, and so on. The second half of the story is thus a mirror image of the first.

- A God resolves to destroy the corrupt race (6:11-13).
- B Noah builds an ark according to God’s instructions (6:14-22).
- C The Lord commands the remnant to enter the ark (7:1-9).
- D The flood begins (7:10-16).
- E The flood prevails 150 days and the water covers the mountains (7:17-24).
- F God remembers Noah (8:1a).
- E’ The flood recedes 150 days, and the mountains are visible (8:1-5).
- D’ The earth dries (8:6-14).
- C’ God commands the remnant to leave the ark (8:15-19).
- B’ Noah builds an altar (8:20).
- A’ The Lord resolves not to destroy humankind (8:21-22).

What then is the function of the *palistrophe*? Firstly, it gives literary expression to the character of the flood event. The rise and fall of the waters is mirrored in the rise and fall of the key words in its description. Secondly, it draws attention to the real turning point in the saga: viii 1, ‘And God remembered Noah.’ From that moment the waters start to decline and the earth to dry out. It was God’s intervention that was decisive in saving Noah, and the literary structure highlights this fact. (Constable)

“all the fountains of the great deep split open”

The word translated “split [or burst] open” is the Hebrew *baqa*, which means “to cleave asunder, to rend, divide; to lay open anything enclosed that it may break forth” (Wilson). Think a huge, highly pressurized pipe suddenly split open by a strong iron cleaver.

From the very beginning of this earth’s existence in Genesis One to its ultimate demise in the Revelation—and several instances in-between—this globe has been subject to dramatic, surface altering upheavals. In Chapter One, some of the earth’s structure (today we would call them “tectonic plates”) beneath a globe of water, rise *above* the water to become dry land. Some of that replaced water flows into resulting seas, but some moves underground. Now, in one supernatural blow, it bursts free of its confinement.

“Then the rain came...”

Here in this dramatic event it is precisely destruction and death that the Lord God has in mind. This is not a nourishing shower, but a destructive and drowning inundation that will wipe away everything in its path. That is, 960 hours of waterfall-intensity rain upon the earth.

My source for this is
Dr. Thomas L.
Constable’s
Commentary (2012).

For complete notes and
audios for each session, go
to DLAMPEL.COM/BIBLE-STUDIES/



Chapter Seven (LSB): Salvation

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.