

Genesis 8:1-22

Over the past few weeks we have been studying the toldot (or narrative) of Noah. To summarize what we have covered,

The World before the Flood, 6:9-12.

Gen 6:5 tells us this was the most evil generation in history *as everything they thought or imagined was evil*. Verse 10 says *that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence*. So corrupt and violent that God decided to start over, but instead of destroying all of mankind and recreating something else, God chose a righteous man, Noah, to continue with his plan.

The Command to build the Ark, 6:13-22.

So in Gen 6:14, God commanded Noah to *build a large boat*; and in Gen 6:13-22, God tells Noah what it is to look like, what to build it with, and gives some engineering parameters for its construction. God again tells Noah of the coming destruction and instructs him to gather pairs of all living creatures to come into the ark with him in order to preserve the dominion God had originally charged man to care for.

The Entrance into the Ark, Gen 7:1-5.

As we get to chapter 7, construction is complete, and God gives Noah seven days to gather all the animals and enter the Ark before the flood comes.

The Start of the Flood, Gen 7:10-16.

Then in 7:10-16 we have a description of the start of the flood. We noted the waters came from two sources. The Springs that had watered the earth since creation which are noted in Gen 2:6 burst forth, while God also sent something new upon the earth; water from the heavens came down which we know as rain.

The Description of the Flood, Gen 7:17-24.

In Gen 7:17-24 we have a description of the flood itself. We know it rained for 40 days and nights. We are not told how long the springs burst forth. But between the two sources, the world was covered with water. Poetically, God had uncreated the earth so it resembled the formless void of Gen 1:2. The only thing preserved was the Ark Noah had made and the creatures with it, as well what remained in the seas.

We now get to chapter 8, which is a description of the receding waters, the landing of the ark, and Noah and his family's emergence from the ark.

The Flood waters Recede, Gen 8:1-14.

The narrative gives some dates and days which can be confusing, so just listen along for I have summarized the timeline in a chart at the end.

Vs 1a, *But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark,*

The pivot point of the flood occurs with this verse, *but God remembered Noah*. The word *remember* does not mean that God had forgotten. Rather it means mindfulness with a goal in mind. We do this all the time. When you go on vacation for a few days, you are mindful to check your mailbox when you get home. In other words you didn't forget the mail. Rather you had in the back of your mind to check it when you got home. You remembered it needed to be checked. During the flood God did not forget Noah or the animals with him, rather he was mindful of them the whole time and when the goal of the flood was accomplished, God checked in and initiated a slow reversal of the waters as noted in verse 1b.

Vs 1b, *and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.*

God now expresses his remembrance by sending a wind over the earth; and with the wind the waters start to recede.

Vs 2, *Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky.*

Verse 2 tells us the two sources of the flood have now stopped.

Vs 3, *The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down,*

Vs 3 and 4 are closely related. Gen 7:17 notes it rained for 40 days, then the waters start to recede over the next 110 days. This same event is also mentioned in Ps 104:6-9, *You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. ⁷ But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; ⁸ they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. ⁹ You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.*

Vs 4, *and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.*

150 days since the flood began the ark comes to rest on a specific day, the 17th day of the seventh month. Noah must have chronicled the event and Moses had access to his writing, or God had revealed the date to be recorded. Note the mountains of Ararat run from southern Russia through Turkey and into Armenia. It is customary to think the ark came to rest specifically on mt Ararat but the text is vague and it is unclear exactly where it came to lie.

Vs 5, *The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.*

Verse 5 tells it took another 2 and ½ months before the full range of mountains upon which the ark rested became visible. Note God must have situated the ark in such a place and position for it not to capsize or tilt once the waters receded.

Vs 6-7, *After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark ⁷ and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.*

In verses 6-12 we have the release of four birds to determine the status of the receding waters. The first bird released is a raven. Ravens are unclean birds (note Lev 11:15) who are scavengers and can live in high places. Note Noah releases the raven and it does not return. This tells Noah some food is available (perhaps a dead carcass) and the bird has found refuge upon some mountain.

Vs 8-9, *Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. ⁹ But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark.*

Next Noah sends a dove. Doves are clean animals who can fly long distances, and require vegetation to survive. Hence Noah is testing how far the waters have receded down the mountains and to see if any vegetation is now growing. As the dove returns, he deduces that water still fills the valleys and no vegetation is yet available.

Vs 10-11, *He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. ¹¹ When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth.*

Now Noah waits seven days and again sends another dove (perhaps it is the same one). This time the dove returns with a small olive leaf. Olives tend to grow on the slopes of hills, so Noah now knows the waters are down and vegetation is growing. The fact the dove returns indicates conditions are still not ideal for full settlement, so Noah decided to wait another seven day as noted in verse 12.

Vs 12, *He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.*

Now Noah sends out a third dove (or the same dove three times) the dove does not return indicating the environment is now suitable for settlement and life.

Vs 13-14, *By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. ¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.*

We are now given more dates as to when the flood is finally ended and the earth is now dry. It is here we can trace the chronology of the flood. There is a fair amount of debate among commentators about what removing the covering of the ark means. Probably the best explanation is there were skins covering the circumferential windows and as it was now not raining and drying out, Noah simply removed a number of these for ventilation and enhancing his view.

The Disembarkation, 8:15-19.

Vs 15-16, *Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives.*

Notice though the ground was fairly dry in verse 13, Noah waited to disembark until God told him to do so. It was one year and 10 days earlier that God had said to Noah, go into the ark. Now God breaks the year long silence and tells him to get out of it. I ponder on what Noah thought of the intervening time. Did he ever think God had deserted him? Had Noah given up hope? It will be interesting to ask him.

Vs 17, *Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it.”*

In verse 17, God commands Noah to bring out all the animals as well. I’m sure that after over a year of living with them, Noah was most anxious to let them go.

Vs 18-19, *So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. ¹⁹All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on land—came out of the ark, one kind after another.*

In verses 18 and 19 we have the actual departure. These two commands (Noah come out and bring out the animals) were probably the easiest to obey in all of scripture. You want me out of here? I am on it!

The Offering and the Promise, Gen 8:20-22.

Vs 20, *Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.*

Verse 20 records the first mention of an altar. The flood had destroyed the Garden of Eden and the presence of the Lord (the Shekinah Glory) in the form of the flashing sword was no longer present on the earth. Mankind no longer had the visible presence of the Lord where they could bring an offering. Humanity now had to make use of an altar. Therefore, Noah builds an altar and makes an offering of some of the clean animals upon it. A burnt offering was one in which all of the animal was consumed, and as later revealed in Leviticus, it demonstrated both a sacrifice for sin and a complete and whole hearted devotion to God.

Vs 21a, *The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart:*

Verse 21 records God’s response. The phrase “*said in his heart*” means God is about to commit himself to something, and that commitment is found in 21b and 22.

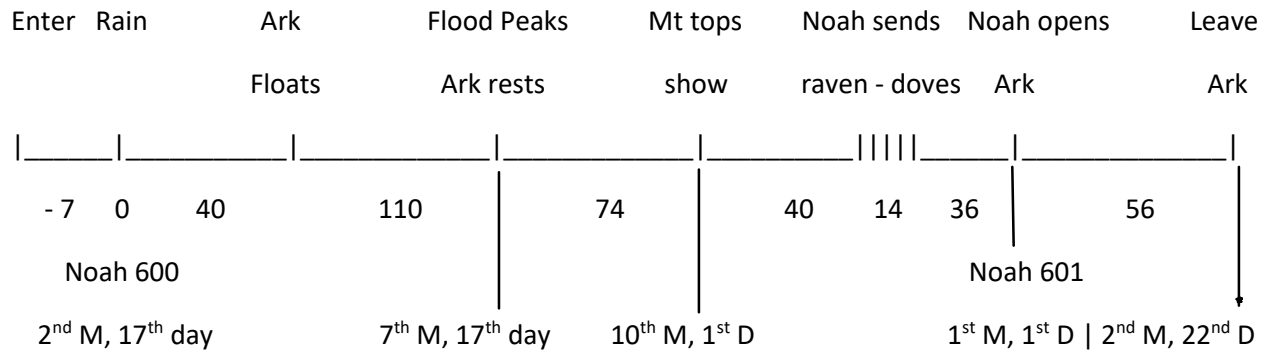
Vs 21b, *“Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though^[a] every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.*

Notice that even though humanity remains evil, God will never again curse the ground and destroy life in the way he just did.

Vs 22, *As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”*

Chapter 8 now concludes with a promise that life will continue as long as the earth endures. This has been called the Covenant of Seasons, and is noted in Jer 31:35-37, and Jer 33:17-26.

Flood Timeline



Some Observations,

1. No matter your trial, God is always mindful of us. We may seem alone, deserted, trapped, and imprisoned in circumstances that we see no way out of. Yet God sees us. He is mindful of our predicament. He has a sovereign plan and with that plan, He has the resources, the power, and the presence to see you through.
2. To be afloat on the ark meant a total dependence on the winds and currents of God's will. The ark had no rudder, no steering mechanism, no sail; it had nothing to guide it other than God's will. All Noah could do was to rest in the ark and let God take it where He will. It is a good picture of how to structure our lives. Letting God fully direct us by the power and direction of His Spirit.
3. Note, even though circumstances looked favorable to leave the ark in 8:13, Noah waited until God told him to leave. In other words don't jump the gun on God's directions. Pray and wait for clear guidance.
3. Noah's first response upon leaving the ark was to worship. He thanks God. He offers a burnt offering. A burnt offering signified two things, forgiveness, and dedication. This past week I read an article in Christianity Today about retirement. It profiled three prominent Christian men and profiled in a brief fashion, how they came to faith and how they viewed retirement. One of the men was Arnie Cole, CEO of Back to the Bible. He stated this, "I didn't know Jesus, but Jesus knew me. I hated Christians. I was on my way to Alaska, and we got caught in a killer storm. I've been boating since I was 18. And I knew the boat could not survive. We got caught between 75-foot and 100-foot waves. I prayed to the Lord: "If you save me, I'll give my life to you." I got through the storm, woke up the next day, and was driving the boat again. And I thought, *Man, I jumped the gun. I've got a whole lot of living to do in retirement.* And as I'm thinking I jumped the gun, we get hit by a wave. The boat got thrown on its side, and I said, "Lord, I'm the lowest form of creeping thing, but if you will just forgive me and let me turn it around, I will give you the rest of my life, my retirement, whatever you want." So that's how it happened. It's truly nothing I did. It's the Lord knowing me before I even knew or acknowledged him." He truly did have an ark like experience, but note what he did –he confessed, then dedicated- a good example for us.

Chronology of the Flood

Event	Ref	Mo	Day of Mon	Interval	Description	Days
Fam enters the ark	7:7-9	2	10	0	wait 7 days	0
Rain begins	7:11	2	17	7		7
Rain stops	7:12	3	27	40	water 150 days	47
Water continues	7:24			110		157
Ark settles	8:4	7	17	0		157
Mt tops exposed	8:5	10	1	74	water recedes	231
Release raven	8:6-7	11	11	40		271
Release Dove 1	8:8-9	11	18	7		278
Release Dove 2	8:10	11	25	7		285

Release Dove 3	8:12	12	2	7		292
Water receded	8:12	12		29		321
N removes cover	8:13	1	1		earth is drying	
N disembarks	8:14	2	27	57		378