
GENESIS 8:1 God remembered Noah, all the animals, and all the livestock that were with him in the ship; and God made a wind to pass over the earth. The waters subsided.

At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters begin to subside, Gen 8:1-3. The ark rests on Mount Ararat, Gen 8:4. On the first of the tenth month the tops of the hills appear, Gen 8:5. The window opened and the raven sent out, Gen 8:6, Gen 8:7. The dove sent forth, and returns, Gen 8:8, Gen 8:9. The dove sent forth a second time, and returns with an olive leaf, Gen 8:10, Gen 8:11. The dove sent out the third time, and returns no more, Gen 8:12. On the twentieth day of the second month the earth is completely dried, Gen 8:13, Gen 8:14. God orders Noah, his family, and all the creatures to come out of the ark, Gen 8:15-19. Noah builds an altar, and offers sacrifices to the Lord, Gen 8:20. They are accepted; and God promises that the earth shall not be cursed thus any more, notwithstanding the iniquity of man, Gen 8:21, Gen 8:22.

Verse 1

And God made a wind to pass over the earth - Such a wind as produced a strong and sudden evaporation. The effects of these winds, which are frequent in the east, are truly astonishing. A friend of mine, who had been bathing in the Tigris, not far from the ancient city of Ctesiphon, and within five days' journey of Bagdad, having on a pair of Turkish drawers, one of these hot winds, called by the natives samiel, passing rapidly across the river just as he had got out of the water, so effectually dried him in a moment, that not one particle of moisture was left either on his body or in his bathing dress! With such an electrified wind as this, how soon could God dry the whole of the earth's surface! An operation something similar to the conversion of water into its two constituent airs, oxygen and hydrogen, by means of the galvanic fluid, as these airs themselves may be reconverted into water by means of the electric spark. See the note Gen 7:11. And probably this was the agent that restored to the atmosphere the quantity of water which it had contributed to this vast inundation. The other portion of waters, which had proceeded from the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, would of course subside more slowly, as openings were made for them to run off from the higher lands, and form seas. By the first cause, the hot wind, the waters were assuaged, and the atmosphere having its due proportion of vapours restored, the quantity below must be greatly lessened. By the second, the earth was gradually dried, the waters, as they found passage, lessening by degrees till the seas and gulfs were formed, and the earth completely drained. This appears to be what is intended in the third and fifth verses by the waters decreasing continually, or, according to the margin, they were in going and decreasing, Gen 8:5.

GENESIS 8:2 The deep's fountains and the sky's windows were also stopped, and the rain from the sky was restrained.

GENESIS 8:3 The waters continually receded from the earth. After the end of one hundred fifty days the waters decreased.

GENESIS 8:4 The ship rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on Ararat's mountains.

Verse 4

The mountains of Ararat - That Ararat was a mountain of Armenia is almost universally agreed. What is commonly thought to be the Ararat of the Scriptures, has been visited by many travelers, and on it there are several monasteries. For a long time the world has been amused with reports that the remains of the ark were still visible there; but Mr. Tournefort, a famous French naturalist, who was on the spot, assures us that nothing of the kind is there to be seen. As there is a great chain of mountains which are called by this name, it is impossible to determine on what part of them the ark rested; but the highest part, called by some the finger mountain, has been fixed on as the most likely place. These things we must leave, and they are certainly of very little consequence.

From the circumstance of the resting of the ark on the 17th of the seventh month, Dr. Lightfoot draws this curious conclusion: That the ark drew exactly eleven cubits of water. On the first day of the month Ab the mountain tops were first seen, and then the waters had fallen fifteen cubits; for so high had they prevailed above the tops of the mountains. This decrease in the waters took up sixty days, namely, from the first of Sivan; so that they appear to have abated in the proportion of one cubit in four days. On the 16th of Sivan they had abated but four cubits; and yet on the next day the ark rested on one of the hills, when the waters must have been as yet eleven cubits above it. Thus it appears that the ark drew eleven cubits of water.

GENESIS 8:5 The waters receded continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible.

GENESIS 8:6 At the end of forty days, Noah opened the window of the ship which he had made,

GENESIS 8:7 and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth, until the waters were dried up from the earth.

Verse 7

He sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro - It is generally supposed that the raven flew off, and was seen no more, but this meaning the Hebrew text will not bear; וַיֵּצֵא יֵצוֹא וְשׁוֹב vaiyetse yatso vashob, and it went forth, going forth and returning. From which it is evident that she did return, but was not taken into the ark. She made frequent excursions, and continued on the wing as long as she could, having picked up such aliment as she found floating on the waters; and then, to rest herself, regained the ark, where she might perch, though she was not admitted. Indeed this must be allowed, as it is impossible she could have continued twenty one days upon the wing, which she must have done had she not returned. But the text itself is sufficiently determinate.

GENESIS 8:8 He himself sent out a dove to see if the waters were abated from the surface of the ground,

Verse 8

He sent forth a dove - The dove was sent forth thrice; the first time she speedily returned, having, in all probability, gone but a little way from the ark, as she must naturally be terrified at the appearance of the waters. After seven days, being sent out a second time, she returned with an olive leaf pluckt off, Gen 8:11, an emblem of the restoration of peace between God and the earth; and

from this circumstance the olive has been the emblem of peace among all civilized nations. At the end of the other seven days the dove being sent out the third time, returned no more, from which Noah conjectured that the earth was now sufficiently drained, and therefore removed the covering of the ark, which probably gave liberty to many of the fowls to fly off, which circumstance would afford him the greater facility in making arrangements for disembarking the beasts and reptiles, and heavy-bodied domestic fowls, which might yet remain. See Gen 8:17.

GENESIS 8:9 but the dove found no place to rest her foot, and she returned to him into the ship, for the waters were on the surface of the whole earth. He put out his hand, and took her, and brought her to him into the ship.

GENESIS 8:10 He waited yet another seven days; and again he sent the dove out of the ship.

GENESIS 8:11 The dove came back to him at evening and, behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth.

GENESIS 8:12 He waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; and she didn't return to him anymore.

GENESIS 8:13 In the six hundred first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth. Noah removed the covering of the ship, and looked. He saw that the surface of the ground was dried.

GENESIS 8:14 In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

Verse 14

And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day - From this it appears that Noah was in the ark a complete solar year, or three hundred and sixty-five days; for he entered the ark the 17th day of the second month, in the six hundredth year of his life, Gen 7:11, Gen 7:13, and continued in it till the 27th day of the second month, in the six hundredth and first year of his life, as we see above. The months of the ancient Hebrews were lunar; the first six consisted of thirty days each, the latter six of twenty-nine; the whole twelve months making three hundred and fifty-four days: add to this eleven days, (for though he entered the ark the preceding year on the seventeenth day of the second month, he did not come out till the twenty-seventh of the same month in the following year), which make exactly three hundred and sixty-five days, the period of a complete solar revolution; the odd hours and minutes, as being fractions of time, noncomputed, though very likely all included in the account. This year, according to the Hebrew computation, was the one thousand six hundred and fifty-seventh year from the creation; but according to the reckoning of the Septuagint it was the two thousand two hundred and forty-second, and according to Dr. Hales, the two thousand two hundred and fifty-sixth. See on Gen 11:12 (note).

GENESIS 8:15 God spoke to Noah, saying,

GENESIS 8:16 "Go out of the ship, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.

GENESIS 8:17 Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh, including birds, livestock, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply on the earth.”

GENESIS 8:18 Noah went out, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him.

GENESIS 8:19 Every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, whatever moves on the earth, after their families, went out of the ship.

GENESIS 8:20 Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Verse 20

Noah builded an altar - As we have already seen that Adam, Cain, and Abel, offered sacrifices, there can be no doubt that they had altars on which they offered them; but this, builded by Noah, is certainly the first on record. It is worthy of remark that, as the old world began with sacrifice, so also did the new. Religion or the proper mode of worshipping the Divine Being, is the invention or institution of God himself; and sacrifice, in the act and design, is the essence of religion. Without sacrifice, actually offered or implied, there never was, there never can be, any religion. Even in the heavens, a lamb is represented before the throne of God as newly slain, Rev 5:6, Rev 5:12, Rev 5:13. The design of sacrificing is two-fold: the slaying and burning of the victim point out, 1st, that the life of the sinner is forfeited to Divine justice; 2dly, that his soul deserves the fire of perdition.

The Jews have a tradition that the place where Noah built his altar was the same in which the altar stood which was built by Adam, and used by Cain and Abel, and the same spot on which Abraham afterwards offered up his son Isaac.

The word מזבח mizbach, which we render altar, signifies properly a place for sacrifice, as the root זבח zabach signifies simply to slay. Altar comes from the Latin altus, high or elevated, because places for sacrifice were generally either raised very high or built on the tops of hills and mountains; hence they are called high places in the Scriptures; but such were chiefly used for idolatrous purposes.

Burnt-offerings - See the meaning of every kind of offering and sacrifice largely explained on Leviticus 7:1-38.

GENESIS 8:21 The LORD smelled the pleasant aroma. The LORD said in his heart, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again strike every living thing, as I have done.

Verse 21

The Lord smelled a sweet savor - That is, he was well pleased with this religious act, performed in obedience to his own appointment, and in faith of the promised Savior. That this sacrifice prefigured that which was offered by our blessed Redeemer in behalf of the world, is sufficiently evident from the words of St. Paul, Eph 5:2 : Christ hath loved us, and given himself for its an offering and a sacrifice to God for a Sweet-Smelling Savor; where the words σμνην ευωδιας of the apostle are the very words used by the Septuagint in this place.

I will not again curse the ground - $\eta\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron$ lo osiph, I will not add to curse the ground - there shall not be another deluge to destroy the whole earth: for the imagination of man's heart, כִּי ki, Although the imagination of man's heart should be evil, i.e. should they become afterwards as evil as they have been before, I will not destroy the earth by a Flood. God has other means of destruction; and the next time he visits by a general judgment, Fire is to be the agent. 2Pet 3:7.

GENESIS 8:22 While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night will not cease."

Verse 22

While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, etc. - There is something very expressive in the original, עד כל ימי הארץ od col yemey haarets, until all the Days of the earth; for God does not reckon its duration by centuries, and the words themselves afford a strong presumption that the earth shall not have an endless duration.

Seed-time and harvest - It is very probable that the seasons, which were distinctly marked immediately after the deluge, are mentioned in this place; but it is difficult to ascertain them. Most European nations divide the year into four distinct parts, called quarters or seasons; but there are six divisions in the text, and probably all intended to describe the seasons in one of these postdiluvian years, particularly in that part of the globe, Armenia, where Noah was when God gave him, and mankind through him, this gracious promise. From the Targum of Jonathan on this verse we learn that in Palestine their seed-time was in September, at the autumnal equinox; their harvest in March, at the vernal equinox; that their winter began in December, at the solstice; and their summer at the solstice in June.

The Copts begin their autumn on the 15th of September, and extend it to the 15th of December. Their winter on the 15th of December, and extend it to the 15th of March. Their spring on the 15th of March, and extend it to the 15th of June. Their summer on the 15th of June, and extend it to the 15th of September, assigning to each season three complete months. Calmet.

There are certainly regions of the earth to which neither this nor our own mode of division can apply: there are some where summer and winter appear to divide the whole year, and others where, besides summer, winter, autumn, and spring, there are distinct seasons that may be denominated the hot season, the cold season, the rainy season, etc., etc.

This is a very merciful promise to the inhabitants of the earth. There may be a variety in the seasons, but no season essentially necessary to vegetation shall utterly fail. The times which are of greatest consequence to the preservation of man are distinctly noted; there shall be both seed-time and harvest - a proper time to deposit the different grain in the earth, and a proper time to reap the produce of this seed.

Thus ends the account of the general deluge, its cause, circumstances, and consequences. An account that seems to say to us, Behold the goodness and severity of God! Both his justice and long-suffering are particularly marked in this astonishing event. His justice, in the punishment of the incorrigibly wicked, and his mercy, in giving them so fair and full a warning, and in waiting so long to extend his grace to all who might seek him. Such a convincing proof has the destruction of the world by water given of the Divine justice, such convincing testimony of the truth of the sacred writings,

that not only every part of the earth gives testimony of this extraordinary revolution, but also every nation of the universe has preserved records or traditions of this awful display of the justice of God.

A multitude of testimonies, collected from the most authentic sources in the heathen world, I had intended for insertion in this place, but want of room obliges me to lay them aside. But the state of the earth itself is a sufficient proof. Every part of it bears unequivocal evidence of disruption and violence. From the hand of the God of order it never could have proceeded in its present state. In every part we see marks of the crimes of men, and of the justice of God. And shall not the living lay this to heart? Surely God is not mocked; that which a man soweth he shall reap. He who soweth to the flesh shall of it reap destruction; and though the plague of water shall no more destroy the earth, yet an equal if not sorer punishment awaits the world of the ungodly, in the threatened destruction by fire.

In ancient times almost every thing was typical, and no doubt the ark among the rest; but of what and in what way farther than revelation guides, it is both difficult and unsafe to say. It has been considered a type of our blessed Lord; and hence it has been observed, that "as all those who were out of the ark perished by the flood, so those who take not refuge in the meritorious atonement of Christ Jesus must perish everlastingly." Of all those who, having the opportunity of hearing the Gospel, refuse to accept of the sacrifice it offers them, this saying is true; but the parallel is not good. Myriads of those who perished during the flood probably repented, implored mercy, and found forgiveness; for God ever delights to save, and Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And though, generally, the people continued in carnal security and sensual gratifications till the flood came, there is much reason to believe that those who during the forty days' rain would naturally flee to the high lands and tops of the highest mountains, would earnestly implore that mercy which has never been denied, even to the most profligate, when under deep humiliation of heart they have returned to God. And who can say that this was not done by multitudes while they beheld the increasing flood; or that God, in this last extremity, had rendered it impossible?

St. Peter, 1Pet 3:21, makes the ark a figure of baptism, and intimates that we are saved by this, as the eight souls were saved by the ark. But let us not mistake the apostle by supposing that the mere ceremony itself saves any person; he tells us that the salvation conveyed through this sacred rite is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God; i.e. remission of sins and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, which are signified by this baptism. A good conscience never existed where remission of sins had not taken place; and every person knows that it is God's prerogative to forgive sins, and that no ordinance can confer it, though ordinances may be the means to convey it when piously and believingly used.