

Noah and the last days

By Malcolm Baker

Noah saw the end of the world that existed before the Flood; and he saw the new beginning after the Flood. He had lived through the violence, human depravity, and lawlessness that fallen man had revelled in, before God's judgment fell from the heavens onto the earth. He endured ridicule and mocking as he went each day to work on the ark. Noah and his family were to be separated from the rest of humankind.

At the birth of his son, Noah's father gave the reason for his son's name: "He named him Noah saying, 'This one will comfort us in the labour and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed'" (Genesis 5:29). There is an allusion to what had been said to Adam (Genesis 3:17), "cursed is the ground because of you; in TOIL you shall eat of it all the days of your life." Then when we go forward to the eve of the Flood, we discover another etymology implied in the text.

"The Lord regretted (*vayinahem*) that he had made man on the earth, and He was pained to His very heart. And the Lord said, 'I will wipe out the human race I have created from the face of the earth – from man to beast to creatures that crawl and to the birds of the sky – for I regret (*nihamti*) that I have made them.' But Noah (*Noah*) found favour (*hēn*) in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:6). Presented in these verses is the tension between most of the human race, that which God regrets (*nahem*) and Noah (*Noah*) who finds favour (*hēn*) in the eyes of God. "*Hēn*," "favour," spelled "*het-nun*," is the reversal of "*nun-het*," "Noah."

When Noah sends out the dove from the ark, yet another etymology appears: "But the dove found no resting place (*manoah*) for its foot (Genesis 8:9). This etymology comes closest to the literal meaning of Noah's name – Outside of the ark, there is no resting place for the dove's feet, but inside the ark, Noah waits for its return. Holding out his hand as a perch for the dove's tired feet, he brings her inside – here I think of the Lord, inside of the boat, holding out His hand to Peter (Matthew 14:31); and of the Spirit descending on Jesus like a dove, at His baptism (Luke 3:22). Once again, one can see a parallel to Christ and His ministry; outside of Him there is no rest for the weary, but for those that come to Christ, they find rest for their soul (Matthew 11:28-29). Keil suggests that the verse "And the ark came to rest (*vayanaḥ*) in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat" (Genesis 8:4) is also playing on Noah's name.

Noah is the 10th Generation from Adam, and like Enoch of the 7th generation, he is described as a person who walked with God; but not only does he walk with God, he is further described as "a righteous man, blameless in his generation" (Genesis 6:9) and one might say, a partner in a covenant with God: "I will establish My covenant with you" (Genesis 6:18), then there was the covenant of the rainbow that came at the end of the Flood narrative. Some people say "never say never again", but God says "Never again", in fact He repeats it: "And I will establish My covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the Flood, and never again shall there be a Flood to destroy the earth" Genesis (9:11). One commentary I looked at states that here, God made His promise never to destroy the world again. But that is not the promise He made. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be dissolved in the fire, and the earth and its works will not be found. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to conduct yourselves in holiness and godliness" (2 Peter 3:10-11). That was also the kind of challenge before the Flood – since everything will be destroyed. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, but his message fell on deaf ears. Perhaps today, when we have preachers of all kinds of things, what is needed are preachers of righteousness. It is our responsibility to preach the gospel of the Kingdom in the whole world (Matthew 24:14), not find ways to entertain ourselves during a pandemic. Once the testimony to all nations is completed, then the end of this age will come. God did not spare the angels when they sinned. He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the Flood. God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where lawlessness reigned, to

destruction. (See 2 Peter 2:4-6). If we consider what the Scripture actually says in Genesis, the actual physical earth was not destroyed by the Flood, but the godless people were. What about this godless generation?

Sending forth

At the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit is featured somewhat as a dove, brooding over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2). Noah sends out a dove three times (Genesis 8:8-14). It is God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that is active again in this new beginning, and in the coming New Creation. Noah had sent out a raven in the first instance, and the raven flew back and forth until the waters receded. There is a difference in the sending. No explanation is offered for sending out the raven; but the dove was sent to see if the waters had receded from the surface of the ground. The dove returned, but the raven doesn't appear to have done so. The dove is described as returning 'to him' in the ark. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and in bodily form lighted upon Jesus (Matthew 3:15; Luke 3:22; John 1:32), and again, water was involved. Jesus Had come up out of the water after His baptism, and a voice came from heaven... "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." In Genesis when the Spirit was brooding over the waters, God spoke, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good (Genesis 1-4), Jesus is the Light of the World. Then there is the example of Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1).

When God despaired of humanity's universal morality, He sent forth the Flood. It was after the Flood that families became nations. Out of those nations, He was to choose Israel to be a light to the nations. Out of Israel He chose one single family line, to bring salvation to Israel first, and to the whole world. He sent His Son, born of a woman in that family line in Israel, to be the Light of the World. In the Last Days world sinfulness under the Man of Sin (Lawlessness), Jesus will come again and will make all things new. When He returns, the Light of the World will be the only light there is – sun, moon and stars will be switched off; the stars falling from the sky. Every eye will see Jesus, even those that have refused to look to Him throughout the centuries.

After the Flood God speaks, "Leave the ark... And every living thing of all flesh that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every crawling thing that crawls upon the earth – bring them out with you, and let them swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth" (Genesis 8:16-17). Noah is seen as the representative of humankind, and he, under the hand of God, sees the animals reborn into this now cleansed world. In a sense, He is a partner with God in creation, in the new world. He is not the master of the new world, but rather submits to God who tells him precisely when to leave the safety of the ark. Similarly, Jesus did only what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19), and had come to do the will of the Father (John 4:34; 6:38). He did nothing on His own (John 5:30).

This world is passing away

"The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God remains forever. Children, it is the last hour; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour" (1 John 2:17:18 See Mark 13:14; 2 Timothy 2:1-12 Timothy 2:1-12). Antichrist's appearance signals the last hour of this age. That day is approaching. How near it is to fulfilment, I don't know.

What should our response be? If doctors and nurses are frontline workers during this pandemic, what should we be for the Kingdom of God? We should conduct ourselves in holiness and godliness – walk in the Spirit. Noah is described as 'a righteous man, blameless in his generation.' Be preachers of righteousness. Watch and pray (Matthew 26:41; Luke 21:34-36; Matthew 24:42-44). Keep your ear to the ground, as in being rooted and grounded in the Word of God, so that you hear and discern what the Spirit is saying (Revelation 3:22).