

Man Without a Redeemer

After the murder of Abel, the biblical account, in approximately one page of text, fast forwards a couple of thousand years or so. Following the initial corruption of mankind introduced through Adam and Eve, mankind spirals downward into a maelstrom of evil. The implication of Genesis 6:1-3 is that man increasingly violated the will of the Lord. The text records that the "sons of God... took wives for themselves from whom they chose," suggesting unspecified violations of God's declaration in Genesis 1:24 that one man and one woman would be one flesh. Without clarifying the length and breadth of man's sin, God sets a limit on how long He will continue to put up with his unrighteous behavior. He declares, "My Spirit shall not strive (or abide) with man forever (Genesis 6:3)" and announces that one hundred and twenty years hence the end of man shall come. Without God's Spirit in the world, man is left completely vulnerable to Satan's influence. Man falls further and God observes that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (6:5)." The text further records that man's sin grieved God's heart (6:6) and He determined to destroy them all, along with all other living creatures on the earth (6:7), with one exception, Noah.

Somehow Noah managed to live well enough in this wicked world to win God's praise. In spite of the evil that engulfed all of mankind, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (6:8)." God instructs Noah on the preparations he is to make to escape His forthcoming wrath. He is to construct a huge boat, what the Bible calls an ark. This ark was to be four hundred and fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet across. The directive to build such a vessel would seem a bit bizarre, to say the least, to someone who had never seen rain. Nevertheless, Noah obeyed God and, with no assistance other than that from his three sons, began the long and arduous construction of this great vessel.

Noah became the first of the faithful patriarchs who managed to rise above the corruption of the world and find favor in the eyes of God. We are told little of the first six hundred years of his life, but Genesis 7:1 records God's assessment of Noah, "Come into the ark... because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation." Noah not only resisted the sin that brought down Cain and the rest of mankind, but he believed God when He said, "And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die (Genesis 6:17)."

Believing an incredible prediction and carrying out strange instructions, Noah demonstrated his faith. Through obedience Noah brought himself and his family, along with a small number of each living creature, safely through the catastrophe that befell mankind for its sins. Chapters 7 & 8 record the events of the flood culminating with, after one year and ten days in the ark, Noah and his family disembarking onto dry ground. It is at this point that Noah did a most remarkable thing. Having landed on dry ground with only a small number of each animal, Noah

makes an enormous sacrifice to the Lord. In Genesis 8:20 we have recorded, "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." With a world devoid of all animal life except for that which was on the ark and which would disperse all about once out of the ark, Noah makes this enormous animal sacrifice to God. He recognized that by the hand of God he survived a monumental disaster and by the hand of God he would be cared for in the future. His well-being rested in reliance on the Lord, not in the abundance of his possessions.

Some people question why God created a world that He would allow to be subjected to corruption, then, once corrupted, destroy it. The answer, as far as man is able to answer it, is too complex for today's final paragraph. All that we can say for the moment is what we have said previously: This story is about God, not us. To this point the theme of the biblical account is that a world without God ends in catastrophe. With the advent of Abram, the course of Divine purpose changes permanently from the horror of catastrophe to the glory of Christ. The balance of the Bible is this account. [Before we move on to the role of Abram (Abraham), we will consider the role of water in the Great Flood and the significance of blood in Genesis 9:1-17.]