

God's Unique Judgment of the Flood

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You have asked me to lead you at this district convention in a Bible study of the divine judgment of the Noachian flood. It is very much in place for God's people to study also God's judgments. We need to understand them properly. The underlying principles according to which God carries out his judgments ought to be clear to us.

In Genesis 18 we hear of another judgment of God. When God was about to bring his judgment of destruction upon Sodom, he said in the hearing of Abraham, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what he has spoken about him." (NASB)

God did not hide his judgment from Abraham. Instead, the Lord took the father of all believers into his confidence. God guided him to understand the judgment that he was about to carry out. In a very effective way he let Abraham pour out his thoughts as he prayed for Sodom concerning this impending judgment. God answered upon the thoughts that Abraham expressed in his prayer of intercession. In this way the Lord let Abraham understand how he does deal with people in his judgments. The Lord did this that Abraham might instruct his children and his household properly in this matter.

What Abraham came to understand in this way was this: God's judgments, all of them, are, first of all, a show of his holy and righteous wrath upon those who are hardened in wickedness and unbelief. God's judgments carry the clear message: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked... for he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." (Gal 6:7a, 8a) Yet God's judgments, all of them, at the same time stand in the service of his saving grace. God's judgments do bring divine vengeance upon hardened sin and unbelief; but these judgments are at one and the same time a deliverance for his own, a deliverance for his believers. In his saving grace God so tempers, so adjusts his exercise of judgment that his believers will somehow be benefited. In patience, in forbearance, God often holds up well-deserved judgments where his saving Gospel is still being proclaimed. He does so in order that some of his elect may still be won through this Gospel message before his judgment sets in. At other times God hastens with his judgment, lest by its postponement even some of his elect, if that were possible, might be swept away in unbelief.

God wants also you and me, his present-day believers, to understand these vital truths concerning his judgments. He wants you and me to understand, on the one hand, that through his judgments God in his holiness and righteousness does punish sin and unbelief. On the other hand, he wants us to understand likewise that through the same judgments God at the same time in his saving grace delivers his believers. This will be true even concerning his final judgment on the last day. On that day God will banish from his holy presence forever all that have remained in sin and unbelief, and he will cast them into eternal shame and woe. Yet for his believers this will at the same time be the day of complete deliverance from all further evil.

It is through his Word, the Holy Scriptures, that God takes us, his present-day believers, into his confidence that we may understand his judgments. Through such understanding he wants to aid you and me in curbing our own sinful flesh. At the same time God wants to cheer us according to our new man with the blessed comfort that all judgments in which we might be involved must serve for our benefit.

Very forcefully are these truths concerning God's judgments brought home to us through the biblical account of the great flood. In our theme we speak very properly of the flood as a unique judgment of God. In one sense it was unique, that is, in one sense it stands all by itself. Unlike all other judgments of God during this earthly time of grace since the fall, the flood was a universal judgment. It involved all mankind. After it had taken place God himself promised that as long as the earth remained such a universal judgment involving all

mankind and all creatures would not again take place. Yet all the while that we are living under God's Noachian covenant of patience, of forbearance, the message of God's unique judgment of the flood stands.

This unique judgment is set forth in Holy Scriptures for all who read the Scriptures to note and to take to heart. It is an important message: That is evident from the very prominence that the account of the flood has in Genesis. No less than four of the first eleven chapters of Genesis are devoted to the flood and to the renewal following upon it. Yet these eleven chapters cover a period of time that extended at least over 2,000 years, if not more. But the flood took up only a little better than a year. The flood is given greater prominence in the first eleven chapters even than creation. More than that, our Savior in the New Testament points to the flood as the great type of the final judgment. He says: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26-27)

Yet we are living at a time when very many people reject the reality both of a universal flood in the past and of a universal judgment day in the future. For more than a hundred years, the educated world all over the globe has carried on a forceful propaganda for evolution as the explanation of the origin of all things. In uniformitarian evolution, however, there is simply no place for God's direct intervention either through a universal flood or through a universal day of judgment.

We are experiencing the fulfillment of the Apostle Peter's warning in his second epistle, 3:3-7. There we read: "...in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of the water, and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (ASV) Peter wants all uniformitarians, people who say nothing ever has changed or ever changes, to give thought to three periods of great change, two of which have already taken place, and one lying in the future: creation, the flood, and judgment day.

To arm ourselves and others against such scoffers, we shall consider what Scripture tells us about God's unique judgment of the flood.

I. Developments That Led to God's Judgment 6:1-8

We shall begin our biblical study of the flood with the first eight verses of the sixth chapter of Genesis. These verses set forth the sad developments that called for the judgment of the flood. In the structure or outline of Genesis there are ten separate histories. The eight verses which we want to start with in our study really go together with chapter 5 of Genesis to make up the second history, that of Adam. What we have in this history of Adam is a list of the Messianic line, a list of ten forefathers or ancestors of the Savior from Adam through his son Seth down to Noah. We call this list a genealogy. Even with the assumption that every link in this genealogy is listed, a period of over 1600 years would be involved. The first eight verses of chapter 6 then tell us how this long period finally ended in universal wickedness and godlessness on the part of mankind. Mankind was ripe for God's judgment of the flood. We are told, first of all:

Now it came about, when mankind began to increase upon the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, so they took for themselves wives whomsoever they chose. And the Lord said: My spirit shall not strive with man indefinitely, for he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be 120 years. (6:1-3)

These verses really present no great difficulty for our understanding as long as we keep them in their proper context. They are very clear as long as we bear in mind what we have already heard in previous chapters

of Genesis. We need to bear in mind particularly what we have been told in the fourth chapter of Genesis. There we hear how the descendants of Adam and Eve were soon divided into two distinct groups.

The Cainites, like their impenitent forefather Cain, despised God's saving grace. In their separation from God they lived wholly for this life. For this reason they tried to make this life as agreeable and pleasant as possible. They practiced the arts, they developed crafts, they amassed wealth and glorified their own achievements. Lamech even glorified violence in an arrogant, self-sufficient spirit as he made a poem concerning his vengeance of one who had wounded him.

A different attitude, however, showed itself in the descendants of Seth, whom Adam and Eve had humbly and gratefully acknowledged as a divine substitute for the loss of God-fearing Abel. Of the Sethites we hear that they began to call upon the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord stands for all that God has revealed about himself, especially about his plan of salvation. In public worship the Sethites proclaimed and praised God as the Lord, as the God of free and faithful saving grace. From this group, from the Sethites, the forefathers of the Savior are then listed in Genesis 5.

In this context "the sons of God," of whom we now hear in 6:1, are therefore without question Sethites. The designation of believers as sons and children of God is very much in keeping with terminology elsewhere both in the Old and the New Testament (Ps. 122:15; 80:17; Dan. 32:5.6; Hos. 1:10; Isa 1:2; Gal. 3:26; 4:6; 1 John 3:1). The sad thing that we are told here is this: After many centuries had passed by and man began to increase on the face of the earth, also Sethites began to push their faith and their spiritual treasures into the background. They did this in making their most vital decision in life, that of choosing a wife to establish a home. They gave their foremost attention to the physical beauty and attractiveness that they saw in the daughters of men. They let that be the deciding factor in choosing their spouse, rather than to look primarily for the spiritual beauty of a believing and God-fearing heart. It is not that Scripture speaks and thinks lightly even of physical beauty in itself. We know how attention is called in Holy Scripture to the beauty of Sarah, of Rebecca, of Esther, and of other God-fearing women. Yet here the physical beauty and attractiveness of the daughters of men were the decisive matter in choosing a wife.

Who are meant by the daughters of men? In a statement in which the Sethites as sons of God are specifically singled out, the daughters of men will have to be understood as referring to the daughters of the rest of mankind. That would mean they were daughters of the Cainites and of such Sethites as themselves were no longer true Sethites, in the sense of being believers.

What happened because of these mixed marriages was therefore this: the homes of an increasing number of Sethites likewise became worldly and spiritually separated from God. This was due to the worldly and godless spirit of the wives and mothers in these homes. Children were no longer brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We grant, of course, that with the help of God's grace such an outcome can be prevented even in a mixed marriage. Yet this happens only when the believing husband or wife from the very outset makes it very clear that there can never be a thought of their marriage interfering with their own faith in their Lord and Savior or with the thorough training of their children in faith and godliness. When husbands and wives give such testimony concerning the importance of their faith, the unbelieving partner has often been gradually led to faith likewise. Such clear and firm testimony was, however, the very thing that was missing here where the sons of God let their spiritual concerns be put into the background, here where they let other considerations be decisive as they chose their spouses. The outcome was gradual spiritual defection of Sethite homes.

All this is certainly indicated when we are told that God now said: "My spirit shall not always strive with men, because they also are flesh." The word translated as "strive" could also be rendered "rule, judge." It is through God's Word that the Holy Spirit strives with men, judges and reproves them, and seeks to establish his gracious rule over them through faith. This work of the Holy Spirit had patiently gone on until this point. It had always aimed at correcting and checking the strong human leaning toward evil. The Holy Spirit sought to inspire humble faith and thankful obedience through the Word of God.

Scripture, of course, gives only a few details of how the Word of God was brought to mankind at this time. We have already mentioned how the Sethites, according to 4:26, proclaimed the name of the Lord in public worship. The epistle of Jude, verse 14, informs us how Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied: "See the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly acts that they have done in their ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Peter in his second epistle speaks of Noah as a preacher of righteousness.

In spite of all the Spirit's corrective striving through such preaching, mankind had persisted in abandoning the way of truth and life. Even the sons of God no longer cared about having their homes centers of godly instruction where saving truth prevailed. At this point God therefore determined that his Spirit would not indefinitely keep on in his work of reproof and restraining. Only an additional span of 120 years for repentance would still be allowed. If this period of grace would be despised and squandered destruction would set in. Yet we should not miss noting that Moses indicates that it is God as the Lord, as the God of free and faithful saving grace, who is still offering these additional years of grace to mankind. Yes, God always tempers his judgments with his saving grace. He holds them up in the interest of his saving grace.

So far in this description of the conditions which called for divine judgment we have had these conditions set forth negatively in terms of spiritual unfaithfulness, in terms of a breakdown of spirit-wrought faith and godliness. It is a reminder that this is the underlying basis of all evil; here is where all evil sets in. We are very apt to think of evil principally in terms of positive wickedness, violence, lawlessness, selfish abuse of others, and ruthless violation of their rights. Yet these things are actually only the result and the consequence of a breakdown in true faith and godliness.

Also these inevitable consequences of spiritual decay did, however, come into bold evidence in the time before the flood. We are told:

Tyrants were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore (children) to them; these were the heroes of old, the men of renown.
(6:4)

To hear about the presence of tyrants may surprise us. Having been brought up with the wording of the King James version, we have been accustomed to hear that "there were giants in the earth in those days." Yet the translation of "giants" came into the King James version erroneously by way of the Latin *Vulgate*. This version in turn had taken it over from the ancient Greek translation, the *Septuagint*. Behind this *Septuagint* translation of "giants," was a fanciful misinterpretation of the first four verses of Genesis 6. This interpretation is wholly out of context with what goes before and with what follows after these verses. It is the idea that the sons of God who had marriage relations with the daughters of men were really fallen angels or demons, and that the "giants" were their natural offspring. These were to have been monsters of mixed human and angelic birth, beings like the rebellious Titans of Greek mythology. The Hebrew word translated as "giants" is *nephilim*.

The only reason for speaking at length of this ancient interpretation is the fact that it is again becoming extremely popular. The widely used historical critical method of biblical interpretation likes to see reworked legends in Old Testament accounts, especially in the accounts of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. This viewpoint is reflected in the rendering of Genesis 6:4 in many modern English Bible translations (the *New English Bible*, *The Living-Bible*, the *Jerusalem Bible*). Those who offer this mistranslation like to refer to the prologue of the Book of Job, where the angels are called sons of God. They do not show, however, that Moses in the *Pentateuch* also uses this as a name for angels.

As already stated, these interpreters wholly ignore the context of these verses of Genesis 6. What is here set forth is how mankind became ripe for judgment. If the sons of God had been angels, demons, who misled the daughters of men, then these evil angels, not mankind, would have deserved punishment. What is decisive is that our Savior himself tells us in Matthew 22 that angels neither marry nor are given into marriage. They were not endowed with any power of begetting children. Their number was fixed from the beginning. Gigantic

stature would also not supply anything in the way of a reason for a divine judgment; but that is what is under discussion here. This sentence also tells us that the *nephilim* were there even before the mixed marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men took place. The offspring of the mixed marriages only contributed some additional *nephilim*. They were not the only *nephilim*.

The term *nephilim* occurs in only one other Old Testament passage. This is Numbers 13:31-33. It is part of the report of the ten unbelieving spies whom Moses had sent out and who had returned from Canaan. The report of the spies does exaggerate the size of the Canaanites, the size of all of its inhabitants and not only of some. This is not the point that the term *nephilim* is to bring out, but rather the feature of violence. *Nephilim* may be derived from the Hebrew verb root *naphal* meaning, "to fall." This verb is also used in the sense of "falling upon, attacking." The *nephilim* were men who usurped power over others, brought others under their control, made others do their bidding; they are tyrants, dictators. The *nephilim* supplied the violence that is mentioned in verse 11 together with corruption as making up the two reasons for the great judgment of the flood.

It is not at all strange that the offspring of Sethite homes that were no longer firmly grounded in faith and godliness should likewise supply some additional *nephilim*. To this day it is not at all uncommon that those who ruthlessly dominate others in the fields of business, money, politics, and learning have come from a strong religious background, and often are pastors' sons. Though they may have lost their own Christian faith, the outward discipline in which they were once trained still equips them with a firm and resolute nature in using all their gifts and aptitudes for gaining control over others and for subordinating the rights of others to their interests.

What is equally significant is this that in the days before the flood, even as now, those who lorded it over others, who ran roughshod over their rights, who made them do their own bidding, were hailed and honored as the great heroes of that day. They were the men of renown, of great reputation. Jesus points out that this ought not surprise us. This will always remain the world's idea of achieving greatness. The more you succeed in dominating others and of making others do your bidding, the greater you will be in the eyes of this world. Jesus says in Luke 22:25: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and they that exercise authority are called benefactors." Only in Christ's kingdom does one become great and renowned in the very opposite way. Jesus says. "But ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you let him be as a younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve." Christ is the greatest because he served most, served in the way in which he alone could serve, giving his life as a ransom for all.

After calling attention to these conditions of spiritual decay and outward violence in the world, Moses goes on to tell us:

When the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on earth and that every formation of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, the Lord repented that he had made mankind, and he was grieved at heart. And the Lord said: I will wipe mankind whom I have created from off the face of the ground, from mankind to beasts, to reptiles, and to the birds of the heavens, for I repent that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (6:5-8)

We see that God now announced his judgment to hardened mankind. He announced judgment to the people before the flood who had grieved God's Holy Spirit as he strove in vain with them to win them away from their wickedness to penitent faith and godliness. The creature world is likewise to be wiped out with them. This is a reminder that the creature world has no goal of its own in God's creation. Its fate is bound up with that of mankind as God's foremost creature, as the crown of his creation for whom all else was made. When man therefore fell into sin, also the whole creature world was made subject to vanity and put under the bondage of corruption. When mankind now fell into judgment, the creature world did likewise. When God will end all further time of grace for mankind on judgment day, also the creature world will perish.

It is significant that God announced this judgment of the flood as the Lord, as God in his free and faithful saving grace. Lord is the translation of the four-letter Hebrew name that is used for God as the covenant God, as the Savior. This just vengeance upon hardened unbelief and wickedness must still serve God's saving purpose. God's judgment must now be hastened so that Noah and the eight souls of his family may be rescued and not swept away themselves in unbelief and wickedness. Through them the promise of the seed of the woman who was to crush Satan's head is to go into fulfillment. Yes, also God's unique judgment of the flood must serve the interest of his plan of salvation. That is why we are told, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. With His grace the Lord kept him in faith and godliness for his promise-sake.

In connection with the announcement of God's decision to destroy mankind, we are told that God repented that he had made man. We need to recognize that here Scripture uses a term from human life and applies it to God. We call such a term like "repent" an anthropomorphism. These human terms are applied to God so that we human beings with our feeble understanding may at least in a measure understand God's actions. They always involve a comparison and dare not be pressed beyond the point of comparison. We say, for example, of man that he sees things. With the term "seeing" we cover all the physical and mental processes enlisting the organ of our eyes, our nervous system, our brain, our consciousness, by which we become aware of some outward object or action or any feature that is a part of them. When Scripture now speaks of God as seeing, then this applies to God only on one point. He, too, is aware of an outward object or action. The processes by which God has this awareness are altogether different, however, from those by which a man sees. God is directly aware of everything that exists and happens.

Something similar is true with God's repentance. When we say of man that he repents, then this involves particularly two things: first of all, a change of mind and purpose; secondly, a new course of action in keeping with the change of mind and purpose and flowing from it. When Scripture uses this human term of God and says of him that he repented, then only this comes into consideration that he enters upon a new course of action.

This is shown very clearly in the 15th chapter of 1 Samuel. In verses 10 and 11 we read, "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying: It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king." The final 35th verse again states "And the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." Yet in the narrative between these verses, in verse 29, Samuel states, "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent." Saul hoped that God would still change his mind and not depose him as king. With his answer Samuel pointed out that God never repents in the sense that he changes his mind. When this chapter nevertheless says twice of God that he repented that he had made Saul king, it means only this that God entered upon a new course of action which would be the very opposite of his former action. God had announced that he would end the very kingship of Saul that he had himself previously established. This change in his course of action did not in any way involve a change in God's mind or purpose. The same purpose of God that caused him to choose Saul as Israel's first king later moved him to depose Saul as king. Not a change in God, but one in Saul, accounted for the new and opposite course of action. God says "I am the Lord, I change not." (Mal. 3.6)

In this way we are to understand the statement in our account of God's announcement of judgment: "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth"; and again the statement: "The Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.... for it repented me that I had made them." Here was a new divine course of action indeed. The Lord who had created man now announced that he would utterly destroy mankind. The change that moved the Lord to enter upon a new course of action was, however, not in the Lord but in mankind. God had originally created man in a bond of perfect trust toward him to enjoy blessed fellowship with God, but man had now become hardened in unbelief and wickedness, This change in man "grieved the Lord at his heart." Out of this grieving over man's change flowed the new divine action. God's mind and purpose concerning man remained unchanged. God still wanted to carry through his plan of salvation in behalf of mankind. That is why, as we have said, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord so that the promised Savior of mankind might come through him.

II. Noah's Godly Life in a Corrupt Era 6:9-12

So far we have heard only of the reasons for God's unique judgment of the universal flood. God's inspired writer, Moses, now proceeds to the account of the judgment itself. This account is found in the third history of Genesis, namely, in the history of Noah. God's unique judgment of the flood is set forth as the story of what developed and took place through Noah as God's instrument. This is significant, for through Noah and his family the human race was saved and rescued, and God's gospel promise did go into fulfillment. In other words, in the account of God's great judgment of the flood God emphasizes the deliverance rather than the destruction. We sometimes miss this. It is not surprising therefore, that the history of Noah as it begins in verse 5 of chapter 6 and as it extends to the end of chapter 9 starts out with centering our attention upon Noah and his godly life in a corrupt age. We read:

This is the history of Noah. Noah was a righteous-devout man among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. But the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth (6:9-12).

Noah stood out over against the people of his time, his contemporaries. In the verses quoted the whole human race of his day is spoken of with great emphasis as having been corrupt and as having been given to violence. In contrast, Noah is described as a righteous devout man. This description is certainly not to be understood in the sense that Noah was righteous and devout of himself and by his own power. In the last verse of the history of Adam we heard that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God's saving grace accounted for the fact that Noah was a righteous-devout man.

This is the first instance in Genesis that Moses used the term "righteous." Moses' use of the term is clarified when he speaks of righteousness in connection with Abraham. In Genesis 15:6 he says: "Abraham believed God and he counted it to him for righteousness." Abraham was righteous by God's declaration, which acquitted him of his sin so that he was without guilt in God's sight. This righteousness Abraham enjoyed by clinging in faith to God's promise of salvation. That this is also the way we are to understand Noah as being a righteous man is indicated by the explanation which Moses gives in this very context: "Noah walked with God." Like Enoch of whom this is likewise said in the 5th chapter of Genesis, Noah lived his life in a close fellowship of faith with his God. This is confirmed by Hebrews 11:7 where we read "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

The description of Noah given here does not only say, however, that he was a righteous man, but also that he was a righteous-devout man. You are probably better acquainted with the way that the King James version translates this description: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation." "Perfect" can, however, easily be misunderstood as ascribing moral perfection and sinlessness to Noah. This cannot be the meaning. Scripture knows of no one after the fall who was perfect in this sense except our Savior Jesus Christ. Scripture clearly relates an incident occurring after the flood, when Noah drank wine to excess. This shows that also Noah was not perfect, even if he did it merely out of a lack of proper caution.

The Hebrew word *tamim* which we have translated as "devout" and which the King James renders as "perfect" really means, "complete." There is a difference between something being perfect and something being complete. A table is complete when all the essential parts, top, legs, drawers, etc., are present yet such a table may not be without many marks and blemishes. That Noah was a righteous-complete man means this that his saving faith showed itself in every phase of his life. He did not apply his faith only to a few things but let show itself in all of his thinking and doing. Because of his sinful flesh none of these manifestations of his faith were, of course, without their imperfections. Just that is what we mean when we call someone a devout person. We mean that he earnestly tries to live his faith in all that he does, thinks, and says.

It is significant that this description of Noah is immediately followed by the statement, “And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” Nothing more is said about them here. Again immediately after this statement the account goes on to emphasize the corruption of Noah’s contemporaries. Why should the begetting of the three sons of Noah be mentioned in this connection? It was not necessary in order that we might be aware of them. In the last verse of chapter 5 we were already told. “And Noah was 500 years old; and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” The repeated mention of the begetting of these three sons here, directly upon the statement of Noah’s faith and piety, seems to mean that Noah showed himself as a devout believer also in the begetting and rearing of these three sons. The very fact that it was not until his 500th year that he reared his family of three sons is certainly very striking. It is all the more striking when we consider that it was 20 years after God had announced the final 120 years of grace. The strong implication is there that righteous Noah reared his family in a devout obedience to a divine mission assigned to him. Through his sons the human race was to be preserved during a universal judgment of God, so that God’s promised plan of salvation might go into fulfillment after all. That is what actually did happen.

It certainly is not difficult to picture to ourselves the great temptations to which Noah was exposed. He stood all alone among the people of his time, as he clung in faith to God’s saving promises and reflected this faith in a godly life. Yet we must not seek the secret of his staunchness of faith in a special makeup of Noah’s own person. We must recognize his faithfulness as something that the grace of God worked in Noah. In the grace of God as it comes to us through Word and Sacrament present-day believers must likewise seek their strength for persevering in faith, as they are surrounded by more and more corruption and violence.

III. The Preparations for the Judgment 6:13-7:5

After an introductory description of Noah’s godly life in a corrupt age, the flood account goes on to set forth God’s preparation for the judgment. God now gives his directions to Noah for the building of the ark. Moses writes.

God said to Noah: The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is full of violence because of them. And, behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; with cells you shall make the ark and cover it within and without with pitch, and this is how you shall make it: 300 cubits the length of the ark, 50 cubits its width, and 30 cubits its height. An opening for light you shall make for the ark and complete it a cubit from the top; and the door of the ark you shall place into its side, with lower, second, and third stories you shall make it (6:13-16).

The cubit is roughly taken to have been the distance from the elbow to the tip of the little finger for a normal man, about 18 inches. With this computation of the cubit the ark would have had a length of 450 feet, a width of 75 feet, and a height of 45 feet. Since it had three decks it had a total deck area equal to slightly more than the area of 20 standard college basketball courts.

Not until 1884 was a ship, the *Etruria*, built with the length of the ark. The *Queen Mary* was slightly more than twice the length of the ark. Nothing is said about the outward shape and design of the ark. The Hebrew word by which it is named, *tebhah*, is used for only one other object in the Old Testament, namely, for the chest of reeds into which the parents of Moses put their infant son and which they placed among the bulrushes in the hope of awakening the interest of Pharaoh’s daughter. Like this little chest so also Noah’s ark had only the one purpose of offering storage. It was not meant for navigation, for traveling. There would therefore be nothing against thinking of the ark as having been made along rectangular lines. Strength against the forces of the flood would have been decisive also for its shape.

The exact and very sizable dimensions suggest that it was adequate for the safekeeping of those who were to be preserved while the deluge raged. That the ark was covered within and without with pitch suggests that every precaution was taken in its construction to make it a safe refuge for all that were to be delivered and

preserved by means of it. The door in the side of the ark deserved mention so that we can picture the account better of the entrance of Noah and his family and all the creatures into the ark and the Lord's own gracious act of closing it and deciding who alone was to be rescued and preserved.

The one feature in the description of the ark that has given interpreters and translators difficulty is the mention of "an opening for light." A number of modern translators render this phrase as "roof." The difficulty lies not in a lack of clarity but in our knowledge of Hebrew words. The Hebrew word *tsoar* does not occur anywhere else in the Old Testament. Another form of this word, *tsoaraim*, is the word for midday, the time of greatest daylight. This has suggested the translation of "light opening." The statement that it was completed a cubit from the top is generally understood in this way that under the overhanging roof of the ark there was an opening to furnish light and ventilation of the width of a cubit encircling the entire ark. Such an interpretation is certainly in keeping with a need existing for the ark. From what has been said it should be evident that it is an interpretation, however, which cannot be insisted upon with full certainty. The cells point to the smaller and larger compartments throughout the three decks of the ark for all the different animals to be stored in it. In informing us concerning the preparations for the judgment of the ark, Moses now goes on to explain the divine purpose of the ark. The Lord says:

Behold, I, on my part, am bringing the flood waters, upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under the heavens; all which are upon the earth shall die. But I will carry out my covenant with you, and you shall enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife and the wives of your sons with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of all into the ark to preserve them alive with you male and female they shall be. Of all birds after their kind and of all reptiles after their kind, two of all shall come to you to be kept alive. And you on your part, take for yourself of all food which is eaten and store it up for yourself, and it shall be for you and for them for food. And Noah did it, according to all that God had commanded him, so he did (6:17-22).

In these words God announces that he is about to bring a universal destruction upon the earth by means of water. In this destruction all flesh upon the earth in which there is the breath of life will perish. The ark would serve the purpose of preserving and delivering those who were to outlive the destruction. This would, first of all, include the eight members of Noah's family: Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives.

God promises that he will now carry out his covenant with Noah. For this reason Noah and the members of his family are to enter the ark. We are not told specifically, either here or elsewhere, when this covenant of God with Noah was made. Note that here God speaks of "my covenant with you." When in any language we use a possessive pronoun in speaking of something, this presupposes that we are speaking about something that is already known to him whom we are addressing. If in conversation I were to say to someone: "Tomorrow I am going to sell my house," this would presuppose that he would know that I have a house to sell. If he did not know this, I would put it differently and say: "Tomorrow I intend to sell a house." Thus also what God says to Noah, "I will establish my covenant with you," must mean that Noah knew of a divine covenant that God had made with him. Establishing it would mean that he would now carry it out.

In the Genesis account of God dealing with Abraham we are told of the very specific occasion when God made a solemn covenant with Abraham (15:7-21). When in later chapters this covenant is referred to and the matter of carrying it out is under discussion, the covenant is also spoken of with a possessive, "my covenant with you."

In the account of God's dealing with Noah we are nowhere told of the exact time when the covenant with him was made. It would appear, however, that it was made at the beginning of the 120 years of additional grace for mankind. Because we are not told when it was made we are also not informed of the way in which the substance was at that time defined. What was involved in this covenant is brought to our attention as its various phases were carried out. The first phase was the preservation of the human race and of the land animals through Noah and his family and the creatures taken with him into the ark during God's universal judgment of the flood.

The other phase of God's covenant with Noah is unfolded after the flood and pertains to the promise of patience and forbearance for all mankind and for all creatures. God declared that he would not again send a universal destruction as long as the earth remained. This phase of the Noachian covenant pertains to man and beast and gives mankind ample time of grace. God's covenant with Noah is not to be equated with God's plan of salvation as it was already announced in Paradise. God's covenant with Noah stands in its service, however. It gives man ample opportunity to hear the gospel and to be brought to salvation in Christ by means of the gospel. There seems to be no good reason to think of more than one covenant of God with Noah. Yet we can speak of the carrying out of several phases of this covenant. We all still live under its phase as a covenant of forbearance the sign of the rainbow is to keep us mindful of it.

In the portion under discussion we are still speaking of carrying out the first, or deliverance phase of the covenant. The ark was not only to preserve the human race through Noah and his family, but we are also told that Noah was to take a mated pair, a male and a female, of every living creature of all flesh with him into the ark.

All the animals that are to be taken into the ark are described in Hebrew as *bazar*, i.e., flesh. In an interesting article in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, Volume 10, September 1973, Arthur J. Jones claims that this term, when used of complete living animals is never used of invertebrates, but exclusively of vertebrates, i.e., animals which have a spine. Invertebrates do not have a spine. All flesh, *bazar*, is qualified by the phrase "which has in it the spirit of life." This additional phrase is likewise understood by Jones as being used only of vertebrates in the Old Testament. The animals to be taken into the ark are restricted by still another qualification: they are to be those who are under the heaven upon the earth, in other words, land animals. Water animals did not come into consideration. Their preservation was not dependent upon their presence in the ark. Though most of them also perished in the flood, God chose to preserve their species without the benefit of the ark. This may also have been true of the amphibian animals, those animals that live both in the water and on the land. The land animals, which Noah was to take with him into the ark, are divided into three classes, birds, beasts, and exclusively land reptiles. Noah was to take two of each, a male and a female, mated pairs.

In the above-mentioned article Arthur Jones also makes the assertion that when Scripture speaks of kinds this is generally recognized to be equivalent to a family in our current classifications of vertebrates. Every kind of the three types of land animals was to be represented by a mated pair. Questions regarding the gathering of these animals can be given a very straightforward answer. Noah was not told to gather the animals.

The Lord did command Noah to cause the animals to come into the ark, but he was told that they would come to him for this purpose. Not only are we told in verse 20 of this section that two of all would come to him, but also in the ninth verse of chapter 7 we hear: "Two by two they came unto Noah," and again in verse 15: "They came unto Noah unto the ark two by two." And in the following verse: "The coming ones came male and female of all flesh."

Much depended upon the factors or genes present in the reproductive cells of each particular pair, if the kinds represented in the ark by one male and one female were again to unfold in great variety after the flood. Wide inheritable variations within kinds are possible. Yet only those physical characteristics as to color, size, and shape could be inherited in various combinations which were present in the reproductive cells of the parent pair preserved in the ark of each kind. God Himself saw to it that those pairs came to Noah that served his divine purpose in preserving the land animals in great variety for the future. It is clearly stated that all these animals were to be taken into the ark for the purpose of preserving them for future propagation upon the earth.

During their stay in the ark the animals were to be fed, even as Noah and his family were to have nourishment. Thus Noah is entrusted with the task of taking of all food that was customarily eaten, that it might serve both man and beast for food. These directions for providing food for the animals during their stay in the ark do not exclude other factors like hibernation also coming into consideration during the time of the flood. Arthur Jones, for example, in the article previously referred to says of animals that

faced with the conditions on the ark (falling temperature, reduced light, restriction on movement, etc.) the natural reaction... would be to go to sleep.... In the tropics many small animals go to sleep to avoid the peak of the dry seasons.... Even an occasional short period of unfavorable conditions will prompt many animals to sleep through it; and larger animals, such as bears, will remain in a semidormant state in their dens for months during the winter. When hibernating, animals do not remain in that condition indefinitely, but arouse periodically in a rhythmic manner every few days or weeks, As soon as conditions on the ark improved, the animals probably awoke and ate. The ability to enter into prolonged “sleep” is probably a common property of animals (p. 107).

Nevertheless, we do not want to lose sight of the fact that God’s arrangement of having Noah and his family entrusted with the feeding of the animals, to the extent that it was necessary, was a most gracious arrangement. It would keep them busy during the ordeal of their prolonged stay in the ark. It would keep them from giving way to worries and fears and discontent and from thinking too much of themselves. This section of the preparation for the flood is closed with the statement that Noah did these things. He carried out orders just as God had given them.

This ready obedience holds Noah’s faith before us again. Scripture does not tell us how long it took to build the ark. 1 Peter 3:20 speaks of those who disobeyed long ago “when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” This patient waiting of God must pertain to the 120 years of grace before the flood. We are not told, however, how early in this period the building of the ark began. We are also not told whether Noah and his sons hired other people to assist them in their great undertaking. We have only the statement in Hebrews 11-7: “By faith Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

Just imagine the mockery, the taunts, and the ridicule that Noah must have experienced from the hardened people of his day as he was building this ark on dry land. How they must have laughed at this vast structure which was to be a refuge from the imaginary judgment of which he was prophesying.

We still have to consider the Lord’s final preparations for the flood. Moses writes:

And the Lord said to Noah, enter the ark, you and all your house, for you alone have I seen to be righteous before me among this generation. Of every clean beast you shall take by sevens, a male and his mate, and of all the beasts which are not clean, two, a male and his mate. Also of the birds of the sky by sevens, male and female, to preserve seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For after seven additional days I am going to cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will wipe out everything that exists which I have made from the face of the ground. And Noah did according to all that the Lord had commanded him (7:1-5).

Seven days before the flood was to set in, the Lord once more spoke with Noah, telling him to enter into the ark with his whole house. Was this an unnecessary repetition of something that the Lord had already told Noah previously? Anyone who thinks this is overlooking the human factor. Remember, Noah was standing practically alone over against all of his contemporaries. It was therefore a wonderful reassurance for him to know that he was not acting on his own or on the strength of something that he supposed, when he was made aware that the time had come actually to enter the ark. The declaratory nature of Noah’s righteousness is brought out anew when the Lord speaks of having seen him to be righteous. It is Noah’s righteousness of faith alone that is stressed; it was apparently shared by all the members of his family, however, for they all were to enter the ark. Yet had Noah not stood firm in faith, they might soon have wavered.

In the Lord’s final instructions to Noah we suddenly hear about a distinction between clean and unclean animals. We know that later on in the Mosaic Law Code such a distinction was carefully defined for Israel. Leviticus 11 treats of Israel’s dietary, or food, laws in detail. The clean animals were those which Israel was

permitted to use for food and for sacrifices. Since Moses in Genesis is, first of all, addressing Israelites who were acquainted with the distinction between clean and unclean animals as fixed in the Sinaitic Law and obligatory for them, we can rightly assume that the same animals are also meant here when clean and unclean animals are distinguished.

Scripture does not tell us, however, how this distinction arose even before the Sinaitic Law Code was specially instituted for Israel. Many things in the Mosaic Law Code were not new; for example, the different kinds of sacrifices. They had already been in use for a long time. What was new in the Mosaic Law was that these things were now made obligatory for Israel and regulated more carefully. This was true also of the distinction between clean and unclean animals. Obviously mankind had chosen certain animals for use in making their sacrifices and not chosen others. It had been a free expression of their piety. Also when after the flood God extended the food of man to include the flesh of animals, it was by a free choice that man decided to use the flesh of certain animals for food rather than that of others. We do this still. God himself made no restriction after the flood in the animals whose flesh man could use for food. God said. "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you" (9:3).

Apart from the Mosaic Law Code and the time when it was in effect as a special discipline for God's chosen people Israel and for them alone, there are no animals which in themselves are clean and others which in themselves are unclean. This is very clearly stated also in the New Testament (Acts 10:15,16; Col 2:16; Ro 14:14). Yet in his final instructions to Noah, the Lord did provide for the preservation of a greater number of those land animals of which he knew that man would be choosing them for food and for sacrifice after the flood. Whether man already ate the flesh of animals with God's approval between the time of the fall and the flood is something concerning which Scripture has not chosen to enlighten us. Arguments that may be used to arrive at both a negative or a positive answer in this matter are indecisive.

Interpreters are divided about how the specified number of clean beasts and birds that were to be taken into the ark is to be understood. This division is reflected in the different English Bible translations. All the interpreters agree that the doubling of the Hebrew numeral seven, *shibbah shibbah*, means "by sevens." The difference in interpretation arises in deciding what is to be taken in by sevens in the statement, "Of every clean beast you shall take by sevens a male and his mate..."

Some find the antecedent, that which is to be taken into the ark by sevens, out of the opening phrase "of every clean beast." They think of the individual kind of clean animal to be that which is to be taken into the ark by sevens, This would then mean seven individuals of every clean kind. "A male and his mate" would then be an additional feature to be taken into consideration in carrying out the directive. Both sexes were to be represented as equally as possible. What Noah according to this understanding was to take into the ark would be three mated pairs and one extra animal of either sex. One must grant that this is a possible interpretation.

This interpretation does present another problem, however, when in verses 8 and 9 of this chapter we are told that all the clean and unclean animals went in by twos, male and female. This could not have been true concerning the extra clean animals of each kind, the seventh ones. The explanation given is usually this that the number of clean animals is very small in comparison to the vast number of unclean animals. The small number of extra unmated clean animals who could not enter by twos is simply left out of consideration in this general description of the entrance of all the animals into the ark. It is true that in general statements we often describe things according to the features that predominate and leave the exceptions out of consideration. This is done especially if mention has already been made of the exceptions. In speaking about graduation day ceremonies to a person who knew, for example, that a certain class consisted of 43 members, one would feel free to say that they marched in two by two. You would figure that it would be self evident that this could not have been true of the 43rd member who would either have had to march in alone or together with another pair. In support of this interpretation it is generally pointed out that providing for the extra unmated animal among all the clean kinds entering the ark was a very beneficial directive. Thereby the Lord was making provision for the sacrifices of thanksgiving which Noah would be moved to bring when his family finally left the ark. This would also make the eating of meat soon after the flood possible without destroying any of the mated pairs for propagation.

The other interpretation of the statement: “of every clean beast you shall take by sevens a male and his mate” is admittedly simpler. It takes “a male and his mate” to be that which Noah was to take in by sevens. With this understanding Noah received the directive to take seven mated pairs of all the clean animals into the ark. This interpretation presents no problem when we are told later that all the clean as well as the unclean animals went in by twos, male and female, i.e., as mated pairs. What has probably shied many commentators and translators away from this simpler understanding is no doubt the fact that thereby the number of animals taken into the ark would be increased. Room would be required in the ark for fourteen instead of seven individuals of all the clean animal kinds.

Probably this would be as good a place as any to discuss two questions that arise in connection with the account of the flood. How many individual creatures were taken into the ark? Was the ark really large enough to give refuge for so many animals for more than a year? Let us be reminded, first of all, that there is a very simple answer for each of these questions which we want to give as Bible-believing Christians. To the first question we will want to answer: We do not know the exact total of animals which entered the ark. We do not know because the Lord’s recorded directives to Noah do not tell us their precise number. To the second question we will want to reply: Yes, the ark was in every way adequate for all the animals for which the Lord had it prepared. God’s inspired and inerrant word tells us that they all entered the ark. This word also tells us that they were all preserved in it. That wholly settles the matter for a Bible-believing Christian.

Does this mean that with these answers the questions must be dropped and should receive no further consideration? Not necessarily, as long as we cling to the answers mentioned as being in themselves fully sufficient for us, and as long as we also keep in mind that this is all that we can say with biblical certainty.

Yet whenever Scripture relates any facts or happenings to us we will invariably try to picture them in one way or another. This is also true concerning the facts and happenings that Scripture relates concerning the ark. It is therefore quite proper to weigh every detail given in God’s Word and any pertinent knowledge available to us through other avenues in the interest of picturing as realistically as possible the stay of Noah’s family and of the animals in the ark.

In this interest I shall, by way of example, sum up the conclusions to which Arthur J. Jones comes in the previously quoted article from the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*. We already stated that he starts out with the premise that only vertebrate land animals, such with spines, were taken into the ark according to the Genesis account. He grants that there may have been invertebrates in the ark, like flies, lice, worms, since this would have been difficult to prevent where animals were concerned; but he adds that Noah had not been bidden to take them into the ark. He estimates that there were 793 vertebrate families at the time of the flood. He arrives at this number on the basis of the study of present living vertebrates and present-day extinct vertebrates, i.e., such as no longer exist but are known through their fossil remains as having once existed on the earth. From these 793 vertebrate families he subtracts the 84 water-dwelling vertebrates which were clearly excluded, and the 81 amphibian vertebrate families, holding that they also did not need to be taken into the ark to preserve a single pair alive, since they can also live in water. In this way he concludes that 628 vertebrate families are left which were represented in the ark. He figures that there may have been some families that are now extinct whose fossil remains have not yet been discovered and may never be discovered. To account also for such he then comes up with an estimate of 628 to 800 vertebrate families.

Similarly he tries to make an estimate of the recognized families of clean kinds. He admits that experts in this field do not agree too well in this matter, that the number of clean kinds that have been recognized would range from 24 to 66 and the unclean kinds between 604 and 734. Figuring one mated pair for each unclean kind and seven mated pairs for each clean kind, he finally arrives at estimates ranging from 1544 to 2392 as the number of animals taken into the ark. He himself considered the lower number to be nearer the truth than the higher, in mentioning this one example of an effort to picture more realistically the function of the ark in preserving the land animals, we become aware of the great difficulties and uncertainties involved in trying to make such a computation.

It has been estimated that in volume the ark had a capacity equal to that of 522 standard railroad stock cars. This would be very adequate for eight people and 2000 animals. Yet Jones points out that the room would not be excessive. The space for animals would be reduced by the subdivisions of the floors with their cages and stalls, by the ramps for access from floor to floor, and by the subdivisions. There had to be sufficient free space inside to prevent unbearable foulness and heating of the air. The food which Noah was instructed to take into the ark may have filled as much space as the animals themselves. Provision for water storage was likewise needed, even though there may have been arrangements for periodic replacement. Space was also necessary for the collection and temporary storage of dung. Since Noah's family and the animals were to live in the ark for a year, there had to be also the space that was required for exercise and simple living.

God did not find it necessary for us that in his Word he should enter upon all of these details in the account of the flood. It is enough that God's Word clearly asserts the adequacy of the ark for its divinely appointed purpose.

IV. The Judgment of the Flood 7:6-24

When Noah was 600 years old, the flood came, waters, upon the earth, and Noah and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Of the clean beasts and of the beasts which were not clean and of the birds and of all the land reptiles by twos they came to Noah to the ark, male and female, as the Lord had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood came upon the earth. In the 600th year of the life of Noah in the second month and the seventeenth day of the month, on that very day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened and a torrential rain came upon the earth for forty days and forty nights (7:6-12).

We are all accustomed to place important happenings into their proper place in a calendar. This is fairly simple for us at present because we have the Christian calendar that is well known all over the world. We figure things as having happened at a certain time after the birth of Christ or before the birth of Christ. When we in this way fit happenings into a calendar, this helps to emphasize them as actual happenings in contrast to something that merely takes place in a story and not on an actual date in history.

Even so the universal flood is set forth as a historical event in the biblical account by the very fact that it is tied up with the life of Noah, the man whom God especially chose to play the most important role in this great event. Noah's life was the only practical way by which the flood could be placed into a historical setting. We are expressly told that it was in the 600th year of Noah's life that the great destruction of the flood set in upon the earth. At that specific time Noah and the seven other members of his family and the animals which had been specified as intended for the ark actually went in. The animals went in as matched pairs. This happened by the end of the seven days previously mentioned as the time when God gave his final directions concerning the larger number of clean animals to be taken into the ark.

The exact time when the flood set in is defined by another statement. It was on the seventeenth day of the second month of the 600th year of Noah's life. This raises the question as to the calendar according to which the month and the day of this 600th year of Noah is figured. Interpreters are generally agreed that Noah's birthday is not to be thought of as the point from which the beginning of that year is to be figured. Since Moses is first of all addressing this account to his fellow Israelites, one has a right to assume that he is figuring years according to a calendar familiar to them.

Two calendars were in use in Israel at one and the same time. The church calendar established at the time of the exodus from Egypt was principally used to fix the religious festivals of Israel. It began with the Passover month falling into the period of our March and April. The older agricultural year also continued in use, and began with the seventh month of the church year, falling into October and November. This was the time of the early rains when the sowing of grains was begun. That is why the time of the sabbatical years and of

the year of jubilee, when the land was to lie idle and not be cultivated, was figured according to the agricultural year. It is generally assumed that it is this older agricultural year that Moses has in mind when he here speaks of the seventeenth day of the second month of the 600th year of Noah. Little depends on whether we can say this with absolute certainty. All this care given to fixing the exact time when the great event of the flood took place does, however, serve the purpose of reminding all who hear the account of the flood that we are dealing with an actual historical happening. It is well to keep this in mind in our day when even in Christian circles the first eleven chapters of Genesis, including the flood account, are treated as presenting symbolical stories rather than actual history.

The other emphasis in this section is on the sources of the flood. Two are mentioned. They need to be given equal attention. On the day in the 600th year of Noah's life that has been carefully specified, for one thing all the fountains of the great deep burst open, on the other hand the floodgates of the heavens were opened. These two sources of the flood again receive equal attention, when after the flood had been upon the earth for 150 days, God caused the waters to subside. At that time we are told: "The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens were closed." This tells us that both sources continued to be equally active throughout the 150 days of the destruction of the flood.

So far we have been dealing with clear statements of the Holy Scriptures. When we try to picture what in detail was involved in each of these sources, the matter becomes more difficult.

Let us focus our attention first upon the opening of the floodgates of the heavens, or as we are accustomed to hear it from the King James version, on the opening "of the windows of heaven." To a certain extent the account before us defines this source of the flood more fully. It tells us of a rain, of a torrential downpour, which fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights, It would appear that by this uninterrupted downpour the bulk of the floodwaters came upon the earth. During the following 110 days torrential rains which fell with some interruptions kept the flood at its maximum height. Not until the end of 150 days, which included both the 40 and 110 days, are we told that the torrential rain ceased altogether.

The scriptural account does not tell us how God caused such an unheard-of torrential rain to fall upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights so that the great height of water involved in the flood was brought about. That these rains took place and effected the flood we as believers are ready to accept without question on the basis of the clear statements of God's inerrant Word in Genesis. If we say more this is not for the purpose of making the fact more plausible for us and others. It is rather in the interest of picturing to ourselves what actually happened. Are we to think of the torrential rain of the flood in terms of the rainfall system that exists today? Are we to think of the processes by which clouds are formed today and their contents later fall down in the form of rain? Are we to think that these processes were merely increased and magnified by God's miraculous intervention? This is the viewpoint that is followed many interpreters as they try to picture the first source of the floodwaters to themselves.

Or are we to think of an altogether different water system existing on the earth before the flood, so that the rains bringing about the vast floodwaters meant the collapse of that former system? Those who hold to this viewpoint call attention to a number of scriptural statements that strongly encourage this interpretation. They point to 2 Peter 3:7, to which we have already referred in the introduction of this study. In this passage Peter is testifying against scoffers who ridicule the promise of Christ's coming, scoffers who claim that everything has remained the same since creation. Peter says: "They willingly forget that there were heavens from of old and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water by the word of God; by which means the world that then was being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens that now are and the earth by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men."

According to St. Peter, the inspired writer, there were at least two great events in the past when great changes took place. One of these events was that of creation itself, the other that of the flood. At Christ's return for judgment there will again be great changes. Of the first event, of creation, the apostle says that the earth was compacted, formed out of water and amidst water, i.e., between water. This took place by the Word of God. Peter is clearly referring to the creation account of Genesis 1. The earth when first called into existence by

God's initial creative act, on its surface at least consisted in a vast mass of water (Gen. 1:2). Then God proceeded to make the firmament, the heavens of the atmosphere, in which the birds were to fly and through which the light from sun, moon, and stars was to be spread out on the earth. This firmament, this expanse of the atmosphere, divided the waters below the firmament from those above the firmament. The waters below the firmament were then gathered together in seas and the dry land appeared.

The waters above the firmament obviously imply more than our present clouds. It is not said that these waters were placed into their position by the processes by which clouds to this day are regularly formed and fall down in the form of rain and snow. It is expressly stated that these waters above the firmament were put into their position above the firmament by a special divine creative act. Yet the waters above the firmament must have been in the form of a vast invisible blanket of water vapor as they did not hide the light from the sun, moon, and stars, since these were created for the purpose of supplying the earth with light from the fourth day on. Genesis 2:5 is also widely understood to imply that before the flood rainfall, as we know it, was not experienced on earth. We are told a mist arose from time to time from the ground and condensed to supply moisture for vegetation. The fact that the rainbow appears to have been something new after the flood likewise points in the direction of a different water cycle before the flood. This much is clear that the passage from Peter's second epistle definitely distinguishes between "the heavens and the earth which were of old" and "the heavens and the earth which are now."

All these scriptural facts receive comment in *The Genesis Flood*, by two Bible-believing scholars, John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry I. Morris. In another book, *The Twilight of Evolution*, the same Henry Morris gives the following summary of his way of picturing the waters above the firmament and their effect upon the earth before and in the flood:

In order for the upper waters to be maintained aloft by the gases of the lower atmosphere and also to be transparent to the light of the sun, they must have been in the form of a vast blanket of water vapor, extending far out into space, invisible and yet exerting a profound influence on terrestrial climates and living conditions. Such a "canopy" would have caused a worldwide warm, mild climate, with only minor seasonal and latitudinal differences. This in turn would have inhibited the great air circulatory patterns which characterize the present atmosphere and which constitute the basic cause of our winds, rains, and storms.

There could have been no rain in the form with which we are familiar, and this is exactly the testimony of Scripture (Ge 2:5,6). But there was a system of rivers and seas (Ge 1:10, 2:10-14), nourished probably by waters that had been confined under pressure beneath the lands when the lands and the waters were separated as well as by the low-lying vapors that were daily evaporated and recondensed (Ge 2:6). These rivers, especially one which emerged from a great artesian spring in the Garden of Eden (Ge 2:10), were the main sources of water for Adam and his descendants.

The vapor canopy also would have served as a highly effective shield against the many powerful and harmful radiations that surround the earth, and which are now only partially filtered by our present atmosphere. Such radiations are now known to be the cause of much damage to man's genetic system, tending to cause harmful mutations and general biological deterioration. It is quite possible that the healthful environment created by this great thermo-vapor blanket was one major factor contributing to human longevity in those days (p. 68).

After then speaking on the basis of Scripture about man's fall into sin and the universal corruption of mankind at the time of Noah, Dr. Morris goes on to say:

The very waters out of which the earth had been compacted and which had sustained its life and pleasant climatic conditions were now to cause its destruction. "Whereby," by this same water, as Peter says, "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Pe 3:6). The great expanse of water

above the firmament was condensed and plunged to the earth, continuing everywhere at fullest intensity for forty days and forty nights (Ge 7:12) (p. 69).

The torrential rains of the flood are spoken of in a similar way in *The Genesis Flood*:

Most of “the waters which were above the firmament” (Ge 1:7) must have fallen through “the windows of heaven” during the first period of forty days, and although “the windows of heaven” were not stopped for another 110 days (8:2), the rainfall during this second period may have contributed only to the maintaining of the flood at its maximum height (P. 4).

From *The Twilight of Evolution* we shall also quote how Dr. Morris visualizes the other source of the floodwaters, namely, the bursting open of the fountains of the deep:

The “great deep” including the waters of the seas and also that part of the primeval deep which had been looked as vast storehouses of water beneath the rocks of the earth’s crust, also issued forth, as “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” (Ge 7:11). This latter upheaval must have been accompanied by the eruption of subterranean magmas and these by great earthquakes, and these in turn by tremendous tsunami waves in the seas. Destruction beyond imagination must have been wrought on the antediluvian earth (p. 69).

Dr. Alfred Rehwinkel in *The Flood* visualizes the second source of the flood in much the same manner. He writes:

By the great deep evidently, then, is meant the water of all the oceans of the world; the breaking forth of the fountains of the great deep would, then, mean that the ocean broke out and poured over the land. But what caused the waters to break forth? We are told that all the fountains of the great deep broke open.... When the Bible tells us that the fountains of the great deep broke open, we are apt to think of springs and fountains such as were known to us in our meadows or on the mountainsides quietly welling forth their water in refreshing streams or babbling brooks. But the statement that the fountains of the great deep were broken open implies a great deal more. It means that the earth was rent, that great fissures and chasms appeared on the surface of the earth. But that happens only in violent cataclysms, such as are caused by earthquakes or volcanic activities. The Deluge was a terrible judgment of God which he brought upon the world because of the wickedness of men and which is comparable only with the final Judgment, awaiting the world at the end of time.... The earth heaved and trembled in its very foundations. Its writhing convulsions encircled the earth. Volcanoes belched forth fire, water, steam, and brimstone, to add more horrors to this terrifying spectacle of divine judgment. This is not a mere fancy of the imagination. If all the foundations of the great deep broke open, as Moses says, this certainly implies such violent and cosmic disturbances as just described. And that something like this did occur somewhere in the remote past of our earth’s history is verified by the conditions of the rocks in the earth’s crust. Geologists are acquainted with these conditions and describe them accurately, attributing them to violent upheavals and continental revolutions, but because it is regarded as unscientific to accept the biblical account of a world-wide catastrophe, they find other explanations and place these events in the nebulous past of millions and billions of years ago....

These violent earthquakes not only caused the earth to be rent, forcing it to yield up whatever streams or reservoirs of water were contained in its bowels, but earthquakes, especially when occurring near the sea or on the floor of the ocean, cause gigantic tidal waves known to have risen to heights of ten, twenty, thirty, even fifty and sixty feet or more, above the normal tide level. Large areas of land have thus been

inundated, and the force with which these tidal waves strike has irresistibly swept away everything before them (p. 100-102).

After having offered these quotations, let me state that they were given only in the interest of helping us to picture more realistically what was seemingly involved in the two sources of the flood that Scripture mentions without details.

The next section of the account of the judgment of the flood deals with the deliverance of the elect through the ark in the midst of the flood.

On the very same 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, they and every beast after its kind, and every domestic animal after its kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, everything with feathers and wings. They came to Noah to the ark by twos of all flesh in which is the breath of life. And those that entered in entered in male and female of all flesh as God had commanded them and the Lord closed the door behind him and the flood came upon the earth for forty days and the waters increased and lifted up the ark and it was high above the earth (7:13-20).

The point that this section wishes to make is this that all those whom God intended for the ark were indeed in it. For this purpose they are again carefully named. The Lord's instructions had been carefully carried out. The animals that the Lord had intended to preserve had come to Noah in pairs. He in turn had brought them into the ark. As the bulk of the floodwaters came upon the earth during the period of the first forty days of the deluge the ark with its precious cargo was safely lifted up by the flood waters and went along high above the earth. God himself had closed the door of the ark. He did it as the Lord, as the God of free and faithful saving grace. In the interest of his plan of salvation he had decided who was to be rescued.

In the meantime judgment came upon all that had not been taken into the ark. We read:

And the waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated upon the face of the waters, The waters were extremely mighty upon the earth, and all the high mountains, which were under all the heavens were covered. Fifteen cubits and upwards did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered (7:18-24).

This section puts away all doubts concerning the universality of the flood. All the high mountains under all the heavens were covered, The double "all," makes it clear that the "all" is meant in an absolute and not in a relative sense. Later on we are told that already on the first day of the recession of the floodwaters the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. Here we are told that the floodwaters extended fifteen cubits above the mountaintops. It is generally thought that this represents the depth to which the ark sank into the waters. The waters receded sufficiently on the very first day of their recession to enable the ark to rest in the mountains of Ararat on that very day.

This raises a question. The altitude of the highest of the mountains of Ararat is only 16,916 feet. Peaks like Mt. Everest in the Himalayas rise about 29,000 feet. Others like the Andes in South America, too, surpass Mt. Ararat in height. Were these high mountains also covered by the floodwaters? Then the floodwaters would have gone down 12,000 feet on the very first day when they receded, for on that day the ark rested on Mt. Ararat.

Yet we will want to stay with the biblical text that all the high mountains were covered by the flood. This is not the same, however, as saying that the floodwaters reached the height of the highest peaks of the Himalayas. No, the statement only applies to those mountains that existed at the time to which this statement has reference, when the floodwaters were at their highest peak. There is reason to believe that most of our

present high mountains, which are all fossil-bearing, reached their present heights during the recession of all flood waters, when the ocean floors were seemingly lowered and the mountains were thrust upward.

Having been informed concerning the great height of the floodwaters, the biblical account then continues to tell us of the universal destruction that they effected. We read:

And all flesh that moved upon the earth expired including birds and domestic animals and wild beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth and all mankind, All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, namely, all that was on the dry land, died. Thus he blotted out everything existing that was upon the face of the land from man to beast to creeping things and to the birds of the heavens and they were blotted out from the earth, and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth 150 days (7:21-24).

These verses really call for little comment. As the previous verses establish the universality of the flood, so these verses establish the universality of the destruction. The awesomeness of God's judgment is presented to us in the most emphatic terms. All mankind was blotted out except Noah and his family, preserved in the ark. With mankind also all the land animals perished except those preserved in the ark. Nothing is said about the sea animals. The fossil remains throughout the present earth show that also they perished in vast numbers. God, however, preserved their kinds in his own way during the flood without the benefit of the ark. The fact that the floodwaters, having reached their great height during the first forty days, then remained the same for 110 days removes any doubt that might still be entertained concerning the universality of the destruction.

V. The End of God's Judgment of the Flood 8:1-22

And God remembered Noah and all the wild beasts and all the domestic animals, which were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth and the waters subsided. And the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were closed, and the torrential rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters receded from upon the earth continually; at the end of 150 days the waters diminished. And the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month. The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains came into view (8:1-5).

The beginning of the subsiding of the floodwaters is led back to God's remembering Noah. Scripture frequently speaks of God remembering people. When God finally was pleased to give a son to Rachel, we are told: "God remembered Rachel" (Gen. 30:22). When God was about to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt, we hear: "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex. 2:24). The expression is used when by an action God makes his care and concern for someone evident. Also here it does not imply that for a time God had forgotten Noah, but rather that up to the time that God caused a wind to pass over the earth so that the waters began to decrease, God's provident concern had remained wholly a matter of faith for Noah. God's provident concern is also known to us Christians. At all times we live in the confidence that for Christ's sake we rest securely in the love of our heavenly Father. Yet it is a matter of faith. When certain problems and troubles that we have committed to our Lord in prayer are suddenly solved and removed, however, we, too, are led to say that God has remembered us.

It is worthy of note that also here as God brings his unique judgment of a universal flood to a close, we are told that God did so with believing Noah in mind. He did it also for the sake of the animals rescued with Noah and for his benefit and that of his descendants. Yes, God carries out his judgments in such a way that they serve the welfare of his own, his believers. The almighty God is able to do that. Notice how the forces of nature that served to bring the flood to a close are spoken of as directed by God. It is he who caused a wind to pass over the earth so that the waters began to recede.

Yet almost in the same breath it is stated that the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were closed, and that the torrential rains were now held back. It will not do to think of these happenings merely as negative factors, which prevented further increase of flood waters but which did not help in their recession. The sudden, continual, and rapid recession of the floodwaters now mentioned in the biblical account can hardly have been effected by evaporation through a wind alone. No, all these factors mentioned, fully in God's hands and wholly under his direction, undoubtedly worked together to effect a rapid diminishing of the flood waters.

Previously we have already said that the recession of the waters undoubtedly involved a lowering of the ocean floor. For as the volcanic eruptions and the earthquakes, by which the fountains of the deep had been broken up for a long period, ceased, vast vacuums must have been formed into which the floodwaters could now rush. This must have created imbalances in the earth's crust, by which the landmasses were thrust upward to form our present high mountains. You know that there were tremors in the earth's crust even when your artificial lake, Lake Mariba, was formed by the damming up of the Zambezi River. That changes in the earth's crust of much greater proportions must have taken place in the recession of the floodwaters is not a fantasy. Our highest mountains are made up of fossil-bearing rock formations; but these vast fossil-bearing rock layers do not lie horizontally as they must have been laid down by the flood waters. No, they are tilted in varying degrees. This seems to indicate that while the fossils were imbedded in molten rock masses and laid down in sedimentary layers during the duration of the flood, the present position in which we find them must have been brought about after these rock formations had been hardened.

The rearrangements of the water and land masses and the ceasing of the rains must have brought about great temperature changes and supplied the means by which God caused the great wind to pass on the earth. Temperature changes are certainly indicated by the polar ice caps and the arctic permafrost with its imbedded mammoths, large elephants, having undigested warm climate vegetation in their stomachs. They must have been frozen as they were grazing. As we have already stated, Scripture does not enter in upon the details. It rather impresses upon us that it was God who was doing these things. He was doing them through the forces that he has himself created and which always remain fully in his hands. That is vital for us to remember. It is more important than that we know just how all these things happened.

And it came to pass after forty days that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. And he sent forth a raven, and it flew back and forth until the water was dried up upon the earth. And he sent out a dove from him to see whether the waters had abated from the face of the ground. The dove did not find a resting place for the sole of her feet, and she returned to the ark, for water was upon the surface of all the earth; and he put forth his hand and took her and brought her to him into the ark. And he waited again another seven days and again sent forth a dove from the ark. And the dove came to him at evening and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had abated from off the earth. And he waited again another seven days and sent out a dove and it did not return to him again. And it came to pass on the 601st year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, that the waters were dried off from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. By the second month, the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. Then God spoke to Noah, saying: Go out from the ark, you and your wife and your sons and the wives of your sons with you. Every living creature which is with you, namely, all flesh, including birds and beasts and creeping things which move upon the earth bring forth with you, and let them spread abroad upon the earth and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth. So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and the wives of his sons with him. All animals, every creeping thing, and all birds, in fact, everything that moves upon the earth, went out according to their families from the ark (8:6-19).

Forty days after the appearance of the mountain peaks Noah opened the window of the ark. We have no detailed knowledge of the nature of the window. The vocable used for this window, *hallon*, is not the same as

that used for the encircling light opening, *tsoar*, which is mentioned in the initial description of the ark. We also do not know the position of the ark as it rested in the mountains of Ararat. For these reasons we do not know why the opening of the window of the ark did not offer Noah a very wide view. Yet he found it necessary to take additional measures to get information.

Being thoroughly familiar with the ways and habits of birds, Noah used them to get such additional information. The raven, which he sent out first, did not return. This told him that as a bird that feeds on dead carcasses it was able to live outside of the ark. This indicated that the earth was no longer a blank waste of water. The raven is spoken of as flying back and forth. This may indicate that it lighted on the ark from time to time until the covering was removed. Seven days later Noah sent out a dove. This bird which feeds on seeds was not yet able to live outside the ark. By its return Noah found out that the water was still widely present upon the surface of the earth.

The next time a dove was sent out by Noah it brought back a freshly plucked olive leaf at evening. This showed that olive trees were again growing at certain levels. The dove that was sent out after another week no longer returned. This brought evidence to Noah that the subsiding of the water was practically complete.

By this time Noah had been in the ark 285 days. He still waited an additional 29 days, almost a lunar month, before he took the additional action of removing the "covering of the ark." We assume that this removal pertained to the roof of the ark, probably a fitting portion of it that could afford him the kind of view that the window had not furnished. Any additional remarks that we might make would be worthless conjectures.

We are told that by the removal of the covering of the ark Noah found out that at least the surface of the ground was no longer covered with water. This did not mean that the ground was dry enough to allow the occupants of the ark to leave. This condition did not set in until the twenty-seventh day of the second month. The duration of the stay of all that were in the ark was a year and ten days.

The various measures undertaken by Noah as they are related in this section show us his deep longing for the time when he would be able to leave the ark. He longed to be relieved from the heavy responsibility that had been entrusted to him in connection with the ark and those taken into it. Probably even more noteworthy, however, is the conscientiousness with which he carried out his trust. H. C. Leupold puts it well in his *Exposition of Genesis*: "Throughout this whole account Noah appears as a man who walked with God. He did not venture to do things according to his own thinking. He entered the ark when he was bidden he left it when God told him to. The future of the whole race was tied up with what he did, and he knew it."

The account before us presents not only the very specific and detailed orders that God gave concerning the leaving of the ark; it also records with equal detail how these orders were carried out. Included is also the repetition of the blessings that God had spoken at creation. The creatures are again bidden to be fruitful and to multiply and to spread abroad on the earth.

The account of the end of the flood closes by telling us of Noah's public thanksgiving and the promises and assurances with which the Lord received this thanksgiving. We read:

And Noah built an altar to the Lord, and he took of all the clean animals and of all clean birds and brought burnt offerings upon the altar. When the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, he said within his heart. Not will I again curse the ground any more for the sake of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and not will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. As long as the days of the earth continue, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease (8:20-22).

We are told that Noah took of all the clean animals and of all the clean birds and brought a sacrifice to the Lord. If we keep the size of the human race and of the creature world at the time in mind, we will have to say that this was certainly a very large sacrifice.

Moses speaks of these sacrifices as having been burnt offerings. We will again bear in mind that Moses was first of all addressing his own people Israel in Genesis. That lets us assume that Moses is saying that Noah's sacrifices were meant to express what an Israelite expressed with a burnt offering.

Israel had four types of bloody sacrifices. Two of these types, the sin offering and the trespass offering, were brought when an Israelite realized that his covenant relationship with his God had been disturbed. These sacrifices were then to restore covenant relationship. The other two types of bloody sacrifices, the burnt offering and the peace offering, were brought by Israelites when they were joyfully conscious of their covenant relationship with their God. Also the burnt offering was a bloody sacrifice. It involved the giving up of life on the part of a sacrificial animal, which substituted for the worshipper who had deserved death by his sins. In bringing such a sacrifice the worshipper was humbly confessing that the fellowship with God in which he was rejoicing rested upon God's gracious forgiveness of his sins.

Of all the bloody sacrifices only the burnt offering was a sacrifice in which the complete sacrificial animal was burned as a sacrifice. This made the burnt offering a fitting sacrifice for expressing the thought of complete dedication and devotion to God. For this reason the morning and evening sacrifices which Israel brought as a people were burnt offerings. They express Israel's complete devotion and dedication as a people to the Lord who had chosen them.

When Moses tells us that Noah expressed his thoughts after the flood with burnt offerings, he is telling us that he was expressing all these thoughts that were bound up with a burnt offering. He and his family had been graciously rescued in the ark from the universal destruction of the flood. They had experienced this deliverance not because of their own merits but by the unmerited grace of the Lord, of their Savior God, who had kept them in faith. In humble thankfulness Noah in his own behalf and in behalf of his family expressed their complete devotion and dedication to the Lord. As blood sacrifices involving a substitutionary atonement by blood, they prefigured the perfect sacrifice of Christ on which the grace that Noah and his family had experienced rested.

With this expression of humble, thankful faith the Lord was greatly pleased. That is what Moses is stating when he says that the Lord smelled the pleasing odor of the sacrifices.

God in his good pleasure now promised never again to curse the ground as he had in the destruction of the flood. We may be surprised by the reason that God gives: "Because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." It comes to our mind that this is in essence the same reason which God according to Genesis 6:5 advanced for destroying the earth.

No contradiction lies in this fact, however. Man's complete depravity was indeed the cause for the universal flood. It was a manifestation of God's holy and righteous wrath upon sin and unbelief. This destruction was carried out with such emphasis that it could serve as an earnest warning for all times. Constant repetition of such well-deserved vengeance upon sin and unbelief would not be in the interest of God's saving grace. That is why God now promises to give mankind ample time for repentance. He would now work out his plan of salvation as he had already promised it in Paradise after the fall. Through the gospel message he would until the end of time gather his elect.

We are still living in that period, in the period of the Noachian covenant of forbearance. The rainbow reminds us of it. We know that during this time there have been many divine judgments upon individuals, upon cities, upon peoples, and upon nations. But never has there again been a universal judgment, one during which summer and Winter, cold and heat, seedtime and harvest, day and night were suspended throughout the earth as this was true during the Noachian flood.

The introductory words: "As long as the earth remains" do indicate that there will be another universal judgment. This will be the final judgment upon hardened sin and unbelief at the end of the world. Twice we have already considered God's earnest warning through the Apostle Peter, "The heavens that now are and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men. Yet this does not frighten and dismay us who have found grace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In God-given faith we will continue to pray:

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head. Amen.