

SERMON NOTES AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

Genesis 8:1-12

The Book of Genesis is the most broad-ranged book of the bible. The scope of Genesis is huge, moving from the creating of the world to some of the ancestors of the faith, including Noah. Genesis moves from there to the story of a particular family, beginning with Abraham, and moving through Isaac and Jacob and culminating with the story of Joseph, and how he ends up in Egypt. Exodus then picks up the story of how Moses brought the descendants of Joseph out of Egypt to the Promised land.

There is a constant connection and dialogue by the New Testament writers and the Old Testament, including the Book of Genesis. John parallels the opening verse of Genesis with his Christological interpretation. The opening verse of Genesis begins: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth..." John writes in the beginning verses of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." A little later in the first chapter, John tells us who "the Word" is: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory..." For John, the God who in the beginning created the world has now come to us in Jesus Christ to recreate His world, to save His world.

The writer of Hebrews also interprets Old Testament events in light of the hope we have in Jesus Christ. In chapter 11, Hebrews talks about the great ancestors of the faith who have gone before us, who, by faith, trusted what God was going to do, even though they couldn't see it at the immediate moment. Noah, says the writer of Hebrews, trusted What God told him "about events as yet unseen," and built an ark to save a remnant, so the world could begin anew. The Letter of Hebrews is a call for perseverance for tough times, to remember our spiritual ancestors, who trusted God, even though they could see what the end result would be.

There are some interesting archeological finds which indicate that a Great Flood happened some time in ancient history. One find, which Michael Coogan rates as one of the top ten biblical archaeological finds of all time, is the clay tablets of the Gilgamesh epic, which was found on the site of ancient Nineveh in 1850 by British explorer Austen Henry Layard. One of the tablets has a striking similar text to that of our text from Genesis for today:

“When the seventh day arrived,
I put out and released a dove
The dove went; it came back,
For no perching place was visible to it, and it turned round

I put out and released a raven.
The raven went, and saw the waters receding.
And it ate, preened, lifted its tail, and did not turn around.”

There are other accounts of some sort of "Great Flood" from other cultures, including the Ninevites, the Persians, and the Babylonians. The difference in these accounts and the account in the Old Testament is the understanding that God was involved in the events as a part of His salvation activity in our world.

Warm-up Discussion Questions

1. What event or experience have you gone through 'once' but never want to go through again.

Questions for Individual Discussion and Reflection

1. How has your life changed as a result of your faith in God?
2. Noah was probably much ridiculed for following what God was telling him, for building an ark when it didn't look like rain? What has your faith cost you?