THE PENTATEUCH PART I: GENESIS
LESSON 6: Genesis 6:9-9:17
The Great Flood and the Noahide Covenant

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My Lord,
You delivered Your righteous judgment against sinful humanity in the event of the Great Flood, but in Your mercy You saved the best of humanity in Noah and his family and carried them to safety through the waters of chaos.  The mercy You showed Noah and his family prefigured the salvation You have offered all of mankind through the waters of the Sacrament of Baptism, to save us from the chaos of this world.  As the waters of the Flood separated Noah and his family from the sin of their world, the Sacrament of Baptism separates us from original sin in the family of Adam and raises us to new life in Christ Jesus as children in Your covenant family.  Send Your Holy Spirit to guide us, Lord, in our study of the Great Flood, not only as it prefigured the Sacrament of Baptism but as it prefigures the Second Advent of the Messiah when this world in a final judgment will pass away and the salvation of the righteous with be through the promised Redeemer-Messiah.

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*Was not Noah a holy man, who alone in the whole human race together with his whole house deserved to be delivered from the flood?  And is not the Church prefigured by Noah and his sons?  They escape the flood, with wood (which symbolizes the cross) carrying them.* St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11.72*

*As it was in Noah's day, so will it also be in the days of the Son of man.   People were eating and drinking, marrying wives and husbands, right up to do day Noah went into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all.* [Luke 17:26-27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke17.htm#v26)

Noah stands out in sharp contrast to the rest of the family of Adam.  The inspired writer of Sirach wrote of him: *Noah was found perfectly upright, in the time of retribution he became the heir: because of him a remnant was preserved for the earth at the coming of the Flood. Everlasting covenants were made with him that never again should every living creature perish by flood* ([Sir 44:17-18/19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach44.htm#v17))*.* And the inspired writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews wrote of him: *It was through his faith that Noah, when he had been warned by God of something that had never been seen before, took care to build an ark to save his family.  His faith was a judgment on the world, and he was able to claim the uprightness which comes from faith* ([Heb 11:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews11.htm#v7)).  It was because of Noah's obedience of faith that the faithful remnant of the "promised seed" was preserved.

The mass extinction event of the Flood narrative begins the major biblical theme of Creation       Judgment      Destruction      Re-creation.  Included within this theme is the preservation of the "faithful remnant" of the covenant people: those who remain faithfully obedient to God's holy covenant and who persevere in holiness.   This theme cycle extends from Genesis to the Book of Revelation, with the first cycle appearing in the narrative of Creation event and the judgment of the Great Flood in which Noah's family was preserved in the earth's destruction and are witnesses to and participants in the re-creation of the earth as God's Temple ([Gen 8:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v20)) and in God re-establishing a new covenant with Noah and all of creation ([9:8-17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v8)).  The cycle is continued in the creation of Israel as a holy nation in covenant with Yahweh, the creation of the desert Tabernacle, the judgment against Israel for her apostasy, the destruction of the nation and the Jerusalem Temple, exile, and later the restoration of the faith remnant of Israel/Judah and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple ([Is 10:20-23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/isaiah/isaiah10.htm#v20); [2 Kg 17:7-23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings17.htm#v7); [Jer 36:14-23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jeremiah/jeremiah36.htm#v14)).  This cycle was followed by Jesus' prophecy of the judgment and destruction of Judea, Jerusalem and the Temple, and the preservation of the faithful remnant of the disciples of Jesus Christ ([Mt 23:13-39](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew23.htm#v13); [24:15-25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v15); prophecy of destruction fulfilled in 70 AD).  This faithful Jewish remnant, led by Jesus' Apostles, became the spiritual fathers in the re-creation of the new Israel'the Universal Church of the new and everlasting Covenant (Acts 2).  It is the spiritual children of that "faithful remnant" of the New Covenant people of God who persevere in righteousness and continue to battle the "seed of the serpent:" *Then the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest (remnant) of her children (seed), who obey God's commandments and have in themselves the witness of Jesus* ([Rev 12:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation12.htm#v17)).

The final episode in the cycle will be the judgment at the end of the Final Age of Man in the return of the Redeemer-Messiah and the fiery destruction of the present creation: *First of all, do not forget that in the final days there will come sarcastic scoffers whose life is ruled by their passions.  What has happened to the promise of his coming?' they will say, 'Since our Fathers died everything has gone on just as it has since the beginning of creation!'  They deliberately ignore the fact that long ago there were the heavens and the earth, formed out of water and through water by the Word of God, and that it was through these same factors that the world of those days was destroyed by the floodwaters.  It is the same Word which is reserving the present heavens and earth for fire, keeping them till the Day of Judgment and the destruction of sinners* ([2 Pt 3:3-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter3.htm#v3)).The final event of the earth's destruction will be the conclusion of the cycle: the destruction of earth in fire, the re-creation of the new heaven and earth, the heavenly Jerusalem as God's earthly Temple, and the preservation of the faithful remnant of humanity for all eternity, living in the fullness of the New Covenant in Christ Jesus ([Rev 20:11-21:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation20.htm#v11)).

The account of the Flood and the preservation of Noah and his family serves as a warning to all generations of God's judgment on sinners and His merciful preservation of the righteous: *He did not spare the world in ancient times: he saved only Noah, the preacher of uprightness, along with seven others, when he sent the Flood over a world of sinners.  He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by reducing them to ashes as a warning to future sinners; but recued Lot, an upright man who   had been sickened by the debauched way in which these vile people behaved'for that upright man, living among them, was outraged in his upright soul by the crimes that he saw and heard every day.  All this shows that the Lord is well able to rescue the good from their trials, and hold the wicked for their punishment until the Day of Judgment, especially those who follow the desires of their corrupt human nature* ***and have no respect for the Lord's authority***([2 Pt 2:5-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter2.htm#v5)).

**Please read Genesis 6:9-16: The Warning of the Great Flood and instruction on building the Ark:**
**6:9*This is the story of Noah:  Noah was a good man, an upright man among his contemporaries, and he walked with God.* 10*Noah fathered three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.* 11*God saw that the earth was corrupt and full of lawlessness.* 12*God looked at the earth: it was corrupt, for corrupt were the ways of all living things on earth.* 13*God said to Noah, 'I have decided that the end has come for all living things, for the earth is full of lawlessness because of human beings.  So I am now about to destroy them and the earth.* 14*Make yourself an ark out of resinous wood. Make it of reeds and caulk it with pitch inside and out.* 15*This is how to make it: the length of the ark is to be three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.* 16*Make a roof to the ark, building it up to a cubit higher.  Put the entrance in the side of the ark, which is to be made with lower, second and third decks.***

**There are 7 phases in the Great Flood event and 7 phases in the after-flood event.**

**The 7 phases in the Great Flood event:**

Phase 1: Warning and instructions on Noah's part in building the Ark.

Phase 2: God's part in His decision to destroy life on earth and the promise of His covenant with Noah and his descendants.

Phase 3: Noah's part in what provisions to take on the Ark and the covenant promise.

Phase 4: Noah, his family and the animals enter the Ark.

Phase 5: The Great Flood begins.

Phase 6: The total destruction of all animal and human life on earth as the waters rose.

Phase 7: The waters maintained their level for 150 days.

[**Genesis 6:9**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v9)**:** This is the story of Noah: Noah was a good man, an upright man among his contemporaries, and he walked with God. Once again the Hebrew word toledot(h) is used in the sense of an historical account. The New Jerusalem translation describes Noah as "a good man an upright man" who "walked with God." A better translation is that Noah was "a blameless and righteous man." The prophet Hosea defined what it meant to be blameless and to walk with God in the last verse of the Book of the Prophet Hosea: *Let the wise understand these words, let the intelligent grasp their meaning, for Yahweh's ways are straight and the upright (righteous) will walk in them, but sinners will stumble* ([Hos 14:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hosea/hosea14.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v10)). (Brown-Driver-Briggs, pages 1071, 834).

This is the first time the words "righteous" and "blameless" are used in Scripture (Genesis, Waltke, page 133). That Noah was "blameless" does not suggest that he was completely without sin. David was a sinner and yet in [2 Samuel 22:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel22.htm#v24) he could claim that because he continually sought to repent his sins and to reestablish fellowship with God that he was "blameless" before the Lord.
Question: What does it mean to be "righteous" and "blameless"?
Answer: To be "righteous" is to be ethically moral in living out the precepts of natural law that God has place in the heart of every man/woman who is animated by the "breath" of God and created in His image. In the biblical sense, to be "blameless" is to diligently seek to avoid sinning against God and against brothers and sisters in the human family and to live in fellowship with God.

**Question**: Noah was both "righteous" and "blameless" and he walked with God, a statement which links Noah to what other pre-flood patriarch in the line of Seth? How are they alike?
**Answer:** Noah is linked to Enoch from the Godly line of Seth ([Gen 5:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v24)) who "walked with God" and was saved from death as Noah will be saved from the death of the flood.

[**Genesis 6:11**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v11)**:** God saw that the earth was corrupt (sahat) and full of lawlessness. The Hebrew word for corrupt (sahat) is used seven times in the narrative (three times in [6:11-12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v11)) and means to "spoil or disfigure." The word translated as "lawlessness" in the New Jerusalem Bible is more accurately translated as "violence," hamas in Hebrew. This word means violence in the sense of "cold blooded and unscrupulous infringement of the personal right of others, motivated by greed and hate and often making use of physical violence and brutality" (Waltke, page 134 quoting Haag, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament). It is a word recognizable as the name for an Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization located in the Gaza region of the Holy Land.

There is an unusual amount of detail given in the Flood account. The amount of detail can be compared to the details concerning the garden Sanctuary in Eden in [Genesis 2:4b-14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis2.htm#v4) and the many details concerning the preparation and building of the desert Tabernacle in [Exodus 25:1-40:33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus25.htm#v1). The Ark became an earthly sanctuary, not for worship but as the vehicle for the preservation of life on earth, just as the building of the desert Sanctuary will become the vehicle for which the life of the children of Israel will be preserved spiritually.

The Hebrew word for the Ark of the flood and for the ark/basket that preserved baby Moses ([Ex 2:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus2.htm#v3), [5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus2.htm#v5)) is the same word, teba. If as Scripture records Moses is the inspired writer of both Genesis and Exodus, it makes sense that he should use the same Hebrew word for the vehicle of Noah and his family's salvation through the waters of the flood and his own vehicle of salvation through the waters of the Nile River. The Hebrew teba is related to the Egyptian word db't, which means "chest," or "box" (Brown-Driver-Briggs, page 1061). This word is not, however, the same Hebrew word as that is used for the Ark of the Covenant. Our English word "ark" comes from the Latin translation arca, which means "box," or "chest" (New Jerusalem, footnote e, page 25). The Hebrew word teba is used 26 times in the flood epic and two other times for Moses' vehicle of salvation for a total of 28 times in Scripture ( [Gen 6:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v14) (twice), [15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v15), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v16) (twice), [18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v18), [19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v19); [7:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v1), [7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v7), [9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v9), [13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v13), [15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v15), [17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v17), [18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v18), [23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v23); [8:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v1), [4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v4), [6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v6), [9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v9) (twice), [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v10), [13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v13), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v16), [19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v19); [9:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v10), [18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v18); [Ex 2:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus2.htm#v3), [5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus2.htm#v5)).

**Question:** Why had Yahweh decided the time had come to destroy all living things? **Answer:** Sin is incompatible with God's holiness. God's wrath was aroused because the creation that He made, which He both "saw" and "judged" to be good and holy, had become wicked and corrupted through the spread of sin.

**Question:** How is Noah contrasted with the rest of humanity in [Genesis 6:8-9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v8)? What does this contrast suggest? Also see CCC 1996-97.
**Answer:** In contrast to the rest of mankind, Noah (nh in Hebrew) is identified has having God's grace (hn in Hebrew)'the gift of participation in the life of God. Scripture also records that Noah "walked with God," meaning that he enjoyed an intimate spiritual relationship with God. The phrase "walked with God" not only links Noah to his righteous ancestor Enoch in [Genesis 5:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v24) but also to Adam before the Fall. God sees and judges human wickedness, but He is also merciful and gracious to the righteous.

It is interesting that even the animals are included in this judgment. [Genesis 6:11-12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v11) records that the wickedness and lawlessness generated by sin had affected "all living things on earth," which included the animals. Since at this time the animals did not have a fear of human beings, perhaps even the animals were engaging in ramped violence not only against each other but against humans. God's judgment was that life on earth was out of control and action was necessary to restore a natural order to bring about a future plan of salvation for mankind and restoration for creation.

**Question:** What dimensions did God give Noah for building the Ark? What other plans for the construction of the Ark are noted in the narrative? Note: in the Hebrew text [6:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v14) may be direction Noah to make "nests" or stalls; also see [Gen 8:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v6).
**Answer:** The dimensions for the Ark were 300 cubits long by 50 cubits wide by 30 cubits high. It had a window, a door, a roof, three decks, and stalls for the animals. It was covered with pitch inside and out.

[**Genesis 6:14**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v14)**:** Make yourself an ark out of resinous wood. Make it of reeds and caulk it with pitch inside and out. The Hebrew word qn, can be translated "nests" or "reeds" (that birds use reeds in nest building probably accounts for both meanings being applied to the same word, although with added vowels the words became slightly different: qen = nest and qaneh = reed). The translation can read "You shall make nests" (New American Bible) or "you shall take reeds" (New Jerusalem Bible) and continues, "you shall cover it with asphalt/pitch inside and out" (Interlineal Hebrew-English Bible translation, page 14).

The mention of "reeds" and especially the detail concerning the pitch may indicate that the Ark was a "sewn" boat. Ancient texts describe the technique of building sewn boats along the coasts of the Indian Ocean and in Mesopotamia. We have no archaeological remains of an actual sewn boat, but we do have two thousand years of records of a sewn boat type that was once common in the ancient world and which is also described in the Epic of Gilgamesh. The sewn boat technique predated metal technology, using twisted reeds to bind the wood panels of the boat together and pitch or fish oil to seal the joints. In his travels the 13th century AD Italian explorer Marco Polo noted the use of sewn boats at Hormuz, near the mouth of the Persian Gulf (Yule, Marco Polo, page 108). The technique of sewn boats is still found in areas of the Indian Ocean, and until recently sewn boats were being built along the coasts of Yemen and Oman. Sewn boats were common in the Persian Gulf until the 20th century when the method ceased to be used in ocean-going vessels but continued to be used for local fishing boats. In the previous centuries, sewn vessels of up to 2,000 tons sailed the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, evidence of the practicality and durability of such boats. The Genesis account appears to offer proof that this very ancient technique that was developed in the Stone Age may have been used in building the Ark ("Noah's Ark'A Sewn Boat?," Biblical Archaeology Review, May/June 2005, pages 19-23, 55-58).

The question remains, how do these dimensions translate into modern feet and inches?  Measurements in ancient Near East included the cubit, span, handbreadth /palm, and fingers.  A cubit usually corresponded to the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tips of the fingers.  Evidence of the 4-fingered palm and 24-finger cubit is found all over the ancient Near East and Mediterranean area dating back to the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age, c. 2.5 million years ago).  As civilizations advanced, the cubit measurement became standardized in different cultures.  The Babylonians used a cubit length designated as a "royal" cubit which was about 19.8 inches, while the Egyptians had a longer and shorter cubit, measuring approximately 20.65 inches for the longer and 17.6 inches for the shorter.  The Israelites had a cubit measure of approximately 17.5 inches.  The Book of Ezekiel mentions a longer cubit of about 20.4 inches, but this may be a "spiritual" measure based on the number 7, which is determined from [Ezekiel 40:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel40.htm#v5) and [43:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel43.htm#v13) to suggest that the longer cubit was 7 "palms."  In this case, the shorter, standard cubit would be 6 palms or approximately a 17.5 inch cubit ([2 Chr 3:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2chronicles/2chronicles3.htm#v3)).  These modern equivalent feet and inches dimensions are all conjecture.  However, using the shorter cubit dimension, the Ark would have measured 437.5 feet long by 72.92 feet wide, by 43.75 feet high.  Adding to the calculations the three decks ([Gen 6:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v16)), yields a total deck area of approximately 95,700 square feet and a total volume of 1,396,000 cubic feet.  The gross tonnage of the Ark has been calculated at 13,960 tons (*The Genesis Flood,* J. Whitcomb and H. Morris, Baker Books, page 10).  The modern Carnival cruise ship, the Paradise has 10 decks and a tonnage of 70,367.  Using the longer 7-palm cubit measurement of Ezekiel, the Ark would have been 510 feet long by 85 feet wide by 51 feet high.

The Ark was designed for floating and not for sailing.  Its destiny and the direction in which it floated was to be entirely determined by God.  If the shape of the Ark was boxy like a large barge and not streamlined as in modern sea-going ships, its carrying capacity was increased by one third (*The Genesis Flood*, page 103).  There is historical evidence for huge barges being built in the ancient world.  The Egyptians built large barges to transport giant obelisks and the Romans also built huge ships to transport building materials from Africa, Greece, and Asia Minor to the Italian Peninsula.  There are records of two huge Roman military transport vessels that impress even modern ship builders.  A barge is very stable in the water and the weight of the cargo only increases its stability by lowering its center of gravity. Marine architects have verified that the dimensions of the Ark made it a very stable vessel (*The Genesis Flood,* page 103).

**Please read Genesis 6:17-22: What provisions to take on the Ark and the promise of God's covenant**
**6:17*'For my part I am going to send the flood, the waters, on earth, to destroy all living things having the breath of life under heaven; everything on earth is to perish.* 18*But with you I shall establish my covenant and you will go aboard the ark, yourself, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives along with you.* 19*From all living creatures, from all living things, you must take two of each kind aboard the ark, to save their lives with yours; they must be male and female.* 20*Of every species of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that creeps along the ground, two must go with you so that their lives may be saved.* 21*For your part, provide yourself with eatables of all kinds, and lay in a store of them, to serve as food for yourself and them.'* 22*Noah did this; exactly as God commanded him, he did.***

**Question:** How many people were to be saved from the flood in the safety of the Ark?
**Answer:** Eight people.  For the Hebrew people, the number 8 came to symbolize salvation, redemption, and re-generation.

[**Genesis 6:18**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v18)**:** *But with you I shall establish my covenant and you will go aboard the ark, yourself, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives along with you.* Despite the plan to destroy all life on earth, God provided for the salvation of the human family.  Through Noah's family He provided for the continuation of animal life after the flood judgment and cleansing of the earth, and He promised to establish "my covenant" with Noah as God's covenant representative to the human family that continued to increase after the flood event.  The use of the personal pronoun "my" signifies that God is the author of this bond of personal commitment, and He will establish the bond of covenant for both Noah and Himself.  It is also significant that the Hebrew text does not read "I shall make my covenant," but instead uses the Hebrew word *qum,* meaning "I shall establish / confirm my covenant," signifying the confirmation of a preexisting covenant with Adam ([Hosea 6:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hosea/hosea6.htm#v7): *They have broken my covenant like Adam*) that is continued in Noah and his line (*Brown-Driver-Briggs,* page 877)

**Question:** What is a covenant?  How is it different from a contract?
**Answer:** A covenant solemnizes and confirms a relationship. A covenant addresses intangibles like loyalty, marriage, honesty, justice, etc., while a contract is concerned with property rights.  Both members of a covenant union have obligations and promise to fulfill those obligations.  In the Bible, covenants form family bonds.

**Question:** How many animals of each kind was Noah to take aboard the Ark?  See [Gen 6:19-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v19) and [7:2-3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v2), [8-9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v8).  The Hebrew word translated "two of each kind" in [Gen 6:19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v19) is *shenayim*, which is better translated as "pairs" (*Brown-Driver-Briggs,* page 1041)
**Answer:** Noah was to take seven pairs of all clean animals and one pair of all unclean animals of every species of land animal.

**Question:** What is meant by "clean" and "unclean" animals?  See [Lev 11:1-8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus11.htm#v1); [20:25-26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus20.htm#v25); [Dt 14:3-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy14.htm#v3).
**Answer:** What is considered to be ritually clean and unclean will be fully defined in the Law of the Sinai Covenant, but even at this time there must have been an understanding of what animals were acceptable to be offered in sacrifice to Yahweh.  A person must be ritually "clean" to approach Yahweh's altar'ritually "clean" and undefiled externally was is a sign of the necessary of the internal purity one must have to approach Yahweh's altar in worship.  In the same way only certain ritually "clean" animals were an acceptable sacrifice.

**Question:** In addition to collecting the materials and building the Ark, what else was Noah required to provide?
**Answer:** Food for himself and for the animals.

At this time humans have not been given permission to eat the meat of animals, so Noah would have to collect enough fruits and foliage for his family and the animals ([Gen 1:29-30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v29)).  Could Noah have collected enough food for his family and all the animals for the entire period of time that they would be imprisoned in the Ark?  It is possible that God put the animals in a state of suspended animation for most of their confinement, which would reduce the amount of food and clean-up.  If sin had disrupted all of nature, as Scripture suggests in [Genesis 6:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v12), then it is possible that the animals were also violent.  A state of suspended animation or hibernation would have eliminated any violent interaction among the animals.  The text does not provide these details but only the information that the animals submitted to willingly coming to the Ark and boarding it with Noah and his family ([Gen 7:8-9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v8)).  At this time the animals had no natural fear of humans.

**Please read Genesis 7:1-5:  The command to board the Ark**
**7:1*Yahweh said to Noah, 'Go aboard the ark, you and all your household, for you alone of your contemporaries do I see before me as an upright man.* 2*Of every clean animal you must take seven pairs, a male and its female; of the unclean animals you must take one pair, a male and its female* 3*(and of the birds of heaven, seven pairs, a male and its female), to preserve their species throughout the earth.* 4*For in seven days' time I shall make it rain on earth for forty days and forty nights, and I shall wipe every creature I have made off the face of the earth.* 5*Noah did exactly as Yahweh commanded him.***

*Yahweh said to Noah, 'Go aboard the ark, you and all your household,* ***for you alone of your contemporaries do I see before me as an upright man.*** Before the final command to initiate the destructive waters of the flood, God again sees and judges the wicked condition of mankind and the righteousness of Noah.

That *Noah did exactly as Yahweh commanded him* is a repeat of [Genesis 6:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v22): *Noah did this; exactly as God commanded him, he did.* These statements are a declaration of Noah's righteousness.  Despite the obstacles, Noah righteousness was expressed in his obedience to God's commands'building the Ark was a work of faith and trust in the Lord, and his faith and trust merited God's judgment of his righteousness.

**Question:** How did St. James define Noah's kind of faith?  See [James 2:14-26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/james/james2.htm#v14).
**Answer:** St. James expressed this kind of faith as living, active faith.  He wrote that this is the kind of faith that brings salvation: *You see now that it is by deeds, and not only by believing, that someone is justified.  [..].  As a body without a spirit is dead, so is faith without deeds* ([Jm 2:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/james/james2.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v24), [26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/james/james2.htm#v26)).  If Noah had only believed the flood was coming but had failed to be obedient to God's commands to build and make provisions for the Ark, he and his family would have been lost: *In the same way faith: if good deeds do not go with it, it is quite dead* ([Jm 2:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/james/james2.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v17)).

CCC 1814: *Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself.  By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God."  For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will: "the righteous shall live by faith."  Living faith "work[s] through charity."*  Charity is not defined as almsgiving.  Charity is defined as "love in action," and almsgiving is one of those expressions of active love.

**Question:** What about Noah's family; did his righteousness save them?  God's declaration of Noah's righteousness in [7:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v1) does not infer that the other members of his family were not righteous.  See [Ezekiel 14:17-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel14.htm#v17) and [18:19-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel18.htm#v19) for your answer.
**Answer:** According to Scripture, a child cannot be held responsible for his parent's sins, nor can the righteousness of a parent save a sinful child.  What saved Noah's family was his example of righteousness that they witnessed, adopted, and followed.

**Question:** What can you do to help your family and friends on their individual journeys to salvation?  How can one become an obstacle to a loved one's salvation?
**Answer:** The Christian example of righteous living in obedience to God's commands to know, love, and serve Him and to love our neighbor is the best way we can help our children, family members, and friends on their journey to salvation.  Unfortunately, when parents provide examples of sinful and unrighteous behavior or a lack of commitment in their relationship to God, they can become responsible for their children learning and following their bad example.  Such parents become an obstacle to their children's salvation.

**Question:** What did Jesus say was the measure of one's love for Him and the importance of being obedient to the commands of God?  See [Jn 14:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john14.htm#v15); [15:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john15.htm#v10).
**Answer:** Jesus said: *If you love me you will keep my commandments,* and He said: *If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.* Our love for God is expressed in our obedience of faith in submitting to His will.  It is His children's joyful and obedient response to live according to His commands that pleases our heavenly Father.

**Please read Genesis 7:6-16: Noah, his family and the animals enter the Ark, and the Great Flood begins.**
**7:6*Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came, the waters over the earth.* 7*Noah with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives boarded the ark to escape the waters of the flood.* 8*(Of the clean animals and the animals that are not clean, of the birds and all that creeps along the ground,* 9*one pair boarded the ark with Noah, one male and one female, as God had commanded Noah.)* 10*Seven days later the waters of the flood appeared on earth.* 11*In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, and on the seventeenth day of the month, that very day all the springs of the great deep burst through, and the sluices of heaven opened.* 12*And heavy rain fell on earth for forty days and forty nights.* 13*That very day Noah and his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth boarded the ark, with Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons,* 14*and with them every species of wild animal, every species of cattle, every species of creeping things that creep along the ground, every species of bird, everything that flies, everything with wings.* 15*One pair of all that was alive and had the breath of life boarded the ark with Noah,* 16*and those that went aboard were a male and female of all that was alive, as God had commanded him.  Then Yahweh shut him in.***

**Genesis 7:12:** *And heavy rain fell on earth:* Humanity usually looks upon rain as a blessing, but one can imagine the fear of humanity in this very first rain event.  The ancients were frightened of any unusual natural phenomena, interpreting such an event as a sign of disaster.  Until this point in the history of the earth, rain had never fallen upon the ground ([Gen 2:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis2.htm#v5)).  Noah had been prophesying the flood.  Building the Ark was a visual reminder of his prophecy, perhaps for the duration of 120 years ([Gen 6:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v3)), and yet it wasn't until this moment that the people believed'but belief came too late.

*Then Yahweh shut him in:* It is a jarring conclusion to this passage that God Himself shut the door of the Ark.  The decision was made and the fate of those inside and outside the Ark was sealed in God's action of shutting the door that was the gateway to salvation.

**Question:** Will the finality of "shutting the door" be something each of us will have to face?  Have you considered on which side of the "door" you will stand?  The "door" to salvation stands opened up the very last moment, but once we pass from this life to the next there is no turning back'the door is shut and our fate is sealed for eternity.

**Please read Genesis 7:17-24: The Great Flood**
**7:17*The flood lasted forty days on earth.  The waters swelled, lifting the ark until it floated off the ground.* 18*The waters rose, swelling higher above the ground, and the ark drifted away over the waters.* 19*The waters rose higher and higher above the ground until all the highest mountains under the whole of heaven were submerged.* 20*The waters reached their peak fifteen cubits above the submerged mountains.* 21*And all living things that stirred on earth perished; birds, cattle, wild animals, all the creatures swarming over the earth, and all human beings.* 22*Everything with the last breath of life in its nostrils, everything on dry land, died.* 23*Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out, people, animals, creeping things and birds; they were wiped off the earth and only Noah was left and those with him in the ark.* 24*The waters maintained the level on earth for a hundred and fifty days.***

Before the flood waters came the Ark was 30 cubits high. With a full cargo, the Ark's draft would have been almost half its height; it would have just cleared the highest mountain peaks which were 15 cubits below the flood waters.

**Question:** Was it a world-wide flood or only a regional flood?  See [Gen 6:1-7:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v1); [Wis 10:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/wisdom/wisdom10.htm#v4); [Sirach 44:17-18/19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach44.htm#v17); [1 Pt 3:19-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1peter/1peter3.htm#v19); [2 Pt 2:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter2.htm#v5) and [Mt 24:37-44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v37).
**Answer:** Statements in these passages, especially [Genesis 6:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v17) and [7:20-24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v20), leave us with the understanding that it was a world-wide flood and mass destruction of every breathing creature that was not saved in the Ark.  The example Jesus used of the flood in [Matthew 24:37-44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v37) loses its impact if the flood in Noah's time didn't affect all humanity.

**Please read Genesis 8:1-14: The flood waters subside**
**8:1*But God had Noah in mind, and all the wild animals and all the cattle that were with him in the ark.  God sent a wind across the earth and the waters began to subside.* 2*The springs of the deep and the sluices of heaven were stopped up and the heavy rain from heaven was held back.* 3*Little by little, the waters ebbed from the earth.  After a hundred and fifty days the waters fell,* 4*and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.* 5*The waters gradually fell until the tenth month when, on the first day of the tenth month, the mountain tops appeared.* 6*At the end of forty days Noah opened the window he had made in the ark* 7*and released a raven, which flew back and forth as it waited for the waters to dry up on earth.* 8*He then released a dove, to see whether the waters were receding from the surface of the earth.* 9*But the dove, finding nowhere to perch, returned to him in the ark, for there was water over the whole surface of the earth; putting out his hand he took hold of it and brought it back into the ark with him.* 10*After waiting seven more days, he again released the dove from the ark.* 11*In the evening the dove came back to him and there in its beak was a freshly-picked olive leaf!  So Noah realized that the waters were receding from the earth.* 12*After waiting seven more days, he released the dove, and now it returned to him no more.* 13*It was in the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, in the first month and on the first of the month, that the waters began drying out on earth.  Noah lifted back the hatch of the ark and looked out.  The surface of the ground was dry!* 14*In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.***

*But God had Noah in mind...* The Hebrew text uses the word *zakar,* which means "to remember."  In English to "remember" means to mentally recall an incident or action, but in the Bible, and especially in reference to God, "to remember" signifies the commitment to act upon a previous covenant obligation ([Gen 9:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v15), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v16); [Lev 26:42](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus26.htm#v42), [45](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus26.htm#v45); [Dt 9:26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy9.htm#v26); [Ez 16:60](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel16.htm#v60); etc).  In the seven "remembrance feasts" or holy days of obligation of the Sinai Covenant, the Israelites re-lived the Exodus experience and acted out their covenant obligations.  For example in the Passover sacrifice and the Feast of Unleavened Bread they "remembered" the slaying of the lambs and kids that saved the firstborn of Israel from death the night of the first Passover and the eating of the sacrifice that night.  But they didn't just remember; they re-lived and experienced the same acts of redemption and salvation'killing the Passover victims and eating its flesh in a sacred meal.  Now God acts upon what He first promised Noah in [Genesis 6:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v18) when the word "covenant" was use for the first time in Scripture.  Noah has done his part and now God will fulfill His part of the covenant with Noah.

**Question:** Where does the Ark come to rest?
**Answer:** Somewhere among the mountains of a region known as Ararat.

Traditionally this region has been identified as ancient Armenia.  Its mountains are located on the borders of modern Turkey, Iran, and Russia.  It is an assumption that the Ark landed on the slope of what is today designated Mt. Ararat.  The mountain has two peaks: Little Ararat is 12,841 ft. high and Great Ararat, at 16,946 feet above sea level, is the highest mountain peak in the Near East and the second highest peak in Europe.  Mt. Ararat is about 200 miles north of the ancient city of Nineveh (the seals depicting the fall of man in Eden and the expulsion from Eden were discovered near Nineveh).  At the foot of the mountain is a town named Naxuana (also called Nakhichevan) which claims to be the site of Noah's tomb.  The name Nakhichevan means "Noah settled here."  Ararat is also mentioned in [Jeremiah 51:27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jeremiah/jeremiah51.htm#v27) and [2 Kings 19:37](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings19.htm#v37) (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, page 74).

**Question:** What numbers have been repeated most often in the flood narrative?  What do these numbers symbolize?  Give some examples. See the document: "The Significance of Numbers in Scripture."
**Answer:** Seven and forty are the most often repeated numbers.  Seven symbolizes completion and perfection, especially spiritual perfection:

* 7 is the number of God the Holy Spirit and the number symbolizing covenant
* the 7 days of Creation (Gen chapter 1)
* Jacob worked 7 years for Leah and another 7 for Rachel ([Gen 29:18-30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis29.htm#v18))
* Joseph's visions of 7 animals and 7 ears of corn representing 7 years of prosperity and famine ([Gen 41:2-47](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis41.htm#v2))
* the repetition of 7s in the building of the desert Tabernacle ([Ex chapters 25-37](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus25.htm))
* the 7 churches of Revelation symbolize the condition of the Church as a whole ([Rev 2-3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation2.htm)), the multiple 7s in the Book of Revelation, etc.

Forty is a number which symbolizes both a time of testing and consecration.  It is also a number which indicates a designated period of time in God plan of salvation:

* Moses was 40 days on Mt. Sinai (twice)
* 40 years of Israel wandering in the wilderness ([Num 14:33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers14.htm#v33))
* Israel's 40 years of eating manna ([Ex 16:45](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus16.htm#v45))
* Israel's men spied out the land of Canaan for 40 days ([Num 13:25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers13.htm#v25))
* Elijah's 40 day journey to Mt. Sinai/ Horeb ([1 Kg 19:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1kings/1kings19.htm#v8))
* Jesus' forty days in the desert and His temptation ([Mt 4:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew4.htm#v2); [Mk 1:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/mark/mark1.htm#v13); [Lk 4:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke4.htm#v2))
* Jesus' Ascension 40 days after His Resurrection ([Acts 1:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/acts/acts1.htm#v3)), etc.

**Question:** How many times is the word "seven" repeated in the Flood narrative?
**Answer:** [Genesis 7:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v2), [4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v4), [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v10); [8:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v4), [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v10), [12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v12), [14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v14) = seven times.

**Question:** Can you find a repetitive pattern in the number of days mentioned in the flood account?  Write out the different references to days and see if you can find a chiastic pattern in the repeated numbers of days from [Genesis 7:4-8:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v4) (do not include the information about Noah's age or the months and days of the month).  A chiastic pattern is a pattern that repeats itself in reverse order.
**Answer:** There is a chiastic pattern in the cycle of days in the epic of the flood:

A. 7 days warning before the 40 days of rain, Noah and family enter the Ark ([7:4-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v4))

         B. 7 days after entering the Ark, the rain began ([7:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v10))

                  C. 40 days of heavy rain ([7:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v12), [17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v17))

                              D. 150 days the water maintained its level ([7:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v24))

                              D. 150 days after the rain stopped the water began to subside ([8:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v3))

                  C. end of 40 days Noah opened a window to release birds ([8:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v6))

         B. 7 days waited to release the dove a second time and it returned ([8:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v10))

A. 7 days waited to release the dove a third time ([8:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v12))

(Note: the twice mentioned 150 days are the same length of time; the number is only repeated in [8:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v3) to maintain the pattern).

**Genesis 8:8-11**: 8*He then released a dove, to see whether the waters were receding from the surface of the earth.* 9*But the dove, finding nowhere to perch, returned to him in the ark, for there was water over the whole surface of the earth; putting out his hand he took hold of it and brought it back into the ark with him.* 10*After waiting seven more days, he again released the dove from the ark.* 11*In the evening the dove came back to him and there in its beak was a freshly-picked olive leaf!  So Noah realized that the waters were receding from the earth.*

**Question:** What does the symbol of a dove mean to the Church?

**Answer:** For the Fathers of the Church, the dove hovering above the flood waters of chaos, just as God's Spirit had hovered above the waters of chaos in the first Creation ([Gen 1:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v2)), coupled with the vision of the Spirit of God descending like a dove above Jesus' baptismal waters ([Mt 3:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew3.htm#v16); [Jn 1:32](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john1.htm#v32)), established the dove as a symbol of the activity of God the Holy Spirit among humanity.

[**Genesis 8:11**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v11)**:** *In the evening the dove came back to him and there in its beak was a freshly-picked olive leaf!*"Evening" is our afternoon; the next day will begin at sunset.  The afternoon may have been the liturgical hour of fellowship between God and man in Eden ([Gen 3:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v8)).  It will be the hour of daily confession and sacrifice for the covenant community in the Sinai Covenant ([Ex 29:41-42](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus29.htm#v41)).  The second lamb of the daily communal sacrifice was led to the altar at noon and sacrificed at the ninth hour, our 3PM (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews, 14.4.3 [65]*), and it will be the time of day that the Redeemer-Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will give up His life on the altar of the Cross, to renew Creation and to lead all men to salvation ([Mt 27:46-50](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew27.htm#v46); [Mk 15:34](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/mark/mark15.htm#v34); [Lk 23:44-46](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke23.htm#v44)).

The raven, a bird that eats carrion, did not return after it was first released from the Ark.  The olive leaf the dove brought back to Noah on its second flight was green and freshly picked.  The Hebrew word *taraph* means *"plucked off"* or *"fresh"* (*Brown-Driver-Briggs*, page 383). According to the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder, olive trees can endure floods, even emersion in salt water (*Natural History, XIII, 50*).  The leaves of the olive tree are green year round and grow lower down the slopes of the mountains of Armenia in the valleys on the south side of the mountains (*The Genesis Flood,* page 104).  Noah would have known that the waters had receded and the tops of the trees were visible.

**Question:** From the information provided in Scripture, how long did Noah, his family, and the animals remain in the Ark from the first rains until the land was dry and God told Noah to exit the Ark?  Hint: look at the references to Noah's age.
**Answer:** Noah was 600 years old when the flood came. The flood began on the 17th day of the 2nd month ([Gen 7:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v6)).  Noah was 601 when the flood ended on the 1st day of the 1st month ([Gen 8:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v13)).  The land was dry on the 27th day of the 2nd month when God told Noah and his family to disembark the ark ([Gen 8:14-15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v14)).  Noah and his family were in the Ark enduring the crisis of the Flood for 1 year and 11 days as the ancients counted.  The ancients at this time would have used a 354 day lunar calendar which is 11 days short of a solar year.  All ancient peoples used the lunar calendar before the discovery of the more accurate solar calendar.  The lunar calendar is the same calendar that will be used to mark the cycle of the months in a year for observance of the holy days of the Sinai Covenant.  Since Noah and his family were in the Ark 11 days beyond the lunar calendar, they were in the Ark an entire solar year.  At that time man may not have known the more accurate solar calendar, but God did.

**Please read Genesis 8:15-22: The occupants of the Ark disembark**
**8:15*Then God said to Noah,* 16*'Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you.* 17*Bring out all the animals with you, all living things, the birds, the cattle and all the creeping things that creep along the ground, for them to swarm on earth, for them to breed and multiply on earth.'* 18*So Noah came out with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives.* 19*And all the wild animals, all the cattle, all the birds and all the creeping things that creep along the ground, came out of the ark, one species after another.* 20*Then Noah built an altar to Yahweh and, choosing from all the clean animals and all the clean birds he presented burnt offerings on the altar.* 21*Yahweh smelt the pleasing smell and said to himself, 'Never again will I curse the earth because of human beings, because their heart contrives evil from their infancy.  Never again will I strike down every living thing as I have done.* 22*As long as earth endures; seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.'***

**Question:** What is significant about the time period revealed in [Genesis 8:13-16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v13) and Noah's action or lack of action?
**Answer:** Noah saw that the land was drying out: *It was in the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, in the first month and on the first of the month, that the waters began drying out on earth* ([8:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v13)).  But he patiently waited nearly two months until God commanded him to disembark the Ark: *In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. Then God said to Noah, 'Come out of the Ark* ([8:14-16a](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v14)).  Despite the fact that Noah had been confined for a year with his family and multiple animals, and all of them must have been getting very restless, Noah was consistently obedient to God's commands.  He did not presume to decide for himself what was right and good in deciding when to exit the Ark. He patiently waited for God's command.
8:15*Then God said to Noah,* 16*'Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you.* The Fathers of the Church saw the Ark as a symbol of the Church.

**Question:** In what way did the Ark prefigure the Church?
**Answer:** Just as the Ark was the vehicle through which God brought Noah's family through the waters of the chaos and death, so too the Church is the vehicle through which God saves humanity from the sinful chaos of the world, bringing mankind to salvation in Christ Jesus.

St. Maximus, the martyred Bishop of Turin (m. 408) who struggled to protect his flock during a period of Roman persecution and Christian martyrdom, saw the Ark as a symbol of the Church and as the means of salvation in the final moments of the Age of Man: *For as Noah's Ark preserved alive everyone whom it had taken in when the world was going under, so also Peter's Church will bring back unhurt everyone whom it embraces when the world goes up in flames.  And as a dove brought the sign of peace to Noah's Ark when the flood was over, so also Christ will bring the joy of peace to Peter's Church when the judgment is over, since he himself is dove and peace, as he promised when he said, "I shall see you again and your heart will rejoice." Sermon 49:3* (quoted from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, vol. I,* page 148).

**Question:** What was Noah's first act upon disembarking the Ark?
**Answer:** He built an altar to Yahweh, establishing the earth once again as God's Temple, and Noah offered blood sacrifices which were entirely consumed (whole burnt offerings) on God's altar.

[**Genesis 8:21**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v21)**:** *Yahweh smelt the pleasing smell and said to himself, 'Never again will I curse the earth because of human beings, because their heart contrives evil from their infancy. Never again will I strike down every living thing as I have done.*

**Question:** What was Yahweh's response to the offering of sacrifices?
**Answer:** God was pleased to accept the sacrifices and made a covenant promise to never again destroy the earth with water'even though man from birth is drawn to sin and the cleansing of the flood waters had not changed man's tendency to sin.

The word "curse" in Hebrew (*'arar*) is in effect an anti-blessing.  At this time in salvation history all blessings were temporal, like fertility, dominion over the earth, etc.  Curses or anti-blessings are also temporal: infertility, sickness, privation, etc. (see the blessings and curses for obedience to the Sinai Covenant in Lev 26:3-46 and [Dt 28:1-68](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy28.htm#v1)).  God was not altering the curse of the ground in [Genesis 3:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v17); He was promising to never destroy the earth by water again (Gen 6:16; [Is 54:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/isaiah/isaiah54.htm#v9)).  Blessings and curses will not become eternal until the advent of the Redeemer-Messiah ([Mt 25:46](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew25.htm#v46); [Mk 3:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/mark/mark3.htm#v29); [10:30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis10.htm#v30); [Jn 3:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john3.htm#v15); [6:54](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john6.htm#v54); [10:28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john10.htm#v28); [12:25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john12.htm#v25); [17:2-3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john17.htm#v2); etc.).

That Yahweh was pleased by the "smell" of the animal's burning flesh upon the altar fire will become part of the vocabulary of ritual sacrifice in the Sinai Covenant, indicating God's acceptance of the sacrifice ([Ex 29:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus29.htm#v18), [25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus29.htm#v25); [Lev 1:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus1.htm#v9), [13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus1.htm#v13); [Num 28:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/numbers/numbers28.htm#v2)).  In the Sinai Covenant the salted flesh of a whole burnt offering victim rose above the altar into the sky in a great white cloud, signifying God accepting the essence of the life of the animal that was sacrificed, which was symbolically tied to the submission of the life of the one (or community) who offered the animal.  It is the submission and repentance of His people that pleases Yahweh, not the "smell" of the sacrificed animal's burning flesh:

* *Is Yahweh pleased by burnt offerings and sacrifices or by obedience to Yahweh's voice?  Truly, obedience is better than sacrifice, submissiveness than the fat of rams* ([1 Sam 15:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel15.htm#v22))
* *Sacrifice gives you no pleasure, burnt offering you do not desire.  Sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a broken, contrite heart you never scorn* ([Ps 51:16-17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm51.htm#v16))
* *...for faithful love is what pleases me, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not burnt offerings* ([Ho 6:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hosea/hosea6.htm#v6))
* *The sacrifice of an offering unjustly acquired is a mockery; the gifts of the impious are unacceptable.  [..].  One who keeps the Law multiplies offerings; one who follows the commandments offers communion sacrifices* ([Sir 34:18-35:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/sirach/sirach34.htm#v18)).

St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) wrote: *The Scripture says, "And the Lord smelled a sweet odor," this is, he accepted the offerings.  But do not imagine that God has nostrils, since God is invisible spirit.  Yet what is carried up from the altar is the odor and smoke from burning bodies, and nothing is more malodorous than such a savor.  But that you may learn that God attends to the intention of the one offering the sacrifice and then accepts or rejects it, Scripture calls the odor and smoke a sweet savor.  Against Judaizing Christians 1.7.3* (quoted from *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament, vol. I,* page 150).

**Genesis 8: 21-22:** *Never again will I strike down every living thing as I have done.  22 As long as earth endures; seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.'*

**Question:** After repeating His promise to never again destroy the earth with water, what does God establish for the earth?
**Answer:** He establishes the seasons.  Before the flood, rain was not necessary to sustain the earth ([Gen 2:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis2.htm#v5)).  Now that the watery region above the earth has been pierced and the protective dome is no longer present; rain and the seasons will establish planting and harvest times.

**Please read Genesis 9:1-7: The order of the new post-flood creation**
**9:1*God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Breed, multiply and fill the earth.* 2*Be the terror and the dread of all the animals on land and all the birds of heaven, of everything that moves on land and all the fish of the sea; they are placed in your hands.* 3*Every living thing that moves will be yours to eat, no less than the foliage of the plants.  I give you everything,* 4*with this exception: you must not eat flesh with life, that is to say blood, in it.* 5*And I shall demand account of your life-blood too.  I shall demand it of every animal, and of man.  Of man as regards his fellow-man, I shall demand account for human life.* 6*He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God was man created.* 7*Be fruitful then and multiply, teem over the earth and subdue it!***

**Question:** What blessings given to man in the first Creation event are repeated?
**Answer:** The blessings of fertility and dominion in [Genesis 1:28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v28).

**Question:** In [Genesis 1:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v29) and [2:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis2.htm#v9) what did God give man for his food?  How did that change after the flood?
**Answer:** Prior to the flood man only ate vegetative foods; after the flood man has God's permission to eat animals and plants.

**Question:** What was the one eating prohibition?  How many times is it repeated in the Old Testament?
**Answer:** Man was not permitted to eat raw flesh or drink blood ([Gen 9:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v4)). This prohibition was commanded five times in the Old Testament; it will be repeated in [Leviticus 3:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus3.htm#v17); [7:26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus7.htm#v26) (16); [17:10-14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus17.htm#v10); and [Deuteronomy 12:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy12.htm#v16), [23-28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy12.htm#v23).

**Question:** Why does God prohibit eating raw flesh and blood?  See [Lev 17:10-12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus17.htm#v10) and [Hebrews 9:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/hebrews/hebrews9.htm#v22).
**Answer:** The sacrificed blood of the animal is the means of atonement for sins.  Without the shedding of blood there is no expiation for sins.

**Question:** Look up the prohibition passages concerning the eating of raw flesh and drinking blood.  What is the penalty for breaking this covenant prohibition?  See [Lev 7:26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus7.htm#v26) (16) and [17:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/leviticus/leviticus17.htm#v14).
**Answer:** Excommunication from the covenant family.

**Question:** What impact will this ancient prohibition, dating back to the time of Noah, will have on those who hear Jesus' "Bread of Life" discourse; see [John 6:48-60](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john6.htm#v48), [66](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john6.htm#v66).
**Answer:** They are horrified; many disciples will walk away ([Jn 6:66](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john6.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v66)).  Those who stay will be separated from the Old Covenant but they will become the spiritual fathers of the New Covenant in Christ.  The crowd didn't understand that Jesus was speaking of His glorified, post-Resurrection flesh and blood in the Eucharist'nevertheless, it is still His real Body and His real Blood that He promised would give them eternal life.

That God has given permission to eat the roasted meat of a sacrificial victim suggests that Noah's sacrifices became the first sacred covenant meal.  The sacred meal will become an important part of covenant formation and will be defined as a rite of the Sinai Covenant, but there are several examples of animal sacrifice followed by a sacred meal in Genesis and Exodus before the formation of the covenant at Sinai'suggesting that from the time of Noah eating sacred meal of the sacrificial victim was part of covenant formation and worship.

The eating of the sacrifice in a sacred meal as a sign of restored communion with God, and as a sign of covenant formation and continuation became the practice of the people of God.  Prior to the formation of the Sinai Covenant, Scripture records that God's priest-king Melchizedek brought a sacred meal of bread and wine (prefigurement of the Eucharist) to share with Abram, while Abram acknowledged Melchizedek's authority as God's covenant representative by giving him a tenth of his treasures from his successful war against the kings of Mesopotamia ([Gen 14:17-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis17.htm#v14)).  Abram/Abraham's son Isaac made a covenant with the Philistines, sealing the covenant with a sacred meal ([Gen 26:26-33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis26.htm#v26)), Jacob and Laban ratified a covenant by a sacrifice and a sacred meal ([Gen 31:44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis31.htm#v44), [53-54](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis31.htm#v53)), and Jethro and Moses, on the journey to Mt. Sinai, made a sacrifice and then all present "ate in the presence of God" ([Exodus 18:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus18.htm#v12)).

The entire Exodus experience will begin with a sacrifice and a ritual meal, the Passover sacrifice and meal in [Exodus chapter 12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/exodus/exodus12.htm), and the Psalmist spoke of the faithful "who sealed my covenant by sacrifice," which can also be translated  "made my covenant over a meal" ([Ps 50:5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm50.htm#v5)).  From the time of Noah, for the people of God eating meat was only permitted in association with sacrifice.  Permission to eat meat other than that offered in sacrifice will not be granted until the people of God enter the Promised Land ([Dt 12:13-16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/deuteronomy/deuteronomy12.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v13)).

**Question:** In [Genesis 6:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v11), *God saw that the earth was corrupt and full of lawlessness.*How does God address the violence and lawlessness of men in [Genesis 9:5-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v5)?
**Answer:** God establishes the death penalty for murder.

According to Jewish tradition this is the first of seven laws established in the Noahide Covenant

These laws include prohibitions against:

1. Idolatry and the eating of animals sacrificed to idols
2. Theft
3. Murder
4. Sexual immorality (incest, adultery, etc.)
5. Eating of raw flesh, drinking of blood

And the positive commands to:
6. Bless the divine name
7. Establish courts of justice.

(Noahide Covenant laws: Tanach, Stone Edition, page 2028; Sanhedrin 56a)

Through the Noahide Covenant man not only existed as a liturgical being, worshiping  Yahweh at His altar of sacrifice, but as a being governed by laws promoting social justice. This guide for a healthy and just society is imposed on all men without exception, although because of the gift of "free will" man continued to be free to accept or reject the natural law God established for the good of mankind.

**Please read Genesis 8:8-17: The Noahide Covenant**
**8:8*God spoke as follows to Noah and his sons,* 9*I am now establishing my covenant with you and with your descendants to come,* 10*and with every living creature that was with you: birds, cattle and every wild animal with you; everything that came out of the ark, every living thing on earth.* 11*And I shall maintain my covenant with you: that never again shall all living things be destroyed by the waters of a flood, nor shall there ever again be a flood to devastate the earth.* 12*And this,' God said, 'is the sign of the covenant which I now make between myself and you and every living creature with you for all ages to come:* 13*I now set my bow in the clouds and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.* 14*When I gather the clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds,* 15*I shall recall the covenant between myself and you and every living creature, in a word all living things, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all living things.* 16*When the bow is in the clouds I shall see it and call to mind the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth, that is, all living things.* 17*That,' God told Noah, 'is the sign of the covenant I have established between myself and all living things on earth.'***

**Question:** What covenant vow or oath does God make to Noah, his sons, and all creation, and what is the sign of the covenant?
**Answer:** God vows to never again destroy the earth by water. The covenant sign is the "bow"'rainbow.  When He sees His bow He will "zakar," remember His covenant with Noah and all creation.

The Hebrew word translated in English as "bow/ rainbow" is *qesheth (keh'-sheth)*, which means "bow" as in a weapon or instrument for hunting.  This word is used three times in Genesis chapter 9 ([9:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v13), [14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v14), and [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v16)).  It is the same Hebrew word used in [Genesis 27:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis27.htm#v3): *Now take your weapons, your quiver and bow...* (also see [Genesis 48:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis48.htm#v22); [49:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis49.htm#v24); [Joshua 24:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/joshua/joshua24.htm#v12); [1 Samuel 18:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1samuel/1samuel18.htm#v4); [2 Samuel 1:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel1.htm#v18), [22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel1.htm#v22); [22:35](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2samuel/2samuel22.htm#v35); [1 Kings 22:34](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1kings/1kings22.htm#v34); [2 Kings 6:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings6.htm#v22); [9:24](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings9.htm#v24); [13:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings13.htm#v15), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2kings/2kings13.htm#v16); [1 Chronicles 5:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1chronicles/1chronicles5.htm#v18); [12:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1chronicles/1chronicles12.htm#v2); [2 Chronicles 17:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2chronicles/2chronicles17.htm#v17); [18:33](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2chronicles/2chronicles18.htm#v33); etc.).  The bow is an ancient weapon used for hunting and for war.  In hanging up His bow, which stretches from earth to heaven and horizon to horizon, God is demonstrating His desire for peace with man and creation and that He will no longer make "war" upon the earth using water.  The visible sign of His promise and the sign of the covenant formed with Noah and all creation is what we call a rain-bow.

**Question:** How many colors are there in a rainbow?  Why is this fact significant?  How is this number connected to the first Creation event, to the Flood and the covenant formation with Noah and the renewed creation?
**Answer:** The rainbow in its 7 color display recalls the 7 days of the first creation and symbolizes the oath swearing necessary of a renewed covenant.  The number 7 is one of the "perfect" numbers reflecting fullness and perfection, especially spiritual perfection.  The number 7 in Hebrew is *sheba* or *shava*.  To swear an oath in Hebrew is to literally "7 one's self."  The number 7 figures prominently in chapter 1 of Genesis in the account of Creation and the formation of the Covenant with Adam: 7 times God pronounced creation as "good" ([Gen 1:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v4), [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v10), [13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v13), [19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v19), [21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v21), [25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v25) and [31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v31)), and God rested on the 7th day ([Gen 2:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis2.htm#v1)), establishing it as His day to commune with man.  The number 7 also figures prominently in the Flood account:

* Noah must take 7 pairs of clean animals ([Gen 7:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v2))
* 7 days after entering the Ark the rains begin ([Gen 7:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v4), [10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v10))
* On the 17th day of the 2nd month all the springs of the deep burst open ([Gen 7:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v11))
* Noah enters the Ark with 7 family members; he is the 8th ([Gen 7:13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis7.htm#v13))
* In the 7th month on the 17th day the Ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat ([Gen 8:4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v4))
* Noah waited 7 days before releasing the dove a second time from the Ark ([Genesis 8:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v10))
* After 7 more days the dove was released again and failed to return ([Gen 8:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v12))
* In the second month on the 27th day the earth was dry ([Genesis 8:14](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v14))
* The sign of the renewal of the covenant with Noah and Creation ([Gen 6:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v18)) is a rainbow which displays 7 colors ([Gen 9:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v9), [12-17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v22)).

Through the events of the Great Flood, water became a covenantal symbol of exterior and interior purity. In [1 Corinthians 10:1](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1corinthians/1corinthians10.htm#v1), St. Paul will describe the children of Israel passing through the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea) as a baptism or immersion unto Moses, as the people passed from a life of slavery to new life as the chosen people of Yahweh.  Covenant ritual purification by water in sprinkling and in immersion becomes an important part of the ritual of the Sinai Covenant.  In [1 Peter 3:18-22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1peter/1peter3.htm#v16), St. Peter links the death and resurrection experience of Noah and his family passing through the cleansing waters of the Great Flood with Christian baptism: Christ himself died once and for all for sins, the upright for the sake of the guilty, to lead us to God.  In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life, and, in the spirit, he went to preach to the spirits in prison.  They refused to believe long ago while God patiently waited to receive them, in Noah's time when the Ark was being built.  In it only a few, that is eight souls, were saved through the water.  It is the baptism corresponding to this water which saves you now'not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience given to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has entered heaven and is at God's right hand, with angels, ruling forces and powers subject to him.

All of these Old Testament rituals prefigured Christian baptism: the washing away of the old life of sin and a rebirth by the power of water and the Holy Spirit'dying to sin and death in the waters of baptism and being resurrection with Christ into a new life as a child of God (see [Jn chapter 3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john3.htm); [Tit 3:4-8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/titus/titus3.htm#v4); [Ro 6:3-4](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/romans/romans6.htm#v3); [2 Cor 5:17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2corinthians/2corinthians/2corinthians5.htm#v17); [Gal 6:15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/galatians/galatians6.htm#v15); [Col 2:12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/colossains/colossians2.htm#v12)).

God's "bow/ rainbow" is also mentioned in [Psalm 45:3-6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm45.htm#v3); [Ezekiel 1:26-28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/ezekiel/ezekiel1.htm#v26) (above the heavenly throne); [Habakkuk 3:8-9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/habakkuk/habakkuk3.htm#v8); [Revelation 4:3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation4.htm#v3) (above God's throne) and [6:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation6.htm#v2).

**Question:** When does God's war bow play another prominent role in Sacred Scripture?  See [Rev 6:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation6.htm#v2).
**Answer:** In [Revelation 6:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/revelation/revelation6.htm#v2), the war bow God hung in the heavens as a sign of the Noahide Covenant will become a symbol of judgment and will be taken up again, carried by the mysterious Rider on the White Horse: *Immediately I saw a white horse appear, and its rider was holding a bow; he was given a victor's crown and he went away, to go from victory to victory.*  See the Revelation study, chapter 6.

The covenant God formed with Noah, his descendants, and all living things is a royal grant covenant.  It is an eternal covenant based solely on the great king's graciousness'in this case, the great King is God. It is the second of the seven Old Testament covenants, some of which are royal grant covenants and others which will be treaty covenants in which the vassal is responsible for obligations and duties which must be performed to maintain the covenant.  In this royal grant covenant, maintenance of the covenant is God's covenant duty ([Gen 9:11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v11)).  The final covenant, the New Covenant of the Redeemer-Messiah will be the 8th and final covenant ([Jer 31:31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jeremiah/jeremiah31.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22v31); [Mt 26:28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew26.htm#v28); [Lk 22:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/luke/luke22.htm#v20); [1 Cor 11:25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1corinthians/1corinthians11.htm#v25)).

**Question:** How many times is the word "covenant," *berit* (ber-eet), used in the Hebrew text of the Flood narrative?
**Answer:** Eight times: [Gen 6:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v18); [9:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v9), [11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v11), [12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v12), [13](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v13), [15](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v15), [16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v16), and [17](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v17).

For more information on the Covenant treaty format of ancient Mesopotamian kingdoms and the similarity to biblical covenants seeMeredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1963).  Also see the documents about covenants in the Documents section of the website and the charts on covenants in the Chart section.  There are a series of seven covenant formations between God and men in the Old Testament, with each covenant building upon the next.  Both Noah's covenant and the New Covenant in Christ Jesus include all humanity and all the living things of creation.

Human wickedness was purged in the Great Flood but not erased.  From the time of the fall of Adam, sin continued to grow and human wickedness came to affect all of creation and the destiny of all living creatures came to be linked to human destiny'for good and for evil.  This is why St. Paul wrote that it is through Christ's saving act of self-sacrifice not only all mankind but all creation can be freed and redeemed ([Rom 8:19-25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/romans/romans8.htm#v19)). Noah's covenant is followed by a 3rd covenant which will be established with Noah's descendant Abraham, a covenant which is limited to Abraham through his descendant Isaac and the faithful remnant of Isaac's line which will become, under the Sinai Covenant, the nation of the people of Israel, those who are entrusted to carry of the "promised seed" of the Redeemer-Messiah.

The post-flood period can be divided into 7 phases:

Phase 1: God sent a wind to make the waters recede.

Phase 2: The rain stopped and the fountains of the deep stopped flowing.

Phase 3: The waters receded and the Ark landed on a mountain.

Phase 4: Noah opened a window in the Ark and released birds.

Phase 5: The command for Noah, his family, and the animals to disembark the Ark.

Phase 6: Noah, his family and the animals exit the Ark and God blessed them, giving them dominion over the earth and its creatures.

Phase 7: Noah offered sacrifice to God and God re-established a covenant with man, who continues to be created in God's image.

**Question:** The 7 phases of the re-creation after the Flood event can be compared to the first Creation event.  See if you can find certain key words (or similar words and ideas) repeated in the 7 phase post-Flood event in [Genesis 8:1-9:7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v1) that are also found in the 6 days of the Creation event in [Genesis 1:2-30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v2).
**Answer:** key words are in bold

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| **7 Phase Post-flood Re-creation Event in** [**Genesis 8:1b-9:7**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v1)  | **Creation Event in** [**Genesis 1:2-30**](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v2)  |
| Phase 1: *God sent a* ***wind*** *across the* ***earth*** *and the* ***waters*** *began to subside.  The springs of the* ***deep*** *(tehom) and the sluices of heaven were stopped up and the heavy rain from heaven was held back* ([8:1b-2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v1))  | Day 1: *Now the* ***earth*** *was a formless void, there was darkness over the* ***deep*** *(tehom) with a divine* ***wind*** *sweeping over the* ***waters***([1:1-2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v1)).  |
| Phase 2: *and the* ***sluices of******heaven*** *were stopped up and the heavy* ***rain from******heaven*** *was held back* ([8:2b](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v2))  | Day 2: *...through the middle of the* ***waters*** *to* ***divide the waters in two****.  [..]. God made the vault, and it divided the waters under the vault from the waters above the vault.  God called the vault '****heaven****'*([1:6-8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v6))  |
| Phase 3: *...* *the* ***waters*** *ebbed from the earth.  [..] the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.  [..]* ***the mountain tops appeared*** ([8:3-5](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v3)).  | Day 3: *God said let the* ***waters*** *under heaven come together into a single mass, and let* ***dry land appear****. [..] God called the dry land earth...* ([1:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v9)).  |
| Phase 4: *...Noah opened the window ... he released a* ***raven****... He then released a* ***dove****... After waiting seven days he released the* ***dove****, and now it returned to him no more* ([8:6-12](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v6)).  | Day 5: *God said, 'Let the waters be alive with a swarm of living creatures, and let* ***birds*** *wing their way above the earth ... let the birds multiply on land* ([1:20-22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v20)).  |
| Phase 5: *Bring out all* ***the animals*** *with you,* ***all******living things (creatures)****, the birds, the* ***cattle*** *and all the* ***creeping things*** *that* ***creep (crawls) along the ground****, for them to swarm on* ***earth****, for them to breed and* ***multiply on earth***([8:17-19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v17)).  | Day 6: *God said, '****Let the earth produce******every kind of******living creature*** *in its own species:* ***cattle****,* ***creeping things*** *and wild* ***animals*** *of all kinds.' God made wild animals in their own species, and* ***cattle*** *in theirs, and* ***every******creature that******crawls along the earth*** *in its own species* ([1:24-25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v24)).  |
| Phase 6: ***God blessed*** *Noah and his sons and said to* ***them, 'Breed, multiply and fill the earth.*** *[..]****all the birds of heaven, of******everything that moves on land and all the fish of the sea; they are placed in your hands.*** *Every living thing that moves will be* ***yours to eat, no less than the foliage of the plants*.** *[..].* ***Be fruitful*** *then and* ***multiply, teem over the earth and subdue it!*** ([9:1-7](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v1)).  | Day 6: ***let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle and all wild animals*** ([1:26](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v26)).  ***God blessed them****,* ***saying to them****, '****Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it***([1:28](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v28)).  ***I give all the foliage of the plants as their food***([Gen 1:29](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v29)).  |
| Phase 7: *Come out of the ark,* ***you****,* ***your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives***([8:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v16)). *So Noah came out with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives* ([8:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v18)).  [..].  for **in the image of God man was created** ([9:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v6)). | Day 6: ***God created man in the image of himself,******in the image of God he created him, male and female******he created them***([1:27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v27)).  |
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The children of Israel saw Noah as a "new Adam" through whom God continued His covenant with man and His promise of a future Redeemer-Messiah.

 **Question:** Compare Adam and Noah.  What similarities do you find between these two men?
**Answer:** Comparison between Adam and Noah in the Creation event and the re-creation after the Great Flood:

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| --- | --- |
| **Adam and the First Creation Event**  | **Noah and the Re-creation Event**  |
| Adam's world was created out of a watery chaos ([Gen 1:2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v2))  | Noah's new world was created out of a watery chaos ([Gen 8:1b-2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v1))  |
| Adam was uniquely associated with the image of God ([Gen 1:27](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v27))  | Noah was uniquely associated with the image of God ([Gen 9:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v6))  |
| Adam walked with God ([Gen 3:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v8))  | Noah walked with God ([Gen 6:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis6.htm#v9))  |
| Received the blessing of fertility and dominion ([Gen 1:28-30](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis1.htm#v28))  | Received the blessing of fertility and dominion ([Gen 9:1-3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v1))  |
| Adam ate fruit that led to sin ([Gen 3:6](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v6))  | Noah ate fruit that led to sin ([Gen 9:21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v21))  |
| Adam worked the soil ([Gen 3:23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v23))  | Noah worked the soil ([Gen 9:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v20))  |
| God made a blood sacrifice for Adam ([Gen 3:21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis3.htm#v21))  | Noah made a blood sacrifice for God ([Gen 8:20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis8.htm#v20))  |
| Adam had three sons who are named in Scripture ([Gen 4:1-2](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v1), [25](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v25))  | Noah had three sons who are named in Scripture ([Gen 5:32](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis5.htm#v32))  |
| Adam's son sinned in the murder of his brother ([Gen 4:8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis4.htm#v8))  | Noah's son sinned against his father([Gen 9:22](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/genesis/genesis9.htm#v22))  |
| Adam's righteous son Seth continued the line of the "promised seed"  | Noah's righteous son Shem continued the line of the "promised seed"  |
| Humanity is fathered through Adam  | Humanity is fathered through Noah  |
| God made a covenant with Adam; its sign was the Tree of Life  | God re-established a covenant with Noah; its sign was the rainbow  |
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**Is the Flood Myth or History?**

Since the early 20th century several sources have reported seeking a large ship-like object in the glacier on the slope of Mt. Ararat.  There are also several supposed "eye witnesses" accounts, including a Russian expedition which reported the discovery of a huge barge imbedded in the glacier, but the report which was submitted to the Russian government was subsequently lost in the governmental chaos of the Russian revolution.  The best image is a photograph taken by WWII pilots who flew over Mt. Ararat on a return mission.

After an expedition to the Black Sea in 1993, Columbia University geologists Walter Pitman and William Ryan presented the astonishing theory that at one time the Black Sea had been a fresh water lake that was turned into a saltwater sea after a sudden and catastrophic rise in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.  They proposed that the Mediterranean overflowed the Bosporus straight, flooding the fresh water lake with salt water and expanding its size significantly (*Noah's Flood,* Pitman and Ryan, Simon & Schuster, 1997).  In 2000 Drs. Coleman and Ballard set out to investigate Pittman and Ryan's claims.  They discovered 82 signs of human habitation along the submerged shore line of what had been the fresh water lake of the ancient Black Sea.  Radiocarbon dating of fresh water mollusks remains recovered during the expedition indicated a date of c. 7,000 BC.  Does this discovery prove that there was a world-wide flood event in prehistory?  No, but it does present scientific evidence that the events recorded in Noah's flood narrative have an historical foundation (*New Scientist Magazine*, May 4, 2002, page 13).

All the ancient cultures of the Near East had flood myths remarkably similar to the Biblical flood narrative.  In fact, the research done by R. Andree, H. Usener, and J. Frazer has shown that the Great Flood myth is documented among cultures on all continents.  The Great Flood myths of the cultures of Mesopotamia are, however, the most similar to the biblical narrative.  These myths recount the story of a fallen humanity, divine judgment in a catastrophic world-wide flood, and the preservation of a group of survivors who are saved in a large boat.  In these myths it is the gods who bring about the flood and the survivors who offer sacrifice to the gods after their ordeal.  Three Mesopotamian myths are the most similar to the biblical flood narrataive:

1. The Sumerian myth of the hero Ziusdra
2. The Akkadian myth of the hero Atrahasis
3. The Old Babylonian flood myth contained within the Epic of Gilgamesh, tablet XI.

Of these three, the story of the flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh, written in old Akkadian script, is the most similar to the biblical flood narrative.  Tablet XI tells the story of the hero Utnapishtim and his family: *The assembly of the gods decided to send a Deluge.  They said, 'On the sinner let his sin rest.  O man of Shuruppak, build a ship, save your life.  Construct it with six stories, each with seven parts.  Smear it with bitumen inside and outside.  Launch it upon the ocean.  Take into the ship seed of life of every kind.'  I built it.  With all that I had I loaded it, with silver, gold, and all living things that I had.  I embarked upon the ship with my family and kindred.  I closed the door.  The appointed time arrived.  I observed the appearance of the day.  It was terrible.  All light was turned to darkness.  The rains poured down.  The storm raged; like a battle charge on mankind.  The boat trembled.  The gods wept.  I looked out upon the sea.  All mankind was turned to clay, like logs floating about.  The tempest ceased.  The flood was over.  The ship grounded on Mt. Zazir.  On the seventh day I sent out a dove; it returned.  I sent out a swallow; it returned.  I sent out a raven; it alighted, it waded about; it croaked; it did not return.  I disembarked.  I appointed a sacrifice.  The gods smelled the sweet savor.  They said, Let it be done no more.* (quoted from *Halley's Bible Handbook,* pages 76-77).  A seal found near Nineveh at Tell Billa depicts Gilgamesh's visit to Utnapishtim in which the old man tells the hero the story of the Great Flood.  The seal is on display at the University Museum of Pennsylvania.

 Most scholars agree on a date of circa 2000-1700 BC for the composition of the Gilgamesh epic on tablet XI of the twelve tablet set written in Akkadian poetic form.  They also agree that the flood myth contained in tablet XI was older and at one time existed independently in a written form before being incorporated into later the Epic of Gilgamesh (*A History of the Ancient Near East, pages 110, 248)*.  These myths are perhaps an example of a major historical event being mythologized by neighboring cultures.

**Questions for group discussion:**

**Question:** What became of those souls who perished in the Great Flood?  Were they doomed for all eternity?  See 1 Pt 3:18-22; 4:6; CCC 632-34
**Answer:** God did not then, nor does He now, condemn anyone who has not had the opportunity to hear the Gospel of salvation (CCC 847-48).  Those who refused to believe Noah waited in Sheol (the abode of the dead/ Hades) for the coming of the Redeemer-Messiah.  All those souls who perished before the Resurrection of the Messiah, including the Great Flood dead, had the opportunity to hear the Gospel of salvation from the very lips of Christ.  Jesus led those who accepted God's gift of salvation out of Sheol and into the gates of heaven.

In [2 Peter 2:5-10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter2.htm#v5), referring to God's judgment during the Flood: His judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and God's preservation of Noah and Lot and their families, St. Peter wrote: *All this shows that the Lord is well able to rescue the good from their trials, and hold the wicked for their punishment until the Day of Judgment, especially those who follow the desires of their corrupt human nature* ***and have no respect for the Lord's authority*** (2 Pt 2:9-10).

**Question:** Who was St. Peter referring to as those who follow their own desires and have no respect for the Lord's authority?  See [2 Pt 2:19-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter2.htm#v19) and [Jude 4-8](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jude/jude.htm#v4), [11-19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/jude/jude.htm#v11).
**Answer:** Those who follow their own desires are those who decide for themselves what is good and evil instead of being obedient to the commands and prohibitions of God and His Church.  This includes false teachers who subvert the truth and teach what is false concerning God and the Scriptures.  St. Peter wrote that it was not the individual's prerogative to interpret Scripture apart from the teachings of the Church ([2 Pt 1:20-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter1.htm#v20)). Christ gave His Church the authority to bind and loose sin ([Mt 16:18-19](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew16.htm#v18); [18:18](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew18.htm#v18); [Jn 20:22-23](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/john/john20.htm#v22)).  Therefore, if the Church teaches that abortion is a sin, no single person or institution has the authority to pronounce abortion anything else.  The person or institution who denies the teaching of Scripture and the Church's teachings has no respect for the Lord's authority and the authority He has given to His Church.  That person or institution will be held accountable for their personal sins and for leading others into sin through their false teaching ([2 Pt 2:1-3](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/2peter/2peter2.htm#v1)) when they are judged before God's throne of justice (Rev 20:11-12; CCC 1021-22; 1038-41).

Jesus said: *As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of man comes.  For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the Ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept them all away. This is what it will be like when the Son of man comes.  Then of two men in the fields, one is taken, one left; of two women grinding at the mill, one is taken, one left.  So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming.  You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect* ([Mt 24:37-44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v37))*.*

**Question:** How does Jesus refer to Noah and the judgment of the Great Flood in [Matthew 24:37-44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v37)?  What "judgment" is Jesus referring to in this passage?  Look at this passage in context with the passages that come before and after: [Mt 24:24:29-36](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v29) and [Mt 24:45-25:46](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v45).
**Answer:** Judgment is the central theme of Jesus' discourse.  Before this passage Jesus spoke of the reunification of the Israel promised by the prophets.  He spoke of the  "faithful remnant" of the old Israel who will become the spiritual fathers of the "new Israel" of the Messianic Age'the age of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the Universal Church.  The New Covenant elect will be collected from the four corners of the earth.  The beginning of that call will be during the Jewish feast of Pentecost fifty days after Jesus' Ascension when Jews from across the Roman Empire gathered in Jerusalem ([Acts 2:1-11](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/acts/acts2.htm#v1)).  At that time, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in the Upper Room who emerged to preach Jesus' Gospel of salvation ([Acts 2:14-41](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/acts/acts2.htm#v14)).  In [Matthew 24:29-31](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew29.htm#v24), Jesus spoke of the reunification of Israel from the four corners of the earth in the language of Moses and the prophets (Dt 30:4-5, Ez 37:9-14; [Zec 2:10](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v37)); not the partial reunification of [Neh 1:9](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/nehemiah.nehemiah1.htm#v9), but the complete reunification promised in [Is 66:18-21](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/isaiah.isaiah66.htm#v18) where Israel's faithful remnant will proclaim Yahweh's glory to the nations of the earth: *I am coming to gather every nation and every language.  They will come to witness my glory.  I shall give them a sign and send some of their survivors to the nations: to Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coasts and islands that have never heard of me or seen my glory.  They will proclaim my glory to the nations...* (Is 66: 18-19).

Next, in [Matthew 24:32-36](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v32) Jesus prophesized the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Roman armies forty years later in 70 AD, which He said some of His present generation would witness ([Mt 24:34](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v34)).  Then, His message included the warning of God's judgment.  In [Matthew 24:37-44](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew24.htm#v37), using the days of Noah as an example, Jesus warned people of every generation to remain vigilant, seeking to live in holiness and in the obedience to the will of God for their lives.Jesus said when judgment comes, as it came in the days of Noah, it will come without warning when people are involved in the ordinary aspects of their lives.  This call to judgment can come to individuals in the span of their ordinary lives or it can come to humanity as a whole as it will in the Final Judgment at the end of this, the final Age of Man.  The Final Judgment will be preceded by the Second Advent of the Redeemer-Messiah ([1 Cor 15:52](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/1corinthians/1corinthians15.htm#v52); [1 Thes 4:16](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/thessalonians/1thessalonians4.htm#v16)).  In the continuing discourse, Jesus warned God's servants who are responsible for faithfully carrying out their Master's commands to spread the Gospel of salvation and to instruct the faithful ([Mt 28:19-20](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew28.htm#v19)).  He closed the discourse with two parables on the necessity of being vigilant and finally completed His discourse with a teaching on the Final Judgment at the end of the Age ([Mt 25:31-46](http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew25.htm#v31)).  The destiny of both the faithful remnant of Noah and his family who were saved and those who refused to believe and perished in the flood, is a warning to us all.