Noah and the Flood

Bible Stories Anthology — Genesis 6–9

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

The Door God Shut

Most people meet this story as a nursery picture: a little round boat, a smiling old man, and two giraffes with their necks poking out of the roof.

The real story is nothing like that. It is the account of a whole world that had filled itself with violence, and of a God who grieved over it, waited for it, warned it, and then judged it. It is the story of one man who "found grace" when no one else would have it, who built a vessel the length of one and a half football fields on nothing but God's word, and who stepped inside with his family while the world outside laughed, ate, drank and married — right up to the day the door closed.

And the door was not closed by Noah. Scripture says "the LORD shut him in."

The first time the word "grace" appears in the Bible is in this story. So does the first time the word "covenant" appears. By the time the waters go down, God has made a promise that still stands every time a rainbow crosses the sky — and Jesus Christ Himself would one day point back to these very days to describe the days before His own return.

The Setting

When. Counting the ages Genesis 5 gives in the Hebrew text, the Flood came 1,656 years after Adam was created. That is closer than most people think. Noah's own father, Lamech, was born while Adam was still alive, and was fifty-six years old when Adam died. The men of Noah's day did not have to guess what had happened in Eden. The memory was only a grandfather away.

Two details in those genealogies are worth noticing. Lamech died five years before the Flood (Genesis 5:30-31). And his father, Methuselah, the longest-lived man in the Bible, died at 969 (Genesis 5:27) — which, counting the same ages, is the very year the waters came. The last of the old generation was gone just as the judgment arrived.

The world Noah knew. Sixteen and a half centuries is not long, as the ages of the earth go. Noah's world was still close to its making. The ground had been cursed for Adam's sake, but it was still rich: Cain's line had built a city, worked "brass and iron" (Genesis 4:22), and made harps and pipes, and Genesis names a land where "the gold… is good" (Genesis 2:11-12). And it was watered in a way ours is not:

> **Genesis 2:5** *And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.*
>
> **Genesis 2:6** *But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.*

Those verses describe the time before Adam was made. As this series understands it, that gentle watering from the ground went on through the centuries until the Flood, and Noah's generation had never seen rain fall from the sky. Scripture does not say so in so many words, but it fits what Hebrews says Noah was warned about: "things not seen as yet" (Hebrews 11:7). And as this series understands the Flood account and Psalm 104 (below), the land itself was gentler than ours: rolling hills, not the jagged ranges we know. The world Noah knew was damaged by the curse but not yet broken. The Flood would break it.

Where. Scripture does not tell us where Noah lived or built. It tells us only where the ark came to rest: "upon the mountains of Ararat" (Genesis 8:4) — a mountainous region, not a single peak. The same Hebrew name is translated "the land of Armenia" elsewhere in the King James Version (2 Kings 19:37), and it names the highlands north of Mesopotamia, in what is now eastern Turkey and Armenia.

Who. Noah; his wife; his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth; and their three wives — "eight souls" (1 Peter 3:20). Scripture never gives us the names of any of the four women. And behind them, the whole population of the earth, and the LORD God.

The situation. Since the day Adam was sent out of Eden, mankind had lived in the second great age of God's dealings with men. An **administration** is a period in which God deals with mankind on a particular basis, and this one is usually called the **Patriarchal** administration: it ran from the expulsion from Eden to the giving of the Law at Sinai, and through all of it a person stood right with God by faith, believing what God said. There was no written law yet. God spoke to individual men — here to Noah, later to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — and those who believed Him walked with Him.

But very few did. Genesis 4 traces two families side by side. Cain's line built a city, invented tools and music, and produced a man who boasted to his wives that he had killed a young man for wounding him (Genesis 4:17-24). Seth's line is marked by one line alone: "then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 4:26). That was the family of the promise — the family through whom the seed of the woman, promised in Genesis 3:15, would one day come.

It is from that family that Noah was born, and his father named him with a prayer:

> **Genesis 5:29** *And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.*

"Noah" means *rest*, and "comfort" sounds like it in Hebrew. This is a **figure of speech** — a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used to add emphasis or feeling. This one is called **paronomasia**, a play on words that sound alike, used to tie two ideas together. Lamech named his son *Rest* and prayed that he would bring *comfort*. And listen to the word "toil." It is the same Hebrew word God used to Adam in Eden: "in *sorrow* shalt thou eat of it" (Genesis 3:17). Lamech had lived his whole life under that sentence, fighting a ground that fought back. He looked at his newborn son and hoped that God would somehow bring relief through him.

God did. But not in the way Lamech could have pictured.

The Story, Told Faithfully

The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

> **Genesis 6:1** *And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,*
>
> **Genesis 6:2** *That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.*

These two verses have produced more strange teaching than almost any others in Genesis. Many have taught that the "sons of God" were angels who came down and married women, fathering a race of half-angel giants. Scripture itself does not support that reading.

Start with the phrase itself. Scripture calls Adam "the son of God" (Luke 3:38), because God made him. It calls believers "the children of God" and "sons of God" throughout the New Testament. The phrase is not exotic. And the chapters right before this one have just set two families side by side: Cain's, and Seth's, whose mark was calling "upon the name of the LORD." The most natural reading, and the one this series holds, is that the "sons of God" were men of that believing line, and "the daughters of men" were women of the line that had turned away from God.

Then notice what they did. They *saw* that the women were fair, and they *took* them. Those two verbs are the same pair scripture uses for Eve at the tree ("when the woman *saw*… she *took*," Genesis 3:6), and later for David and Bathsheba ("he *saw* a woman… and David sent messengers, and *took* her," 2 Samuel 11:2-4). It is what John calls "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16). This is not a story about beings from another world. It is the oldest human story there is: the people of God choosing by what looked good, rather than by what God said.

And there is a reason scripture's own first chapter settles it. Ten times Genesis 1 says that God made every living thing "after his kind." Kind produces kind. Angels are spirit beings; men are flesh. Whatever else Genesis 6 describes, it does not describe the creation of a new kind of being by crossing two that God made separate.

> **Genesis 6:3** *And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

God's spirit had been *striving* with man — pleading, contending, holding him back. It would not go on for ever. "Yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." As this series understands it, God was setting a period of patience before judgment: a hundred and twenty more years in which He would keep

striving. (Some read the verse as a new limit on the human lifespan. But Noah's own son Shem lived six hundred years, and Abraham after him lived a hundred and seventy-five, so the countdown reading fits the story better.) Peter confirms that there *was* such a waiting: "the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (1 Peter 3:20).

> **Genesis 6:4** *There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.*

"Giants" is the Hebrew *nephilim*. The word comes from the verb "to fall," and the old lexicons explain it as *one who falls upon others* — a bully, a tyrant. These were the strongmen of their day, men who made themselves great by force. And look at how scripture describes them: "men of renown." In Hebrew that is literally *men of the name*. They made a name for themselves, and they made it by violence. The same phrase is used later of the proud princes who rebelled with Korah against Moses — "famous in the congregation, men of renown" (Numbers 16:2) — and the same ambition drove the builders of Babel: "let us make us a *name*" (Genesis 11:4). Keep that word "name" in mind. It returns at the end of the story.

What Genesis 6:1-4 tells us, then, is not that the human race was invaded from outside. It tells us that the family of promise was drawn into the world's ways by marriage, until even the line that called on God's name was compromised — and the next verse shows what the world became.

What God Saw

> **Genesis 6:5** *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Read the verse slowly. It piles up word on word: *every* imagination, of the *thoughts* of his heart, *only* evil, *continually*. There is no room left in it for anything good. This is how scripture describes a world at the end of itself.

The word "imagination" is worth knowing. In Hebrew it is *yetser*, from the verb *yatsar*, "to form" — the very verb used when "the LORD God *formed* man of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7). A potter "forms" a pot. The *yetser* of the heart is what the heart forms: its plans, its schemes, the shape it gives to things before they happen. God had formed man. Now all that man formed was evil.

> **Genesis 6:6** *And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*
>
> **Genesis 6:7** *And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*

Before a single word of judgment is spoken, the text tells us what God felt: grief.

"It repented the LORD" does not mean God had done wrong and changed His mind about it. The Hebrew word, *nacham*, means to be moved with deep feeling — to sigh, to be sorry, and (in other places) to be comforted. It is the same word Lamech used when he prayed that Noah would "comfort" them. And "grieved" is the word Lamech used for "toil," the same word God used to Adam for "sorrow." Put it together. The sorrow God had pronounced over the ground in Genesis 3 was the sorrow God Himself now felt over man.

This is the figure of speech called **anthropopatheia** — describing God in human terms, with human feelings and a human body, so that we can understand Him. God is spirit (John 4:24), and He does not change (Malachi 3:6). But He is not unfeeling. The figure is chosen to make us see His heart: this judgment was not the act of an angry tyrant, but of a Father whose heart was broken by what His children had become.

God Is Good — Always, and in Judgment Too

Before the story goes one step further, a question has to be faced, because every thoughtful reader feels it here. If God is good, how can He destroy the world? Did God, for a time, stop being good?

Scripture's answer is no, and it gives that answer in plain words. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Psalm 145:9). God's goodness is not a mood that comes and goes. It is what He is.

But goodness is not the same as softness. Paul puts both sides of God's one character in a single sentence:

> **Romans 11:22** *Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*

Paul does not set God's goodness against His severity, as though God had to choose between them. There is one God, and one character, meeting two different responses. The psalmist says the same thing about the foundation of God's throne:

> **Psalm 89:14** *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.*

Justice and judgment are what His throne stands on. Mercy and truth go out ahead of Him. Both belong to Him, always.

Now think about what the earth had become: "the earth was filled with violence" (6:11). Every day, somewhere, people were being robbed, beaten, taken and killed by the "men of renown." A judge who sees that and does nothing is not kind. He is indifferent, and the victims pay for his indifference. "The wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth" (Psalm 11:5). God's judgment on that world was His goodness toward everyone it was crushing — and toward the one family, carrying the promised Seed, that the world was about to swallow.

And even in judgment, God's goodness was everywhere. Before the judgment came grief (6:6). Before the water came a hundred and twenty years of patience, and a preacher (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5). Alongside the judgment came an ark and a covenant (6:18). After it came a promise: never again (8:21). God says of every judgment He has ever brought: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Judgment was never God giving up His goodness. It was His goodness refusing to let evil have the last word.

But Noah

> **Genesis 6:8** *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

Everything turns on the word "But."

This is the first time the word “grace” appears in the Bible. The Hebrew word is *chen* — favour, kindness freely given, the goodwill of a greater person toward a lesser one. “Found grace in the eyes of” someone is a Hebrew **idiom** — an expression whose meaning is not found in its individual words, but in the way a people used it. It means to be looked on with favour. It is how Joseph later found favour with Potiphar (Genesis 39:4) and how Ruth asked to be received by Boaz (Ruth 2:10).

Notice the order. Noah did not earn grace by being better than everyone else; he *found* it. Grace was there to be found, and he found it. There is even a small detail in the Hebrew that many readers have noticed: Noah’s name (*Noach*, נח) and the word “grace” (*chen*, חן) are made of the same two Hebrew letters, in reverse order. Whether or not the writer meant anything by it, the story says the same thing plainly: in a world that had turned its back on God, one man turned toward Him, and found grace waiting.

> **Genesis 6:9** *These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*

Three things are said of him. **Just** — righteous, right with God and right in his dealings. **Perfect in his generations** — the Hebrew word *tamim* means whole, complete, upright; it is the word used of Job (Job 1:1, “perfect and upright”) and of Zacharias and Elisabeth (Luke 1:6, “blameless”). It does not mean Noah never sinned — the end of this story shows plainly that he did. It means he was a man of integrity in a generation that had none. And **Noah walked with God** — the same words used of only one other man in Genesis, Enoch (Genesis 5:22, 24). To “walk with” someone is to go the same way, at the same pace, in daily company. It is a **metaphor** — a figure of speech that speaks of one thing as though it were another, to show what they have in common — and it pictures a life lived in steady fellowship with God.

> **Genesis 6:11** *The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.*
>
> **Genesis 6:12** *And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 6:13** *And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*

“Violence” is the Hebrew *chamas* — cruelty, wrong done to others by force. It is the world of the “men of renown.”

And there is something in these three verses that English cannot show. “Corrupt,” “corrupted” and “destroy” are all the same Hebrew word, *shachath* — to ruin, to spoil. The earth was *ruined*. All flesh had *ruined* its way. And God says, “I will *ruin* them with the earth.” Using the same word again in a different sense is a figure of speech called **antanaclasis**, and here it tells us something important about the judgment. God was not bringing destruction on a healthy world. Man had been ruining the earth for generations. God was bringing the ruin to its end.

The Ark

> **Genesis 6:14** *Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*
>
> **Genesis 6:15** *And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.*

> **Genesis 6:16** *A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.*

"An ark." The Hebrew word is *tebah*, and it is not a word for a ship. It means a chest or box. It appears in only one other place in the whole Bible: the little "ark of bulrushes" in which Moses' mother laid her baby on the Nile (Exodus 2:3). Both were made to float, not to sail. No sail, no oar and no rudder are mentioned. The ark was not built to go anywhere. It was built to carry what God put in it safely through the water, and to rest where God set it down.

"Gopher wood." This is the only place the word appears, and no one knows for certain what tree it was.

"Rooms." The Hebrew word is *qinnim*, literally "nests." The ark was fitted out with compartments, nest upon nest, on three decks.

"The fashion." A cubit was the length of a man's forearm, from elbow to fingertip — commonly taken as about eighteen inches. At that measure, the ark was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high, with more than 100,000 square feet of deck across its three stories. That is no toy boat. It is the size of an ocean-going vessel, and it was built by hand.

"A window… in a cubit shalt thou finish it above." The word here is not the ordinary word for window. It is *tsohar*, a word connected with light and with noon. The exact design is uncertain, but the most likely picture is an opening for light and air, a cubit high, running under the roof.

"The door… in the side." One ark. One door. There was one way in.

"Pitch it within and without with pitch." This is one of the most remarkable words in the story. The verb "pitch" is *kaphar*, and the noun "pitch" is *kopher*. This is the very first time the word *kaphar* appears in the Bible. It appears about a hundred more times in the Old Testament, and most of them are translated "make atonement," as in "it is the blood that maketh an *atonement* for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). The root meaning is "to cover." In Eden, God covered Adam and Eve with the skins of a sacrifice. Here He tells Noah to cover the ark, inside and out, so that the water of judgment could not get through. As this series understands it, the same word was chosen because the same truth was being taught: God provides a covering, and those inside it are safe.

> **Genesis 6:17** *And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.*
>
> **Genesis 6:18** *But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.*

"I, even I." God does not hide His hand in this judgment, and neither should we. The Flood was the act of the Judge of all the earth.

But in the same breath comes the second "But" of the chapter: "But with thee." This is the first time the word "covenant" appears in the Bible. The Hebrew word is *berith* — a binding agreement, solemnly made, in which one party commits himself to another. And notice who is doing the committing. God does not say, "Let us make an agreement." He says, "I will establish *my* covenant." God announced the rescue in the same moment He announced the judgment. The ark was never an afterthought.

> **Genesis 6:19** *And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.*
>
> **Genesis 6:20** *Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.*
>
> **Genesis 6:21** *And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.*
>
> **Genesis 6:22** *Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.*

"Two of every sort shall come unto thee." Noah was not asked to hunt the animals down across the earth. God would send them to him.

And then the verse that sums up Noah's whole life: "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Not most of it. All of it. The New Testament tells us what was behind that obedience:

> **Hebrews 11:7** *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

"Things not seen as yet." No one had ever seen a flood like this. Noah built for years toward something that had never happened, on nothing but God's word. That is what faith is: believing what God says before you can see it.

"Moved with fear." The Greek word means *reverent caution* — not terror, but the careful respect of a man who takes God at His word and acts on it. Noah took God seriously.

"By the which he condemned the world." Noah never needed to shout condemnation at anyone. The ark did it for him. Every day that it rose higher in plain view, it said to everyone who passed, *God has spoken, and He means it.* And Peter tells us that Noah did speak as well: he was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). The world that perished was a world that had been warned, and warned, and waited for.

Come Into the Ark

> **Genesis 7:1** *And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*
>
> **Genesis 7:2** *Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.*
>
> **Genesis 7:3** *Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.*

"*Come* thou… into the ark." Not "go." God invited Noah in, the way a host invites a guest into a house where he is already standing.

Now comes the detail almost everyone misses. Chapter 6 gave the general rule — two of every sort. Chapter 7 fills in the rest: of the *clean* animals and of the birds, "by sevens." (The Hebrew literally says "seven seven." It may mean seven animals or seven pairs; either way, far more than two.)

Stop and ask: how did Noah know which animals were clean? The Law of Moses, with its lists of clean and unclean animals (Leviticus 11), would not be given for another thousand years and more. Yet God

speaks to Noah as though he already knew — and Noah did. The only way he could have known is that God had taught it long before, and the knowledge had been handed down, father to son, from the day God clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of a sacrifice. Abel had known it: he brought "the firstlings of his flock" (Genesis 4:4). Noah knew it too. And he would need those extra clean animals. When the Flood was over, the first thing he would do was offer them to God.

> **Genesis 7:4** *For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.*
> **Genesis 7:5** *And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.*

"Yet seven days." Even at the very end, there was one more week.

How Did They All Fit?

Scripture tells us which animals went into the ark and how many of each. It does not tell us how they all fit, how old they were, or how they were fed and cared for beyond the food Noah gathered (6:21). Every reader wonders. So here this series steps briefly outside the text to share what creation scientists have worked out. **None of what follows in this section is stated in scripture.** It is careful reasoning about scripture, and it is offered as that.

Which animals. Land animals and birds only: "all flesh, wherein is the breath of life" (7:15), "of all that was in the dry land" (7:22). Fish and sea creatures stayed in the sea. Insects and other small creatures that do not breathe through nostrils were very likely not included either.

Kinds, not species. God told Noah to bring them "after their kind" (6:20). A "kind" is not the same as what modern science calls a species. Creation biologists who study this question estimate that a Bible "kind" usually matches what scientists now call a *family*. Wolves, coyotes, dingoes and every breed of dog, for example, can all interbreed and are one kind. On that basis, their estimate is about 1,400 kinds of land animals and birds, living and extinct. With seven of the clean kinds and two of the rest, that comes to at most about 6,700 animals — and probably fewer.

Dinosaurs. Dinosaurs were land animals with the breath of life, so they were on the ark too. The book of Job describes a great creature called behemoth, which "eateth grass as an ox" and "moveth his tail like a cedar" (Job 40:15-17) — a description many readers see as a large plant-eating dinosaur, living alongside men. Creation scientists estimate there were about 85 kinds of dinosaur, which means at most about 170 dinosaurs on board. The giants are the ones people picture, but the average dinosaur was about the size of a bison, and many were much smaller.

Young animals, not full-grown ones. Scripture does not say how old the animals were, but it is reasonable to think God sent young ones: not a full-grown bull elephant, but a young elephant; not an eighty-foot sauropod, but a juvenile a fraction of that size. Young animals take up less room, eat less, make less waste, are calmer and easier to manage, and have their whole breeding life ahead of them — exactly what a new world would need.

Room to spare. At about eighteen inches to the cubit, the ark held roughly 1.5 million cubic feet, with more than 100,000 square feet of deck over three floors. Most kinds of land animals are small — rodents, birds, reptiles, small mammals. By the creation scientists' own figuring, the dinosaurs, even taken as a group, would have needed only a small share of the ark's space.

Now return to what scripture *does* say: “two of every sort shall come unto thee” (6:20). Noah built. God gathered. The ark God designed was large enough for everything God sent.

The Day the Fountains Broke

> **Genesis 7:11** *In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.*
>
> **Genesis 7:12** *And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.*

Genesis dates the Flood like an entry in a ship’s log: the year, the month and the day. This is not the language of a fable. It is the language of a record.

And notice where the water came from. The rain is mentioned second. First, “all the fountains of the great deep” were “broken up” — water bursting up from beneath the earth. Then “the windows of heaven were opened.” “Windows” here is a word for lattices or floodgates, and the phrase is a **metaphor**: the sky is pictured as a great storehouse whose gates were thrown open. The same picture appears later of blessing, when God tells Israel He will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing” (Malachi 3:10). Here, it poured out judgment.

And look again at the word “broken up.” The Hebrew verb is *baqa*, to split, to burst open. It is the word used when “the waters were divided” at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21) and when “the ground clave asunder” beneath Korah and his rebels (Numbers 16:31). This was no gentle seepage. Something beneath the surface of the earth tore open, all at once, “all the fountains” on “the same day.” Creation geologists have proposed models for how this could have happened. The best known, called *catastrophic plate tectonics*, pictures the earth’s crust splitting and moving rapidly, releasing vast stores of water from beneath and driving steam and water up into the sky — a possible source for the forty days of rain. Its own supporters call it a working model, not a settled fact, and this series holds it the same way. What scripture states is the event itself: the deep broke open, and the sky poured.

> **Genesis 7:13** *In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;*
>
> **Genesis 7:15** *And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.*
>
> **Genesis 7:16** *And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.*

“They went in unto Noah.” Just as God had promised, the animals came.

And then five of the most important words in the story: **“and the LORD shut him in.”**

Noah did not close the door. God did. It meant two things at once. For those inside, it meant safety: the door was sealed by the hand of God, and no one could open it and no water could force it. For those outside, it meant that the time of waiting was over. For a hundred and twenty years the door had stood open. Now God Himself closed it.

Jesus described exactly this moment:

> **Matthew 24:38** *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,*

> **Matthew 24:39** *And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.*

Notice what Jesus says they were doing. Not only murdering and raging — though the earth was full of violence — but eating, drinking, marrying. Ordinary life. The terrible thing was not that they lived ordinary lives. It was that they lived them as though God had never spoken. They "knew not." They had been told for years. They did not believe it until the water was at the door.

The Waters Prevailed

> **Genesis 7:17** *And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 7:18** *And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.*
>
> **Genesis 7:19** *And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.*
>
> **Genesis 7:20** *Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.*

Read these four verses as a set, and hear them climb: the waters *increased*; they *prevailed*, and were *increased greatly*; they *prevailed exceedingly*. Each verse raises the water higher than the last, until the mountains themselves disappear. This building of statement upon statement, each stronger than the one before, is a figure of speech called **climax** — literally "a ladder." Scripture is making sure we understand how complete this was.

"All the high hills, that were under the *whole* heaven." Genesis does not describe a local flood that covered one valley. It describes water over the whole earth. Peter says the same thing: "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Peter 3:6).

But stop at the word "mountains." The moment a modern reader sees it, he pictures Mount Everest, twenty-nine thousand feet of rock and ice — and then he wonders how any flood could ever have covered that. The verse is not asking us to picture Everest.

Two different Hebrew words are used. The "high hills" of verse 19 are *gib'ot*, hills. The "mountains" of verse 20 are *harim*, and the Hebrew word covers any raised ground, from a single hill to a stretch of hill country. Mount Zion, a "mountain" in scripture, stands about 2,500 feet above sea level; "mount Ephraim" is the hill country of central Israel. Genesis 7:20 describes the mountains *of Noah's world*, not the mountains of ours.

That matters, because as this series understands it, the world's great mountain ranges were not yet standing when the Flood began. They rose during and after it (see "Where the Water Went," below). The very top of Mount Everest is made of limestone that formed under the sea, and it holds the fossils of sea creatures. Creation geologists and mainstream geologists disagree about when and how fast it happened, but they agree on this much: the rock at the top of the world was once under water, and it was pushed up.

A little arithmetic. The Bible gives no heights for the hills of Noah's day, so this is an estimate, not scripture — but it shows the question is not as impossible as it looks. All the water in today's oceans is about 1.3 billion cubic kilometres. If the earth's surface were smoothed out flat, with no mountains and no ocean deeps, that water would cover the whole globe to a depth of about 8,600 feet. To cover today's Everest, by contrast, would take more than four times all the water on earth. But a gentler world

does not need anything like that. If the seas of Noah's day were shallower than ours and the highest hills stood somewhere around 3,000 to 5,000 feet — about like today's Appalachians or Smoky Mountains — then roughly half to nine-tenths of the water now in our oceans would be enough to cover every one of them. On those figures, this series estimates that the highest hills before the Flood stood at most a few thousand feet.

"Fifteen cubits upward." Fifteen cubits is about twenty-two feet. The ark was thirty cubits high, and a loaded vessel rides with roughly half its height below the water line. Many readers have noticed what that means: the waters rose far enough above the highest hills that the ark could float over any of them without striking ground. Scripture does not spell that out, but the numbers fit.

And while the water destroyed, the same water "bare up the ark." The water that ended the old world lifted Noah above it.

> **Genesis 7:23** *And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.*
>
> **Genesis 7:24** *And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.*

Count the "ands" in verse 23: man, *and* cattle, *and* the creeping things, *and* the fowl. This is **polysyndeton** — "many ands" — the figure that slows a list down so that each item stands on its own and is weighed. We are not meant to hurry past who died. And then the verse ends with its own "but": "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

God Remembered Noah

> **Genesis 8:1** *And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;*

This is the turning point of the whole story. Up to this verse, the waters rise. After it, they fall.

"God remembered Noah." God had not forgotten him; God does not forget. This is anthropopatheia again, and it carries a Hebrew meaning English misses. In scripture, when God "remembers" someone, it means He *acts* on their behalf. "God remembered Rachel" — and she bore a son (Genesis 30:22). "God remembered his covenant" — and He began to bring Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 2:24). To be remembered by God is to be rescued by Him.

And notice what God did: "God made a wind to pass over the earth." Anyone who has read Genesis 1 will hear the echo. There, too, the earth was covered with water, and "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2) — and "spirit" and "wind" are the same Hebrew word, *ruach*. What follows in Genesis 8 reads like creation told again: the waters draw back, the dry land appears, the birds fly, the living creatures come out to "be fruitful, and multiply." The Flood ended one world. God was beginning another.

> **Genesis 8:4** *And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*

"The ark *rested*." The Hebrew verb is *nuach* — the very root of Noah's name. The ark of the man named *Rest* came to rest. Lamech's prayer at his son's birth was beginning to be answered.

There is one more detail in this verse that some have noticed, and it is offered here as an observation, not a doctrine. Many hold that the months in Genesis were counted from the autumn, as Israel's civil year later was. If so, the "seventh month" is the month God later told Israel to make "the beginning of months" at the first Passover (Exodus 12:2). The Passover lamb was killed on the fourteenth day of that month. Three days later is the seventeenth — and as this series understands the chronology of the resurrection, that is the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Scripture does not draw this line itself. But it is a striking thing that the ark came to rest, lifted out of the judgment, on that date.

Where the Water Went

> **Genesis 8:3** *And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.*
>
> **Genesis 8:5** *And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.*

A flood that covered the whole earth leaves an obvious question: where did all that water go? Genesis says the waters "returned from off the earth continually." A psalm, praising God as the Creator, describes it more fully:

> **Psalm 104:6** *Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.*
>
> **Psalm 104:7** *At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.*
>
> **Psalm 104:8** *They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.*
>
> **Psalm 104:9** *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.*

Verse 8 can be translated two ways. The King James reads it of the waters: "They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys." Several modern translations read the same Hebrew words this way: "The mountains rose; the valleys sank down to the place which You established for them." Either way, verse 9 settles when the psalm is speaking of: God set a bound "that they turn not again to cover the earth." That is the promise God made after the Flood (Genesis 9:11), not at creation. As this series understands it, Psalm 104:6-9 describes the end of the Flood.

And it describes the mechanism: the land rose and the valleys sank. The same violent forces that broke open "the fountains of the great deep" did not stop when the rain stopped. Across the earth, the crust buckled and heaved. Continents were pushed up; the ocean floors dropped down. New mountain ranges — the Himalayas, the Alps, the Rockies, the Andes — rose out of the waters, and the water ran off the rising land into the deepening basins, carving valleys and canyons as it went. Even the "mountains of Ararat," where the ark came to rest, and the mountaintops Noah first saw in the tenth month, were rising out of the water as it drained. (Here again, the details of how this happened come from creation geology's working models. Scripture gives the event: the waters fled, the mountains rose, the valleys sank.)

Today the oceans are deep enough to hold all of it. The average level of the earth's solid surface — land and sea floor together — lies nearly 8,000 feet *below* sea level, because the ocean basins are so deep. The water that once covered a gentler world now sits in basins shaped to hold it, behind a bound God Himself has set.

The Raven and the Dove

> **Genesis 8:6** *And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:*
>
> **Genesis 8:7** *And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 8:8** *Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;*
>
> **Genesis 8:9** *But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.*

The raven was an unclean bird and a scavenger (Leviticus 11:15). It never came back. It could live off what floated on the water, and it went "to and fro" until the earth was dry. The dove was a clean bird, one that later could be offered in sacrifice (Leviticus 1:14). It could not settle on what the raven lived on. It "found no *rest*" — the same word again, *manoach*, from *nuach* — and it came home.

And look at Noah: "he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him." Picture the old man reaching out of the window for a tired bird. It is one of the gentlest sentences in Genesis.

> **Genesis 8:10** *And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;*
>
> **Genesis 8:11** *And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 8:12** *And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.*

"An olive leaf pluckt off" — the Hebrew means *freshly* plucked, torn off a living tree. The olive grows low on the hillsides, not on mountaintops. The leaf told Noah that the water had gone down far enough for trees to put out new growth. Life was coming back to the earth. Ever since, the dove and the olive branch have stood as a picture of peace after judgment.

Go Forth

> **Genesis 8:13** *And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.*
>
> **Genesis 8:14** *And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.*
>
> **Genesis 8:15** *And God spake unto Noah, saying,*
>
> **Genesis 8:16** *Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.*

Compare the dates. Noah went in on the seventeenth day of the second month of his six hundredth year (7:11). He came out after the twenty-seventh day of the second month of the next year (8:14). He and his family spent a year and ten days in the ark. The popular picture is of forty days and nights of rain and then dry land. The rain was forty days. The whole event was more than a year.

And notice this: on the first day of the first month, Noah took the covering off and saw that the ground was dry. He could have walked out that day. He did not. He waited nearly two more months, until God said, "Go forth." God had told him when to go in. He waited for God to tell him when to come out. The man who began by doing "all that God commanded him" was still doing it at the end.

The First Altar

> **Genesis 8:20** *And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*
>
> **Genesis 8:21** *And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*
>
> **Genesis 8:22** *While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

This is the first time the word "altar" appears in the Bible. The first thing Noah did on the new earth was not to build a house or plant a field. It was to worship. And now we see why God had told him to bring the clean animals by sevens: there were enough of them to offer to God without ending their kinds. A "burnt offering" was an offering wholly given to God, all of it consumed on the altar — the offering of complete devotion.

"The LORD smelled a sweet savour." This is anthropopatheia again: God is described as though He had a nose, so that we can understand that the offering *pleased* Him. And the word "sweet" is *nichoach* — from *nuach* again. It is literally "a savour of *rest*," a soothing, satisfying aroma. The sacrifice of the man named *Rest* brought rest. Paul uses the same picture of Christ: "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

Then God "said in his heart" — made His resolution — and look at the reason He gives. "For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." That is almost exactly what He had said before the Flood (6:5). Man's heart had not changed. The Flood did not cure it. Yet the very thing that brought the judgment is now given as the reason for *mercy*. God does not say, "Man is evil, so I will judge again." He says, "Man is evil from his youth, so I will not." The difference was the sacrifice on the altar. God would deal with man's heart another way.

And verse 22 is a promise made in poetry. Listen to it: seedtime *and* harvest, *and* cold *and* heat, *and* summer *and* winter, *and* day *and* night. Polysyndeton again — "many ands" — and each pair set in contrast, one against the other. Every harvest since, every sunrise since, has been God keeping this promise.

A New Beginning, and New Terms

> **Genesis 9:1** *And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.*

These are word for word the words God spoke to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28). Noah stands where Adam stood: the head of a new human family on a cleansed earth. But the world was not Eden, and God now set new terms for life in it.

> **Genesis 9:3** *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.*

> **Genesis 9:4** *But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.*
>
> **In Genesis 1:29** *God had given man plants for food. Here, for the first time, scripture records His permission to eat meat. With it came one limit: not the blood, because the blood is the life. The same reason is given in the Law: "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). Life belongs to God, and it is to be treated with reverence even when an animal is killed for food.*
>
> **Genesis 9:5** *And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.*
>
> **Genesis 9:6** *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.*

Before the Flood, the earth had been "filled with violence." Cain murdered Abel, and later Lamech of Cain's line boasted of killing a young man, and no one answered for it. Now God set the value of a human life, and He gave the reason: "for in the image of God made he man." To murder a man is to strike at the image of God. And God placed the responsibility for answering murder into human hands — "by man shall his blood be shed." For the first time, men were made accountable to one another for justice. This is the seed of all lawful human government.

The Bow in the Cloud

> **Genesis 9:9** *And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;*
>
> **Genesis 9:10** *And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 9:11** *And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.*

Here is the covenant promised in 6:18, and look how wide it is. It is made with Noah, with his sons, with every generation after them, and with every living creature — every bird, every beast. And it has no conditions. God does not say, "If you obey, I will not flood the earth." He simply says He will not. Man's part is not mentioned. The whole weight of this covenant rests on God.

> **Genesis 9:12** *And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:*
>
> **Genesis 9:13** *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.*
>
> **Genesis 9:14** *And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:*
>
> **Genesis 9:15** *And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.*
>
> **Genesis 9:16** *And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.*

A "token" is a sign — a visible thing that stands for an invisible promise. In the East, a covenant was often marked by a sign both parties could see, like a heap of stones (Genesis 31:44-48) or the later sign of circumcision (Genesis 17:11). God chose a sign that fills the sky.

“My bow.” The Hebrew word, *qesheth*, is the ordinary word for a bow — the weapon of war, the archer’s bow. Many readers have pictured it this way: God hung His war bow in the clouds, unstrung and put away. Look at a rainbow and you will see its curve bending up toward heaven and its open side toward the earth — if an arrow were on it, it would point away from man. Scripture does not draw that picture itself; but the promise it announces is the same. God’s weapon is laid down.

And notice who the sign is for. “I will look upon it, that I may remember.” We usually think of the rainbow as a reminder to us. God says it is a reminder to *Himself*. This is anthropopatheia once more — God does not need reminding — but the figure is full of comfort. God is telling us that every time the clouds gather and the bow appears, *He* is looking at it too, and keeping His word. The prophet Isaiah later leaned all his weight on this promise:

> **Isaiah 54:9** *For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.*
>
> **Isaiah 54:10** *For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.*

And when John was shown the throne of God in heaven, there was “a rainbow round about the throne” (Revelation 4:3). The sign God set in the clouds after the Flood surrounds His throne still.

Two Worlds

Step back and look at what the Flood did to the earth. Noah went into the ark from one world and came out into another.

The world before. Still young, and still close to how God made it: damaged by the curse on the ground, but rich, watered — as this series understands it — by a mist rising from the ground rather than by rain, with gentle hills and shallow seas. Men lived for centuries: Adam 930 years, Methuselah 969, Noah 950.

The world after. A world torn open and reshaped. Mountain ranges pushed up where there had been hills. Deep ocean basins where there had been shallow seas. Whole forests and countless creatures buried under sediment — which, in the view of creation geologists, is where much of the world’s coal, oil and fossil record came from. Clouds and rain, and with them storms, deserts in the rain-shadow of the new mountains, and hard seasons. God’s promise itself names the new pattern: “seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night” (8:22).

Other things changed too, and scripture states them directly. The animals would now fear man (9:2). Man was given meat to eat (9:3). Murder would now be answered by men (9:6). And the long lives of the old world came to an end. Genesis 11 records the ages as they fell: Shem lived 600 years, his son Arphaxad 438, Abraham’s father Terah 205, and Abraham himself 175. Moses, writing much later, put the ordinary life of man at “threescore years and ten” (Psalm 90:10).

Mist before; a bow after. As this series understands it, the rain of the Flood was the first rain Noah’s world had ever seen — and the rainbow after it was the first rainbow. (It is possible rainbows had appeared before, since a rainbow is simply sunlight passing through drops of water. If so, God took something already in the sky and gave it a new meaning. Either way, it is from this day forward that the bow became God’s sign.) The world that had never seen rain now lived under it. And every time the clouds gathered over that new, harder world, God hung His promise in them.

A Vineyard, a Tent, and Three Sons

The story does not end at the rainbow, and it would be less honest if it did. Scripture tells us what came next.

> **Genesis 9:20** *And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:*
> **Genesis 9:21** *And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.*

"An husbandman" is literally "a man of the ground." Noah went back to the very ground his father had prayed about — the ground God had now promised not to curse again. And this is the first time wine is mentioned in the Bible.

The same Noah who walked with God, who built the ark, who did "all that God commanded him," got drunk and lay uncovered in his own tent. Scripture does not hide it. It never flatters its heroes. It records their failures, too, "for our learning" — so that we do not put our trust in any man, and so that we remember that grace, not perfection, is what carried Noah from the beginning. The warning is simple and repeated elsewhere: "Wine is a mocker" (Proverbs 20:1); "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

> **Genesis 9:22** *And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.*
> **Genesis 9:23** *And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.*

Read in English, this sounds like very little: Ham happened to see his father lying naked, and told his brothers. But stop and think about what follows. Noah's sons were each more than a hundred years old. The family had lived together in tents all their lives, and had just spent more than a year together in one vessel. A glimpse of their father undressed is not something that would have been new to any of them. Yet when Noah woke, he spoke a curse that would follow a whole people for generations. A son's glance does not produce that. Something far worse happened in that tent, and the Hebrew tells us what it was.

First, what Noah "knew."

> **Genesis 9:24** *And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.*

Not "what his younger son had seen," but "what his younger son had *done* unto him." Ham did something. It was an act, not a look.

Second, what the phrase means. "The nakedness of his father" is not an ordinary phrase in the Bible. It is a fixed expression, and the Law of Moses tells us exactly what it means:

> **Leviticus 18:7** *The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.*
> **Leviticus 18:8** *The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.*
> **Leviticus 20:11** *And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.*

In the Law's own words, "thy father's nakedness" is thy father's *wife*. To "uncover thy father's nakedness" is to lie with her. Deuteronomy says the same: "Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt" (Deuteronomy 27:20). And the Law uses the very verb of Genesis 9:22 — to *see* someone's nakedness — for a sexual act: "if a man shall take his sister… and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a wicked thing" (Leviticus 20:17).

This way of speaking is a figure of speech called **euphemism** — a milder, indirect expression put in place of something too shameful to state bluntly. English readers see the milder words and miss the meaning. A Hebrew reader who knew the Law did not.

So this is what Ham did, as this series understands it. While his father lay drunk and helpless in the tent, Ham lay with his father's wife — his own mother. Then he went outside and told his brothers.

Why tell them? Because in the ancient East, taking a father's wife was more than lust. It was a claim to the father's place. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, lay with his father's concubine (Genesis 35:22), and lost his birthright for it: "because thou wentest up to thy father's bed" (Genesis 49:4). Absalom, in open rebellion against King David, went in to his father's concubines on the palace roof "in the sight of all Israel," on the advice that "all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong" (2 Samuel 16:21-22). Ham's announcement to his brothers was not gossip. It was a boast and a claim: the old man was finished, and Ham had taken his place.

Then look at what Shem and Japheth did. They "took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness." They would not look, and they would not share in their brother's act, even with their eyes. They covered what Ham had shamed — their father, lying exposed, and the dishonour done to his marriage bed. Where Ham exposed and exploited, they covered. "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8) — not hiding sin from God, but refusing to expose and profit from another's shame.

And this explains the curse. Noah did not curse Ham. He cursed Canaan, Ham's son. Readers have puzzled for centuries over why a son should be cursed for his father's sin. But notice how Genesis tells the story: twice, in the middle of this account, it stops to say "Ham is the father of Canaan" (9:18) and "Ham, the father of Canaan" (9:22). As this series understands it, the narrator is telling us who Canaan was: the son born of that union. Noah's prophetic words fell on the child of Ham's sin.

And watch where Canaan's descendants went. They filled the land that bears their name with exactly the sins listed in Leviticus 18 — the chapter that begins with "the nakedness of thy father." After listing every one of them, God says: "in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you… and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants" (Leviticus 18:24-25). The family's sin became a people's way of life.

Other readings, fairly stated. Not everyone reads the passage this way, and the reader deserves to know the other views. The most common reading is the plain English one: Ham looked at his naked father and mocked him to his brothers. It does not explain why a look brought a curse, why the text says Ham *did* something, or why Canaan was cursed. An old Jewish tradition says Ham castrated Noah; nothing in the words supports it. Some modern writers think Ham abused Noah himself; but the Law's own phrase points to the father's wife, and that reading does not explain Canaan either. Genesis does not name Noah's wife in the scene, and verse 23 can be read simply as covering Noah's body. But the Law's definition of the phrase, "what his younger son had done unto him," the double naming of Canaan, and the curse on Canaan all point the same direction.

It is also worth seeing that this is not the only time scripture tells this kind of story. After Sodom, Lot's daughters made their father drunk with wine and lay with him, and from that came the nations of Moab and Ammon (Genesis 19:32-38). In both stories, wine opened the door, a father lay helpless, and a sin within the family became the root of a people who troubled Israel for centuries.

> **Genesis 9:25** *And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.*
> **Genesis 9:26** *And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.*
> **Genesis 9:27** *God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.*

When a patriarch spoke over his sons, his words carried the weight of prophecy — as Isaac's and Jacob's later would (Genesis 27; 49). Noah did not curse Ham, and he did not curse Ham's other sons, Cush, Mizraim and Phut (Genesis 10:6). He cursed *Canaan*, for the reason seen above. And scripture shows how the words came true: the Canaanites were brought into servitude under Israel, Shem's descendants (Joshua 9:23; 1 Kings 9:20-21).

"A servant of servants" is a Hebrew way of saying *the lowest of servants*. Repeating a noun in this way to express the highest or lowest degree is a common Hebrew **idiom** — like "holy of holies" or "King of kings."

And look at the blessing of Shem. Noah does not say, "Blessed be Shem." He says, "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem." The greatest thing about Shem was whose God he had. And his name is worth knowing: *Shem* is the Hebrew word for "name." The "men of renown," the men of the name, had made themselves a name by violence, and they were gone. The line of the promise went on through the man called *Name*, whose God was the LORD. Genesis 11:10-26 traces it straight from Shem to Abraham — and, in Genesis 12:2, God tells Abraham, "I will… make thy name great." The name a man makes for himself perishes. The name God gives endures.

> **Genesis 9:28** *And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.*
> **Genesis 9:29** *And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.*

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

The Seed was kept. Genesis 3:15 promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. By Genesis 6, the whole earth was corrupt, and even the family of promise had been drawn into the world's ways. If that line had been lost, the promise would have been lost with it. God kept it alive in one man and his house, carried it through the Flood in a wooden chest, and set it down on a cleansed earth. Luke's genealogy of Jesus Christ runs straight through the ark: "which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe" (Luke 3:36).

The true Rest. Lamech named his son *Rest*, and prayed for comfort from the toil of the cursed ground. Noah brought a measure of it: the ground was not cursed again, and God smelled "a savour of rest." But the rest Lamech longed for was only fully offered by the One who came through Noah's line and said:

> **Matthew 11:28** *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

One door. As this series understands it, the ark is one of the clearest pictures of salvation in the Old Testament. There was one ark, with one door, and all who were inside were saved, and all who were outside were lost. Jesus said:

> **John 10:9** *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

Covered, and carried through. In the same picture, the ark was covered with *kopher* — the word for atonement — so that the water of judgment could not get in. The waters fell on the ark, not on those inside it. The judgment that fell on the world fell on the ark, and the ark bore it, and rose above it. Peter says it of Christ in the same passage where he speaks of Noah: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). He bore the judgment; those who are in Him are carried through.

Through the water to a new world. Peter draws the line from the ark to Christ himself:

> **1 Peter 3:20** *Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.*
>
> **1 Peter 3:21** *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*
>
> **1 Peter 3:22** *Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

"The like figure" is one Greek word, *antitupos* — a counterpart, something that answers to a pattern the way a seal's impression answers to the seal. Noah's passage through the water, from the old world to the new, is a picture of how we are saved now. And Peter is careful to say what does the saving: not the washing of the body — "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh" — but what God did "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." As this series understands it, the baptism that saves here is the one Paul describes, being placed *into* Christ: "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). And notice that Peter carries the story all the way through: the Christ who suffered, was raised, and "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." Cross, resurrection and ascension — the whole of the work that brings us safe to the other side.

The days of Noah. Jesus Himself used this story to describe the time before His return: "as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37). Ordinary life, lived as though God had never spoken, until the door was shut.

To the Grace Administration

Grace was always God's way. The first time "grace" appears in the Bible, it is found by a man in a world that had no use for God. The last age before the Flood and this present age of grace are separated by thousands of years, but the principle is the same:

> **Ephesians 2:8** *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

Noah found grace; he did not manufacture it. And he responded to it by faith, "being warned of God of things not seen as yet." The believer today is saved the same way — by believing what God has said about things not yet seen.

In Christ, as Noah was in the ark. The whole of Noah's safety depended on one thing: whether he was inside the ark. Under grace, the believer's whole standing depends on being "in Christ" — "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17); "your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). And the door Noah went through was shut by God's hand. The believer's place in Christ is kept the same way.

Delivered from the wrath to come. Noah was not left to face the judgment; he was lifted above it. The believer's hope under grace is the return of Jesus Christ:

> **1 Thessalonians 1:10** *And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 5:9** *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,*

God's patience, then and now. Peter says the scoffers of the last days will ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" and will forget the Flood (2 Peter 3:3-6). And then he explains the delay:

> **2 Peter 3:9** *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

"The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." It is waiting still. Every day the door stands open is a day of God's patience. And just as Noah preached while he built, the believer today is given "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18) — to tell people, while the door is open, that God has made a way in.

A God who keeps covenant. The same God who hung His bow in the cloud and said, "I will remember," is the God who has given the believer His word. The writer of Hebrews says it is "impossible for God to lie," and calls our hope "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" (Hebrews 6:18-19). Every rainbow is a reminder that God does what He says.

To the Topic of Obedient Faith

Noah's story is scripture's great example of faith that acts. Twice the text says it in almost the same words: "according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (6:22); "Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him" (7:5).

- He **believed before he saw**: "warned of God of things not seen as yet."
- He **built what God specified**, to God's measurements, not his own.
- He **kept going for years**, while the world around him went on eating, drinking and marrying.
- He **went in when God said "Come,"** and **came out when God said "Go forth"** — not before.
- He **worshipped first** when he stepped onto the new earth.

And then he fell, in his own tent. His faith did not make him perfect. It made him willing to take God at His word. That is still what God asks.

The Main Takeaway

God's judgment is real, but His grace came first — and the safest place in the world is inside the provision He has made.

- **Find grace.** Noah did not earn God's favour; he found it. It is still there to be found, in Christ.
- **Believe what God says before you see it.** Noah built toward something that had never happened, on God's word alone. That is faith.
- **Do all of it.** "According to all that God commanded him, so did he." Partial obedience would have sunk the ark.
- **Don't mistake God's patience for His absence.** The world of Noah's day "knew not" because it would not believe. The door stood open for years — and then God shut it.
- **Wait on God's timing.** Noah went in when God said "Come," and waited for "Go forth." God's timing is part of God's rescue.
- **Look up.** Every rainbow is God keeping His word. He will keep the rest of it too.

For Our Learning — The People

- **Noah.** A man who "found grace," "a just man and perfect in his generations," who "walked with God" — one of only two men in Genesis said to do so. He believed God about things not yet seen, built the ark exactly as God said, preached righteousness to a world that would not hear, and was carried through the judgment. Afterward he fell into drunkenness, and scripture records that too. Ezekiel names him with Daniel and Job as the most righteous of men (Ezekiel 14:14).
- **Lamech, Noah's father.** A man of Seth's line who named his son *Rest* and prayed for comfort from the toil of the cursed ground. He died five years before the Flood.
- **Methuselah, Noah's grandfather.** The longest-lived man in scripture, 969 years; by the ages Genesis gives, he died in the very year of the Flood.
- **Shem.** Noah's son whose name means "name." Noah blessed "the LORD God of Shem," and the line of the promised Seed ran through him to Abraham, to David, and to Christ (Luke 3:36).
- **Ham.** Noah's son who, as this series understands the Hebrew, lay with his father's wife while Noah lay drunk, and then boasted of it to his brothers — a claim to his father's place. The prophetic curse fell not on him but on Canaan, the son born of that union.
- **Noah's wife.** Unnamed in scripture. She went into the ark with her husband, and in the tent afterward was wronged by her own son.
- **Canaan.** Ham's son, cursed by Noah; as this series understands it, the child of Ham's sin, and the father of the Canaanite peoples.
- **Japheth.** Noah's son who joined Shem in walking in backward to cover their father's shame. Noah said God would "enlarge" him and that he would "dwell in the tents of Shem."
- **The four women.** Noah's wife and his sons' wives, unnamed in scripture, who went into the ark with their husbands and came out to become the mothers of every nation on earth.
- **The sons of God.** Men of the believing line of Seth who chose wives from the ungodly line by what looked good to the eye, until even the family of promise was compromised.

- **The nephilim.** Not a race of giants from another world, but the violent strongmen of their day — "men of renown," men who made a name for themselves by force.
- **The LORD God.** A God who saw, grieved, strove, waited a hundred and twenty years, warned by a preacher and an ark, provided a way of escape, shut the door Himself, remembered Noah, and bound Himself by covenant never to flood the earth again.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **The cubit.** The length of a man's forearm, elbow to fingertip, commonly about eighteen inches. The ark was 300 × 50 × 30 cubits — about 450 × 75 × 45 feet.
- **An "ark" (*tebah*).** A chest or box made to float, not a ship made to sail. The only other ark of this word is the basket that carried baby Moses on the Nile (Exodus 2:3).
- **Pitch (*kopher*).** A tar-like coating used to seal a vessel against water. The verb *kaphar*, "to cover," is the word later used throughout the Law for "atonement."
- **Clean and unclean animals.** Known and handed down long before the Law of Moses listed them (Leviticus 11). The clean animals, taken by sevens, were used for sacrifice.
- **The altar and the burnt offering.** The first altar in scripture. A burnt offering was wholly consumed — an offering of complete devotion.
- **The token of a covenant.** Covenants were marked by a visible sign both parties could see. God's sign was the bow in the cloud.
- **The raven and the dove.** The raven, unclean and a scavenger, never returned; the dove, a clean bird later used in sacrifice, came back to Noah's hand. The olive leaf, freshly plucked, showed that life was returning to the lower ground.
- **"The nakedness of thy father."** In the Law, a fixed expression for the father's wife (Leviticus 18:7-8; 20:11; Deuteronomy 27:20). To "uncover" or "see" it meant to lie with her.
- **Taking a father's wife as a claim to his place.** Reuben lost his birthright for it (Genesis 35:22; 49:4); Absalom did it publicly to declare his rebellion against David (2 Samuel 16:21-22).
- **Covering a father's shame.** The faithful sons refused even to look; to cover was the mark of honour.
- **Mist, not rain.** As this series understands it, the pre-Flood earth was watered by mist rising from the ground (Genesis 2:5-6), and Noah's generation had never seen rain fall.
- **The patriarch's words over his sons.** When a patriarch blessed or cursed, his words were understood as prophetic, and scripture shows them fulfilled.
- **Names with meaning.** *Noah* means rest; *Shem* means name. Both names are woven into the story.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Paronomasia** — a play on words that sound alike. "Noah" (*rest*) and "comfort" (5:29). The word *rest* keeps returning: the ark "rested" (8:4), the dove "found no rest" (8:9), the sacrifice was "a savour of rest" (8:21).

- **Anthropopatheia** — describing God in human terms so that we can understand Him. God "repented" and was "grieved… at his heart" (6:6); God "remembered Noah" (8:1); God "smelled a sweet savour" and "said in his heart" (8:21); God will "look upon" the bow "that I may remember" (9:16).
- **Idiom** — an expression whose meaning comes from how a people used it. "Found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (6:8) — was looked on with favour. "A servant of servants" (9:25) — the lowest of servants.
- **Metaphor** — speaking of one thing as another. "Walked with God" (6:9) — a life of steady fellowship. "The windows of heaven were opened" (7:11) — the sky as a storehouse with its floodgates thrown open.
- **Antanaclasis** — the same word used again in a different sense. *Shachath* is "corrupt," "corrupted" and "destroy" (6:11-13): man ruined the earth, and God brought the ruin to its end.
- **Climax** — statement built on statement, each stronger than the last, like the rungs of a ladder. The waters "increased," "prevailed," "increased greatly," "prevailed exceedingly" (7:17-20).
- **Euphemism** — a milder, indirect expression put in place of something too shameful to state bluntly. "Saw the nakedness of his father" (9:22), which in the Law's language means lying with the father's wife.
- **Polysyndeton** — "many ands." "Both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl" (7:23); "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night" (8:22).

What the Bible Actually Says

- **Not only two of every animal.** The clean animals and the birds went in "by sevens" (7:2-3); only the unclean went in by two.
- **Noah did not round up the animals.** "Two of every sort shall come unto thee" (6:20); "they went in unto Noah" (7:15).
- **Noah did not shut the door.** "The LORD shut him in" (7:16).
- **The rain was not the only water.** "All the fountains of the great deep" broke open first, and then "the windows of heaven were opened" (7:11).
- **It was not over in forty days.** It rained forty days; the waters prevailed a hundred and fifty days; Noah was in the ark a year and ten days (7:11; 8:14).
- **The ark did not land on "Mount Ararat."** It rested "upon the mountains of Ararat" (8:4) — a mountain region.
- **The ark was not a little round boat.** It was a floating chest about 450 feet long, with three decks, one door and "nests" for rooms.
- **The "sons of God" were not angels, and the giants were not half-angels.** Every living thing reproduces "after his kind" (Genesis 1). The nephilim were violent strongmen, "men of renown."
- **Scripture never names Noah's wife.** Nor the wives of his sons.
- **The "mountains" of Genesis 7:20 were not Everest.** The Hebrew *harim* means any raised ground or hill country. As this series understands it, the great ranges rose during and after the Flood, and the top of Everest is made of rock that formed under the sea.
- **The ark did not need full-grown giants.** Scripture does not give the animals' ages; creation scientists reasonably propose that God sent young animals, including young dinosaurs.

- **Ham did not merely glance at his father.** “Knew what his younger son had *done* unto him” (9:24), and in the Law, “thy father’s nakedness” is thy father’s wife (Leviticus 18:8).
- **The rainbow is God’s reminder to Himself.** “I will look upon it, that I may remember” (9:16).
- **There is no “curse of Ham.”** Noah cursed Canaan (9:25), one of Ham’s four sons, and the words were fulfilled in the Canaanites. The teaching that Ham’s descendants were cursed on account of their race has no basis in scripture.
- **Noah was not flawless.** He “found grace,” and he also got drunk. Scripture records both.

God’s Will and Intent

- **God is good always, and His judgment is part of His goodness.** “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22). A good judge does not leave the violent to crush the helpless.
- **God grieves over sin before He judges it.** “It grieved him at his heart” comes before a single word of judgment.
- **God is patient.** “The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” He strove with man for a hundred and twenty years, and He is “not willing that any should perish” still.
- **God warns before He judges.** He sent a preacher of righteousness and set an ark in plain view.
- **God provides a way of escape.** The covenant and the ark were announced in the same breath as the judgment.
- **God keeps His promised Seed.** Through the worst corruption the world has known, He preserved the line through which the Messiah would come.
- **God’s judgment is just.** The Flood ended a ruin man had already made. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25).
- **God binds Himself by His word.** The covenant with Noah rests on God alone, and He has kept it every day since.