

“The LORD then said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation’” (Genesis 7:1).

Earlier in our look at Genesis chapter six, we mentioned that to be “righteous” means that someone has “right standing” with God. Noah was exactly that kind of individual. Noah was someone who acted upon God’s direction when no one else would. This helps explain why the New Testament book of Hebrews makes the following comment about him...

“Noah was another who trusted God. When he heard God’s warning about the future, Noah believed him even though there was then no sign of a flood, and wasting no time, he built the ark and saved his family. Noah’s belief in God was in direct contrast to the sin and disbelief of the rest of the world-which refused to obey-and because of his faith he became one of those whom God has accepted” (Hebrews 11:7 TLB).

So Noah expressed his faith through his act of obedience in constructing the ark and God declared him to be righteous.

“Take with you seven of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and two of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also seven of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth” (Genesis 7:2-3).

Some illustrations of Noah’s ark depict pairs of animals entering the ark together. But these verses also tell us that several additional animals were brought into the ark as well. So why were these other animals taken aboard?

Well, we can say that some of these additional animals eventually provided meals for Noah and his family during their extended stay upon the ark. However, the following chapter tells us that once the floodwaters abated, “...***Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar***” (Genesis 8:20). So Noah also sacrificed some of those additional animals as an offering to God once he left the ark in safety.

However, Noah's sacrificial offering also presents us with a question. The Old Testament sacrificial system [did not come into existence](#) until well after Noah’s time. How then did Noah differentiate between those animals that were acceptable for sacrifice and those that weren’t?

The Bible offers some information related to that question, but not enough to provide a definitive answer. Since Noah didn’t have access to the Old Testament sacrificial law, it seems reasonable to conclude that God conveyed that information to him through some other means. While that may not be the most satisfying answer, it probably represents the best available response based on the available information.

But what was the point of conducting an animal sacrifice? What benefit did Noah derive from the act of killing an animal and burning it up? And why might God want someone to do such a thing?

To address those questions, we should first remember that death is the inevitable consequence of sin ([Genesis 2:17](#), [Ezekiel 18:4](#), [Romans 6:23](#)). But God graciously accepted the substitutionary death of an animal on behalf of a sinner in the pre-New Testament era. Today, we refer to that arrangement as the “Old Covenant” that is detailed for us within the pages of the Old Testament.

Under the Old Covenant, those who offered an animal for sacrifice were required to identify with that animal by placing their hand upon its head ([Leviticus 1:4](#)). The animal was then put to death as a means of atonement for their sins.

While this offered genuine forgiveness for sins, there was one critical limitation: ***“...it is not possible***

that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Another portion of the book of Hebrews offers some additional insight into that limitation: “...***under the old system, gifts and sacrifices were offered, but these failed to cleanse the hearts of the people who brought them” (Hebrews 9:9 TLB).*** In other words, these animal sacrifices did nothing to change people internally, where it was most important.

Something better was needed- a new agreement (or “New Covenant”) was necessary between God and humanity. Jesus eventually fulfilled that new agreement through His atoning death on the cross. In contrast to those animal sacrifices, Jesus selflessly sacrificed His own life once for all (see [1 Peter 3:18](#) and [Hebrews 10:1-18](#)). That sacrifice also works to bring about a God-honoring internal transformation in those who accept it (see [John 16:7](#), [13-15](#) and [1 Corinthians 2:9-16](#)).

“For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.' And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him” (Genesis 7:4-5).

So much like a modern-day timer, Noah received the ancient equivalent of a chronometer that ticked off the remaining days before the flood. That countdown offered another illustration of God’s patience and graciousness toward humanity.

To better understand that gracious expression, let’s consider that example of someone who lived in Noah’s region during that era. Anyone who lived in proximity to Noah undoubtedly watched as he spent decades building the ark. Since Noah was a preacher of righteousness ([2 Peter 2:5](#)), those same individuals surely heard him speak about the one true God and their need to honor Him.

In addition, Noah must have discussed the massive flood that was coming as he explained his reason for constructing the ark. Finally, a parade of animals then began to enter the ark with no form of compulsion (as we’ll see next).

We might expect a reasonable person to take notice of such things and give Noah the attention he deserved. But no one did. And even though no one was interested in listening to him, Noah followed God's instruction anyway. Thus, we can say that God gave the population of Noah's era one last week to think things over and change their minds.

“Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth. So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood. Of clean animals, of animals that are unclean, of birds, and of everything that creeps on the earth, two by two they went into the ark to Noah, male and female, as God had commanded Noah” (Genesis 7:6-9).

So Noah had no need to capture these animals or compel them to enter the ark. According to Genesis 7:9, these creatures simply arrived on Noah's doorstep, so to speak, and invited themselves in. And once again, this spectacle apparently had no effect upon the people of Noah's era. With these things in mind, we might say that these animals were more receptive to God’s direction than the human population of that time.

And now, after years of preparation, the day Noah planned for had finally arrived....

“And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:10-12).

Genesis 7:11 is another verse that is more significant than it may appear. That verse begins by saying, ***“On the seventeenth day of the second month of the six hundredth year of Noah’s life...” (GW).*** Those sixteen words are significant because they dispel the notion that Noah’s flood was an obscure incident that occurred at some unknown point in the past. Instead, this passage references an actual historic event that took place in real time on a literal day.

Thus, Noah’s flood is not a myth, a fable, or a legend. It was an actual event that happened to real human beings on the seventeenth day of the second month in a specific year of Noah's life.

This verse also tells what started to happen on that day. For instance, most people are probably familiar with the rain that fell during the forty days and nights of Noah’s flood. But Genesis 7:11 also tells us, ***“...on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth” (NIV).*** Another translation of that verse says, ***“...all the underground waters erupted from the earth” (NLT).***

This tells us that large underground reservoirs of water must have existed prior to the flood. The sudden emergence of those underground pockets of water would have led to an environmental catastrophe. That's exactly what transpired according to Genesis 7:11.

The term ***“floodgates of the heavens” (NIV)*** is another word picture that suggests some sort of atmospheric collapse, much like a great dam that suddenly bursts. According to one source, the term ***“floodgates (or windows) of heaven”*** is, ***“certainly... intended to convey the idea of great quantities of water, formerly restrained in the sky, suddenly released to deluge the earth.” (1)***

So it wasn’t just the falling rain that led to Noah’s Flood. It was the torrential downpour from above, coupled with the corresponding surge from the water table below.

(1) Henry M. Morris *The Genesis Record* pg.197

“On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in” (Genesis 7:13-16).

Before we continue our survey of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge a crucial detail that appears at the close of verse sixteen. That detail appears so briefly that it might slip by unnoticed: ***“... Then the LORD closed the door behind them” (NLT).***

Inside the ark, there were eight individuals who demonstrated respect for God and His Word. In response, God personally ensured their safety by closing them inside the ark. But while Noah and his family were safely enclosed within the ark, it also meant that those who had rejected God were locked out as well. As we'll see, that choice led to the tragic loss of their lives.

This idea from the first Biblical book appears in the last Biblical book as well...

“But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” (Revelation 22:15).

Those who similarly reject their Creator face a corresponding risk.

“The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it

rose above the earth. The water surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. Then the water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered. The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet” (Genesis 7:17-20 CSB).

So these verses paint a vivid picture of a flood that was relentless and unstoppable. If we could visualize the most catastrophic tidal surge imaginable, the flood described in Genesis chapter seven would surpass it by an immeasurable magnitude.

“The flood engulfed the earth for forty days. As the waters increased, they lifted the ark and raised it above the earth” (Genesis 7:17 NET).

Why did Noah’s Flood last forty days? Is there any significance associated with that length of time?

Well, in reading through the Scriptures, it should quickly become apparent that numbers often carry special meanings. Although it is possible to take the examination of Biblical numerology to an unhealthy extreme, the occasional relationship between Biblical numbers and meanings is one that is easy to grasp since we sometimes use numbers in a similar manner today.

For instance, if one person says to another, *"You're number one,"* the first person certainly doesn't intend to assign a numeric value to the second person. Instead, “number one” identifies the person in question as the first or best.

One of the more easily identifiable examples of this idea is found in the Biblical use of the number forty. In addition to its appearance here in Genesis chapter seven, the Scriptures often associate this number with a period of testing or judgment.

For instance, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus fasted for forty days prior to His temptation on the wilderness (see [Matthew 4:1-11](#)). We also have the example of the Old Testament Israelites following their departure from the land of Egypt. The people of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years due to their irreverent and disrespectful attitude towards God ([Numbers 14:26-34](#)).

We also have the Biblical use of the number ten, a number that is sometimes affiliated with a period of trial or assessment ([Daniel 1:12-15](#), [Luke 19:11-27](#), [Revelation 2:10](#)). Another example of Biblical numerology is associated with the number seven, a number that appears more than fifty times in the book of Revelation alone. The number seven is commonly linked with the qualities of fulfillment, completion, or perfection within the Scriptures..

So the number forty typically heralds a period of trial or evaluation whenever it appears in a Biblical context.

“They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet” (Genesis 7:19-20 NIV).

Note how Genesis chapter seven repeatedly emphasizes the intense nature of these floodwaters...

- Verse 17: ***“the waters increased...” (ESV).***
- Verse 18: ***“The waters rose and increased greatly...” (NIV).***
- Verse 19: ***“Then the water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered” (CSB).***
- Verse 20: ***“The waters rose more than 20 feet above the mountains” (NET) (about 15m).***

These details provide us with an idea of the tremendous force and intensity of the flood. This passage also tells us that Noah's flood was not localized. Instead, this flood was a catastrophic event that affected the entire world, for all the mountains under the heavens were covered by the waters of the flood.

Given the global nature of the flood, a natural question arises: were these waters deep enough to carry Noah's Ark over every mountain across the entire planet? Such a thing would seem impossible if we stopped to consider it. For instance, Mount Everest is over 29,000 feet (8839m) tall. Genesis 7:20 seems to indicate that the floodwaters reached a height of twenty feet (six meters) even beyond that mountaintop. How could anyone on the ark breathe at such an elevation?

When addressing these questions, we should not make the mistake of assuming that the earth's current topography is identical to that which existed prior to the flood. In other words, the surface features that exist on earth today may not be identical to the surface features that existed during the events of Genesis chapter seven. The height and size of the earth's various mountains may represent one of those potential changes.

For instance, some of the mountain ranges that exist today may have been brought into existence as a result of the flood. This might occur if a pre-flood land mass shifted to a point below its previous position. If that shift exerted force on an adjoining land area, it might lead to the elevation of that neighboring area.

One source explains how this process may have occurred...

"Creationist scientists currently think that mountains such as the Himalayas were probably built by catastrophic movement of the Earth's continental plates during and after the Flood. (1)

The catastrophic plate tectonics model gives a mechanism for the deepening of the oceans and the rising of mountains at the end of the flood...The collision of the tectonic plates would have pushed up mountain ranges also, especially toward the end of the flood...In support of this, the layers that form the uppermost parts of Mount Everest are themselves composed of fossil-bearing, water-deposited layers. This uplift of the new continental landmasses from under the Flood waters would have meant that, as the mountains rose and the valleys sank, the waters would have rapidly drained off the newly emerging land surfaces." (2)

(1) Dr. Don Batten, *Did Noah need oxygen above the mountains?* Christian Answers Network Web site (Gilbert, AZ: Christian Answers Network, 1996), URL: <https://christiananswers.net/q-aig/noah-above-mts.html> accessed 13 March, 2024.

(2) Edited by Don Batten, Ph.D. *Where did the Flood waters go?* / Authors: Ken Ham, Jonathan Sarfati, and Carl Wieland, adapted from *The Revised & Expanded Answers Book* (Master Books, 2000). Christian Answers Network Web site (Gilbert, AZ: Christian Answers Network, 1996), URL: <https://christiananswers.net/q-aig/aig-floodwater.html> accessed 13 March, 2024

"Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days" (Genesis 7:21-24 NIV).

So the entire human population was now reduced to eight people. Every land animal perished except those who had been granted refuge along with those eight individuals. But how could such a

catastrophic event actually occur?

The answer is simple, yet often difficult to accept: *choices lead to consequences*. The people of Noah's day sought to enjoy the blessing of life in God's creation while ignoring their Creator. However, it wasn't only their refusal to acknowledge their Creator that led to their demise- they were also living in a manner that was antithetical to His character. Consider what we read earlier in Genesis 6:5...

“Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Noah's flood ranks as the worst environmental catastrophe in human history- and it happened because people turned away from their Creator to embrace lifestyles that were characterized by wickedness, evil, and self-absorption.

While those characteristic qualities of wickedness and evil may be evident from these chapters, this reference to self-absorption may be less so. However, Jesus enlightened us on that aspect of human nature prior to the flood...

“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 24:37-39 NLT).

In Noah's time, people were living their normal, self-indulgent, everyday lives without concern, acknowledgment, or interest in their Creator- until the flood wiped them out. These people were so preoccupied with their personal interests and activities that they were oblivious to God's agenda. And because they weren't paying attention, they were unprepared. That fatal mistake ultimately led to their demise.

Sadly, Jesus predicted that this same mindset will persist among the members of humanity at the time of His return.