

***“Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained” (Genesis 8:1-2).***

Genesis chapter eight begins with the words, ***“Then God remembered Noah...”*** The act of "remembering" something typically implies that someone has forgotten about it first. So does this mean that God overlooked Noah and subsequently “left the water running” in the form of the Great Flood?

Well, the phrase ***“God remembered...”*** is an Old Testament means of signifying God’s intent to re-engage with a specific individual or group (see [Genesis 30:22](#) and [Exodus 2:24](#) for some examples). In fact, we often use a similar expression when we speak of “remembering” someone on his or her birthday or other special occasion.

For instance, if we plan to “remember” someone on his or her birthday, that certainly doesn’t mean that we have forgotten that person about during the rest of the year. Instead, it means that we plan to do something special to commemorate that person's birth. In a similar way, God “remembered” Noah in the sense that He was about to do something significant on his behalf.

That action took two forms. First, Genesis 8:1 tells us that a wind encircled the earth, causing the waters to recede. Today, we recognize this process as a component of the [hydrologic cycle](#) where air currents move water into the atmosphere through the process of evaporation. This action helped transfer some of the floodwaters away from the earth’s surface and reduced the amount of water remaining above ground.

Next, verse two tells us, ***“The outlets of the water beneath the earth and the floodgates of the sky were closed” (GNB).*** Earlier, Genesis chapter seven [alluded to the presence](#) of subterranean water reservoirs that likely existed prior to the Great Flood. If the Flood emptied those reservoirs, then it seems likely that some of those great underground voids eventually collapsed. That would have introduced a radical change in the earth’s topography and surface terrain by establishing lower elevation areas to contain the remaining waters.

***“And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen” (Genesis 8:3-5).***

So, having spent months adrift on the surface of a watery planet, Noah’s Ark came to rest on what amounted to a colossal sandbar: the mountainous region of Ararat.

Today, that area functions as a boundary point between the contemporary nations of Russia, Turkey, and Iran. (1) While Mount Ararat is over 17,000 feet (5200m) in elevation, notice that Genesis 8:4 doesn’t tell us that the Ark settled *atop* Mount Ararat; instead, it touched down somewhere within the *mountains* of Ararat. So while Noah’s Ark landed somewhere within this mountainous region, it’s impossible to say exactly where it set down or even where it may be today (assuming it has survived). Here is how one source describes the challenge of locating Noah’s Ark...

***“Some people believe that Noah’s ark still rests on Mount Ararat, and occasional expeditions have been launched to find it. However, shifting glaciers, avalanches, hidden crevices, and sudden storms make the mountain so difficult to climb that it is referred to by the native inhabitants of that region as ‘the Painful Mountain.’” (2)***

So Noah’s Ark had finally touched down on a solid land surface. It was during that time that other

mountain peaks became visible as well. This offered an opportunity for Noah to conduct a reconnaissance mission and collect some further data on the changing environmental conditions. To accomplish that, Noah dispatched one of the animals on a special assignment....

***“So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth” (Genesis 8:6-7).***

A raven is a type of bird that will generally eat whatever it finds. Therefore, a raven would have no trouble landing on and consuming anything it discovered after Noah released it from the Ark. This helps explain its apparent failure to return to Noah once he set it free.

So that marked the end of Phase I of Noah’s reconnaissance mission and signaled the commencement of Phase II.

(1) See Fausset, Andrew R. Entry for 'Ararat'. *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*. 1949.  
<https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/eng/fbd/a/ararat.html>

(2) “Ararat” *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* Copyright © 1986, 1995 by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

***“Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark” (Genesis 8:8-9 NIV).***

These verses tell us that Noah devised an ingenious strategy to collect further information regarding the state of the environment beyond the immediate vicinity of the ark.

Remember that the first bird Noah chose for his scouting report was a raven. That bird’s repeated journeys back and forth told Noah that the ecological conditions beyond his immediate surroundings were still unfavorable, despite the Ark’s successful landing on dry land.

The second bird chosen was a dove. In contrast to a raven, a dove is more selective about its diet and where it chooses to land. The dove’s return to Noah indicated that the land was still too wet to consider leaving the Ark.

So Noah tried again the following week...

***“And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth” (Genesis 8:10-11).***

The olive leaf carried by this dove provided Noah with two significant pieces of information...

1. First, it told Noah that the earth (or at least portions of it) had finally become dry enough to support human habitation.
2. The earth’s plant life had sufficiently recovered, allowing Noah and his family to cultivate food again once they left the ark.

What happened next confirmed each of those conclusions.....

***“So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore” (Genesis 8:12).***

Why did this dove fail to return to Noah after he released it for the third time? The most obvious answer is that the land had recovered enough to allow it to find a new home. For Noah, this meant that he and his family could soon find a new home as well.

***“And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry” (Genesis 8:13).***

Although Noah’s list of building materials didn’t mention it, he must have placed some sort of water-resistant cover over the Ark, much like we might use a waterproof tarp as an overlay today.

***“And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried” (Genesis 8:14).***

So approximately 371 days or about 53 weeks passed from the beginning of the Flood to Noah’s eventual exit from the Ark. Given that time frame, we might imagine that Noah desperately wanted to disembark from the ship to begin “shore leave.” Nevertheless, we’re told that he patiently waited until he received permission to depart...

***“Then God spoke to Noah, saying, ‘Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.’***

***So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark” (Genesis 8:15-19).***

Consider the scene that must have greeted these eight people as they stepped out of the ark. For instance, there were no human beings anywhere. The vegetation was sparse and limited. The earth’s surface was an unfamiliar landscape, vastly different from what Noah remembered before he boarded the ark. The weather was probably different as well. So the harsh reality of the world Noah encountered when he left the ark was far removed from the idyllic image that is often portrayed in coloring books.

It’s also possible that Noah and his family encountered another disturbing reality upon leaving the Ark—the remains of those who perished during the flood. That may have been the catalyst that prompted Noah to take his next course of action.

***“Then 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).***

After living on the ark for more than a year, we might ordinarily expect Noah to begin exploring, building a home, or planting a crop. Instead, he engaged in an act of worship upon his departure from the ark: ***“Noah built an altar where he could offer sacrifices to the LORD” (Genesis 8:20 CEV).*** So it seems that Noah understood God’s rightful place of priority. Thus, he led by example as he honored his Creator upon his return to dry land.

***“And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease’” (Genesis 8:21-22).***

Earlier in our look at Genesis chapter six we discussed a literary device known as an anthropomorphism. In a Biblical context, this refers to a figure of speech in which a human ability (such as vision or hearing) or human emotion (such as anger or jealousy) is attributed to God. Genesis 8:21 now uncovers two additional uses of that tool.

For instance, this passage tells us, “*The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart...*” (NIV). Those two human attributes (the ability to smell a pleasing aroma and speak within His heart), help describe God’s ability to interact with people and the environment in a way that’s easy to understand.

These references to cold, heat, summer, and winter may also indicate that the changing seasons were a new and permanent feature of the post-flood environment. And God’s promise to spare His creation from a similar judgment in the future was surely a comfort to Noah, especially during subsequent rainstorms.

However, God made an additional comment, almost as if it were a casual aside: “*I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood*” (NLT). We’ll consider that comment at greater length next.

“*...Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood*” (Genesis 8:21b NIV).

There appears to be a prevalent belief among some that human beings are inherently good and that negative behaviors are the sole product of social or environmental factors. Of course, most of us probably are “good people” in the sense that we aren’t mass murderers or cruel, sadistic, merciless tyrants. And it’s also true that social and environmental factors often affect behavioral patterns for better or worse. But as much as we might like to think of ourselves as “good people,” the passage quoted above reminds us that human beings are not “basically good.”

Virtually anyone can affirm the truth of that statement by simply observing young children. While small children are undeniably cute and innocent in many ways, there is no need to instruct a young child on how to lie. We do not need to train a child in the art of deception. We don’t have to teach children to act greedily or selfishly. It is unnecessary to teach a child how to hurt other children. In fact, the opposite is true; parents and other authority figures must teach children *not* to do those things.

Even a very small child can exhibit jealousy, hostility, or a desire to take something that doesn’t belong to him or her. The Scripture quoted above explains the reason for this: “*...every inclination of (someone’s) heart is evil from childhood.*” The truth is that such things don’t change as we grow older- *we simply become more adept at hiding them.*

Unlike previous generations, it is nearly impossible for anyone who thinks critically to subscribe to the naive belief that human beings are inherently good. The reason is simple: the emergence of internet technology in the late 20th century has made it possible to witness the extent of human depravity on a near-instantaneous basis.

This unfortunate reality transcends the realm of those news outlets that are desperate to attract audiences with attention-grabbing headlines, sensationalized revelations, and hastily formed opinions from those who prioritize “being first” over “being right.” It also includes an array of social media platforms, videos captured on cell phones, and online comments posted by individuals who find pleasure in provoking, offending, and irritating others.

This brings Jesus' teaching from Mark 7:20-23 to mind...

***“...What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person” (NIV).***

Unfortunately, what comes out from within us often leads to personal attacks, hostile criticisms, racial slurs, and every kind of vicious, argumentative, and hateful form of speech.

So in Genesis 8:21, God essentially said, *“Even though human beings are bent towards evil right from the beginning, I will never replicate this form of judgment again.”* This is another example of God’s graciousness toward undeserving human beings.