

God's Way Out

"For Us and For Our Little Ones"

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

Ezra 8:21.

Lesson 3. The Wrong Way Led to Disaster

If you are wondering, "Why doesn't God do something" to punish the wicked nations, read this chapter and see how surely God's judgments follow oft-rejected mercy.

AFTER all the jokes that have been made about the story of the Flood, it has been discovered that Noah was a real man of flesh and blood--one of the young world's outstanding heroes, and that the Flood was a mighty deluge which drowned the whole world and changed the whole surface of the earth.

Over two hundred different nations or tribes kept it in memory for centuries. Nigh five hundred traditions tell the story of this mighty catastrophe. **[1]**

In more than five hundred different parts of the earth you yourself can actually see the havoc caused by the Flood of Noah's day. Once you get the key you will be astonished by what you discover.

The Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul both testified to the truth of the story. **[2]** They were men who would die rather than deceive, so their word is of weight. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself witnessed to the accuracy of this strange narrative. **[3]** Certainly no one could accuse Him of falsification.

Noah himself became famous as the builder of the ship which weathered this greatest storm our old earth has ever seen. That huge vessel was called the Ark. It had the tonnage of the old Mauretania.

Noah's ancestors were famous men. His father was Lamech, son of Methuselah, "earth's oldest inhabitant." Methuselah lived over nine centuries, and probably assisted in the building of the Ark. He died about the time it was launched. **[4]** His name in Hebrew actually signifies "when dead it shall be sent."

Three children were born to Noah and his wife: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They have been famous for millenniums as the founders of the three great races of mankind.

If Noah was interested in the story of our world's creation, and the drama of lost Eden, he had unparalleled opportunity for hearing it, for Enos, the grandson of Adam, was still alive when he was born.

Judging from the Bible description and by the contents of our earth, as we find them today, the world of Noah's day was still a beautiful place to live in. There were no fierce extremes of climate, no rigors of cold and heat. **[5]** Europe was warm and pleasant, and there was eternal spring near the North Pole. Coral grew in its beauty in the warm rippling waters of the arctic, and giant sequoia trees waved their branches where polar bears now amble along. **[6]** Luxuriant grapevines, oaks, walnuts, and magnolias grew in Greenland.

There was still an abundant supply of food for man and beast, and in that delightful climate the life in the open air could have been a perpetual joy. The earth also yielded her treasures and gave the men of that time precious stones, fine perfumes, gold and tin, iron and copper. **[7]** The saddles and bridles of their galloping horses were, beautifully inlaid with gleaming gold and shining white metal.

The men of those days were by no means savage pygmies or half-witted cavemen. Noah's grandson, Mizraim, was founder of Egypt with its clever architects and skilled pyramid builders. Another grandson, Javan, was the progenitor of the Greek races, men of genius with a love of art and beauty. Another was the founder of Persia, and still another began the mighty race of the Assyrians. **[8]**

Great Giants and Intellectual Leaders

Many of the men of Noah's day were giants in stature and strength. Life was short if a man died at four hundred. Many of them lived eight centuries. Think of it! Eight centuries of education for men whose intellect and memory were as extraordinary as their stature! **[9]**

What opportunities they had! And they used them. Among these celebrities was Jubal, the father of music, who produced sweet melody from the harp and the organ. His brother, Tubalcain, was a master metal-worker who brought ringing music from his anvil to mingle with the strains of Jubal's harp. Brass and iron he hammered and forged into useful implements for the men of old. **[10]**

Earth's women were beings of beauty, too, for they were near descendants of the beautiful Eve, earth's first mother. In that fair land there was much misery and unhappiness. The record of those days is an extremely sordid one. The blacksmith's father was a murderer and a polygamist. . His two wives, Adah and

Zillah, had to listen to the gruesome tale of his crime in killing a young man. To their horror they found their husband was earth's second murderer.

But those mighty men of old were not to be called atheists. Who could be an atheist when the Garden of Eden was still to be seen on the earth? Who could disbelieve the record of the drama of Eden while there at those garden gates stood the glorious cherubim with that flaming, waving sword barring the way to the tree of life?

They had listened to great preachers, those strong-muscled men and fair women. Enoch had preached before them with impassioned fervor, telling of a solemn judgment to come. Opening before them those solemn scenes, he declared:-

"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds." [11]

Did they take heed to those solemn warnings? Did they cease to use the club, the knife, and the sword on their fellows?

No; very few changed their lives. Instead they ceased to respect the law of God, and the earth became full of violence, wrangling, fighting, quarrelling, bloodshed, cruelty, oppression, adultery, fornication, and all impurity. The Bible record declares:-

"The wickedness of man was great in the earth."

"Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

"The earth was corrupt"- rotten to the core of the people's hearts.

Probably those who suffered under that violence asked: "Why doesn't God do something? Why does He allow wicked men to continue their violence? How often that question is asked today! "Surely the great Judge of the earth will take action!" Surely He will!

But often the roots of the wheat are twined around the roots of the tares. Often a good mother's heart-strings are twined around a wicked, cruel man. Her prayer goes up: "Lord, save my son; give him opportunity to change; to turn to Thee."

A Catastrophe Coming : The Way of Escape

So when God at last spoke, infinite mercy was blended with sure justice. The evil men should be destroyed--true! But a way out was provided for all who would

believe. A great flood should destroy the wicked, but a ship--God's way out--was to be provided to save all who would believe.

"My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years," said God.

What an opportunity? God gave them one hundred and twenty years of grace--enough time for all to repent and for all to perfect their characters.

Abundant mercy was offered for all--but then followed the solemn warning: "Behold, I ... bring a flood of waters upon the earth," came the message of God to Noah. "I bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh . . . and everything that is in the earth shall die."

A great world-wide catastrophe should swallow up those wicked men of old! Loudly the voice of Justice clamored from all the universe: "Let them be swept from the earth! They are not worthy of the gift of life!"

"Make thee a great ship," said the voice of Mercy to Noah. "Make a ship of strength that shall weather the mighty storm. Make it of hard gopher wood-pitch-wood-that shall resist long months of crashing waves. Then come thou and thy wife, thy sons and their wives into the Ark.... And urge the people to come into the Ark and be saved from the Flood. Declare unto them that whosoever will may come! Whosoever will may come!"

Reverently Noah listened as the divine voice gave those minute directions.

"I am to build a ship of gopher wood," reflected Noah, "three hundred cubits long, her breadth of fifty cubits, her height thirty cubits! A mighty vessel that will be; large enough to house men and women and a host of animals and birds to repopulate the world after the waters subside. What material must be gathered! What work must be done! In truth we shall need the six score years which mercy has proclaimed. Let us begin. This Ark shall be God's way out for us." So earth's first ship was begun.

How practical were those measurements and dimensions! Why, the warship Oregon, built to these proportions, broke the record for speed in its voyage from San Francisco to the, Atlantic, via one of the wildest seas on the globe, the storm-swept Cape Horn route. The Ark was built for storms.

Was there room for man and beast? Yes, counting up the deck space the Ark had the tonnage of the old Mauretania over 30,000 tons. **[12]**

They built the Ark of gopher wood--probably cypress, durable, and unaffected by damp. The vessel was to be caulked and painted within and without with pitch. There was iron enough available to make strong joints, for had not Tubal-Cain, the smith, with his glowing forge, instructed men to work in iron and brass long before this time? So for one hundred and twenty years they built and fitted out this mighty ship.

God Is Not Mocked

It may be there were popular preachers who said: "God is love; He is too good to punish sin."

But plain speaking Noah declared: "God will punish every unforsaken sin with death. He will punish violence, cruelty, impurity, selfishness, idol worship, Sabbath-breaking, and neglect of parents. Forsake sin, and enter the Ark!"

His own children came: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Their wives came, too. And that was all. Eight persons! For the sun arose and set as usual. The moon came up and went down as of old. There were no signs of a flood anywhere, [13] except this old man and his sons, hammering and sawing and working away on that great ship.

On with the dance! Sing with music of flute and harp! Dance with laughter and joking! But the hundred and twenty years passed. Suddenly--impossible! There were the animals coming, coming into the Ark! What supernatural power was impelling these dumb creatures? Strange feelings must have come over the spectators as they watched the animals come. What if Noah's preaching were true?

A Message of Mercy

One hundred and twenty years of mercy! To us it is just as if some preacher in the early days of Dickens, 1820, or 1830, had begun preaching: "The end of the world is coming," and was, still preaching it in these nineteen fifties. What attitude should we ourselves take if such a solemn message came to us from God? Probably many were startled at first and threw in their lot with the shipbuilder-preacher and then grew careless as the years went by. Just as we do.

Many others, no doubt, said: "Oh, there's plenty of time" and delayed too long. How delay deadens conscience! Yet all those years they had the living preacher, Noah, warning them: "Cease from sin. Come into the Ark. The hundred and

twenty years are passing." Every blow of the hammer and mallet said: "Come, come!"

"Come for your children's sake. Bring them into the Ark. The great Flood is coming soon!"

There stood Noah at the door. Earnestly he pleaded that they would board the ship of safety.

But no more came. Then "the Lord shut him in." The great door in the side of the Ark was closed. **[14]**

Still no sign of a flood! Still the sun shone as usual. So men their way, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling and laughing at the men in the Ark.

But the seventh day the Flood came. Dark angry clouds rose up and blackened the heavens. The thunder roared. Cataracts of water poured from on high. The rivers rose. Great waves came in from the sea. Subterranean waters burst through the earth's crust. The land began sinking beneath the waves.

"Oh, for the safety of the Ark now!" groaned the men and women who had laughed at its builder. See, the great ship is afloat; she is riding the waves. How she reels and plunges in those mountainous seas! What strange cries from those frightened beasts and birds inside! But they were safe--safe under the protection of God. Peace and gratitude gradually came uppermost in the hearts of Noah and his family.

That raging storm was such that even demons might fear for their lives. As the fury of the tempest increased, great tidal waves were hurled across the earth's surface, breaking up temples and palaces, throwing down idols, tearing up rocks, and felling forests, pouring mile-deep layers of mud and sand and gravel over the old surface of the earth. Crushing, grinding, and burying monster animals; mammoths, dinosaurs, fish, lizards, and reptiles, along with the cruel and bloodthirsty, selfish and evil men and women of those days.

Remembered for long ages was that mighty Flood. Among over two hundred peoples in nigh five hundred traditions the memory lingered for centuries. **[15]** What a solemn fulfillment of God's warning message! How did God bring about such a Flood?

Scores of the traditions suggest that great astronomical changes took place at the Deluge and played their part in causing that unforgettable catastrophe. From the Scriptures also this seems very probable. Here are four illuminating suggestions:-

1. It would seem that at creation the moon gave out light and heat like the sun, **[16]** and the sun gave out much more heat than at present.
2. The earth was apparently surrounded by an envelope of water vapor, thick at the equator and thin at the poles by centrifugal motion. Because of this vapor envelope no excessive heat penetrated to the tropics, but ample warmth came through in the northern and southern regions of earth. **[17]**
3. At the Flood the moon was by a miracle suddenly cooled, and the sun's heat reduced. As a result earth's great envelope of watery vapor condensed and fell as cataracts of rain.
4. The disappearance of the water-vapor envelope, the decrease of heat from the sun, and the lack of heat from the moon left the polar regions in the arctic cold which prevails today.

If these suppositions are true-why, even the moon's fair face bears the scars of the Flood to this very day!

For forty days and forty nights torrents of rain poured from the sky while floods of water gushed up out of the earth. And after the rain had ceased, the waters still prevailed until the mountain tops were fifteen cubits below the waves. **[18]**

For five months the waves swept the earth with tremendous force. Fearful and long was the voyage for those in the Ark.

Then the waters began to subside. By mighty, miraculous forces the mountains were pushed upward out of the muddy tides and the wet land once more appeared. The sea-bed slowly sank to its resting-place as it had done on the third day of creation. The Ark floated safely among the mountain peaks of Ararat, in Armenia. **[19]**

Still the Flood subsided, and on the glad New Year's Day, Noah and his sons broke open the roof and looked out over the landscape. Cold, moist fresh air greeted them; the atmosphere of a new world!

What a scene of devastation met their eyes! Mountain and valley, hill and dale, stretched out before them, gaunt and desolate. Miles and miles of mud and pebbles and shells appeared. Rocks and stones were strewn in confusion over the earth.

Gone were the idolaters with their shrines; gone were the murderers and cruel tyrants. Buried beneath the mud were the selfish, unthankful, and unholy adulterers of old. God's one hundred and twenty years of mercy had passed and the wicked were gone.

We See the Signs of It Still

Signs of the Flood and fragments from the times of Eden still stare at us wherever we go. Sea shells and pebbles are found lifted high on the hills and mountains. Remains of huge animals are found below the earth in our great caverns. Mammoth elephants and horses are found frozen in the ice of Northern Siberia. In Greenland, Spitzbergen, and the Antarctic, as well as in our own land are found coal beds which are naught but the trees and the plants of the time of the Flood.

As the waters went roaring down to the sea, huge ravines were formed in the deep mud over which they flowed. Behold the Grand Canyon of Arizona! Behold the great chasm of Niagara! Behold a thousand other marvels formed at that time!

For scores of years, perhaps centuries, until this mud hardened into rock and shale and slate and stone, the ocean carved away continually at the soft land. See how the waters of the English Channel steadily hewed out Britain's southern coast until half a hill of chalk was washed away at Dover and two thirds of a hill of red mud-rock at Teignmouth.

How these remains witness of God's sure justice! Yet tender mercy is displayed on every hand.

"See, these beds of pebbles in the woods tell of God's justice," says the teacher to his wife.

"Yes," she replies, "but see how the bluebells are coming! Look, a beautiful dreamland of bluebells is covering the shingle left by the Flood! These lovely flowers are tokens of God's love and tender mercy for all."

Oh, yes, beautiful flowers grow in profusion on the rugged Rockies. The rough, boulder-strewn wastes of Norway's fields are musical with the song of birds, and breath-taking with the beauty of the blue hepatica in spring. The valleys of the bleak Himalayas are often gorgeous with red, pink, and yellow wild roses and apricot blossoms--blossoms which show God's love and tender care for all, and remind us that He who brought Noah safely through the flood has promised us: "When thou passes through the waters, I will be with thee." [20] Even in the

solemn scenes of the end of this world He will be our Ark and bring us safely through.

And one day God will restore the earth to its Edenic beauty. All marks of the great storm through which our planet sailed will disappear, and the joy and love of Paradise will be restored.

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6. US Geological Survey.
7. Genesis 4.
8. Genesis 10.
9. Genesis 5,6.
10. Genesis 4.
11. Jude 1:14, 15.
12. Science and Invention, quoted in Present Truth, February 26, 1931.
13. Matthew 24:37,38.
14. Genesis 7:16.
15. Moons, Myths, and Man, Page 120.
16. Genesis 1:14-18. Isaiah 30:26; Acts 3:21.
17. Genesis 1:6-8.
18. Genesis 7:19, 20 (Lesser's Translation).
19. Genesis 8:4.
20. Isaiah 43:2.

