

Genesis 8 – The Comfort

“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.”

Noah waited a long time in the ark without hearing from God. With the ship rolling, the earth disappearing, the people outside screaming, the skies thundering—never before had such a stormy time come. Perhaps you find yourself in such times, and you think, ‘The Lord has forsaken me’, or ‘The Lord has forgotten me.’ If so, be encouraged for the Lord says, *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.”* Isa 49:14,15

Just what is that inscription on His hands? Nail holes. You know Jesus, after He rose from the dead, kept His scars. He showed them to the disciples and especially Thomas who was doubting. He has kept the holes in His hands specifically so He

will remember--not in anger but in love, not in revenge but in recalling the price He paid for you and for the joy set before Him of having you in His kingdom. (Heb 12:1-6)

Although it may sometimes seem like it, God DOESN'T forget us. David mourned, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are you so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?”* which even the skeptics recognize as the cry of the Messiah (Psalms 22) and Christians recognize as some of the last words of Jesus upon the cross of Calvary.

Jesus understands that feeling, for He truly was forsaken by God, for a moment, as He carried the sins of the world. And because of that, because Christ suffered that judgment, He absorbed the waves of loneliness and forsakenness for us all, now we are never forsaken.

He has said, *“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”* (Heb 13:5) God has not forgotten you.

Even in times of tribulation when you may think you've just gone too far. You may wonder, *“Where is the Lord?”* In such times, remember King David's words,

“Where can I go from Your Spirit?...If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me and Your right hand shall hold me.” (Psa 139:7-10) All around you, it may look as lonely as the open sea, but God does remember you!

“The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.”

The fountains, the windows, and the rain of judgment were stopped. And for the believer, there is a new meaning to these once frightening words: because of the Ark (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ) taking the pounding for you so to speak, you can have the fountain of living waters rather than fountains of death and destruction (see Jer 17:13 and Joel 3:18).

Jesus said, *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow torrents of living water.”* (John 7:38)

Now, the windows of heaven hold blessings for the believer, *““Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... and try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for*

you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal 3:10)

The rain also has new meaning -- *“For as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and do not return there but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth. It shall not return void (without fruit) but shall accomplish what I please and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”* (Isa 55:10,11) It brings blessings -- *“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Weeping, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with blessings...”* (Psa 84:5,6)

The fountains, the windows and the rain represent great promise to the one who knows Christ - all because of the Ark, because of the Lord Himself.

“And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.”

This is the second mention of 150 days. The judgment that covered the earth, that afflicted all men lasted 150 days. In considering the foreshadowing symbolism here, we look to the Great Tribulation period and likewise find that there is a judgment that afflicts all men who are not sealed (up) by God, for 150 days: *“Then the fifth angel sounded: and I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months (150 days). Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.”* (Rev 9:1-6)

This is especially significant because, as you recall from our previous discussion on chapter six, these demons who are described in the book of Revelation as hideous locust-like creatures that come out of the bottomless pit; it is they who torment men for 150 days. And it is such torment that men seek death but are denied it. These are the very demons that corrupted the pre-flood world and were then bound in chains of darkness during the flood and kept there until the Tribulation. (see Jude 6,7) The typology is perfect.

“Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month on the mountains of Ararat.”

There is a beautiful message for us here. The word Ararat means “holy place”. After five months of ‘torment’, five months of world-wide devastation, the ark with the people of God inside found rest on Mount Ararat, the holy place - a holy mountain, if you would. This points to the people of God along with the Lord Himself resting in the holy mountain. That’s where the true rest is - in the presence of the Lord on His holy mount.

These massive beams of wood, covered with pitch or, as we previously mentioned, covered with ‘atonement’ came to rest on a holy hill. In a parallel sense, another set of massive beams of wood dripping with the atoning blood of the Lamb of God was set on the mount of Calvary.

There’s the true rest, there’s the rest of the people of God. That’s where the floods of tribulation carry us, or lead us -- they bring us to the cross of Christ. That’s their whole purpose.

“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. So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.”

As far as we know, this was the first time the window was opened. It wasn’t made so Noah could watch the destruction of those who had mocked him. It wasn’t a vantage point from which to look down on the damned. It was a window of humility and hope. As Noah opened it and looked upon the horizon, he saw the tops of the

mountains appearing. At this point, they looked like little island hills -- a sight that surely brought a sense of humility, a holy awe to Noah.

When we realize the mountains of despair or difficulty that stand before us are as nothing before the Lord; when we see them from His vantage point, from above, we indeed have hope for the future.

The windows or perspectives God gives us as we abide in Him are never for giving us condescending viewpoints or judgmental vistas at those who aren’t in the Ark, those that don’t know the Lord. The Lord wants the windows of our souls to behold a broken world, desperately in need of the breath of His Spirit, the radiance of His Love, the truth of His Word. He wants us to see people as He sees them and to walk in humility and hope.

The word for window in this verse, ‘tso-har’, is not used for window anywhere else in scripture. It literally means “light”. When our eyes are open to His Light, we see as He sees. The Psalmist sang, *“The entrance of Your Word gives Light; it gives understanding to the*

simple.” and he prayed, “*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things from Your law.*” (Psa 119)

“Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth.”

The raven was an unclean bird (see Lev 11:15).

“He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground. But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. 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. So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.”

There’s a picture here that I won’t be dogmatic about. Nevertheless, it has its basis in scripture and I’ll suggest it for your consideration.

Pray about it; meditate on it; search the scriptures and see what you think. First, recall that we have Noah, who typifies the Jewish “elect according to grace”. Next, we have the ark which typifies the Lord Himself - His presence, His protection, His priestly sacrifice. And, we have the flood which typifies the judgments of God.

And then we have two birds. One a raven, and the other a dove. Both left the ark but only one returned, the dove. The raven wandered to and fro over the earth. The dove found no “rest for the sole of her feet” and returned.

Noah reached out and drew her into the ark. After some time, she left again and returned with a freshly plucked olive leaf. Then for the third time she was sent out and this time did not return to Noah.

Now, as we mentioned, the raven is an unclean bird, one that feeds on dead flesh. As we look at the scriptures, there is an interesting relationship with the raven and food (see Phi 3:18,19). Nearly all the references to the raven have to do with its uncleanness and its food or appetite. (See Lev 11:15, Deut 14:14, Job 38:41, 1 Kings 17:4, Psa

147:9, Prov 30:17, and Luke 12:24) In fact, we get our English words ‘ravenous’ and ‘ravening’ which denote a devouring appetite for that which is killed from this bird.

There are just two exceptions - this verse in Genesis where Noah initially puts his trust in this bird and one in Song of Solomon where the Beloved (the type of Christ) is said to have beautiful black hair, as black as a raven. And interestingly enough, the very next sentence says, He has a dove’s eyes.

Now, there is coming a man who many believe may be of Jewish heritage (from Noah, if you would) who will arise out of a kingdom that is known prophetically for devouring. Daniel the prophet said concerning this kingdom, “*After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet.*” and the Lord interpreted for him, “*The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth...*” Dan 7:7,23

This man is also known as the son of the devil, the one who “*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*” 1 Pet 5:6 Like father, like son. Like the raven, he is a devourer. But he is darkly beautiful as well. He will be impressively beautiful, extremely attractive, intelligent, charismatic, so much so that the world will worship him and the Jewish people will initially think he is the Messiah. But he will not return unto them. He will be apostate and self-absorbed. He will appear to be good and he will have the backing of religion, but he is evil, black as a raven in heart. And he will set himself up in place of (literally anti) Christ.

Also note the raven “*kept going to and fro*” which is reminiscent of what the devil said concerning his own activity before the Lord.

“*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” so Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth,...*”” Job 1:6,7

So, I will suggest that this raven may be a picture or type of the Antichrist who the Jews, like Noah, will initially put their trust in during the Tribulation. They will look to him for the answers to the problems of the world. But he will have no answers, only a ravenous desire to conquer and destroy.

Now, what about the dove? In the New Testament, we see the unmistakable linkage between the dove and the Holy Spirit. (See Mat 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1)

In the Old Testament, the dove is known for mourning (Isa 38:14, 59:11, Na 2:7), and is linked with those in relationship with God (Song 2:14, 5:2, 6:9). Also, the dove is said to hide in the rock. (Jer 48:28)

As such she is representative of the elect, God's children, those with whom the Holy Spirit is working closely. They are the ones who are broken before God, mournful over sin, in relationship with God, anointed by His Spirit, and who find their safety in the Rock, Christ Jesus (Deut 32:18, 2Sam 22:47, Isa 17:10, Rom 9:33, 1 Cor 10:4, Dan 2:34.)

Returning to our passage, the first time the dove left the ark would speak to the first time the judgments of God came upon Israel and His children were scattered or as with Noah's dove – sent out over the sea (in the Bible, the sea is a picture of the gentile nations). This was when the Assyrians and then the Babylonians crushed the northern and southern kingdoms.

The Word confirms this in a prophecy from Deuteronomy: *“You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God. And it shall be that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the Lord will be cheerful over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. Then the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from the one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known--wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing* (literally,

dovelike) *eyes, and anguish of soul.*” Deut 28:62-65

The second time the dove left the ark is representative of the second time the judgments of God came upon Israel when she rejected her own Messiah, the gracious new covenant of His atoning blood. This time, the Roman legions under Titus destroyed the nation, and again the Jews were scattered into the gentile nations.

This is reminiscent of when the Psalmist wrote, *“My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me and horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”*” Psa 55:4-8

But a second time the dove came back to her window, and with this return to the Ark (the Lord), she brought an olive leaf, freshly plucked, which is miraculous for normally an olive tree is not going to live nearly 200 days underwater

and then spring forth leaves. This new life is miraculous. It was the Lord's work -- *“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time (this was spoken by Isaiah before the first dispersion of the Jews) to recover the remnant of His people who are left...and will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”* Isa 11:11,12

Now the olive leaf or branch is a universal sign for peace, but in scripture the olive tree pictures specifically the born-again believers, Jewish and Gentile. Paul makes this very clear in Romans chapter 11 where he writes to the gentile believers: *“if some of the branches (the Jews) were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches...because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith...and they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.”* Rom 11:17-23

This second return of the dove therefore is not just representative of the return of the nation to the physical land but more importantly of the return of the children of the Most High to the faith of their fathers and belief in Christ.

There is coming a miraculous new birth, new life, and they will make peace with God (see Isa 40:1,2).

The olive was also used to produce the anointing oil, universally accepted as the type of the Holy Spirit throughout scripture. This is appropriate, for in these last days, the returning spiritual Israel will be anointed: *“And it shall come to pass that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh (all the Jews); your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved for in Mount Zion and in*

Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.” Joel 2:28-32

And a third time the dove was sent out, but she didn't return. Why? For this picture, we need to turn to the book of Revelation and look at a couple of chapters.

In chapter seven, we see that during the Great Tribulation there will be a commissioning of 144,000 Jewish evangelists. These people, newly born again in Christ, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, will go forth with the Gospel and immediately following this anointing in Revelation we read that heaven is filled with multitudes more believers that have specifically come out of the Great Tribulation.

So I'll suggest that the reason the dove does not return to the ark the third time may be because these guys, the 144,000, won't return to Israel, they will go to heaven! All of them will be faithful to the end evidently being martyred for the faith. We gather this for we see them all, all 144,000, not 143,999 - all of them gathered together around the Lamb in chapter 14.

In Psalms, David prophesied, *“The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it (see Rev 7!)...You will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver (the metal of redemption) and her feathers with yellow gold (symbolic of faith)”* Psa 68

So this passage in Genesis is hugely important and packed full of meaning. Though the Jewish people will mistakenly put their confidence, at least initially, in the Antichrist, they will find themselves like the dove returning to the presence of the Lord and then, under His anointing, empowered by the Holy Spirit, fulfilling their original commission to spread the Gospel all over the earth.

“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. And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried. 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.”

370 days had passed since they entered the ark. I find it fascinating that God only spoke to Noah twice -- first, when He said to come into the ark and then, at this point, where He said to go out of the ark. The whole time in the ark, the whole 370 days during the flood, there was no speaking, at least none is recorded. And we don't find Noah complaining to the Lord about it.

If it were me, I'd have been seeking some new divine revelation each and every day, “Oh, Lord, please show me just how many more days. Tell me how to get out of this ark. When will the door open? Yap, yap, yap...” Noah on the other hand was indeed a man of faith. He lived out

his name -- he knew how to rest in the Lord, in his confidence in the Lord. Today, we've revved up the pace of life and our selfish expectations of Him to the point that a few hours or a few days of the floods and we freak.

But this passage teaches me that it is specifically during the times of tribulation that I need to be quiet and trust my Father in heaven. I need to listen for His voice more than ever. So many times I've heard the question or wondered it myself, "How do I know that God really loves me? Why doesn't He tell me? Why doesn't He show me again, and again, and again?"

I think His gentle reply is that He proved His love once and forever by providing the ark and calling us into it. He made a way out of the old world into the new -- the cross of Calvary. How could He ever top that? He couldn't -- He gave His all there. And that should always be the thing that keeps us trusting and loving Him in response.

Now, graciously God does speak to us and He often nudges us by His Spirit through His Word. With long-suffering and kindness, He gloriously re-demonstrates for us

His never-ending devotion; but forever, the ultimate expression of His love remains Jesus Christ!

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offering on the altar, 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."***

We should note here in closing that worship was a response to God's work. We don't see the altar until after the flood, after the door was opened on a new world. And Noah's response was perfect - it was an acceptable sacrifice with a sweet smell.

Was it like presenting the Lord a barbecue? Or a bouquet of sweet smelling flowers? No, I don't think

so. Although the Lord later specifically required some sacrifices in the Mosaic Law, He also later said through the prophets that He detests sacrifices.

You see the act itself is symbolic and for it to be acceptable, just as with Abel, it must be mixed with faith, with the right heart-attitude.

There must be an understanding that the consequences of sin is death - sacrifice makes that poignantly apparent. Sacrifice that is acceptable also involves the giving of something costly. And in the expression of both of these things, the heart must say unto God, with all sincerity, "I love You and I trust You. I believe."

Worship is always, always a response to God, never is it to be a routine before God. And it is this heart attitude itself which is in fact the "*sweet smelling aroma*".

Our lives as believers should have this aroma on a daily basis, not because we each have a Montana cattle ranch or a country club membership to prove it. Rather, we ourselves -- our lives, our hearts, should carry the sweet aroma of acceptable sacrifice. We are

intended to know deep within that sin means death, that love means responding in giving and trusting. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (response!).*" Rom 12:1

When the church in Philippi gave in love to help the apostle Paul, he wrote, "*Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.*"

It's the fragrance of our heart that God senses which is important - the fragrance of love. That's why Noah's sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord; because it spoke of the perfect sacrifice of His perfect Son Who in perfect love and obedience, laid His own life down. Thus, we are instructed that the proper response to God is to, "*walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*" Eph 5:2

Then God responded to Noah's response! He gave a beautiful promise we call the Noahic covenant, 'wrapped in a rainbow' - glorious response to a beautiful response to a joyful response to a trusting response to a ... that's what God delights in -- LOVE.