

Remember. Flood.

⁹ These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

¹⁰ And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

¹³ And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.

¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits.

¹⁶ Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks.

¹⁷ For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.

¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female.

²⁰ Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive.

²¹ Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them."

²² Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Genesis 7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

² Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate,

³ and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

⁴ For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground."

⁵ And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth.

⁷ And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.

⁸ Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground,

⁹ two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.

¹⁰ And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

¹² And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

¹³ On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark,

¹⁴ they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every

creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature.

¹⁵ They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life.

¹⁶ And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷ The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

¹⁸ The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

¹⁹ And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.

²⁰ The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.

²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.

²² Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

²³ He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

²⁴ And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.

^{ESV} Genesis 8:1 But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.

² The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,

- ³ and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,
- ⁴ and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.
- ⁵ And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.
- ⁶ At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made
- ⁷ and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.
- ⁸ Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground.
- ⁹ But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.
- ¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.
- ¹¹ And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.
- ¹² Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.
- ¹³ In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth. And Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry.
- ¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth had dried out.
- ¹⁵ Then God said to Noah,
- ¹⁶ "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you.
- ¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh-- birds and animals and every creeping thing that

creeps on the earth-- that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.

¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

²¹ And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done.

²² While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

Genesis 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.

³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

⁶ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

⁷ And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it."

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,

⁹ "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you,

¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth.

- ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."
- ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:
- ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.
- ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,
- ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.
- ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."
- ¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."
- ¹⁸ The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)
- ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

Genesis 6:9-9:19

Numbers, Chiasm, and the Flood

Numbers are fascinating things. In the Bible, they often have important **symbolism** or function. One thinks of the number **three** and the Trinity, the number **seven** and the days of the week and how both help us understand the idea of completion or perfection. **Two** is a number of contrast, differences: black and white, good and evil, male and female.

Larger numbers are often the product of smaller numbers multiplied together. For example, 50 is the number of a jubilee. It is $7 \times 7 + 1$ (where one is the first new year in the series). 150 would be three jubilees, and so on. The point is, it is rare that numbers are absolutely theologically meaningless in the Bible.

The story of the Noah's flood is a story filled with numbers. Most people think of the number 40, because it rained forty days and forty nights (Gen 7:4). Yet, when we take the whole story together, we find many numbers repeating, some several times: 2, 3, 7, 10, 40, 150, and 600. There are other explicit numbers: 15, 17, 27, 30, 50, 300. Then there are numbers that come when you add together numbers that are supposed to be added: 1 (year) or 5 (months), etc. I wonder, how many of you have ever paid attention to all of these numbers or asked yourself why they are there?

I'm going to begin a short series that looks at Noah's flood. Today, we will be taking a sweeping look at almost three chapters: Gen 6:9-9:19. I'm going to use numbers to help teach the central idea of the Flood. I'm guessing that if I asked each of you the most important thing about the flood story, that I might get as many answers as there are people.

But textually speaking, there *is* a central idea of this story. It isn't something I have to make up or guess at, because it comes right in the middle of one of the first and greatest chiasms in the Bible.

What is a chiasm? Well, given the context of the flood, perhaps you might say that it is a huge hole in the ground where the waters of the earth came from and went back to. But that would be a *chasm*. I'm talking about a *chiasm*. A chiasm is a very common literary device used to emphasize, parallel, and contrast ideas. The simplest chiasm would start with an idea, move on to a new idea, and then return to the first idea. They are diagramed with a kind of A,B,A or A,B,B,A or A,B,C,B,A outline. Here is a simple chiasm from **1 John 3:9**:

A whoever has been born of God
 B does not sin
 C for His seed remains in him
 B' and he cannot sin
A' because he has been born of God

The tool helps you remember what you are hearing or reading by using **repetition**. And it points you to a **center**, in

this case “His seed remains in him.” The chiasm in our story is massive (A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,H’,G’,F’,E’,D’,C’,B’,A’). It consists of 79 verses. It has been recognized by many scholars and commentators. The way we will proceed is that I will begin with A and then go to A’ to see what is being taught in that section. Then we will move to B and so on until we arrive at the central focus of our great story. I hope that as we do this, you will learn to read the story in a new way, you will come to recognize the brilliance of Moses (and/or the redactor), you will let the various parts help to interpret one another, and that most of all, you will be greatly encouraged by the focus, for even though this story is one of great wrath, at the heart lies one of the most precious verses in the Bible.

A: THREE ~ Noah and his Sons

I’m going to begin in **Genesis 6:9-10**. Last week we looked at **vs. 9** in great detail. Today, I want to focus on these two verses as the beginning of this literary device. There is a number here. The number is **three**. “Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (**Gen 6:10**). Now turn to **Genesis 9:18-19** and you will see the number three repeated. “The sons of Noah we went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the

whole earth were dispersed.” You can see how not only is the number three repeated, but so also are the names of Noah’s sons.

The story begins with them and ends with them. Why? The answer is that this whole section is the “generations of Noah” (6:9). But what is the basic teaching here? I’m not going to make too much of the number three on a symbolic level, because as with many of these numbers, if there is symbolism, I’m not always confident that I know what it is. Instead, with Peter, I want you to see exactly how he reads these verses.

He uses a different number. The number is eight. He says, “because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:20-21). So before anything else this morning, I want you to see that our story’s final purpose is to point you to Jesus Christ. The Flood is was a type of baptism (we will look at this more next week). It was a salvation from drowning by being kept safe in the ark. These eight people

were spared by God's grace and came through the waters alive.

But Peter also says that people “deliberately forget” this fact, not remembering on purpose, so that they can pretend that their sins do not matter to God. But they do. And this story points you to the need to trust in Christ alone for salvation. One of these three brothers is the ancestor of everyone in this room. The salvation that God gave to your great grandfather Shem, Ham, or Japheth is now offered to you in this day of salvation. To turn to Christ in repentance and faith.

B: INFINITY~ A Promise and a Covenant

The next section I want to look at is **Genesis 6:11-18**. Its parallel **9:8-17**. This part is not bound together by a repeating number, but by a theme, and this theme leads me to consider a kind of number that is symbolic and important.

The theme is covenant. You can see in **6:18**, “I will establish my covenant with you.” The covenant language returns in **9:9**, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your seed after you...” As all covenants are cut near sanctuaries, the sanctuary of this covenant is Noah's ark (**6:14-16**). The sign of this covenant is the rainbow (**9:13**).

But what kind of a covenant is it? To whom does it extend? First, it is a *gracious covenant*. But the grace shown in it multiplies between the first and last section. At first, only Noah and his family are shown grace. God will not destroy them in the flood. This was a physical grace, but it pointed them to salvation in Christ. But by the time we get to Ch. 9, the grace is extended to “every living creature that is with you” (9:10). Indeed, it extends to “the earth” itself (13). God’s grace is on display as being virtually infinite in size.

Thus, I’m going to argue that there is actually a number here that represents this massive number of creatures, a number that we could symbolize as infinity, because it extends to every creature, human or animal that will come on the earth after the flood. It is symbolized in the dimensions of the ark.

The ark is a massive structure, 300 x 50 x 30 cubits. In mathematical terms, that is 450,000 cubic cubits of space, or 675,000 cubic ft., or to put it another way, one of the largest numbers in the Bible. If I were some kind of numerologist, I might be able to find some kind of symbolism in the numbers themselves, but for me, they just symbolize hugeness. Ancient people’s didn’t really use words like “billion” or “trillion,” and hardly ever even “million.” So this is a way they would

have symbolized something so big the mind could not fathom it. The ark was massive and protected life from being utterly destroyed during the flood.

Now, in this covenant reconfirmed after the flood, God promises that he will never again **cut off** all flesh by the waters of the earth (9:11). The grace is common grace, because God will keep creatures alive on the earth, though they do not deserve it. But this grace is also meant to point you towards Jesus Christ. You are not to take the grace of God in weather or food or shelter or anything else in this life for granted or to become complacent about it. But you are to be thankful for it, and always remember that it is his grace, and that today he continues to extend his grace so that people might reach out and find him, until at the very end when he will not longer allow it, because he returns again in final judgment.

C: TWO ~ Preservation, Multiplication, and Provision

The third part of the chiasm takes us back to 6:19-22. There is a number to be found here. It is the number 2 (19, 20). The number relates to the **pairs** of things Noah is to take onto the ark—male and female so that they might be able to reproduce and repopulate the earth.

Its parallel section is found in 9:1-7. Although the number 2 does not appear here, without question it is implied, because the very same theme is repeated. “God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth ... be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it” (9:1). It takes two to be fruitful and multiply. Obviously, there is more in this section than just this number, and we will take a more detailed look at it in a different sermon. The point now is, through the covenant, God is sending his **blessing** upon man and beast so that they will carry out the **dominion** mandate of Genesis 1 again. His grace is not only negatively that he will not destroy the earth again, but that he will positively bless the remultiplication of the kinds upon the face of the earth. Because of the fall and our sin, there will be repercussions involving both the animals and diet and justice, but God’s grace will still be here through it all.

What a glorious thing it is to consider that in pairing off life into male and female, he has reestablished the natural order of life multiplying and that as they do it, he blesses them and his **grace** overshadows them, even though every thought of their heart is only evil continually. The family is the primary means that this occurs with us. It is God’s gift to

us and his very special order that we must protect and fight for and learn to cultivate and tend to so that it will not be perverted as we take for granted God's ever present grace in this world.

D: SEVEN ~ God's Command and Preparation

The fourth section of the literary structure begins in **Gen 7:1-3**. It also sees a dramatic shift in emphasis **from one of grace to one of judgment**. This actually works its way progressively through this and the next two sections, all three of which are characterized by the number **7**, a number of perfection, the number of completion.

We begin with God's command. The previous section concluded with **"Noah did all that God commanded him."** Now, God commands Noah to prepare. **"Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals ... seven pairs of birds"** also (**7:2-3**) and **"go into the ark"** (**7:1**).

In its paired section (**8:15-22**), the number seven is not repeated, but it is implied, because it is the reversal. Whereas what we have just seen has God commanding Noah to **"go into the ark,"** this section has God commanding, **"Go out from the ark"** (**16**) and **"bring out with you every living thing that is with you ... birds and animals and every creeping thing"** (**17**). And they all obeyed God (**18-19**). Then, the **clean**

animal theme is repeated, because Noah takes some of the clean animals and birds and offers a burnt offering on an altar (20). It is this act of worship that rises up to God in heaven, and after smelling the pleasing aroma he says, “I will never again curse the ground because of man ... while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease” (vs. 21-22). So whereas the first section begins to lead us into judgment, that last begins leading us out of it so that we may more clearly see the grace that we have just seen.

E: SEVEN ~ God’s Command and Obeying

But as you are reading the story like a story, you must enter into the heart of darkness. The fifth section is **Gen 7:4-9**. It has several numbers in it: 7, 40, 600 and 2. Its companion is **Gen 8:12-14**. It likewise has several numbers: 7, 601, “second” and 27. Most scholars who outline this chiasm point to the number **seven** again, for it is the only number that is repeated exactly (600 vs. 601 and “two” vs. “second”). “In **seven** days I will send rain” (**Gen 7:4**). Its companion is that Noah “waited another **seven** days” (**8:12**) as he sends out the dove over the waters.

In both cases, we get the picture of Noah the righteous man doing what God says. “Noah did all that the LORD had

commanded him” again (7:5; also vs. 9). He believed God that in seven days he would send a flood, and so he went in with the animals at a time when he was 600 years old. Their obedience by faith allowed them “to escape the waters of the flood” (vs. 7). This is what true faith does. When it hears the command to flee from God’s wrath, it obeys. When it hears the command to build, it obeys. When it hears the command to prepare, it obeys. When it hears the command to trust in Christ, it obeys. It does not delay, for it realizes that if it does, it will be too late. Imagine Noah waiting till the eighth day because he was a procrastinator or lazy or in love with the world around him? Obedience does not delay, but it obeys immediately. When God tells you to do something, be it trust in his Son or stop sinning, you do it now.

And yet, the second half ironically teaches us about waiting. Not waiting because of our sin, but waiting for God’s timing. “Noah waited another seven days” (8:12) and “In the six hundred and first year...” (13). Noah did a lot of waiting on God. As we will see, he keeps having to wait a week (seven days, an important connector to Genesis 1) to get off the ark. But this is after having to wait over a year for a flood! We here in Colorado lived through a week long “flood of the millennium” last fall. I can’t even imagine having to

wait it out for a year, inside a boat, with thousands of stinking animals, and only your closest family to talk to.

So as you think about Noah's immediate **obedience** and how you are to respond in kind to God, you must also be thinking about Noah's great **patience** in waiting upon the LORD. God's timing is often, perhaps mostly, not our timing. We want things now, but God's patience is boundless. To him a thousand years is like a day.

Yet, in this context, Noah's patience must be with God's wrath and judgment. He must wait for *it* to subside. This it seems to me is something we may need to hear more in our day than ever before. Without question, God is **removing his common grace** from civilization—all civilization around the entire world. Civility in manners and discourse is almost non-existent. Our politicians are for the most part corrupt, greedy, and perverted. They don't even understand what they are supposed to be doing. Every major crime or perversion has been increasing exponentially since the early 1960. We are in utter financial ruin and on the brink of catastrophe. There are very powerful forces that oppose our us and our gospel, and without them even doing anything to us, our churches have almost completely lost this only power that is able to bind Satan and steal people out of his kingdom.

The darkness is returning with a vengeance. Each day it grows darker, even while most of us sit here bathing in the sunset of what common grace yet remains. Yet Noah had to be patient with God's judgment. We see this even more in the next section.

F: Seven ~ Waiting Upon God

The sixth section of the chiasm is again fixed to the number seven. “And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth” (Gen 7:10). Noah has taken seven pairs of animals onto the ark in preparation of the coming wrath. He has been told to wait seven days for the coming flood. And now he has waited those seven days, and finally, after 120 years since the first warnings to preach the gospel to these wretches, the floods come. One wait is over: The preparation. Another wait is only beginning: the actual destruction and devastation caused by God's wrath. I don't know which waiting is worse.

I do know that the emphasis on waiting is only emphasized in the second half of the chiasm. Gen 8:7-11 has Noah sending forth the first of the birds: the unclean, dark raven that will now brood over the waters, finding that there is no land, no ground, no tree, no twig for it to land upon (7-8). It

circles the chaos of the newly destroyed world and returns to the ark and waiting hand of Noah (9).

Then Noah waits **another seven days** (10), and sends out a dove, but the dove came back too. This seven days signifies a complete period of time, a time for God to begin easing his wrath and bringing about a new creation. The dove returns with a freshly plucked **olive leaf** (11). The **olive leaf** is a symbol of renewed **fertility**, God will make the earth habitable again. Look, the vegetation is already returning. His wrath will not abide forever. It is also a symbol of **peace**, sort of like holding up a white flag. **God is done fighting**. Finally, the olive leaf is a sign of **victory**. The **King has won**. God sits enthroned over the flood (**Ps 29:1**). No one may defy him without repercussions. Noah had a good long week to think about all of these things as he waited for the water to finally retreat.

G: Forty ~ Ark Floating, Ark Resting

Now we come to the seventh pair of passages, as we make our way ever nearer to the center. The first is **Genesis 7:11-17**. Again there are many numbers here (600, second, three, and two), but the one that we will focus on is **40**. Once the rains come, they come and they come and they come and the come. “**And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty**

nights” (12). In the Bible, this is a very symbolic number. It is associated with probation, trial, and chastisement.

You have forty years in the wilderness, forty days for both Moses and Elijah on Mt. Sinai and forty days of Jesus in the wilderness and Jonah in Nineveh, forty years of rule under such judges as Othniel, Barak, and Gideon and the kings Saul, David, Solomon, Jeroboam II, Jehoash, and Joash. Forty years of servitude under the Philistines—more than once. And so on. So this number of forty days and nights is filled with meaning. Of course, that meaning involves all that we have talked about this morning. It was a time of God’s judgment upon the earth, a time of showing himself to be the true ruler of the world, and a time of what had to be severe trial by Noah.

Let us not forget that Noah is in the Ark all this time. It must have been incredibly loud, both inside and outside. Though not the SS Mino, the very large ship was tossed, to and fro by wave after wave after wave. Sea sickness, fatigue, the incessant bleating of sheep and every other animal, and the loss of everything he knew and loved. This was most certainly not easy for Noah. And this is all symbolized by the ark floating (mentioned three times in the passage; 13, 15, 17) aimlessly, rudderless upon the waters. “The flood continued

forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth” (17). Surely, this is epitomized by the Psalmist when he says, “Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me” (Ps 69:1-2).

But if the first half of this section focuses on the **rising waters**, the trials, the travails of the ark, and the testing of the number 40, the second half is its **reverse**. **Gen 8:4-6** closes by saying, “At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made” (6). Rather than turmoil and tossing to and fro, now it is characterized by “**rest**.” “In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month...” (4-5).

Rest is a very important word.¹ If you remember when Noah was born, his father named him this because of a prophecy predicting this very moment. “This one shall give us rest² from our work and from the toil of our hands” (**Gen 5:29**). **Noah means “rest.”** Now, after the waters have abated,

¹ Next week we will compare it to God’s resting.

² The ESV translates it as “relief.” This is a rather strange decision, given that the name Noah means “rest.” The word used in this verse is *nacham*, and it is the same word used in 6:6, 7 for God “repenting” or “being sorry.” Clearly, there is a word-play going on here. The word in 8:4 is *nuach*, the very same word for Noah. Now, God’s repenting, which caused the flood, is finally resulting in the rest that was promised.

and the land has returned, the ark and Noah and his family and the animals inside come to rest on the mountains of Ararat. The floating, aimlessly wandering, battered and torn ark is finally at rest. What a beautiful picture of the promises of God. It begs me to ask you if you have **found rest from the wrath of God**? Do you know what it means to rest in Christ? **“Come to me all you who labor, and I will give you rest.”** Christ is the Man of rest, the greater Noah with a better Ark.

If you struggle with fear, with doubt, with temptations, with sins, if you struggle with people, with anger, with lust, with worry, there is rest for you here. If you are tired of this world, its cruelty, its lies, its false promises, its greed, and its waste, there is rest in Jesus. If you long for a better land because this one is fading, if you are sick or poor or homeless or a wanderer, if you have needs that can't be filled by the excess and glitter of the vanity of our age, there is rest in Christ. His grace is being poured out even this moment. As you hear his voice telling you to come to him, obey and find the rest that your weary head so desires. For he is the only place you shall ever truly find shelter from the storm.

H: One Hundred Fifty ~ Waters upon Waters

There is **one more couplet** of verses, parallels that repeat with numbers and meaning. These begin in **7:18-24**. The

number here that repeats itself in the next section is 150. “And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days” (24). I speculate that this number is related to the idea of a jubilee, because it is 3 x 50. As it is repeated twice, this makes 6 sets of jubilees, and that number 6 is something that we will look at next time, because it relates us back to Genesis 1, something this entire story does in profound and important ways.

The waters prevailing is the main theme of this section, without doubt. This is the heart of the flood. “Water prevailing” is repeated in 18, 19, 20, and 24. For 150 days, the waters prevailed. They were the victor. Something we have not mentioned yet is how the flood story is repeated in almost every culture on the planet. I’ve seen some counts that go over 400 different cultures. Most are well over 100. The point is, there is an ancient memory that humanity still has of this most horrific of all cataclysms. Plato reports a story between two Greeks that went like this:

- Athenian: Then what view do you both take of the ancient legends? Is there any truth to them?
- Clinias: What legends are you talking about?
- Athenian: Those which recount recurring destructions of humanity by floods, epidemics or from a

variety of causes, when only a few survivors are left behind.

Clinias: Oh, those stories are entirely credible to anyone.

Athenian: Well then, let us discuss one of those mass exterminations, the one that was brought about by the Great Deluge.

(Plato, *The Laws* Book III)

But what do they tell?

They have many of the same props: a man, an ark, a rainbow, a flood, a sacrifice, animals, and so on. But the story they tell, the things they do with those props is different. For example, the **Mesopotamians** tell is like this. People had been created to do the work that the gods were tired of doing. We were basically their slaves to do menial labor. But the growing population and the inevitable internal strife that resulted had made even more work for the gods, for people were constantly disturbing them with their troubles, demands, and requests. This is the “noise” of humankind which led the gods to embark on a course of total destruction. Their decision to send the flood is a reaction of angry frustration. The gods are shown to be duplicitous, shortsighted, and absorbed in petty squabbles.

The plan was that no one would survive, and they were all sworn to secrecy, but one of the council (Ea) carries out a scheme to save his favorite human (Utnapishtim, their Noah). He manages to be saved in an ark. The gods then become distressed, because they have forgotten how much they liked having us as slaves after all. Having lived through the deluge, they end up begrudgingly granting the flood hero eternal life.

That's not quite what the biblical story says, is it? These flood waters were the result of Yahweh seeing how sinful, perverted, violent, and corrupt mankind had gotten. The problem was sin in direct violation of the covenant, not over-population or man-made global warming. The waters were his waters. They were planned by him, sent by him, and carried out his ordained plan just as he wanted. Noah was not saved as an afterthought, but as an act of grace, not only before the Flood, but in the plan of God before Noah was ever born. That is how a Christian is to view the waters. Though they rise up to my neck, save me from them, for you alone are powerful to save.

Well, the second half of this part of the chiasm also have 150 as its number. It is Genesis 8:2-3, "The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, and the waters receded from

the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated.” Do you see how this is the reversal of the prevailing waters? They will not last forever. Yes, 150 days is a very long time, but it is not an eternity. The very things God used to spill forth the waters, were used in their retreat. The entire event was under his control.

I: God Remembers Noah

Now, if you are paying attention, there is only one verse left that we have not covered in this long literary structure. One single verse, a verse that is meant to be viewed as the very center and theological heart of the story of the flood. So what is it? It is something that all of the grace has pointed at, but all of the judgment has hidden. It is something that would have been quite pressing upon Noah’s mind, especially after day upon day, week upon week of rain, and then month upon month upon month of waiting for the waters to recede.

When God sends such calamity our way, into our own lives, our families, our church, our country, it can seem like an eternity of waiting for him. And during those long periods, doubt inevitably begins to creep into our minds. Even those with the best theology are not immune. Is God really in this? Does he really care about me? Is his grace even real? Has he completely forgotten me?

The Psalmist says, “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Ps 13:1). “Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression” (Ps 44:24)? “Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts; do not forget the life of your poor forever” (Ps 74:19). Yes, even king David was not immune.

Thus, Genesis 8:1 now comes into our view. It has no parallel line. It is the only stand alone verse in the entire story. It is the center of the chiasm, the tip of the literary arrow (see chart below), the one thing that all the rest has been working towards developing. “But God remembered Noah.” We forget the flood, but God remembered Noah. He did not leave him in the ark, on the water, stranded, alone to die. He remembered, saw, and took pity on him.

But this is no afterthought, as if God had somehow forgotten Noah. Rather, the language of remembering is for our sake. It is language that comes into our situation, Noah’s situation, and helps us know that he really is here. He’s been here all the time.

But not only Noah. God remembered all the beasts and the livestock that were with him in the ark. This wasn’t become the bleating and mooing finally reached its way up to heaven,

and God had to figure out what all that noise was. Of course he knew. And because of his oath, his covenant, his word, he remembered them all.

“And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.” Why? Because Noah found grace in God’s eyes. Why? Because God made a covenant and a promise to Noah and the animals and the earth itself. Why? Because God is not merely full of justice and retribution, but love. He loves what he had made, even if he somehow “regrets” it, is somehow “angered” by it, and must of his own goodness and holiness punish it.

That is what the story of the flood is all about, from a Christian perspective. It is not just God wiping us out and starting over. It is God remembering Noah and showing grace to those who do not deserve it. I’ve mentioned the verse once, but it is worth repeating as a final word on this matter today. The flood and the ark all point you to God’s mercy and grace in this day when they may still be found. And so it says,

“Because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now

saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” (1 Pet 3:20-22). May each of us be found in him on the greater day of judgment to come, because he has been pleased to use his word to save many in this day of salvation.

Chiasm of the Flood Story³

- A 3 ~ Noah and his Sons
 B ∞ ~ A Promise to Flood and a Covenant
 C 2 ~ Preservation and Provision of Life
 D 7 ~ Clean and Unclean Animals Saved
 E 7 ~ God's Command to Enter the Ark
 F 7 ~ Waiting for Earth to Flood
 G 40 ~ Ark Floating
 H 150 ~ Waters Prevail
I GOD REMEMBERED NOAH
 H¹ 150 ~ Waters Recede
 G¹ 40 ~ Ark Resting
 F¹ 7 ~ Waiting for Earth to Dry
 E¹ 7 ~ God's Command to Leave the Ark
 D¹ 7 ~ Clean and Unclean Animals Used (flying and sacrifice)
 C¹ 2 ~ Multiplication of Life
 B¹ ∞ ~ A Promise not to Flood and a Covenant Renewed
 A¹ 3 ~ Noah and his Sons

- A. 3
 B. 300, 50, 30 (450,000)
 C. 2
 D. 7
 E. 7, 40, 600, 2 (7 days of waiting for flood; 7:4)
 F. 7 (7 days of waiting for flood; 7:10)
 G. 600, 2, 17, 40, 3, 2, 40 (40 days of flood; 7:17a)
 H. 15, 150 (150 days of water triumphing; 7:24)
I. God Remembered NOAH
 H. 150, 7, 17, 10, 1 (150 days of water waning; 8:3)
 G. 40 (40 days' wait; 8:6)
 F. 7 (7 days' wait; 8:10)
 E. 7, 600, 2, 27 (7 days' wait; 8:12)
 D. (7 implied by animals)
 C. (2 implied by multiplying)
 B. ∞
 A. 3

³ You can find various of this chiasm and good treatments of it in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 155-58; Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 101-03.