

Tell Me the Stories – Noah

Week 2, Genesis chapter 7

Brief Recap

God's heart broken at the state of humanity. He speaks to Noah to build an ark and what to bring. God also promises that a covenant will be made between them.

Question: Do you think some things breaks God's heart more than others? If so, name them.

Kid question: What do you think makes God sad?

Sources

Before we jump into chapter 7, we're going to look at sources. Last week we learned about oral tradition and the lack of 1st hand accounts. This week we're going to look at sources. In the New Testament we have 4 Gospel accounts. Some of them share stories, some are different but when used together we get a more wholistic understanding of the life, death & resurrection of Jesus. In the Torah (the 1st 5 books of the Old Testament) we have 4 sources J, E, D & P. The following information can be found in *People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* by Henry Jackson Flanders, Jr., Robert Wilson Crapps & David Anthony Smith, 4th Edition Oxford University Press, 1996.

J – Yahwistic source is from 10th century BCE while Israel's origins were being shaped into a narrative. It is named J because of the author's preference for the divine name Yahweh (Israel's name for God). You may ask why isn't it the Y source – this came out of German Biblical studies where the German spelling begins with a Jahweh. The J also works because it has a preference for Judah (one of the Southern tribes which we will learn more in the series on Jacob). This source is focused on telling the nation's story under the Judean kings of David & Solomon.

E – Elohist source dates to 922 BCE. Similar to the J source in that it followed the Northern tribe of Ephraim which broke away after King Solomon's death. Covers the same period as J except it does not include creation, fall & Abraham's story. Elohim is the name used for God until God reveals to Moses the name of Yahweh. The E source is only partially preserved because after Israel's fall to Assyria in 722 BCE. The narrative has been reshaped by J editor. For E God's purpose for Israel was greater than just the monarchy.

J & E are so intertwined that sometimes it's referred to as the JE source. Both believe laws of Israel society were part of God's divine guidance of the people & covenant community.

D – Deuteronomic Tradition was added sometime after the 7th century BCE and is very different because the law is more important than the narrative of God's people. Exhortation is key to ethical living. It is primarily found in the book of Deuteronomy and can stand alone outside of the 4 other books of Torah. It is sermon in style all about living faithfully to the covenant that Moses & God established. Prophetic encouragement is used to supplement the Elohist's narrative. D introduces and expresses philosophical & theological history found in Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings.

P – Priestly Tradition. The Torah was completed around 550 BCE. The Priestly community assumed leadership while in exile which began 722 after Assyria conquered Israel. The focus was on maintaining identity through faithfulness to priestly institutions. Supplemented by JE sources with ritual & cultic material. Found specifically in Genesis 1, genealogical lists & chronological notations as well Exodus 25-31, 35-40 & Numbers 1- 10.

It is important note that all these are woven together to tell the whole story which is different than the Gospel accounts of the New Testament where we have 4 separate stories. This is important as we look at this chapter because it seems there are some contradictions in chapter 7 when compared to 6. Biblical scholars have explained the differences in the shift from a P to J materials. The editor (called a redactor) may not have thought it an issue because 6 is dealing in generalities while 7 is dealing in specifics.

Question: When you read differences in scripture what do you do with it?

Kid Question: How do you tell stories – do you tell it in order (what happened first, second, etc) or by idea?

Clean vs. Unclean

When we approach scripture – trying to do it chronologically does not always work. Chapter 7 is a great example. When we read through Genesis we think of it telling us the story from the beginning. Suddenly in 7 we are given information that we know does not come until Moses and the laws & rules of what is clean & unclean. It is important to remember that none of this was written down in first hand account. When the story is put down details that they take for granted are placed in the text from the beginning.

Question: Do you know what makes animals clean or unclean according to scripture? Do you make any such determinations in your own life?

Kid questions: Do you have animals that you like and animals that you don't like? If so, which animals would be essential on the ark and which ones could be left off?

40 Days of Rain

God calls Noah to build the ark with specific instructions and what to put on the ark (family & animals) we get even more details. God tells Noah that in 7 days the rain will come – it kind of functions like our weather reports with tropical weather. 7 days out we can begin to see a storm, 5 days out we get the cone of probable track. Verse 10 after 7 days the flood waters come. And so it begins according to verse 11 on the 17th day of the 2nd month.

All age question: Is the flood over after 40 days?

The Storm

How many of us know this story from the song, *Rise & Shine & Give God the Glory?* It rained for 40 days and nearly drove poor Noah crazy crazy. Somehow

we have made the flood smaller than it actually was. Before the rain, “the fountains of the great deep burst forth” (NRSV) “springs of the great deep burst forth” (NIV) or “all the underground springs erupted” (Message). It was not just rain but we know what a lot of rain in a short period of time can do. It was rising & falling water. It was cosmic in nature – meaning it was a breakdown in the division God did in creation waters above & below.

Floods

There is no evidence in the archeological or geological record of a world-wide flood. There are at least 4 different versions of a massive flood which can be found in Gilgamesh Epic, Atrahasis Epic, History of Babylon Berossus & Sumerian version. Each of these stories are set in the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley known as the Fertile Crescent. Alluvial deposit show that this region flood in ancient times. There is no such record in the land of Canaan. In each of the above Epics the gods were terrified. God in Genesis however was not. God gave temporal limits (it would rain for 40 days) as well as God is the one to shut the door on the Ark. And so it rains so that water is 15 cubits above the mountains.

Question: How long was the water on the earth?

What questions do you have after studying chapter 7 that were not answered in the study?