

Tell Me the Stories – Noah

Week 3, Genesis chapter 8 Wait For It

Brief Recap

Noah, his wife, sons & their wives, along with 7 pairs of clean animals, 2 pairs of unclean animals, birds & food are all on the ark before the water from below & above begin to flood the earth. It rains for 40 days, 7:24 “and the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred and fifty days.”

All Age Question: Did you know before this study that the flood was not over after 40 days & nights of rain?

Kid question: Can you imagine being inside for 197 days? That’s 6.5 months!

Waiting

We are not good waiters. We have no idea how Noah & company did with all of the time on the ark. Many of us have filed away the idea that the flood was 40 days & nights and then there was a rainbow and it was all good. But there is so much more waiting than that. In going through the actual chronology as found in chapters 7 & 8 this is what we get:

7 days before the water;

40 days of water;

150 days of water before it begins to go down & Ark rests;

73 days the mountains appear;

40 days Noah opens the window; sends a raven out

7 days sends dove out & returns olive leaf;

7 days sends dove & doesn’t return;

57 days Noah saw ground was drying

On day 381 Noah could go out.

In our current setting we may have some ideas about how Noah & family felt on each of these sets of days.

Question: What does this tell you about Noah? What do you want to know about Noah?

Kid Question: How would you do being inside for 381 days with nothing but family and animals? How would you occupy the time?

God

Chapter 8 is a turning point in the story of Noah. This chapter begins with “But God remembered.” Just as God closed the ark door before it begins, before it is over God remembers and acts. After remembering in verse 1, “God made a wind blow over the earth.” The Hebrew word used here is “rûah”. It is the same word used to describe the wind from God that swept through in Genesis 1:2. God is beginning the work of restoration. God has been present, remembering and keeping the promise of the rain on the earth for 40 days & nights. God begins the work and the natural world takes over. It simply takes time for that amount of water to go away. When Noah can leave the ark, the first thing Noah does is built an altar to God. God meets that offering by offering a promise that never will God curse the ground again. This is the removing of the curses that had been given after Adam ate the apple in 3:17 & Cain killed his brother in 4:11. Cursing will no longer be the divine relationship with humanity.

In the course of the flood, God has learned some deep truths about humanity. 21 “I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.” The flood didn’t change humanity. The flood did change God and God’s relationship with the world. God chooses another course of action. God declares the natural order will continue (winter, spring, summer & fall). Before looking into how & what God changes, a note about disaster. Because God declares that the natural order of the world will reign on earth, God does not send flood, hurricane, earthquake, tsunami, wildfire or any disaster as a judgment upon the earth and the people of the earth. God in Genesis chapter 8 chooses another way. In recent years (the last 20 at least), we hear that God is punishing _____ for _____. These things just happen. It breaks God’s heart, I’m sure but God is with us.

So what does God do in response to the realization that humanity’s heart is bent to evil? God changes. God chooses to limit action on earth. God new road includes suffering for God. Remember in chapter 6 when it says God was sorry that

humans were made and that it grieved him in his heart? Since curses the land (twice) and flooding it once didn't change the human heart that means God will continue to suffer and be heart broken. But God continues to go with us, not in spite of our failings but because of it. God knows we cannot get there on our own. This is grace – the blessing of God with us.

Question: What are the things you wish you could change? What are the things that you need help to change?

Kid questions: What does it mean to you that no matter what, God will always be with you?