

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 9



But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD [Yahweh]

... Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God [Elohim] ... -- Gen. 6:8,9 (NKJV)

GRACE LEADS TO OBEDIENCE (6:9-22)

6:9-13 Sequence the following words, in their application to Noah: obedience, revelation, grace.

(1) From grace comes righteousness, and whether we think of its Old Testament meaning of genuineness and sincerity, or of its New Testament fuller meaning of being right with God ... 'Noah was ... perfect.' The original word means upright, genuine, and has no reference to the absence of sin. Uprightness in turn is the result of being righteous before God through grace. Our personal character must necessarily be the proof of our true position in the sight of God. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis* pp. 85,86

(2) ... the statement about "walking with God" is quite isolated. Noah, as the last member of the first aeon and the beginner of a new age, is the last one of whom such a thing can be said theologically. Abraham could only walk *before* God (ch. 17.1). -- **Gerhard von Rad**, *Genesis* p. 122

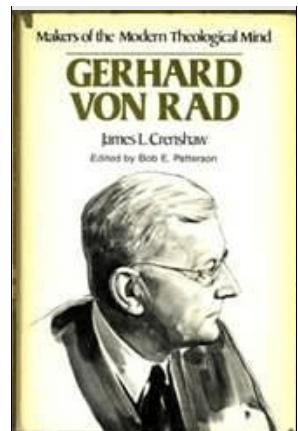
(3) The Divine Scrutiny is also stated in simple but solemn terms (ver. 12). 'God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt.' How great is the contrast here with a former occasion: 'God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good' (chap. i. 31). God is not indifferent to human life, and the fact of sin necessarily compelled Him to take action. His decision to destroy the earth was at once an expression of His justice and His mercy; the end had come, and there was no alternative. Moral putridity can only be destroyed by a Divine judgment. -- **W.H.G. Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 83

(4) ... the words *corrupt(ed)* and *violence* give new insight into the prevailing anarchy (and into the ugly side of the might and fame noted in verse 4). The Hebrew for *corrupt(ed)* (or 'destroyed') also makes it plain that what God decided to 'destroy' (13) had been virtually self-destroyed already. -- **D. Kidner**, *Genesis* p. 87

6:14-22 Where does faith figure in the sequence? (Eph. 2:8-10)

(5) Here is a challenge to faith on an unprecedented scale. What would you do if God commanded you to build an 18,000-ton ship? When God commands the impossible, it is, of course, necessary that He supply the faith and the growth and the maturity of the faith. The work in the life of Noah was the greatest work that God did in this whole deluge episode. Far more power was needed to fill the life of this 'preacher of righteousness' to undertake this stupendous task than would be exercised in the destruction of the world. Spiritual power is always greater than physical power. One of the greatest acts of faith in the history of the world was when Noah stretched out his hand and grasped the first tool to build the Ark. -- **D.G. Barnhouse**, *Genesis* p. 52

(6) For even its very dimensions, in length, breadth, and height, represent the human body, in which He came, as it had been foretold. For the length of the human body, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, is six times its breadth from side to side, and ten times its depth or thickness, measuring from back to front ... And its having a door made in the side of it certainly signified the wound which was made when the side of the Crucified was pierced with the spear: for by this those who come to Him enter; for thence flowed the sacraments by which those who believe are initiated. And the fact that it was ordered to be made of squared timbers, signifies the immoveable steadiness of the life of the saints; for however you turn a cube, it still stands. -- **Augustine**, *The City of God* p. 516 [editor's note: this is included here more as a sample of medieval exegesis, than as a blanket endorsement of Augustine's interpretation.]



'ACCORDING TO ALL THAT GOD HAD COMMANDED' (7:1-16)

7:1-6 Some might be inclined to take v. 1 as an indication that Noah was saved by works. How might we reason with them?

(7) This is the first time that the familiar word 'Come' occurs. It is found some six hundred times in the rest of the Bible. It is noteworthy that God said 'Come' into the ark, not 'Go.' Surely we have here the suggestion that in some sense God would be with him there. 'His presence is

GERHARD VON RAD
One of the greatest Old Testament scholars notices that Noah is the LAST human of whom it is said, "He walked with God!"

salvation.' The personal character of the invitation is also noteworthy, 'Come thou.' Yet again, the inclusion of his family in the invitation should be observed, 'Come thou and all thy house.' -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 95

7:7-16 Though Noah, his family and the animals owed their lives (and salvation) to grace, what thrice-repeated phrase shows grace is purposive? (Rom. 1:5; 16:26)

(8) All our privileges and opportunities of grace are intended to be manifested in daily obedience. 'Conduct is three-fourths of life.' -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 87

THE PURPOSE OF GRACE (7:17-8:20)

7:17-8:5 What profound point is made by "God remembered" (8:1)?

(9) "God remembered Noah." Similarly, God "remembered" Abraham after the destruction of Sodom (19:29); he "remembered" Rachel (30:22), and he "remembered" his covenant made in 9:15,16, etc. Man is bidden not simply to "remember" the past but the future (e.g., Isa 47:7; Eccl 11:18), which suggests that the word is more equivalent to "think about" than to a concept of recall. -- **Gordon J. Wenham**, *Genesis 1-15* p. 184

(10) So far as we know, there was no sail, no mast, no rudder; only God! And that was enough! -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, p. 104

8:6-20 Some see contradiction in 6:19,20 and 7:2,3 (and therefore 2 sources). What should we see? (Dan. 8:13)

(11) Noah and his great-grandfather, Enoch, are the two men before the flood who are said to have walked with God. Their lives show that it is possible to grow a lily in a manure pile. No circumstances of this world are too low for God to produce therein faith and holiness. -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op.cit.*, p. 50

(12) The main Babylonian flood legend, in particular, is "steeped in the silliest polytheism," to quote the words of Dillmann. The gods are divided in their counsel, false to one another and to man; they flee in consternation to the highest heaven and cower like dogs in their distress; they quarrel and lie and gather over the sacrificer like a swarm of hungry flies! In the Babylonian accounts the moral or ethical motive is almost completely absent. As we read the first few lines of the flood story on Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic, we get the impression that the cataclysm was caused by the caprice of the gods, for no ethical reason at all; however, toward the end of the story we are told, quite incidentally and by implication only, that the flood was due to the sin of mankind. Wherein the sin consisted is not indicated. According to the Atrahasis Epic, the flood was sent because mankind with their noisy, hilarious gatherings disturbed the sleep of Enlil. Some such idea may also have been in the minds of the authors of the flood tradition in the Gilgamesh Epic. In none of the other

Babylonian legends do we find any reason at all for the deluge, an omission which may, however, be due solely to the imperfect state in which they have come down to us. At any rate, in the Babylonian stories it is nowhere emphasized that the gods were actuated by moral ideals or that the flood was a divine visitation on human corruption. Rather considering that the gods were intent on destroying the whole human race without discrimination between the just and the unjust, it is apparent that the gods were prompted more by caprice than by a sense of justice. -- **A. Heidel**, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* p. 268

(13) Through the flood story, then, Genesis paints a completely different portrait of God from the standard ancient theology. Most obviously, there is only one God. This means that all power belongs to him: it is not shared out unequally among different members of a pantheon. But just as important is the character of the divinity revealed by the flood story. He is still personal: anthropomorphic language is freely used to describe God's thoughts and attitudes. But the failings that too often characterize humanity and the Babylonian deities are eliminated. God is not fearful, ignorant, greedy, or jealous. He is not annoyed by man's rowdiness, but by his depravity. -- **G.J. Wenham**, *Genesis 1-15* p. 165

* * *

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION about various flood theories, see **Henry Morris**, *John Whitcomb*, *The Genesis Flood* (supports a global flood); **Bernard Ramm**, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (believes local flood best option).