



Genesis - Chapter Seven

I. Genesis 1:1-11:26 - Primeval History (continues)

I.d Genesis 6:9-9:29 - Noah's Descendants and the Flood (continues)

Summary of Chapter Seven

This chapter covers detail of the entry into the ark, the deluge of rain and the breaking forth of the waters from beneath the surface of the earth and the five month duration of the flood. However, it would be several more months before dry land would appear and that is detailed in Chapter Eight.

1.d.ii Genesis 7:1-24 - The Great Flood

Refer to the chapter summary for further information.

¹ Then the LORD said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. ² Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; ³ and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. ⁴ For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for 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.

Genesis 7:1-5

Go into the ark, you and all your household. Having made the ark according to God's direction, Noah is now told to embark. His family are permitted to go aboard with him even though the text only says that he was found to be righteous in the

sight of God: for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. In the years between his initial calling and the flood Noah clearly remained obedient to God's call on his life. As a result, the grace given to Noah is extended to his wife, his sons and their wives too. This also indicates that the Scripture: *<<Mortal, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it, and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it human beings and animals, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God>>* (Ezekiel 14:13-14), is not intended to mean just the individual concerned but also those close to them, for the righteous acts of one person may well bring saving grace on those loved by that person: *<<Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife>>* (1 Corinthians 7:16).

He is instructed to take on board seven pairs of all clean animals and a pair of the animals that are not clean. On the distinction between clean and unclean creatures, refer to Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:4-20. Since after the flood some clean animals will be offered as sacrifices, refer to 8:20, and some will be eaten as food (9:3), to ensure their survival it was necessary to have more than one pair of each kind in the ark.

It should be noted that many translations record seven clean animals rather than seven pairs being taken into the ark. Therefore, comments in Chapter Eight refer to seven or seven pairs of such creatures.

For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. Noah is given just one week to make final preparations and to embark all the animals on board the ship. This, too, was a test of faith for the bible does not indicate that rain had ever fallen on the earth before but seems to indicate that its moisture came from humidity. The duration of the rainfall is a time period that has significance elsewhere in the bible: *<<He was there with the LORD for forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments>>* (Exodus 34:28), *<<The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?>>* (1 Kings 19:7-9), and: *<<Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished>>* (Matthew 4:1-2).

Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him. Righteousness by faith leads to obedient actions and that is what was demonstrated by Noah: *<<By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built*

an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith>> (Hebrews 11:7).

⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. ⁷ And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives 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 on the earth.

Genesis 7:6-10

Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. Noah was five hundred years old when he fathered his sons (5:32). So the eldest Shem was by now one hundred years old. Although popular with some commentators, the text does not confirm that the ark took one hundred years to construct nor does it state that Noah preached for that same time period, seeking that others on earth would repent and thus be saved also.

The text does not indicate how such a wide variety of animals, birds and insects were gathered in one place and at the right time to embark. It can only make sense if they were brought there by divine will.

After seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth. The rains commenced according to the word of God.

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 The rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights.

Genesis 7:11-12

In the six-hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month. A peculiar feature of the flood narrative is the number of detailed chronological notices, as confirmed in 8:4-5 and 8:13-14. By pinpointing the exact date of the flood within Noah's life, the text underlines that it was a real event.

All the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. Powerful imagery is used here to capture the intensity of the flood. From below and above, water poured out to cover the land. Rain fell continuously for forty days and forty nights: <<For thus says the Lord God: When I make you a city laid waste, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep

over you, and the great waters cover you>> (Ezekiel 26:19) They came out of the dome above and below which they had been formed at the time of creation (1:7).

¹³ On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons, entered the ark, ¹⁴ they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind – every bird, every winged creature.

Genesis 7:13-14

Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons, entered the ark. Although only the men are named, the women are no less important in God's plan to ensure that the human species could survive and inhabit the earth as God had initially intended. It is also made quite clear that all the animals were also included in this plan. God clearly cares about everything that he has created.

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.

Genesis 7:15-16

The LORD shut him in. The safety of those in the ark depended on both human and divine action. The use of the personal name Yahweh underscores God's special relationship with Noah.

There is a strong link in the imagery here and the Gospel message. God separates those he has chosen for salvation from those of the world whom he knows will perish, as Jesus prayer indicates: *<<I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one>> (John 17:14-15); or as Paul writes: <<The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned>> (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).*

¹⁷ The flood continued for forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. ¹⁸ The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. ¹⁹ The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; ²⁰ the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. ²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; ²² everything on 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, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark. ²⁴ And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred and fifty days.

Genesis 7:17-24

The devastating results of the flood are described, fulfilling the judgement that God had previously pronounced.

The flood continued for forty days on the earth. As God had said, so it was. God's promises and his warnings should always be heeded because it always comes to pass in the way he says it will: <<*God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind. Has he promised, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?*>> (Numbers 23:19).

The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. This would have required a lot of water, but there is plenty of water on the earth today to do this. However, because of the topography of the earth, the water is collected into oceans. If the earth were a perfect sphere, the oceans would cover the land to a depth of two and a half to three miles. Before the cataclysmic flood, the earth may have been much nearer to a perfect sphere. The language used here would certainly support the argument of those who propose a universal rather than regional flood.

If this were just a regional flood it seems that God could have made Noah, his family and the animals migrate to a safe haven while he destroyed the region where they had come from. Thus the ark would have been superfluous. Certainly other Scripture writers believed in a global flood: <<*You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight. They rose*>>

up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth>> (Psalm 104:5-9), and: <<They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished>> (2 Peter 3:5-6).

Of the more than 200 cultures that have their own account of the flood the following aspects of the story are common:

- 88% describe a favoured family.
- 70% attribute survival to a boat.
- 95% say the sole cause of the catastrophe is a flood.
- 66% say that the disaster is due to man's wickedness.
- 67% record that animals are also saved.
- 57% describe that the survivors end up on a mountain.
- Many of the accounts also specifically mention birds being sent out, a rainbow, and eight persons being saved.

All flesh died that moved on the earth. Whether or not one subscribes to a universal flood, it is clear that no living creature that lived by breathing air survived. It seems that even those who could survive the flood, e.g. ducks, gulls, etc, would have died because they were unable to access sources of food. Jesus certainly taught this as a factual account of human history: *<<Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them>> (Luke 17:26-27).*

The waters swelled on the earth for one hundred and fifty days. The figure of one hundred and fifty days, which includes the 40 days of rain mentioned in v.12, is repeated in 8:3. In both places it denotes the five-month period that falls between the detailed chronological notices given in 7:11, marking the very start of the flood on the 17th day of the second month, and 8:4 when the ark comes to a place of rest on the 17th day of the seventh month. It will be a further seven months before the land is sufficiently dry for those in the ark to disembark safely (8:13-14). On the depth of the flood above the mountains, refer to the comments made on 6:17.

There are many species on earth today that hibernate over the winter months. It is possible that these animals, and indeed many other kinds, could have been placed in induced hibernation to conserve the food stocks and reduce the amount of waste products.