**July 1, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 8 of the Book of Genesis**

**The Flood**

Chapter 7 recounted the advance of the flood, the constant rain and rising water and the death of all living creatures on the earth.  At the end of the chapter we are told that the waters flooded the earth for 150 days, covering the highest mountain peaks and 20 feet beyond.  Chapter 8 is about the retreating of the flood waters and the new beginning of life on earth.  Verse 1 says God remembered Noah and the animals.  I have been forgetful for as long as I can remember (even as I write this, that seems odd to say, after all unremembering is the same as forgetting.  It sounds like something Yogi Berra would say).  Nevertheless, this has plagued me for years and I attribute it to focusing on the task at hand, tuning out everything else.  Unfortunately, I am prone to multi task and I often forget about the first while working on the second or third.  This has led to all manner of mishaps; bathtubs overflowing, food burning on the stove, pets darting out of open doors and other calamities I am sometimes able to conceal from Michele.  The image that comes to mind is God distracted by weightier matters leaving Noah and his family to their own devices, then saying to Himself, “I almost forgot about Noah”.  The idea of a forgetful God is ludicrous of course.  This is the God who counts the hairs on our heads, who knew us before we were born, who knows our every thought and deed.  Remembering infers temporarily forgetting and God does not forget us.  Moses uses the language of man to describe the thoughts of God because that is all he had and he chose to say that God remembered Noah because that best describes the situation from a human perspective.  No one knows the mind of God (1st Cor. 2:11) and human words are not able to describe his thoughts.

Noah and his family entered the ark 150 days before the waters started to recede and during that time the ark had apparently wandered about on the water as there is no mention of sail or rudder.  There is nothing in Scripture to indicate that God told Noah how long he would be in the ark or where his journey would end.  Noah stepped out on faith, completely trusting God (see Luke 9:3).  Just as God used a strong wind to part the Red Sea, he uses wind to make the flood waters recede and the ark settles on Mt. Ararat.  This mountain is in modern day eastern Turkey near the border of Armenia.  Mt. Ararat is the highest peak in Turkey at 16,854 feet (as a comparison Mt. Everest is 29,029 feet).  Throughout history there are many accounts of seeing the ark or finding remnants of it.  While one might think it would be a simple matter to climb the mountain and look for evidence, Mt. Ararat is a volcanic mountain and has a layer of ice 350 feet thick extending from an elevation of 14,000 to its peak, much of this ice buildup occurring after the flood.  While this is a most inhospitable environment now, it may not have been so severe in Noah’s lifetime.  David Guzik notes that while the high elevation could have been a harsh place for Noah and his family to land, if God wanted to preserve the ark it would be an ideal location.  After the ark came to rest, Noah had the patience to wait 40 days before he began to investigate the condition of the earth.  He first sent out a raven, a flesh eating bird that no doubt found plentiful food in the carcasses of dead animals now exposed from the waters that previously covered them.  Noah next sent a dove that  returned with an olive branch the second time Noah sent it out.  Some see symbolism in the two birds; the raven representing the carnal nature of man and the dove representing the believer.   On the 27th day of the 2nd month of Noah’s 601st year, God finally told Noah to exit the ark with his family and the animals, about a year after they first entered it.

The first thing Noah did when he reached dry land was to build an altar to the Lord, sacrificing some of the clean animals that were on the ark.  Noah was the first of many Old Testament saints who built an altar to honor God.  Charles Spurgeon notes that the sacrifice Noah offered was the turning point were God responded that he would never again destroy the earth by flood despite the sinful nature of man.