

January 5

Scriptures: Read Genesis 8 & 9

Key Verse: “And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake,... nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.’”(Genesis 8:21)

Overview

After Noah and his family had been in the ark for 150 days, God, not forgetting His faithful and righteous servant, caused a wind to come over the water which made it begin to recede from the earth, implying the water returned to the seas. God was in control of all that happened and He caused the ark to come to rest on the very high mountains of Ararat (which reach up to 17,000 ft. and are found in present-day Armenia). After the water had totally subsided, God told Noah when it was safe for him and his family and all the living things to leave the ark.

The first thing Noah did was to express his thanks to God by worshipping Him. Building an altar and offering unto Him sacrifices from every clean animal and bird. Oral traditions concerning the acceptable offerings may have been passed down to him from his forefathers. We read that the offerings were indeed acceptable, pleasing, and even appeasing unto God, for they came to Him as a “soothing aroma” of satisfaction which caused the Lord God to vow that never again would He destroy the earth as He had done, by a universal flood (8:21; 9:11).

The Lord God blessed Noah and his sons and commanded them to have many children and fill the earth, for they were the starting point of a new human family and history. The old covenant that God established with Adam was not annulled by the Noahian covenant (9:1-19), rather it was reaffirmed and had some additions. The responsibility to populate the earth, man’s dominion over the earth, and the covenant as binding on all flesh, were reaffirmed. In addition, man was permitted to eat meat, although not the blood, and the sacredness of human life was established through the institution of capital punishment. The sign of the existence of this everlasting covenant is the rainbow, which also confirms the promise of God that He would never again destroy the whole earth by a flood. The beautiful rainbow also proves to be a message of comfort and love from a just and merciful God.

The story of Noah’s drunkenness is sad, for it brought a curse upon his son Ham and all of his descendants. Excessive drinking results in loss of self-control and may even cause one to be mocked and despised by those who are closest relations or friends (see Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-35). Yet, this story reflects the attitude of his children. Ham did not show respect, but the other two brothers took a garment and, without looking upon their father’s nakedness, covered him. After Noah arose from his stupor, knowing what had happened he prophetically pronounced a curse and a blessing. Notice that he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham to be “servant of servants” which was the lowest, most despised slavery and, in this context, he was foretelling the evil consequences that would befall future generations. Later on, we see that, in God’s providence, Ham lived in Canaan and became as wicked as one of them.

This prophecy of Noah was also fulfilled later, when Israel put the Canaanites under subjection (Deut. 7:1, 2). Noah pronounced a blessing on Shem by saying “Blessed be the Lord of Shem” (v.26). Notice also here he did not say “Shem”, but “the Lord God of Shem”. The more personal name for God, “Jehovah”, is used here, for it was through the godly line of Shem that Jehovah Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to the world. Concerning Japheth, Noah said, “May God (here “Elohim”) enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem”, meaning that Japheth (which means “enlarge”) will participate in the blessings of Shem, both materially and spiritually.

Let our lives be pleasing to God by flowing His instructions and let us have the fragrance of Christ, who was that “sweet-smelling”, soothing aroma to which all the Old Testament sacrifices pointed (see Ephesians 5:2; 2Corinthians 2:15).

Prayer

Almighty God, we offer the sacrifice of praise – we ask for Your Holy Spirit to make our lives as a delightful perfume of love, joy, righteousness and peace in the midst of the rottenness of this age.