

A New Beginning

When we think about the creation of the world and the Garden of Eden, we may think about a pristine place with beauty all around. We may never give a thought to Adam and Eve following their expulsion from the garden. We remember they had two sons and one of those sons killed the other. They had another son named Seth. We are told that Adam had other sons and daughters (Genesis 5:4). Reading through the 5th chapter of Genesis, we find that just nine generations from the time of Adam the world has become corrupt.

In a relatively short time from a geological perspective. God's crowning creation had gone from being created in the image of God and placed in a pristine garden to a creature noted for depravity.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." (Genesis 6:5-7 NASB)

In this passage, there is one phrase that has stuck with me for many years. It is the phrase that describes the condition of mankind when God reached a point that He was ready to wipe out all mankind along with the animals. That phrase speaks volumes about the human condition. The phrase is: **the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** As I reflect on this phrase, I wonder how close we are today with pushing the weight to a tipping point. At what point will we devise more and more ways to try the limits of God.

Here we are not even 2 millennia from the perfect creation where everything was declared good to God wishing He had not made man. Yet, there is one ray of hope found in the very next verse. **But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:8 NASB)**

We all are familiar with Noah building an ark and providing for a repopulation of the world following God's destruction of the world by the flood.

But wait, the flood is just a myth. It is a part of folk lore that tells a story but is not base on a truth. Have you ever heard this? I have. It, for me, becomes one of those hills on which I will stand and fight. It strikes at the heart of whether I, or you, can believe the Bible. If the flood is a fairy tale, then how much more of the Bible is a fable and a myth?

Let's close our Bibles for a few minutes. I will be referring to an article published by John D. Morris, PhD that was published September 1, 2001 in the magazine Acts and Facts. The name of the article is **Why Does Nearly Every Culture Have a Tradition of a Global Flood?**

In this article, Dr. Morris distills more than 200 stories from around the world. These stories were compiled by various missionaries, anthropologist and ethnologist.

Now, if you are like me, you may wonder what is an ethnologist. Well, according to Cambridge Dictionary of the English Language. An ethnologist is the noun form of ***a branch of anthropology that analyzes cultures, especially in regard to their historical development and the similarities and dissimilarities between them. (formerly) a branch of cultural anthropology dealing with the origin, distribution, and distinguishing characteristics of human societies.***

From his study of the various cultures and their "story" of a flood, he found that there are striking similarities. Keep in mind these stories come from many differing cultures and geographic locations from around the world.

Here are some of the similarities along with the percentage of agreement.

There is a favored family.	88%
They were forewarned.	66%
Flood due to wickedness of man.	66%
Catastrophe is only a flood.	95%
Flood was global.	95%
Survival was due to a boat.	70%
Animals were saved.	67%
Animals played a part.	73%
Survivors land on a mountain.	57%
Flood was geographically local.	82%
Birds were sent out.	35%
A rainbow is mentioned.	7%
Survivors offered sacrifice.	13%
Specifically, 8 people were saved.	9%

We can see from this study that almost every culture and tribe have a history of the flood. The agreement between their story and the Bible is too great to discount the Biblical account. In the Bible, the flood came about due to the depravity of mankind. Following the flood, God made a covenant with Noah. We find this covenant in the 9th chapter of Genesis.

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, “Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” And God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.” (Genesis 9:8-17 NASB)

The world had been cleansed by the flood waters. The depravity had been eliminated and a new beginning had been started. God promised that the earth will never again be destroyed by flood. The sign of a rainbow will serve as a reminder both for God and mankind. This is great news. However, while the covenant assures us that there will not be another flood of this magnitude, we need to be aware of the conditions that brought God to the point of destroying the world in the days of Noah. The Bible does tell us that the world will be destroyed again. This time by fire. Peter mentions this and he points out the condition of mankind that will lead u to the destruction. His description sounds somewhat like the days of Noah. In fact, Peter uses that very comparison in the third chapter of 2nd Peter.

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” For when

they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:3-7 NASB)

Peter then uses the same image used by Jesus to talk about the return of Jesus. He speaks of the fact that it will be unexpected (like a thief in the night).

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10 NASB)

Just as the world and all of the evil deeds were destroyed in the days of Noah brought about a new beginning, Peter promises a new beginning.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:11-13 NASB)

The promise of a new beginning with a new heaven and new earth are exactly like the picture we find in Revelation

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:1-2 NASB)

Just a few verses prior to the scene of the new heaven and new earth, we find a scene of judgement. Those who were participants in the depravity of the world, those whose names are not found in the Lamb's book of life, they are separated and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

There is hope even for us who have sinned and become separated from God due to our sins (Romans 3:23). God has provided a way where we may be reconciled to Him through Jesus the Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19 NASB)

Through Jesus, we become a new creature and the old (sinful) self is put to death. We are made new in Christ Jesus. The sins that separated us from God are washed away by the blood of Jesus. Jesus, the one who sits on the throne tells us: **"Behold, I am making all things new."**

(Revelation 21:5 NASB)

Paul tells us how we may be joined to Christ in Romans the 6th chapter.

Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4 NASB)

That newness of life is our personal new beginning. It marks the time where we find a new beginning ready to start fresh before God.