Praise the LORD at all times!

*My soul is among lions;
I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows
And their tongue a sharp sword.*

 Psalm 57:4

This is part of a Psalm written by David; anointed by God to be king of Israel and called by God a man after His own heart. He was gifted by God to be a prophet. Yes, he made some big mistakes, but he always turned back to God in sorrow and repentance, calling upon His mercy. We know that David was truly blessed by God, yet here he is, obviously suffering great trouble.

This is something important for God’s people to remember, as Jesus often warned us about: Although we are blessed and favored by God, we will suffer in this life. There are many now who will preach that all should go well for a faithful Christian and any problems demonstrate a lack of faith. This is a false teaching. We will have trouble in this life and it doesn’t mean that we are poor Christians.

When you go through hard times, prayerfully check your life to make sure there isn’t some area that needs repenting. If nothing is found, seek the Lord in prayer for relief, but even more for strength to endure, for wisdom to grow spiritually, and continue to praise God anyway, simply for who He is.

Throughout Psalm 57 while David prays to God for relief, he continues to depend on Him and to glorify Him. He tells God about what is going on, yet doesn’t try to blame Him for his circumstances.

It is encouraging for us to see in the Bible that through problems and disappointments in David’s life, he was brought closer to his God. It is the same for us. Let difficulties bring you closer to our Saviour; not drive us away.

In Christ’s love

John

 6-26-22

Genesis 6:13 – 7:16

As we have studied so far in the book of Genesis, it is obvious that there is a huge sin problem. God made His creation good; yet mankind, whom God created in His own image, has turned against Him in rebellion. In so doing, the creation that God gave man dominion over also suffers evil. God has determined that He must destroy creation in judgement.

There is something for us to consider here. We might get the impression that this was an absolutely miserable time to be alive. If everything is tainted by sin and violence is on the earth, it seems that life would have been difficult and unhappy. But consider what Jesus said in Matthew 24:37-38, “*For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark.*”

Life was normal. People were living just like they are now. They were going about life doing the things they needed to do and wanted to do; and sometimes something bad happened. Just like today. The point of view where the sin and evil were so prevalent was God’s point of view. He could see what was going on and He was not pleased about it. Again, it is the same today. Sin and evil are rampant upon the earth; and God sees it. And He is not happy about it.

In the words we just quoted from Jesus in Matthew, we are assured that the dynamics of the flood event are going to happen again, but by different means. Life will be going on; people will be doing what people do; suddenly they will be caught completely unawares at the sudden and dramatic return of Christ. And once again, it will be too late.

Noah was alone in his day able to see the evil in the world and chose to walk with God. We who are Christians are able to see the world like Noah; from God’s point of view. We see the great evil and know what is coming. We have the chance to be ready.

God had Noah build a massive ark that was able to withstand the flood of God’s judgement. Noah and his family were safe in the ark; they were safe because Noah had listened to and trusted in God. Our ark is Jesus Christ. We will be safe in Him, able to withstand the wrath of God that is coming upon the earth. Noah was able to start a new life from Mount Ararat on the freshly cleansed earth. We will start a new life in the new creation of God.

Let’s consider the ark and the animals for a bit. Is the account of Noah’s ark believable or plausible? Well, coming from the perspective of a Bible believing Christian, the answer needs to be yes. We hold that the Bible is the infallible word of God; therefore, what we read is true. We must admit that there are some things we have trouble understanding and there is nothing wrong with asking questions of the text when we seek to understand.

There is also nothing wrong with looking at science. God created all the natural laws and it is good for us to study them and apply them. The problem is when science is used to discredit the Bible; although in such cases the science is incorrectly understood or misapplied. We, as Christians needn’t be afraid of science. In fact, it is good to know a few things when speaking to non-Christians about the Bible. They often ask questions, not out of hostility, but trying to understand how certain things we read in the Bible can be.

We looked at the ark a little bit last week. It was huge. At least 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Those dimensions are in the same proportions as modern ocean-going vessels. Remember that the purpose of the ark was not navigation, but to keep the occupants safe for the duration of the flood and until the surface of the earth was dry. The dimensions of the ark were the perfect balance for strength, stability, and comfort regarding rolling on the waves.

Even though God has determined to bring judgement upon the earth and the destruction of flesh; He isn’t going to do away with His creation entirely. As we see throughout His word, God keeps a remnant. He knows what He is doing and He will bring about the fulfillment of His plan to spend eternity with faithful followers who want to be with Him. We can rest assured that God will succeed; our part is to believe on Jesus Christ and be faithfully obedient to the work He has for us.

The animals are part of God’s creation and were created for the benefit of man, so part of the purpose of the ark was to keep animals in existence. Notice again how God chooses to use means to accomplish His will. He could have easily recreated animals after the flood; yet He choose to have Noah do all the work to preserve them. It is the same with us. God is capable of doing all He wants done Himself, yet in His wisdom, He has chosen to use us to accomplish much of His desire.

In chapter 6 verse 19 God gives the preliminary instruction to bring two of every kind of animal into the ark. In chapter 7 verses two and three, He clarifies His command to bring seven pairs of each of the clean animals and only one pair of the unclean animals. It is not until the book of Leviticus that we learn which animals are ceremonially clean and unclean. But God must have let people know of these classifications early in history so that Noah knew which was which.

There is certainly controversy over whether or not Noah could have fit all these animals into the ark, even with its massive size. Artist’s renderings of the animals entering the ark don’t help. They often show pairs of lions and tigers and leopards entering, or several pairs of animals from the same family group. Often, we see full grown elephants and giraffes with their heads sticking out of the top of the ark. All in all, it can be difficult to imagine how Noah pulled this off.

Once again, the Bible tells us it happened even though it doesn’t give all the details. That is enough evidence for Bible believing Christians. But once again, science can help as we try to answer questions that unbelievers might have. The question of the large animals is easy. It would have been no problem to take very young animals onto the ark. Yes, they would have grown during the year on the ark, but the amount of food necessary for them would have been much less and large animals tend to take several years to reach adult size.

Hibernation is also a possibility. The conditions were probably cooler due to the rain and dampness, and the conditions inside the ark would have been darker. These are conditions that bring about hibernation in some animals and would have again cut down on the need for food.

A big question involves the sheer number of different types or species of animals. It is important to see that the Bible uses the word “kind” when it speaks of bringing the animals onto the ark. When we consider the different kinds of animals, the number of variations becomes much smaller. Earlier I used the example of an artist drawing pairs of lions and tigers and leopards entering the ark. These all belong to the same kind; we call them cats.

We will consider DNA and genetics in more detail when we come to a discussion of the tower of Babel. But the possible genetic combinations in each kind of animal is enormous and are all contained in the original form of the kind. For example, all Noah needed was a pair of wolves. He didn’t need coyotes and hyenas and all the different dog breeds. The genetics for all of these are contained in the original. Incidentally, the same is true for people; there is only one race, the human race. All the variations we see are contained in our genetic code.

So, how many different kinds of animals did Noah have to take onto the ark? A very liberal estimate is that there were about 1,400 kinds of animals. Most likely there were less than 1,000. We can see that this is a much more manageable number to deal with.

The Bible is also very clear in these verses that the animals came in pairs, male and female. This is spelled out several times. This is how God wants His creation that has the breath of life. Not only are the male and female to be together to be fruitful and reproduce; but they are the only two categories. Each living thing is born male or female; we don’t get to make our own choice between the two or make up our own category.

One more question regarding the animals is “How did Noah get them all?” It appears that God supernaturally intervened here. In chapter 7 both verses 9 and 15 mention the animals entering the ark. It says that the animals “*went into the ark to Noah*.” That same wording, especially twice, indicates that the animals came on their own to Noah and entered the ark; not that Noah brought them in.

In the midst of God explaining to Noah what is going to happen, in verse 18 of chapter 6 God makes a stand-alone statement. *But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.* This is the first time the word covenant is used although it is not the first covenant. A covenant is an agreement between two parties where, in most cases, both parties have certain duties to uphold. God did make some covenants where all the duties were His.

God is a covenant making God; He likes to make agreements with His people. More importantly, He is a covenant keeping God. He has always upheld His end of the bargain. This is very reassuring for us; we know that we can always and forever trust God.

The first covenant God made was with Adam. God provided everything Adam needed. Adam was to enjoy communion with God, tend the Garden, and be fruitful with his wife, Eve. The only prohibition was to avoid the tree in the middle of the Garden. All the positive requirements were easy and built into the desires of his heart. But the one prohibition proved too much for him and he broke the covenant.

Now God is telling Noah that He will make a new covenant with him and his family, but He doesn’t give the details yet. We have to wait until chapter 9 to learn what the covenant is about.

God made a series of covenants with His people and it is no surprise for us that His people broke them all. God Himself had to step into history and establish a covenant that once we accept, we can’t break. God Himself, through Jesus Christ, did all the work to bring about our salvation. He even draws us to Himself and makes it possible for our sin clouded minds to understand the salvation being offered to us. And if we accept the terms of the covenant, true belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour, then God indwells us by the Holy Spirit so that we stay safe in His covenant.

God told Noah when to take up residence in the ark along with his family and all the animals that God brought to him. They had one week for the moving in process before the flood began.

I never cease to be amazed at the intricacy of God’s word and how it all fits together. It is beyond the ability of human imagination to create such a work as the Bible. Let’s consider Enoch, of the line of Seth, once more. In the book of Jude, it is after speaking about ungodly men, that verses 14 and 15 say, ‘It was also about these men that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”’

This prophecy certainly refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, this comes from a group of writings called the book of Enoch. The book of Enoch is not part of the Bible and has several glaring problems; it is not to be used or trusted. Only this line that is in Scripture is given by the Holy Spirit. But the main point I am getting at is that Jude said Enoch was a prophet.

This is seen in the name he gave to his son. Remember that names were given that had meaning and gave indication of what the parents hoped for the child or perhaps some indication they had at the time. Enoch named his child Methuselah. It means “After he dies, it comes”.

The Bible tells us that the flood came in the 600th year of Noah’s life. If you do the math in the genealogy, you will find that Methuselah died when Noah was 600 years old. Enoch prophesied through the name of his son. When Methuselah died, the flood, the judgement, came upon the earth.

If the whole idea of the ark and gathering animals had been an effort of a man, it probably wouldn’t have worked. But this was God’s plan and it couldn’t fail. It is the same with the ark offered to us: Jesus. If we will just enter that ark, we will be safe. It is God’s plan and it can’t fail.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, how You despise evil yet love Your people. You alone could make a way to carry out Your just wrath against evil and evil-doers, while at the same time saving those who are sinners but desire to be with You. At the cross, justice and mercy are both fulfilled, because You are the God capable of the impossible. How fortunate we are to be Your children; cleansed in the blood of Christ, having our spirits made alive after dying in sin.

Thank You for showing us the seriousness of Your judgement. We see by Your past actions that You will not turn a blind eye to evil. Your wrath is real and terrifying. Your word lets us know from history that we cannot be nonchalant when it comes to living a holy life. We cannot take Your mercy for granted.

Lord, help us; it is our tendency to focus on Your love and mercy while forgetting Your justice and wrath. We take You for granted. Help us to be in awe of our sovereign God, who deserves our highest respect and honor. Help us to desire to live holy lives, pleasing to our Saviour.

All these things we pray in Jesus’ name

Amen