

The Great Flood: New Testament Applications.

This morning, the sermon was “God, Noah, the Flood & Us: A Few Lessons to be Learned from the Great Deluge.” This is not that same lesson, and I’m not “hung up” on the Flood. That lesson centered on principles gleaned from the original account in the book of Genesis. But, Rom.15:4 says that “*whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*” There is a fundamental principle of interpretation that says **it’s always best to start with the interpretation and/or application that other inspired writers make of passages or accounts-** at least when they’re available. So, I didn’t want to leave the subject without considering the applications that are made from the account of the Flood in the New Testament.

I. Instances of and Application from *The Great Flood* in the New Testament:

A. Luke 17:22-30 (and the parallel account in Matt.24:38ff)

The context of this verse makes it clear that Jesus is speaking of the coming destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, cf. vv.25,30,31.

The point being made to the disciples (v.22) is that **the destruction of that day will come unexpectedly to those unprepared for it.** This singular point is borne out by both illustrations- Noah and the Flood, vv.26-27; and Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot, vv.28-29. The *day of destruction* in both of these instances was *unexpected* only to those *unprepared!* Both Noah and his family, and Lot and his daughters knew what was coming, and escaped. They did so for one simple reason: they listened to God and obeyed His instructions, cf. Heb.11:7 and 2Pet.2:7-8.

Though the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is long past, the lesson for us remains valid since another *day of destruction* is coming, and we must be likewise believe the warning and be prepared- both in faith, in order to escape! The Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah both make this point! Lesson: **Heed God’s warning of destruction and prepare accordingly.**

B. 2Peter 2:1-10a

The warning in the first few verses of this passage concerns *false prophets* who “*introduce destructive heresies.*” It is further said, “*because of them the way of the truth will be maligned...*”

An *if - then* (where a conclusion is predicated on specified circumstances being met) statement begins at v.4 and continues through v.10a. In it, the preliminary circumstances on which the conclusion is based found in vv.4-8, and the conclusion is in vv.9-10a. Thus, because the preliminary “*if*” circumstances of God *not sparing angels that sinned, not sparing the ancient world but preserved Noah, and condemned Sodom and Gomorrah but rescued Lot* are all true and have been met, “*then*” God “*knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority,*” vv.9-10a.

Now think about the point being made. Do you suppose there were *false teachers* attempting to *introduce destructive heresies* and *maligned the way of truth*: (1) when the angels sinned? (2) in the days of Noah? (3) in Sodom and Gomorrah? Sure there were! But, there were also *angels* who did not sin, there was *Noah* and his family, and there was *Lot* and his daughters! All heeded the word of God and obeyed. Thus, vv.9-10 were true then, and still are now! Lesson: **God both knows how and will rescue the godly and punish the unrighteous.**

C. 2Peter 3:1-7

In this passage, Peter is *reminding* his readers to “*remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles*” v.2. Specifically, he is doing so to counteract the notion of *Uniformitarianism*- that “*all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation,*” v.4b. He does so by reminding them what was *spoken before by the holy prophet Moses* when he by inspiration recording the events of the Great Flood, v.5.

When the text of v.5 says, *“it escapes their notice”*, the term from which *escape noticed* is translated is the Greek word *lanthano*- which usually means *to be hidden*, or *to be hidden from one*. But in this passage specifically, The Dictionary of Biblical Languages says it means *to forget*. Thus, it does not refer to something that is otherwise *unknown*, but instead just *not remembered!* Hence, Peter is endeavoring to *“remind”* (v.1) that such *forgetting* does not occur in the brethren!

So what is it that Peter is so diligently trying to *remind* us? He is reminding us that **God destroyed the world once with water, and will do it again with fire, vv.5-6 → 7**. To that end, we now need to prepare for that eventuality even as they did then, vv.8-12. Lesson: **Don’t mistake God’s patience for unwillingness.**

D. 1Peter 3:18-21

This passage has been made the occasion of considerable debate and much misunderstanding. Let’s break it down into its component parts to better understand what is being said in the whole of it.

In v.18, the *fact*, *nature*, and *purpose* of God in Christ is seen. The *fact* is that *“Christ also died for our sins once for all”*. The *nature* of this sacrifice is that it was *“the just for the unjust”*, and the *purpose* is *“that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit”*.

V.19 seems to be the point of misunderstanding. Note Peter does not say that Jesus *went and made proclamation to the spirits while they were in prison*- it says that He *“made proclamation to the spirits now in prison*. These are not the same! The text does not demand that the spirits were imprisoned in some way when Jesus preached to them, it simply says that they are imprisoned now (that is, at the time Peter was writing). This is in perfect harmony with the teaching that departed wicked spirits, either human or angelic, are *imprisoned* in a state of punishment until the final judgment, cf. Luke 16:23ff and 2Pet.2:4.

When and through what means this proclamation was made is explained in the next verse (v.20) *“who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah...”* That is, Jesus *preached* to men during the days preceding the flood *through Noah*. But, all but the eight people of Noah’s family rejected that teaching and their *spirits* became imprisoned in torment, just like the rich man’s of Luke 16, until the final judgment. These people’s *spirits* were imprisoned because their *bodies* were destroyed in the flood due to their lack of belief and obedience to the message of salvation preached by Jesus through Noah.

So, what’s the point? Look in the last part of v.20, *“eight persons were brought safely through the water.”* Note that *“the”* is added by the translators between *“through”* and *“water”* in that sentence. If we remove that inserted *“the”* then the text says that their being *“brought safely through”* was *“through water”*. Such is surely the case! The same water that destroyed the wicked, saved the righteous! The only difference was that the righteous believed God and followed His instructions concerning the water! Now notice v.21. The same is still true today! Lesson: **Water both destroyed and saved- the difference was *faith and obedience!***

II. Conclusions

The divine interpretation and application of events- certainly like the Great Flood of Gen.6-9, is always preferable to any considerations we come up with on our own. So, efforts to not NT interpretations and applications of OT events should always be considered!

The NT teaches us some vital lessons regarding the Flood: Heed God’s warnings destruction and prepare accordingly, Luke 17:22-30; God knows how and will rescue the godly and punish the unrighteous, 2Pet.2:1-10a; Don’t mistake God’s patience for unwillingness, 2Pet.3:1-7; and, Water both *destroyed and saved*- the difference was and is *faith and obedience*, 1Pet.3:18-21.