

Genesis 7

The ark which was built by Noah according to divine directions, in which he and his house, together with representatives from the lower creation, found shelter from the storm of God's wrath, is one of the clearest and most comprehensive types of the believer's salvation in Christ which is to be found in all the Scriptures. So important do we deem it, we have decided to devote a separate article to its prayerful and careful consideration.

1. The first thing to be noted in connection with the ark is that it was a Divine provision. This is very clear from the words of Genesis 6:13, 14- "And God said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before Me. . . make thee an ark." Before the flood came and before the ark was made, a means of escape for His own people existed in the mind of God. The ark was not provided by Him after the waters had begun to descend. Noah was commanded to construct it before a drop had fallen. So, too, the Saviourship of Christ was no afterthought of God when sin had come in and blighted His creation; from all eternity He had purposed to redeem a people unto Himself, and in consequence, Christ, in the counsels of the Godhead, was "a lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The ark was God's provision for Noah as Christ is God's provision for sinners.

2. Observe now that God revealed to Noah His own designs and ordered him to build a place of refuge into which he could flee from the impending storm of judgment. The ark was no invention of Noah's; had not God revealed His thoughts to him, he would have perished along with his fellow creatures. In like manner, God has to reveal by His Spirit His thoughts of mercy and grace toward us; otherwise, in our blindness and ignorance we should be eternally lost. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

3. In the next place, we note that Noah was commanded to make an ark of gopher-wood (Gen. 6:14). The material out of which the ark was built teaches an important lesson. The ark was made, not of steel like our modern "dreadnoughts," but out of wood. The typical truth which this fact is designed to teach us lies not on the surface, yet is one that is brought before us again and again both in the Word and in Nature; the truth, that life comes out of death, that life can be secured only by sacrifice. Before the ark could be made, trees must be cut down. That which secured the life of Noah and his house was obtained by the death of the trees. We have a hint here, too, of our Lord's humanity. The trees from which the wood of the ark was taken were a thing of the earth, reminding us of Isaiah's description of Christ- "a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. 53:2). So Christ, who was the eternal Son of God must become the Son of man- part of that which, originally, was made out of the dust of the earth- and as such be cut down, or, in the language of prophecy, be "cut off" (Daniel 9:26), before a refuge could be provided for us.

4. The ark was a refuge from Divine judgment. There are three arks mentioned in Scripture and each of them was a shelter and place of safety. The ark of Noah secured those within it from the outpoured wrath of God. The ark of bulrushes (Ex. 2:3) protected the young child Moses from the murderous designs of Pharaoh, who was a type of Satan. The ark of the covenant sheltered the two tables of stone on which were inscribed the holy law of God. Each ark speaks of Christ, and putting the three together, we learn that the believer is sheltered from God's wrath, Satan's assaults and the condemnation of the law- the only three things in all the universe which can threaten or harm us. The ark of Noah was a place of safety. It was provided by God when death threatened all. It was the only place of deliverance from the wrath to come, and as such it speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior of lost sinners- "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

5. Into this ark man was invited to come. He was invited by God Himself, "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark" (Gen. 7:1). This is the first time the word "come" is found in the Scriptures, and it recurs over five hundred times in the remainder of the Bible. Is it not highly significant that we meet with it here as its first occurrence! A number of thoughts are suggested by this connection, for several of which we are indebted to Dr. Thomas' work on Genesis. Observe that the Lord does not say "Go into the ark," but "Come." "Go" would have been a command, "Come" was a gracious invitation; "Go" would have implied that the Lord was bidding Noah depart from Him, "Come" intimated that in the ark the Lord would be present with him. Is it not the same thought as we have in the Gospel- "Come unto Me and I will give you rest!" Observe further that the invitation was a personal one- "Come thou"; God always addresses Himself to the heart and conscience of the individual. Yet, the invitation went further- "Come thou and all thy house into the ark," and again we find a parallel in the Gospel of grace in our day: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

6. The ark was a place of absolute security. This truth is seen from several particulars. First, the ark itself was pitched "within and without with pitch" (Gen. 6:14), hence it would be thoroughly watertight, and as such, a perfect shelter. No matter how hard it rained or how high the waters rose, all inside the ark were secure. The ark was in this respect also, a type of our salvation in Christ. Speaking to the saints, the apostle said, "Your life is hid (like Noah in the ark) with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). In the next place, we read concerning Noah after he had entered the ark, "And the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7:16). What a blessed word is this! Noah did not have to take care of himself; having entered the ark, God was then responsible for his preservation. So it is with those who have fled to Christ for refuge, they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). Finally, the security of all in the ark is seen in the issuing of them forth one year later on to the destruction-swept earth- "And Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark" (Gen. 8:18, 19). All who had entered that ark had been preserved, none had perished by the flood, and none had died a natural death, so perfect is the type. How this reminds us of our Lord's words, "Of them which thou gavest Me have I lost none" (John 18:9).

7. Next we would note what has often been pointed out by others, that the ark had only one door to it. There was not one entrance for Noah and his family, another for the animals, and yet another for the birds. One door was all it had. The same was true later of the tabernacle; it, too, had but a single entrance. The spiritual application is apparent. There is only one way of escape from eternal death. There is only one way of deliverance from the wrath to come. There is only one Savior from the Lake of Fire, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ- "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). The language of our type is directly employed by Christ in John 10:9, where we hear Him say, "I am the door." It is also worthy of attention to note that Noah was ordered by God to set the door "in the side" of the ark (Gen. 6:16). Surely this pointed forward to the piercing of our Lord's "side" (John 19:34) which was the intimation that the way to the heart of God is now open to guilty and ruined sinners.

8. The ark had three stories in it, "with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it" (Gen. 6:16). Why are we told this? What difference does it make to God's saints living four thousand years afterwards how many stories the ark had, whether it had one or a dozen? Every devout student of the Word has learned that everything in the Holy Scriptures has some significance and spiritual value. Necessarily so, for every word of God is pure. When the Holy Spirit "moved" Moses to write the book of Genesis, He knew that a book was being written which should be read by the Lord's people thousands of years later, therefore, what He caused to be written must have in every instance, something more than a merely local application. "Whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning." What then are we to "learn" from the fact that in the ark there were three stories, no less and no more?

We have already seen that the ark itself unmistakably foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. Passing through the waters of judgment, being itself submerged by them; grounding on the seventeenth day of the month- as we shall see, the day of our Lord's Resurrection; and affording a shelter to all who were within it, the ark was a very clear type of Christ. Therefore the inside of the ark must speak to us of what we have in Christ. Is it not clear then that the ark divided into three stories more than hints at our threefold salvation in Christ? The salvation which we have in Christ is a threefold one, and that in a double sense. It is a salvation which embraces each part of our threefold constitution, making provision for the redemption of our spirit, and soul, and body (1 Thess. 5:23); and further, our salvation is a three tense salvation- we have been saved from the penalty of sin, are being saved from the power of sin, we shall yet be saved from the presence of sin.

9. Next, we observe that the ark was furnished with a window and this was placed "above"- "A window shalt thou make to the ark and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above" (Gen. 6:16). The spiritual application is patent. Noah and his companions were not to be looking down on the scene of destruction beneath and around them, but up toward the living God. The same lesson was taught to Jehovah's people in the Wilderness. The pillar of cloud to guide them by day and the pillar of fire to protect them by night was provided not only for their guidance, but was furnished for their instruction as well. Israel must look up to the great Jehovah and not be occupied with the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness. So, we, called upon to walk by faith, are to journey with our eyes turned heavenward. Our affection must be set upon "things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2).

10. The ark was furnished with "rooms" or "nests"- "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms (margin "nests") shalt thou make in the ark" (Gen. 6:14). In every other passage in the Old Testament where the Hebrew word "gen" occurs, it is translated "nest." We hesitate to press the spiritual signification here; yet, we have seen that the ark is such a striking and comprehensive type of our salvation in Christ we must believe that this detail in the picture has some meaning, whether we are able to discern it or no. The thought which is suggested to us is, that in Christ we have something more than a refuge, we have a resting place; we are like birds in their nests, the objects of Another's loving care. Oh, is it that the "nests" in the ark look forward to the "many mansions" in the Father's House? which our Lord has gone to prepare

for us. It is rather curious that there is some uncertainty about the precise meaning of the Greek word here translated "mansions." Weymouth renders it, "In My Father's house are many resting places!"

11. In connection with the ark the great truth of Atonement is typically presented. This comes out in several particulars: "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch" (Gen. 6:14). The Hebrew word here is not the common one for "pitch" which is "zetteth," but is "kapher," which is translated seventy times in the Old Testament "to make atonement." The simple meaning of "kapher" is "to cover" and nowhere else is it rendered "pitch." Atonement was made by the blood which provided a covering for sin. Our readers being familiar with this thought, there is no need for us to develop it. God is holy, and as such He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Habakkuk 1:13), hence sin must be covered- covered by blood. It is therefore remarkable that this word "kapher" should be employed (for the first time in Scripture) in connection with the ark, as though to teach us that a shelter from God's wrath can be found only beneath the atoning blood! Again we notice that the storm fell upon the ark which provided shelter for Noah and those that were with him. So, too, the clouds of Divine judgment burst upon our adorable Redeemer as He suffered in our stead: "All Thy waves and thy billows are gone over Me" (Ps. 42:7) was His cry; and may not His words here be language pointing back to the very type we are now considering?

12. As others have pointed out, the typical teaching of the ark reaches beyond the truth of atonement to resurrection itself. We quote here from the writings of the late Mr. William Lincoln: "There seems no reason to doubt that the day the ark rested on the mountain of Ararat is identical with the day on which the Lord rose from the dead. It rested "on the seventeenth day of the seventh month." But by the commandment of the Lord, given at the time of the institution of the feast of the Passover, the seventh month was changed into the first month. Then three days after the Passover, which was on the fourteenth day of the month, the Lord, having passed quite through the waters of judgment, stood in resurrection in the midst of His disciples, saying, "Peace be unto you." They, as well as Himself, had reached the haven of everlasting rest." But not only does our type prefigure our Lord's resurrection from the dead, it also suggests the truth of His ascension, for we read "And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month upon the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 8:4). The final resting place of the ark was upon the mountain top, speaking of the place "on high" where our Savior is now seated at the right hand of God.

We lay our pen down with a strengthened conviction that the Holy Scriptures are no mere "cunningly devised fables," but that they are indeed the inspired Word of the living God.

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