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## GOD REMEMBERED NOAH

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Have you ever forgotten something really important? I remember one time a family left a little boy here at the church. That was fairly important! Dad thought mom had him, and mom thought dad had him, and both parents had other kids with them. Mom and dad got distracted by the other children and they missed the littlest one somehow. These things happen; fortunately, it happened here, among friends.

We all get distracted and we all forget things, even important things. That is why pilots have checklists for every phase of flying. There's a checklist for checking the plane over before flight; there's a checklist for take off; a checklist to use once you've reached altitude; a checklist for landing; and a checklist for taxiing, shutting down, and securing the aircraft. Checklists, checklists, checklists! Why? Because we forget things, even really important things! Because forgetting something while you're flying could very well be fatal, the checklists are meant to be a means of defense against human nature.

What about God? Does He ever forget us? It almost sounds as though He does when we read Genesis chapter 8!

*And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged;*

*The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;*

*And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.*

It almost sounds at first reading as though you or I had simply left a pot boiling on the range and had forgotten about it. Did God have an "Oops!" moment here? Not at all!

Remember that God had told Noah, "Come thou into the ark." God did not leave Noah, nor did He "forget" Noah. This is what we call a *hebraism*, or a manner of speech among the Hebrew people. Let me share with you another hebraism to help illustrate this.

"Slow to Anger" is literally translatable as Long Nosed (Jewish, obviously) meaning Patient. A short, fiery nose in the Biblical poetry is a sign of impatience. So, beneath the humor there is the idea that patience is a key to understanding the apostasy of the people's desire to make a God they could see [the golden calf].<sup>1</sup>

In those places in the Bible where we see that God is slow to anger, the actual Hebrew rendering is that God has a "big nose"! The idea is that when God is provoked, He breathes *slowly*. We can imagine a young, fresh translator marking down all these wonderful attributes of God, and in the middle of this list, he reads, "God has a big nose"!

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1 Andy Bachman, "The Big Nose of God." Jewcy.com, March 13, 2007. Available at [http://www.jewcy.com/faithhacker/the\\_big\\_nose\\_of\\_god](http://www.jewcy.com/faithhacker/the_big_nose_of_god)

To put it another way, imagine a culture in which the heart is just a physical heart. It has no connection to love or emotion at all. Someone in *that* culture would not understand what we mean when we talk about *the bottom of our heart*.

Back to our Scripture, then. This hebraism, or idiom, of God's "remembering" has to do with God *beginning to act again* or *working in accordance to* [His mercy, etc.]. We see this over and over in Scripture: "God remembered Abraham" (Gen 19:29), "God remembered Rachel" (Gen. 30:22), "God remembered his covenant" (Ex. 2:24). That is why you can take special comfort in the fact that God remembers that we are dust (Ps. 103:14): it's not that He's ever forgotten the fact, but rather that He works according to it!

It's important to realize, then, that God didn't just walk away from Noah and forget about him, like a pot set to boil. God had been working in and through the rising waters for 150 days, but the time has come for Him to start working to bring about the end of the flood. The previously unmitigated violence of man toward man and beast and the natural world had come to an end; the time has come for a new beginning. The waters must recede, the land must become wholesome again, and the survivors must be freed to repopulate the earth. Let's read those verses again:

*And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged;*

*The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;*

*And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.*

For 150 days, the waters rose; every land animal that was not in the ark perished. The days of punishment are over, and the work of restoration begins. At the end of 150 days, the water stops rising, and the waters begin to recede.

The "wind" here is the Hebrew word *ruach*, which can mean *wind* or *spirit*. It's the same word we find in Genesis 1:3:

*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

We cannot rule out that this is a reference to a move of God's Spirit; nevertheless, there were probably very strong winds because there were no land masses to slow them. The wind blows, and the water levels begin to decrease. God is working on behalf of Noah and the other survivors.

The earth under the water had been in a state of tremendous turmoil. The flood began with the breaking open of the foundations of the deep, flooding the land with water, unleashing massive volcanic activity, and almost certainly breaking the pre-flood landmass into the continents we find today. Now that the fountains of the deep, after 150 days, stop pouring out their waters, a new dynamic begins. Cooler rock begins to sink, and warmer rock begins to rise up. Magma cools and solidifies into rock. The massive amounts of mud, volcanic ash, and organic matter laid down by the great flood begin to solidify and form layers of rock and coal, and huge reservoirs of petroleum. Land masses are pushed laterally and collide with other land masses, creating folds which become our mountain ranges.

Does that sound far-fetched? It does if you believe that the world reflects millions and millions of years of very slow, gradual changes; but there is abundant evidence that most of what we see in the geological record is actually a record of a great catastrophe. How can we tell? We weren't there to observe either millions of years of gradual change or one year of massive catastrophe. Is there any observable, reliable, scientific evidence of how the world got to be the way that it is?

As a matter of fact, there is one event that occurred within the lifetime of almost everyone in this room, and this week marks the thirtieth anniversary of that event. I'm sure you remember the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Washington. There are four effects of that catastrophe which give us verifiable, observable scientific data which show us how the geological features we see elsewhere were formed. Dr. Andrew Snelling has spent the last three decades researching the effects of the Mt. St. Helens disaster. He gives these four observations as evidence that the geologic record at large was transformed very rapidly based on evidence from Mt. St. Helens:

### 1. Rapid Formation of Sediment Layers

Up to 600-foot thicknesses of sediment layers formed as a result of the primary air blast, landslides, resultant water wave on nearby Spirit Lake, volcanic ash flows, mudflows, air falls of volcanic ash, and steam water. The most surprising accumulations resulted from the volcanic ash flows that moved at high velocities from the volcano. These deposits included fine volcanic ash beds from a tiny fraction of an inch thick to greater than 3 feet thick, each representing just a few seconds to several minutes of accumulation. ...Geologists were staggered that such coarse and fine sediment layers could be separated into distinct strata by such a catastrophic flow process from a slurry moving at freeway speed.

Sadly, most geologists still conventionally think that such sedimentary layering has to represent long seasonal variations, or annual changes, as layers accumulate very slowly. They normally think that catastrophic sedimentary processes homogenize materials, depositing coarse and fine grains together. However, Mount St. Helens emphatically teaches us that sedimentary layering does form very rapidly by catastrophic flow processes, such as those that would have occurred during the Genesis Flood.

### 2. Rapid Erosion

Two-[thirds] of a cubic mile of landslide and eruption debris from the May 18, 1980, eruption covered 23 square miles of the North Fork of the Toutle River, blocking the drainage from Spirit Lake westward into the Pacific Ocean. ...Then on May 19, 1982, another explosive eruption of Mount St. Helens melted a thick snow pack in the crater, creating a destructive, sheet-like flood of water, which became a mudflow. Reaching the landslide and eruption debris deposits of the North Fork of the Toutle River, the flow formed channels which cut through the blockage of the drainage westward. Bedrock was eroded up to 600 feet deep to form two canyons on the north flank of the volcano. Individual canyons up to 140 feet deep were cut through the landslide debris and volcanic ash deposits. The erosion left elevated plateaus to the north and south resembling the North and South Rims of the Grand Canyon.

Also, gully-headed side canyons and amphitheater-headed side canyons resemble the side canyons to the Grand Canyon. The breach did not occur straight through the obstruction, but

took a meandering path, which reminds us of the meandering path of the Grand Canyon through the high plateaus of northern Arizona. This “Little Grand Canyon of the Toutle River” is a *one-fortieth scale model of the real Grand Canyon* [emphasis added].

The small creeks which flow through the headwaters of the Toutle River today might seem, by present appearances, to have carved out these canyons very slowly over a very long time period, except for the fact that the erosion was observed to have occurred extremely rapidly! ...

### 3. Rapid Formation of Fossil Deposits

The volcanic blast of May 18, 1980, destroyed the surrounding forests. By late that afternoon one million logs were floating on nearby Spirit Lake. Many of these logs were actually floating upright. Even though the roots had been broken off, the logs were thicker at the root end and the wood obviously denser so that the root ends sank before the tops of the logs. Indeed, thousands of upright, fully submerged logs were subsequently observed sitting on the floor of the lake, looking as though they were a forest of trees. Investigations showed many had become buried by more than 3 feet of sediment, while others were still resting on the floor of the lake.

Geologists could easily have misinterpreted these upright buried logs as representing multiple forests that had grown on different levels over periods of many thousands of years. This is in fact how the petrified upright logs at Specimen Ridge in Yellowstone National Park had been interpreted, as successive forests growing over many thousands of years. However, the lesson from Mount St. Helens is that fossilized upright logs had to be buried rapidly.

### 4. Rapid Formation of a Peat Layer

The enormous log mat floating on Spirit Lake lost its bark and branches, rubbed off by the abrasive action of wind and waves. Scuba investigations of the lake bottom subsequently revealed that sheets of bark intermingled with volcanic sediments had formed a layer of peat many inches thick. Together with broken branches and root materials, the sheets of bark gave the peat a coarse texture and a layered appearance. This “Spirit Lake peat” resembles, both compositionally and texturally, certain coal beds of the eastern United States.

Geologists suppose that coal beds formed by the accumulation of organic material in vast swamps where the plants grew in place. By slow growth and accumulation, they estimate about 1,000 years was required to form each inch of coal. However, typical swamp peat deposits are very fine, with a texture looking like coffee grounds or mashed potatoes. They are homogeneous because of the intense penetration of the roots which dominate swamps. Thus root material is the dominant coarse component of modern swamp peats, while sheets of bark are extremely rare. This is the exact opposite of what was found in the “Spirit Lake peat.” Yet the Spirit Lake peat is texturally and compositionally similar to coal. Thus the lesson from Spirit Lake at Mount St. Helens is that this first formation stage of coal beds is rapid, and due to catastrophic destruction of forests, not the slow and gradual growth of plants in swamps.<sup>2</sup>

The bottom line is that the evidence we have from an observed catastrophe fits the evidence we see of a

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Snelling, “Thirtieth Anniversary of a Geologic Catastrophe.” Answers in Genesis website, May 18, 2010. Available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2010/05/18/thirtieth-anniversary-of-geologic-catastrophe>.

larger catastrophe recorded all over the world in a record of stone. We have no reason to doubt God's Word.

Let's continue in Genesis 8:4-5:

*And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.*

*And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.*

The ark settles on ground which cannot yet be seen. After about seven and a half months in the ark, the survivors notice that the tops of the mountains begin to appear. The little islands get larger day by day. Incidentally, the mountains of Ararat are formed of sediment (which is rock laid down by water) and pillow lava (which is the form lava takes when it cools under water), and they contain marine fossils.<sup>3</sup> Fun facts!

Let's consider a few more verses today. Genesis 8:6-12:

*And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:*

*And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.*

*Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;*

*But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.*

*And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;*

*And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.*

*And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.*

I won't dwell here too long other than to say that Noah takes some sensible precautions. Forty days after the mountain tops appear, he releases a raven. The raven was only too happy to be free, finding conditions outside the ark to be at least satisfactory. He sent a dove next, but the dove was more particular about what was acceptable. The ground was still too wet for the dove. After a week, he sent the dove again, which found conditions to be better, as indicated by the olive leaf it carried; but the world outside still wasn't quite suitable for the dove. The next week, Noah sent the dove again, and it did not return. The world outside was not quite yet ready to sustain the people and animals within the ark, but it was getting to that point.

The time had almost come for them to leave the safety of the ark and venture into a wasted world,

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2006), 208.

bringing life where death had reigned. The same God who had told Noah, “Come thou into the ark” has said to us, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This same God will soon tell Noah to “Go forth from the ark,” bringing life into the world, just as he tells us, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” We, like Noah, are to leave the safety of the ark to bring life to a dead world. Will you answer the call?

Peter recounts the importance of this event in II Peter 3:3-9:

*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things **continue as they were** from the beginning of the creation.*

*For this they **willingly are ignorant of**, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:*

***Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:***

*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***