

Lord ourselves whether we are either 'doing' or 'waiting' appropriately. We do need to hear His voice to know what is right!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- Are you waiting for the Lord to do something in your life? You may not be aware of it, but the Lord may be waiting for you to fulfil something important so that He can work in you! Seek to find out some answers to these questions!
- Pray for those who find themselves caught up in events which are significant, but they are not confident of how to deal with the issues involved. This can happen at work or at church, or personally. Pray for wisdom to speak to people who are in such need.

Final Prayer

Remember us O Lord, and flood our lives with the joy of Your presence! Give us patience as we wait for Your timing and the comfort of knowing that we await Your works of power and might. We praise You for the timing of all that You do, O Lord; AMEN

Prayer

We praise You O God! Nothing in all the world can take away our desire to praise You; You have made each one of us, You stay close to us each moment of the day, You save us from our sins and You have a destiny for us because You love us! We want to praise You, we strive to praise You, we ought to praise You and we will never cease to praise You in this life or the next! AMEN!

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Vision

Pray that God's people will grow in confidence as spiritual men and women, able and willing to receive what their Lord would reveal to them through visions and dreams.

On-going prayers

- Pray for industries badly affected by recession
- Give thanks for the beauty of music and the arts
- Pray for those who are suffering in extremes of weather

Meditation

I see the mark of faith in others,
The true gift of God, the soul's conviction
The look on the face of one who suffers
The loss of a loved one, entrusted to God.
A word of truth that is spoken 'in season'
A spiritual light, which shines in the heart.
The offer of help, both timely and wise,
The difference between failure and success.
A journey of trials, surely ascending
No easy prey to sin's spiral of despair.
A life in tune with God and with others;
One known as a man or woman of God.
I see the mark of faith in others;
The saints of God who witness to my soul.

Bible Study - Genesis 8:1-12

¹ But God remembered Noah and all the animals, wild and domestic, that were with him in the ark. So God sent a wind over the earth, and the waters began to subside; ² the springs in the earth and the floodgates of heaven were closed, the deluge from the heavens was held back. ³ The floodwater gradually receded from the earth, and at the end of 150 days the floods had abated.

⁴ On 17th day of the 7th month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵ The waters gradually fell until the 10th month, when on the 1st day of the 10th month, the mountain tops appeared.

⁶ After forty days, Noah opened the skylight he had made in the Ark, ⁷ and released a raven, which flew around whilst the floodwaters dried up on the earth. ⁸ Then he released a dove to see if the water had gone from the surface of the earth; ⁹ but the dove found nowhere to alight, so it returned to Noah to the ark for there was still floodwater over the earth. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it into the Ark with him.

¹⁰ He waited another seven days, and again he released the dove from the Ark.

¹¹ In the evening, the dove came back to him and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the floodwaters had gone from the earth. ¹² He then waited another seven days, and released the dove; but it did not come back to him any more.

Review

This passage begins with the centre piece of the whole story of the Flood; God 'remembered' Noah and the drama of the story changed around. Before, we heard news of impending doom and rising floods, but from 8:1 onwards, we hear of subsiding water and the quest for land (8:4f.). One thing becomes evident, however, and this is the emphasis placed on dates and times. We have seen a few references so far, the days of waiting (7:4,11) and the days of flood (40 days – 7:12,17). The best way to understand the sequence of events is through a chart, which I have given below.

The time chart This is a compilation of the Biblical information about timing in the story of the Flood (using Wenham's 'Word' Biblical Commentary - Nelson 1987, and Hartley's New International Commentary - Paternoster 2000). The dates given are related to Noah's 600th birthday, and the dates in brackets are estimates whereas the others are quoted directly. Also, the first month in the ancient calendar is not January. There is some dispute as to when the Jewish calendar begins, but we must assume around March / April.

Ref.	Scripture says	Numbers analysis	date	day
7:4	Flood in 7 days time	7 days of waiting begin	10/2/600	Sunday
7:11	Flood begins	7 days of waiting over	17/2/600	Sunday
7:12	Rains come for 40 days	40 days of Flood		
7:17	Continues up to 40 days	40 days Flood continues	(27/3/600)	Friday
7:24	Waters swelled for 150 days	Total 150 days of Flood swelling		
8:4	Ark comes to rest	From now 150 days of abating	17/7/600	Friday
8:5	Mountains re-appear		1/10/600	Wednesday
8:6	After 40 days a raven sent out	40 days waiting	(10/11/600)	Sunday
8:10	'another' 7 days a dove sent	7 days waiting	(24/11/600)	Sunday
8:12	7 days and another dove sent	7 days waiting	(1/12/600)	Sunday
8:13	Dried up – Noah looked out		1/1/601	Wednesday
8:14ff	Disembark	(40 + 2x7 days waiting)	27/2/601	Monday

Points arising from the chart Several interesting things arise from this list. Firstly, notice the chiasmic structure of the day numbers. This confirms the overall chiasmic structure of the story as already noted (see yesterday's study). Secondly, the pattern of repeated descriptions of entry into the Ark seems similar to the repetition of Noah's sending out of birds to ascertain whether it was safe to disembark, and this fact helps us understand more about the disembarkation process. Thirdly, whilst many things happen on Sundays (naturally, because it was the 'first day of the week'), two very significant things happen on Wednesdays, which was considered a 'special' midweek day. The first was the re-

appearance of mountain tops, and secondly the day Noah removed the covering of the Ark and observed that the land was dry (8:13); both these days were evidently special 'blessings' within the whole story. Charts such as this can be most helpful in getting to grips with Old Testament stories!

Today's passage From today's reading onwards, everything that has happened unwinds. The floods abate, the Ark comes to rest, the mountain tops re-appear and Noah patiently waits for the right moment to allow all on board the Ark to disembark. God's remembrance (8:1) triggers this change, but why does scripture talk about 'remembering'? This sounds strange to us, for surely God is 'all-knowing', and He must know what needs to be done? The trouble is that the word 'remember' has a slightly different meaning in Hebrew to that in English. When the Bible says 'God remembered', it means that God 'called to mind' something and decided to intervene! God's remembrance here is therefore the point of his decision to intervene in saving power; and as He does so, the world responds in gradual re-creation. God brings the 150 days of 'swelling' waters to an end (7:24) and begins a 150 day period of 'subsiding' waters (8:3). If you look at the detailed dates for the Flood in Genesis 7 and 8, as laid out in the table above, then you will see that the whole flood lasted just over a year. People have argued for centuries about these dates, but the important thing is to know that this was no short event. It lasted a long time and required great patience, as shown by Noah in his handling of the birds, whilst waiting to be sure that the land was dry and able to support life again.

Other features of this part of the story include the work of the Spirit of God in controlling the 'waters' as if for a second 'creation' (8:1). This is then symbolised in the dove released by Noah to help him decide when to open the doors of the Ark that God had shut (7:16). The other great mystery is the location of 'Ararat', the mountain on which the ark came to rest, which some reckon to be the region of Ararat, the Biblical Arartu in northern Mesopotamia (see 2 Kings 19:37, Jer 51:27). This is the subject of on-going investigation, and there is still more work that can realistically be done to clarify what has been claimed as archaeological work on this issue.

The amazing fact is that God was in control of this whole operation, as the chart shows. There is no doubt that those who wrote down this story were impressed by the scale and structure of the whole story. We should not treat it therefore as some 'fairy tale'. What it tells us about God's work in this world is invaluable.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Check out the list of days and dates in the table to make sure that you can understand what is happening.
2. Which feature of Noah's handling of the birds catches your attention, and why?
3. Are there any other stories of scripture which show that God's redemption takes time? Share and discuss what you find with others.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Scriptural models that show how God acts in the world are to be valued, and this may well be one reason that the story of the Flood is important to the heritage of God's people and the whole world. It gives us a number of important messages of which we need to take heed: the difference between right and wrong in God's eyes, the judgement of sin, and God's protection of the righteous in the Ark, for example. However, there is a lesson here about 'waiting', and it is one that is hard for us to accept today. Each of us must ask the