

Living in Hope of a New Creation

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The flood is a powerful promise that Jesus Christ is coming to earth again. This might surprise us at first. What does the flood have to do with the return of Christ? After all, the flood is recorded way at the beginning of the Bible, while our Lord's return will be the very last thing that happens in the history of this earth. The flood resulted in the utter destruction of all flesh, except Noah and his family, while our Lord will make a new heaven and earth when he returns. What does the flood have to do with the return of Christ?

And yet our Lord and his apostles repeatedly connected the flood with Jesus' return. Our Lord, in Matthew 24:37–39: “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” And Peter, writing about “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished,” writes that “the heavens and 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,” which will occur on “the day of the Lord” (2 Pet. 3:6, 7, 10).

The connection between the flood and the return of our Lord is that the flood was a precursor of the second coming. The flood foreshadowed and foretold the return of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. The flood stands as a powerful promise of God to his church that Jesus Christ is coming indeed! For as it was in the days of Noah, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be. This promise of God encourages the hearts of God's people as we wait for our Lord to appear. Especially when it seems to us that we have been waiting long for him, knowledge of the

flood assures us that God's word is true and that Christ's return is sure. The child of God, believing God's word concerning the flood, lives in the hope of the new creation.

There are especially three things to note about living in the hope of the new heavens and earth. First, the Lord Jesus Christ shall return to the earth personally. He will come visibly and bodily in such a way that every eye will see him. The flood foreshadows this personal return of Christ to the earth, because when God sent the flood, he himself came to the earth. God did not sit at a distance from the earth and send the flood waters, but he himself visited the earth and brought the flood waters with him. Notice the language that God uses in Genesis 6:17: "And, behold, I, even I, do *bring* a flood of waters upon the earth..." If God were far away, he would only *send* a flood of waters. But God himself came to earth and *brought* a flood of waters upon the earth.

This was also the prophecy of Enoch about the flood, recorded in Jude 14–15: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all..." Even though the ultimate fulfillment of Enoch's prophecy awaits the second coming of Christ, Enoch was definitely speaking about the flood as a type of the final judgment. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was prophesying to the last generations before Noah, the tenth from Adam. Those were days when the church was apostatizing through the sons of God marrying the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2). To those ungodly generations, Enoch prophesied that God would soon come in judgment "with ten thousands of his saints." What a striking prophecy! It means that when the flood waters were exploding up from below, God himself was there with his own hands breaking up the fountains of the great deep. And when the flood waters were crashing down from above, God himself with his own hands was opening the windows of heaven. And the angels of God, as the servants and ministers of God, were there, for they are the "saints" spoken of by Jude. Though unseen by the wicked who choked and drowned in the waters of the flood, God came

personally to earth in the flood, with a multitude of angels in his attendance. Yes, it is true that God is always present on the earth and never leaves or departs from it. Part of his glory as God is that he is omnipresent, or everywhere present. But there are also times when God comes in a special visit to the earth. The flood was such a visit, as the Lord came in judgment with ten thousands of his saints.

So it will be when our Lord Jesus Christ returns on the clouds of glory. He himself personally shall return, and his coming will be triumphant, majestic, and glorious. The very last sign before his coming shall be the sun turning to darkness, the moon not giving her light, and the stars falling from heaven (Matt. 24:29). Into that pitch blackness there shall sound the shout of Jesus Christ himself, accompanied by the trumpet-blast voice of God, and the voice of the archangel (1 Thess. 4:16). As he shouts, the Lord himself shall descend from heaven on the towering clouds of heaven as his chariot (Acts 1:11), shining with all of the full, bright glory of God himself (Matt. 25:31), and every eye shall see him (Rev. 1:7). He shall be attended by all his holy angels (Jude 14). His shout, and the trump of God, shall have raised the dead (1 Cor. 15:51–54), whose bodies will be reunited with their souls. That same trump of God shall change those of us who are alive and remain so that we too undergo a kind of translation or a resurrection without dying that makes us fit for life in the new heavens and earth, and we shall be caught up with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17). What a blessed hope the children of God have as we await our Lord. He is coming, personally and visibly, just as he promised!

The second thing to note about living in hope is that, when our Lord returns, he shall make a new heavens and earth. He will do this by burning up the present heaven and earth with fire so that the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the world that now is shall perish. Here too, the flood was a type and precursor of the coming of the Lord. Through the waters that blasted up from the earth and that smashed down upon the earth, the world that existed before the

flood, being overflowed with water, perished (2 Pet. 3:5–6). The earth that Noah stepped onto after the flood was a new earth. Even though it was recognizable as a place where he could plant a vineyard, for example, it was nevertheless new. So it will be in the coming of our Lord. Out of the ashes of the present heaven and earth, as it were, our Lord will make a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13).

There are many things that we could say about the new heavens and the new earth, for the Bible reveals much about them. It reveals the light of them—not the sun, but the Lamb. It reveals the work we will be engaged in—worshiping God and ruling over the heavens and the earth with Christ. Even though there is much to say, we say it all as the blind trying to describe color, for we yet see through a glass darkly as we sojourn on this present earth. So, for this article anyway, let us focus on only one aspect of life in the new heavens and new earth: covenant fellowship with God.

Here too, the flood has something to teach us, for covenant fellowship with God was a prominent feature of the flood. God told Noah to *come* into the ark (Gen. 7:1), not *go* into the ark, indicating that God was in the ark and that God lived with Noah and his family in the ark for the entirety of the time that they were sealed in. After the flood, God said to Noah, “And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you” (Gen. 9:9). Then God gave to Noah one of the most visible, recognizable, and beloved symbols of his covenant: the rainbow. “I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Gen. 9:13).

When God gave the rainbow as the symbol of his covenant, he was revealing that his covenant is essentially friendship and fellowship between himself and his people in Christ. God’s covenant is that he dwells with his people and brings them to dwell with him. In order to understand this, we must understand the rainbow. Some say that the rainbow is a covenant

symbol because it has seven colors, and seven is the number of the covenant. Others say that the rainbow is a covenant symbol because it unites earth and heaven by appearing to span them both. There may be some truth to these ideas, but they do not capture the main biblical significance of the rainbow. The key to understanding the rainbow is Revelation 4:3. There, God is described this way: “And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” Here we are told that God’s glory, which always shines forth from him, is the brilliant color of the rainbow. When God gave the rainbow as a symbol of his covenant, it was as if he took a little wisp of his glory and painted it across the sky. By this, God tells his people that we may dwell with him and behold his glory. Rather than destroying us in hell as we deserve, he will take us to live with himself and show us his beautiful glory in heaven. God gives us this precious gift through Jesus Christ, who bore the flood of God’s curse against our sins and delivered us from them. Life in the new heavens and earth will be the life of covenant fellowship with God in Christ, dwelling before his throne and beholding his beauty and glory world without end.

The third thing to note about living in hope is that we may be absolutely sure that God’s promise of Christ’s coming is true, even though there are many who deny it and laugh at us for believing it. The Bible says that there shall be scoffers in the last days who say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Pet. 3:3–4). By this question, the scoffers mean to say that Christ shall never return and that his promise has failed, because we have been waiting two thousand years and he still has not returned. Over against these scoffers, we hold to the promise of the scriptures that “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness,” and we, “according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:9, 13).

The flood teaches us this patient hope as well. Remember that Noah lived in the midst of a wicked generation who lived in open ungodliness. Noah looked forward to God's coming to the earth in judgment, but it was a judgment that must have sounded so strange to people in his day. God said that he would send a flood, and Noah was commanded to build an ark-box for his family and the animals. But it had never rained before! How could water possibly cover all the land and destroy all flesh? And yet Noah believed God. By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, built the ark (Heb. 11:7). So it is with us. All we have to go on is the word of God, which promises the return of our Lord. But that word is sure, surer than all of the scoffing and scorning of the wicked. And so we look forward in hope to the coming of our Savior and to our eternal fellowship with him before the throne of God. For the flood is a powerful promise that Jesus Christ is coming again!

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