

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done." [Genesis 8:20-21]

INTRODUCTION

For 376 days, Noah and his family lived on the ark. No matter how big the ark was, this is a long time! Whether it was a universal flood or a local flood, the scope of this deluge was beyond imagination. The highest points of the earth were under 22 ft of water for nearly a year.

The Size of the Ark

It was 450' by 75' by 45' and had three decks. This yields a total living space of 33,750 sq ft per deck or 101,250 sq ft total – 2.3 acres of deck space, with an average ceiling of 14.5 feet. That's a big boat, especially when it is made of wood!

The closest parallel to this is the treasure ship of Zhu Di (3rd emperor of the Ming Dynasty, 1402-1424), which was 400' long and 125' wide, but whether that this was actually constructed or was just Zhu Di being bombastic is a matter of some discussion.

The modern CVN-21 class of aircraft carriers (the America is set for commission in 2015) will be 1,092 ft in length with a beam of 134 ft. That is TWICE the size of the ark and will carry 4,660 people as well as 75+ military aircraft, displacing 100K tons!

Again, like last week I do not want to dwell on the details of the narrative, but rather God's words in this situation.

1. RELATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS NATURALLY LEADS TO SACRIFICE (v 20)
 - a. Obedience based righteousness leads to GUILT and OBLIGATION.
 - b. This is the first appearance of the Hebrew word *mizbeach* – translated as "altar." It derives from the term for sacrifice, *zabach*, which does not appear before Genesis 31:54. We have a case of a later editor (Moses) using a derivative word before its root because they were both in his vocabulary.
 - i. God did not *command* Noah to do this. God had provided an extra (7 of every clean beast, remember?) but he had not told him why.
 - ii. Common sense would have said, "Keep what you've got because you're going to need it."
 - iii. Relational righteousness gives to God the obvious gift. *Let's see – hmm, 7...that's an odd number, isn't it?*
 - c. When our righteousness is derived from obedience or magical prayers, there is no need for sacrifice. Because our communication with God is really one way (me to him), there's no reason to give back to him. You are the ultimate *receiver* – a reservoir of God's gifts with no outlet.

ILL: *The Dead Sea receives all the water of the Jordan River valley. It is the ultimate receiver. But it has no outlet. The water cannot flow out. As a result, the water can only evaporate (DISAPPEAR) leaving behind salt – nice on food, bad in large quantities. It is the saltiest place on earth – nearly 35% salt. As a result, the Dead Sea is lifeless. It is a disastrous eco-system.*

If you choose to only receive God's gifts without ever outflowing those gifts, you will dry up. The gifts will keep coming, and you may experience a "high concentration" of God's blessing or knowledge of His word, but in reality, you are a disaster.

- d. This is a unique type of offering – the burnt offering: the voluntary (not compulsory), irreversible surrender of possession.
 - i. Once offered it could not be reversed. Once given, it could not be reclaimed. It was an all or nothing proposition.
 - ii. Apparently, Noah invented this kind of offering. He is the first to perform one. Although Abel offered of his flocks, there is no indication that he burned them. In Genesis 4:3-4, the term is *minhah* or "gift". This is distinct from Noah's offering of a *'olawh*, or burnt offering. AN OFFERING WITHOUT EXPECTATION

2. SACRIFICE'S SWEET AROMA (V 21)

- a. The Hebrew phrase translated "sweet savour" or "soothing aroma" appears 42 other times in the Hebrew Scriptures, 38 of the appearances are in the Pentateuch and the remaining 4 are all based on sacrifice. Without exception, this is tied into God's reception of an offering.
 - i. ¼ thanks, ¼ praise, ¼ confession, ¼ request
- b. There was a price to the offering man made. This is the first time we see man killing an animal. God places the fear of man on the animals. Man lost his *harmony with nature* when Noah chose to sacrifice to God.

– BTW, all the stuff about primitive peoples living in harmony with nature? That's BUNK. They're just as scared of wolves and bears as anyone else. –

 - i. God tells Noah, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth..." (9:2)
 - ii. Righteousness has a price. *Things won't be like this all the time.* For Noah, we might say he lost more than he gained. But packaged with the fear was a blessing. Man was commanded to not eat the blood of the animals he killed, why? It reminds man that his blood is important; that he is important to God.
 - iii. God knows and accepts man's sinfulness. NOT TOLERATES but understands.

3. PROMISE IN CONTEXT: WHAT GOD KNOWS ABOUT MANKIND

- a. God is painfully aware of the presence of evil in our lives from the earliest days. We are *not* perfectible, only redeemable.

- b. Who was left on earth? Just Noah and his direct family. And yet God says, “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” God gives a blessing to mankind that he really didn’t need to give. Despite man, God would continue to love him.
- c. What separated Noah from all the people God had just wiped off the face of the earth? It was not his sacrifices, but rather his relationship. He walked with God before the flood, through the flood and after the flood. Far from perfect – but still walking.