

# The Flood, the raven and the dove

by: Brian Pellerin

Genesis 8:4-9

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In Genesis 8:4-9 we read: “And the ark set itself in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased more and more until the tenth month: on the first of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains were seen. And it came to pass at the end of forty days then Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made. And he sent out the raven, and it went out, going to and fro, until the waters were dried up from above the earth. And he sent out a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from above the face of the earth; but the dove found no rest for the soul of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of all the earth; and he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her unto him into the ark.”

Going through the passages surrounding the phrase, ‘the face of all the earth’ in the early chapters of the book of Genesis, it truly seems that *universal* things appear in character and application in connection with it. This passage says that *the waters* were upon the face of all the earth. There are several very practical, universal points for the state of things here below, and firstly I would like to tell of two important aspects that happened at the cross where our dear Saviour died.

The deep waters of the Flood speak of judgement upon the world (Gen. 6:17). By the death of our Saviour, *the world became a judged system*. (John 12:31). Christ’s death fully exposed the world in all its awful sin and righteously condemned it; the judgment of the world and its prince are inseparably connected – Satan has been cast out (John 12:31). The world and Satan are seen as judged in view of the glorification of Jesus, who “having spoiled principalities and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it” (Col. 2:15). As far as the world is concerned, the coming of the Holy Spirit and His abiding in the believers affords demonstrative proof to the world of its *judgement* (John 16:8-10). His presence makes a demonstration to the world of the facts of sin, the triumph of the Deliverer and the discomfiture of the great enemy of God and of man. By the grace of God, this world was righteously judged as evil at the death of Christ; yet also there was a marvelous deliverance made for the believer.

This leads to a second point of the work of Christ. As Galatians 1:4 says: “He gave Himself for our sins, so that He should deliver us out of the present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father.” Nothing

so righteously *condemns* the world and *delivers* us as grace. Christ takes us out of this world even while we are in it! This state is a complete deliverance: **‘They are not of the world even as I am not of the world’** (John 17:16). We are separated from the world by the death of Christ: ‘Ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world’ (Col. 2:20). Likewise, Noah was safe within the ark, surrounded by a judged world – in the world but not of the world.

In the multifaceted applications of the raven and the dove, I would like to show how the two represent the old man and the new man, respectively. First the raven was sent out. This black bird is notorious for feeding upon flesh (Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9), and strikingly pictures that nature of sin which is within every individual. It is most important to remark that the flesh within a believer is no better than the flesh within any sinner. Nowhere in the Bible does God sanctify it or can He sanctify it in any way. It is a hopelessly ruined thing that has been condemned by God and put to death with Christ (Rom. 6:7). Thus we are freed from sin to live unto God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet the flesh is still present within us and can cause all manner of evil if we feed it. Therefore, we can apply the restless raven – relishing all the death that the condemned world has to offer but is never satisfied (‘going to and fro’) – to the sin that dwells in us. We must not feed it or try to fight it ourselves. ‘So walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfil the flesh’s lust’ (Gal. 5:16). The raven also correctly depicts the flesh as being totally useless. The spiritual is not first, but the natural. The raven was the first creature that Noah sent out of the ark. Scripture distinctly tells us that the flesh profits *nothing* (John 6:63).

The dove (most appropriately mentioned for the first time here) is sent out *in relation to Noah* (Gen. 8:8). Jesus says to His Father, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; for *they are thine*.” Truly the dove can be seen as a beautiful application of the new man which *according to God* is created in truthful righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). The dove is characterized elsewhere as a being of harmlessness and an expression of love. How sweet it is when our new nature is allowed to manifest all the nine segments of the Spirit’s fruit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.

The dove did not want anything to do with the world's filth; she did not settle here in any way – for it was not her home. How this should speak to us! Where are our desires? Are they upon things here below? Is there *anything* here below worthy of our attention and satisfaction? Midst the thousands of earthly pleasures, the world cannot provide one heavenly, lasting joy fit for our new nature. No, nothing can be found here below to charm the new man of each believer. All that is in the world comprehends the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). And if believers are not sufficiently appalled by this, it is said that all that is in the world is *of* the world. All we need is found in Christ and He is in heaven. Oh, to gaze more intently upon the One whom Stephen saw! Remember dear friends: all believers have the greatest privilege to behold the heavens opened and see the glory of God and Jesus! (Acts 7:55).

Notice again that the dove is not at rest. For us to observe a Sabbath rest contradicts a very important principle in Scripture. When creation was finished, it was very good and complete and God rested on the seventh day. Notice in Genesis 2 that there is no ordination for *man* to observe it; *God rested*. Notice too that it is a rest with respect to *creation*, an earthly rest. Thus it was instituted for the earthly people, Israel (Ex. 16). But after sin, God's rest was broken and Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work" (John 5:17). God cannot rest when sin is in the world. The most solemn proof of this was given at the death of the Lord Jesus. Where was He on the Sabbath day? His body lay in the tomb! It was impossible for God to celebrate the Sabbath because of man's sin. Yet, what was *man* doing that day? He was observing the Sabbath! Refusing to realize his sin, he would have his own Sabbath without God and without His Christ. Theirs was an earthly rest, observing the seventh, Sabbath day which was broken by sin. Christ's is the heavenly rest, celebrated the first day of the week, not the end of the old creation but the beginning of a *new* thing – perfect and complete for ever, based upon the death and resurrection of Christ. This heavenly rest is not the completion of the old *creation*, but the completion of *redemption* and the beginning of the new creation.

For Israel, the Sabbath was a test for her moral condition based upon what Israel *could do* for God; for the Church, the Lord's day is a proof of her eternal acceptance based upon what God *has done* for us. So to confound the two, making the first day of the week a Sabbath or even to insist on upholding the Sabbath is to forget our heavenly position and try to get back to an earthly position. Of course, I do not mean that we cannot take Saturdays or Sundays off work – nothing of the sort. I wish to impress on believers that the Sabbath and the Lord's day are two very distinct things. The Lord's day is a Christian privilege to rejoice and remember Christ; John was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day' (Rev. 1:10). It has nothing to do with ceasing our physical work. Paul was very concerned about the Galatians who observed days and months and times and years (Gal. 4:10,11). Remember that we believers are heavenly people – free from sin and the world and slaves unto God. [The Sabbath is not ruined by sin for ever, though; Israel will again celebrate the Sabbath day in the Millennium (Heb. 4:9).]

The raven found much in the dead world, but the dove *sought one thing: rest*. David likewise seeks 'that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in His temple' (Ps. 27:4). Christian friends, the many pleasures of this life last for only so long. They will not give lasting peace or satisfaction. Is Christ your one thing? He gives us peace (John 14:27; 16:33).

The two natures are utterly distinct. One delights in and feeds upon death, while the other finds nothing to satisfy itself upon the face of all the earth. It realizes that all its needs are fully met in the work of Christ. Nothing but death lies outside of Him. All fellowship, love and peace lie within Christ and His work, as the Ark of salvation. It is our portion and our rest.

The dove is sent into the world with a purpose and so are we; but we are here upon this earth for only so long. The little dove returned, was taken, and pulled into the ark to Noah. At any moment we will return to Him; soon He will take us to be with Himself!