

## Saved Through Water – Saved Through Fire

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### **UNBELIEF IS BLINDNESS**

Everyone has heard of the doubts that have been cast upon the Scripture record of the flood. Not only avowed infidels, but also many professed ministers of the Gospel, do not believe that there ever was a general flood, covering the whole earth. The same cause of unbelief exists in this case as in that of the story of creation. Satan has instilled doubts of that in the minds of men, in order that they might become blinded to the power of the Gospel, and especially to the Sabbath, the sign of the cross, which creates new men. As disbelief of the story of creation hides the beginnings of this world, so disbelief of the story of the flood hides the view of the end, for the days of Noah are referred to by the Saviour as a parallel to the days of the coming of the Son of man. (Read Matt. 24:37-39). The adversary of God and man would be glad to have all men ignorant concerning the coming of the Lord; and that is the cause of the disbelief in the record of the flood.

### **WILLFULLY IGNORANT**

Still further: We are told “that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to 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 creation” (2 Peter 3:3, 4). How is it that these scoffers thus throw discredit upon the promise of the Lord’s coming, and declare that there is no evidence of any such thing? The answer follows: “For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (Verses 5-7). Further on we are told that “the elements will melt with fervent heat,” and that “all these things will be dissolved.” At the Day of Judgment there will be a sea of fire overwhelming the earth, just as the waters covered and destroyed the earth in the days of Noah.

From the margin of our Bible, together with the reading of the Revised Version, we can get a more clear idea of the text than we now have. We know that when the earth was created it was a watery mass. “Darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Then the waters were separated, some remaining on the surface of the earth, and the larger portion of it being stored up in the earth. These are called “the water under the earth” (Ex. 20:4). That is, in the beginning, “of old,” the earth was “standing out of water and in the water,” or “consisting of water,” a large portion of which was stored up in the earth.

Now by this water “the world that then existed perished.” After Noah went into the ark, “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Gen. 7:11). The very material out of which the earth emerged, and which was stored up in it, was made the agent of its destruction.

If men were not willingly ignorant of this fact, they would not be blind to the coming of the Lord, and the approaching destruction of the world by fire. The flood reduced the earth almost if not quite to its original chaos. At that time all the changes took place, which by unbelievers are attributed to the lapse of ages. Whole forests of huge trees were buried deep in the earth. These have since turned to coal, which has generated large amounts of oil and gas. As a consequence, there is a vast amount of fire stored in the earth, reserved till the flood of fire that is to overwhelm it. As in the time of the flood the water out of the depths of the earth united with that which poured forth from the open windows of heaven, so in the last day the fires in the interior of the earth will unite with that which comes down from God out of heaven, to destroy the earth. All things have not continued as they were from the beginning of creation. Once was the world destroyed by the very elements out of which it was composed, and all the agencies are ready for its second destruction, which, instead of leaving it more curse-marked than before, as was the case with the flood, will cleanse it from the curse, so that there will be a new earth, as in the beginning.

The texts already quoted prove that the flood was universal. It was as extensive as the fires of the last day will be. To deny this is to deny the writings of the apostles, and thus to undermine the Gospel. The third chapter of Second Peter mentions three worlds:

1. The world that was “of old,” from the creation (v 5),
2. The one that now is, since the flood (v 7), and
3. The new earth, which will emerge from the fires of the day of the Lord (v 13).

These three worlds are but the same world in three different stages of existence. The universality of the flood is denied only by those who do not credit the prediction that the earth is to be destroyed again, this time by fire.

### **“SAVED THROUGH WATER”**

In 1 Peter 3:18-21 there is reference to the flood, which sometimes puzzles the reader. The first portion of the text tells us that by the same Spirit by which Christ was raised from the dead, He went in the days of Noah, “while the ark was being prepared,” and “preached to the spirits in prison,” that is, to the captives of sin, shut up under the law. The longsuffering of God waited one hundred and twenty years, while Noah was building the ark, “in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Just a word about the expression, “saved through water.” The Greek word is the same as that in Acts 23:24, where we read that the two centurions were commanded to provide mounts to set Paul on, to “bring him safely” to Felix the governor; and a close parallel to the one in Peter is found in Acts 27:43, 44, where we read of Paul’s escape from shipwreck, together with his travelling companions. Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, “they all escaped safely to land.” By means of the boards and broken pieces of the ship the people who were with Paul were all conveyed through the water to a place of safety; and by the ark Noah and his family were brought safely through the water. So here we see that the ark, and not the water of the flood, is referred to as the means of salvation.

**“BAPTISM”**

“There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism.” How does baptism save us? — “Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3, 4). “For as many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

Baptism means being enclosed in the life of Christ as really as Noah was shut up in the ark. Only in the ark could he find safety, and only in Christ is there salvation for any man. Baptism saves us, but not if it is only a form. It is not the washing of the body in water, but the answer of a good conscience toward God; it is the cleansing of the conscience by the water of the life of Christ.

**SEA OF FIRE**

But there is a still further parallel. When the waters overflowed the earth, destroying it, Noah and his family, safe in the ark, rode upon the sea. That which covered up the corrupt earth with its wicked inhabitants, bore righteous Noah in safety. Even so it will be in the last days, the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Before the final act of Judgment, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, will come down from God out of heaven, and will take its place upon the earth. We know that it comes down upon the earth which is now, before it is made new, because we read in Rev. 20:9 that at the close of the thousand years during which the earth will lie desolate, the second resurrection—the resurrection of the wicked—will take place, and that Satan will then go forth among them to deceive them, and to gather them together to battle. “They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” After that the new heaven and the new earth are seen.

And where will the New Jerusalem be all the time that the flames are devouring the earth with its wicked inhabitants? It will be riding on the lake of fire as securely as the ark rode on the billows of the flood. The saints of God inside of it will be saved through the fire. They will be able to dwell with the devouring fire, and with everlasting burnings. (Isa. 33:14, 15).

**SAFETY**

It is just that great salvation that is secured by baptism into Christ, by being hidden in Him. “We have a strong city; *God* will appoint salvation *for* walls and bulwarks” (Isa. 26:1). “But you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise” (Isa. 60:18), because “God is in the midst of her; she will not be moved.” Its strength is simply the strength of the everlasting God, our refuge. The safety of the saints in the city, as it rides on the billows of fire that will rise, will be only the safety that everyone now finds, who is hidden in the Rock of Ages.

“Not rocks nor hills could guard so well,  
Fair Salem’s happy ground,  
As those eternal arms of love,  
That every saint surround.”

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