July 8, 2017

Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **8: The Flood**

 The descendants of Seth were called the sons of God; the descendants of Cain, the sons of men. As the sons of God mingled with the sons of men, they became corrupt and, by intermarriage with them, lost, through the influence of their wives, their peculiar, holy character, and united with the sons of Cain in their idolatry. Many cast aside the fear of God and trampled upon His commandments. But there were a few that did righteousness, who feared and honored their Creator. Noah and his family were among the righteous few.

 The wickedness of man was so great, and increased to such a fearful extent, that God repented that He had made man upon the earth, for He saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

 More than one hundred years before the Flood the Lord sent an angel to faithful Noah to make known to him that He would no longer have mercy upon the corrupt race. But He would not have them ignorant of His design. He would instruct Noah and make him a faithful preacher to warn the world of its coming destruction, that the inhabitants of the earth might be left without excuse. Noah was to preach to the people, and also to prepare an ark as God should direct him for the saving of himself and family. He was not only to preach, but his example in building the ark was to convince all that he believed what he preached.

 Noah and his family were not alone in fearing and obeying God. But Noah was the most pious and holy of any upon the earth, and was the one whose life God preserved to carry out His will in building the ark and warning the world of its coming doom. Methuselah, the grandfather of Noah, lived until the very year of the Flood; and there were others who believed the preaching of Noah, and aided him in building the ark, who died before the flood of waters came upon the earth. Noah, by his preaching and example in building the ark, condemned the world.

 God gave all who chose an opportunity to repent and turn to Him. But they believed not the preaching of Noah. They mocked at his warnings and ridiculed the building of that immense vessel on dry land. Noah's efforts to reform his fellow men did not succeed. But for more than one hundred years he persevered in his efforts to turn men to repentance and to God. Every blow struck upon the ark was preaching to the people. Noah directed, he preached, he worked, while the people looked on in amazement and regarded him as a fanatic.

**Building the Ark**

 God gave Noah the exact dimensions of the ark and explicit directions in regard to the construction of it in every particular. In many respects it was not made like a vessel but prepared like a house, the foundation like a boat which would float upon water. There were no windows in the sides of the ark. It was three stories high, and the light they received was from a window in the top. The door was in the side. The different apartments prepared for the reception of different animals were so made that the window in the top gave light to all. The ark was made of the cypress or gopher wood, which would know nothing of decay for hundreds of years. It was a building of great durability, which no wisdom of man could invent. God was the designer, and Noah His master builder.

 After Noah had done all in his power to make every part of the work correct, it was impossible that it could of itself withstand the violence of the storm which God in His fierce anger was to bring upon the earth. The work of completing the building was a slow process. Every piece of timber was closely fitted, and every seam covered with pitch. All that men could do was done to make the work perfect; yet, after all, God alone could preserve the building upon the angry, heaving billows, by His miraculous power.

 A multitude at first apparently received the warning of Noah, yet did not fully turn to God with true repentance. There was some time given them before the Flood was to come, in which they were to be placed upon probation--to be proved and tried. They failed to endure the trial. The prevailing degeneracy overcame them, and they finally joined others who were corrupt in deriding and scoffing at faithful Noah. They would not leave off their sins but continued in polygamy and in the indulgence of their corrupt passions.

 The period of their probation was drawing near its close. The unbelieving, scoffing inhabitants of the world were to have a special sign of God's divine power. Noah had faithfully followed the instructions God had given to him. The ark was finished exactly as God had directed. He had laid in store immense quantities of food for man and beast. And after this was accomplished, God commanded the faithful Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me."

**The Animals Enter the Ark**

 Angels were sent to collect from the forest and field the beasts which God had created. Angels went before these animals, and they followed, two and two, male and female, and clean beasts by sevens. These beasts, from the most ferocious, down to the most gentle and harmless, peacefully and solemnly marched into the ark. The sky seemed clouded with birds of every description. They came flying to the ark, two and two, male and female, and the clean birds by sevens. The world looked on with wonder--some with fear, but they had become so hardened by rebellion that this most signal manifestation of God's power had but a momentary influence upon them. For seven days these animals were coming into the ark, and Noah was arranging them in the places prepared for them.

 And as the doomed race beheld the sun shining in its glory and the earth clad in almost its Eden beauty, they drove away their rising fears by boisterous merriment, and by their deeds of violence seemed to be encouraging upon themselves the visitation of the already awakened wrath of God.

 Everything was now ready for the closing of the ark, which could not have been done by Noah from within. An angel is seen by the scoffing multitude descending from heaven, clothed with brightness like the lightning. He closes that massive outer door, and then takes his course upward to heaven again.

 Seven days were the family of Noah in the ark before the rain began to descend upon the earth. In this time they were arranging for their long stay while the waters should be upon the earth. And these were days of blasphemous merriment by the unbelieving multitude. They thought, because the prophecy of Noah was not fulfilled immediately after he entered the ark, that he was deceived and that it was impossible that the world could be destroyed by a flood. Previous to this there had been no rain upon the earth. A mist had risen from the waters, which God caused to descend at night like dew, reviving vegetation and causing it to flourish.

 Notwithstanding the solemn exhibition they had witnessed of God's power--of the unnatural occurrence of the beasts' leaving the forests and fields, and going into the ark, and the angel of God clothed with brightness and terrible in majesty descending from heaven and closing the door; yet they hardened their hearts and continued to revel and sport over the signal manifestations of divine power.

**The Storm Breaks**

 But upon the eighth day the heavens gathered blackness. The muttering thunders and vivid lightning flashes began to terrify man and beast. The rain descended from the clouds above them. This was something they had never witnessed, and their hearts began to faint with fear. The beasts were roving about in the wildest terror, and their discordant voices seemed to moan out their own destiny and the fate of man. The storm increased in violence until water seemed to come from heaven like mighty cataracts. The boundaries of rivers broke away, and the waters rushed to the valleys. The foundations of the great deep also were broken up. Jets of water would burst up from the earth with indescribable force, throwing massive rocks hundreds of feet into the air, and then they would bury themselves deep in the earth.

 The people first beheld the destruction of the works of their hands. Their splendid buildings, their beautifully arranged gardens and groves, where they had placed their idols, were destroyed by lightning from heaven. Their ruins were scattered everywhere. They had erected altars in groves, and consecrated them to their idols, whereon they offered human sacrifices. These which God detested were torn down in His wrath before them, and they were made to tremble before the power of the living God, the Maker of the heavens and the earth, and they were made to know that it was their abominations and horrible, idolatrous sacrifices which had called for their destruction.

 The violence of the storm increased, and there were mingled with the warring of the elements, the wailings of the people who had despised the authority of God. Trees, buildings, rocks, and earth were hurled in every direction. The terror of man and beast was beyond description. And even Satan himself, who was compelled to be amid the warring elements, feared for his own existence. He had delighted to control so powerful a race, and wished them to live to practice their abominations, and increase their rebellion against the God of heaven. He uttered imprecations against God, charging Him with injustice and cruelty. Many of the people, like Satan, blasphemed God, and if they could have carried out their rebellion, would have torn Him from His throne of justice.

 While many were blaspheming and cursing their Creator, others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the ark, pleading for admittance. But this was impossible. God had closed the door, the only entrance, and shut Noah in and the ungodly out. He alone could open the door. Their fear and repentance came too late. They were compelled to know that there was a living God who was mightier than man, whom they had defied and blasphemed. They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. Some in their desperation sought to break into the ark, but that firm-made structure resisted all their efforts. Some clung to the ark until borne away with the furious surging of the waters, or their hold was broken off by rocks and trees that were hurled in every direction.

 Those who had slighted the warning of Noah and ridiculed that faithful preacher of righteousness repented too late of their unbelief. The ark was severely rocked and tossed about. The beasts within expressed, by their varied noises, the wildest terror; yet amid all the warring of the elements, the surging of the waters, and the hurling about of trees and rocks, the ark rode safely. Angels that excel in strength guided the ark and preserved it from harm. Every moment during that frightful storm of forty days and forty nights the preservation of the ark was a miracle of almighty power.

 The animals exposed to the tempest rushed toward man, choosing the society of human beings, as though expecting help of them. Some of the people bound their children and themselves upon powerful beasts, knowing that they would be tenacious for life, and would climb to the highest points to escape the rising water. The storm did not abate its fury--the waters increased faster than at first. Some fastened themselves to lofty trees upon the highest points of land, but these trees were torn up by the roots and carried with violence through the air and appeared as though angrily hurled, with stones and earth, into the swelling, boiling billows. Upon the loftiest heights human beings and beasts strove to hold their position until all were hurled together into the foaming waters, which nearly reached the highest points of land. The loftiest heights were at length reached, and man and beast alike perished by the waters of the Flood.

 Anxiously did Noah and his family watch the decrease of the waters. He desired to go forth upon the earth again. He sent out a raven which flew back and forth to and from the ark. He did not receive the information he desired, and he sent forth a dove, which, finding no rest, returned to the ark again. After seven days the dove was sent forth again, and when the olive leaf was seen in its mouth, there was great rejoicing by this family of eight, which had so long been shut up in the ark.

 Again an angel descended and opened the door of the ark. Noah could remove the top, but he could not open the door which God had shut. God spoke to Noah through the angel who opened the door, and bade the family of Noah go forth out of the ark and bring forth with them every living thing.

**Noah's Sacrifice and God's Promise**

 Noah did not forget God, who had so graciously preserved them, but immediately erected an altar and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar, showing his faith in Christ the great sacrifice, and manifesting his gratitude to God for their wonderful preservation. The offering of Noah came up before God like a sweet savor. He accepted the offering and blessed Noah and his family. Here a lesson is taught all who shouldlive upon the earth, that for every manifestation of God's mercy and love toward them the first act of all should be to render to Him grateful thanks and humble worship.

 And lest man should be terrified with gathering clouds and falling rains, and should be in continual dread, fearing another flood, God graciously encourages the family of Noah by a promise. "And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. . . . And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

 What a condescension on the part of God! What compassion for erring man, to place the beautiful, variegated rainbow in the clouds, a token of the covenant of the great God with man! This rainbow was to evidence the fact to all generations that God destroyed the inhabitants of the earth by a flood, because of their great wickedness. It was His design that as the children of aftergenerations should see the bow in the cloud and should inquire the reason of this glorious arch that spanned the heavens, their parents could explain to them the destruction of the old world by a flood, because the people gave themselves up to all manner of wickedness, and that the hands of the Most High had bent the bow and placed it in the clouds as a token that He would never again bring a flood of waters on the earth.

 This symbol in the clouds is to confirm the belief of all, and establish their confidence in God, for it is a token of divine mercy and goodness to man; that although God had been provoked to destroy the earth by the Flood, yet His mercy still encompasseth the earth. God says when He looketh upon the bow in the cloud He will remember. He would not have us understand that He would ever forget, but He speaks to man in his own language, that man may better understand Him. {SR 71.1}

Next Mailing: Story of Redemption Chapter **9: The Tower of Babel**