

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 8

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

(NAC) – Genesis chapter 8 can be divided into four main sections: the receding of the floodwaters (8:1-5), the drying of the earth (8:6-14), the disembarking of the ark (8:15-19), and God's covenant with Noah (8:20-22).

Genesis 8:1-2

(NAC) – “Just two words, “God remembered,” explain the reversal in the flow of the waters and thus the flow of the narrative.” The Hebrew term for “remember” (זָכַר – *za-car*) does not simply refer to process of recalling information but is “covenant language, designating covenant fidelity.” Thusly, in 8:1 we see that God remembers his promise to Noah, and commits to remaining faithful to keep that promise to save Noah, his family, and all the living creatures on the ark.

(BKW) – “The Hebrew term (to remember), especially with reference to God, signifies to act upon a previous commitment to a covenant partner...By acting on his earlier promise to Noah, God shows himself to be a trustworthy covenant partner. This crucial expression shows that the subsiding waters of the Flood are subject to God's undisputed will. By contrast, in the Babylonian accounts “the gods were terror-struck at the forces they themselves had unleashed. They were appalled at the consequences of their own actions over which they no longer had control.” It is only the remembering of God that gives hope and makes new life possible.”

(NAC) – Within this verse God begins to reverse the waves of judgment cast upon the earth, and the author of Genesis depicts this process in a similar fashion to the creation of the earth in Genesis 1.

	Genesis 1	Genesis 8
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Day 1	1:2 “earth,” “deep,” “Spirit (<i>ruah</i>), “waters”	8:1b-2a “wind” (<i>ruah</i>), “earth,” “waters,” “deep”
Day 2	1:7-8 “waters,” “sky”	8:2b “sky”
Day 3	1:9 “water,” “dry ground,” “appear”	8:3-5 “water,” “tops of the mountains,” “appear”
Day 4	God creates the luminaries	No need to re-create the luminaries
Day 5	1:20 “birds,” “above the earth,” “across (<i>al pene</i>) the expanse”	8:7-8 “raven,” “from the earth,” “from the surface (<i>al pene</i>) of the ground”
Day 6	1:24 “creatures,” livestock,” “creatures that move along the ground,” “wild animals”	8:17 “creature,” “birds,” “animals,” “creatures that move along the ground”
Day 6 cont'd	1:26 “man,” “image”	9:6 “image,” “man”

(NAC) – the same “wind” that hovered over the earth at creation is the same “wind” that causes the waters to subside. This same “wind” is the same wind that will drive the plague of locusts away in Egypt, dries the seabed of the Red Sea, and provided quail for the people of Israel in the wilderness. The author desires for his readers to see that this “wind” is nothing more than the Spirit of God. Just as God has the power to open the widows of the heavens and the fountains of the deep, he also has the power to close them. God has always been in control and is the only one powerful enough to impose his will upon the world.

Genesis 8:3-5

(NAC) – After 150 days, the waters that consumed the earth began to recede, but it would not be for another approximately 120 days that Noah would take his first steps outside of the ark. Here in Genesis 8:4, the waters came down enough for the ark to rest upon the mountains of Ararat, however, it was not until almost three months later the tops of the mountains were visible. Concerning the specific dating of these events, Mathews says, “The seventh month in the religious calendar of the Hebrews was Tishri, the most important month of the sacred convocations; it included the Day of Atonement as well as the Feasts of Trumpets, Tabernacles, and Sacred Assembly (Lev. 23:23-26).”

(NAC) – It was appropriate, therefore, that the ark should find refuge in the cultic month celebrating atonement and God’s provision. By the ark coming to “rest”, the passage is reminiscent of Noah’s naming. In a play on “Noah” the author indicates that the patriarch achieved, in a most unexpected way, the hopes of his father Lamech.”

(NAC) – It is often casually said that the ark rested on mount Ararat, but the text indicates that the resting place is actually someone within the mountains of Ararat. The designation of Noah’s landing on the singular Mount Ararat (located in modern day Armenia) came during the eleventh and twelfth century AD. According to Assyrian records, the mountains of Ararat are located within the range of mountains extending from southeast of Turkey to northwest Iran.

Genesis 8:6-12

(NAC) – “There is no reason stated for the raven’s release, as we find with the dove, but we may assume the raven was commissioned for the same purpose. As the stronger bird and a consumer of carrion, the raven could remain in flight longer, going back and forth while deriving its food from floating carcasses...According to rabbinic tradition, the raven was released first as expendable since it was neither good for food nor sacrifice...Its departure from the ark signified that the impurities of the past had been removed and the creation of the new world had a fresh start.”

(BKW) – “In the Babylonian account, the hero sends out a dove, a swallow, and then a raven.” In the biblical account, “the raven braves the storm, can feed on carrion, and as the stronger bird can remain in flight much longer. It makes sense, as in the biblical account, to send out the stronger raven before the gentle, timid, and low-flying dove, but none to reverse the sequence, as in the Babylonian epic.”

Genesis 8:13-14

(NAC) – Once again, Moses uses specific dates to ground the events detailed in his account of the flood in real history. It is a continual reminder that these events are not myths or fables, but the very real account of history. When Noah was 601 years of age on the first day of the first month Noah opened the hatch of the ark and perceived that the ground was dry, but Noah was unable to exit the ark until 57 days later on the twenty-seventh day of the second month. “One year and eleven days since the initial outpouring, the last vestiges of the waters disappeared.” The word “dry” is the same word used for the “dry ground” of creation in day 3, as well as the same word for the “dry ground” that the Israelites walked on as they crossed the Red Sea and the Jordan river.

(NAC) – “Again the narration ties the flood deliverance to the worship activity of Israel by drawing on tabernacle jargon for the “cover” of the ark (v.13)...With the exception of Noah’s ark, the term designates exclusively the “covering” for the “tent of meeting” (Ex. 26:14; 36:19; Num. 3:25). Even as God was with Israel in the wilderness sojourn, he was with Noah in the midst of his watery voyage.”

Genesis 8:15-19

(NAC) – “These eight are the new humanity, and the future of the blessing remains with them. Those who entered the ark successfully rode out the storms and were delivered intact by the mercies of God. For the long year of rising and receding waters, Noah received no word from the Lord. He had waited and waited yet did not anxiously exit until given the heavenly word to disembark. As Calvin remarked, “Noah did not move a foot out of the sepulchre, without the command of God.””

(NAC) – God follows his initial order to disembark the ark with a similar command seen in 1:22 to go and be fruitful and multiply over all of the earth. This command reminds us that God’s original command to fill the world with worshippers of God is still the command given to this “new creation.”

(BKW) – Whereas when Noah steps out of the ark there is hope as man is called to go out and fill the world, but in the Babylonian epic “when its hero looks out on the world after the flood, he sees all of mankind had turned to clay.”

Genesis 8:20-22

(NAC) – “Although worship was known from the days of Cain and Abel, this incident is the first account of an “altar” erected for that purpose.” Some of the seven pairs of clean animals taken aboard the ark were then used as sacrifices to the Lord. His offering was burned, as a means of showing his complete devotion to the Lord.

(NAC) – “Here God pledges only to desist from imposing any further affliction on the already-burdened ground. The flood is viewed as another curse upon the “ground/earth” that was the result of human disobedience as in the garden, where the earth suffered its first judgment. Yet it is because of Noah as meditating priest that the world experiences some “comfort” from the pain of the cursed ground.”

(NAC) – “Humanity is said to be evil from its infancy, referring to humanity collectively or the individual person...The progressive character of collective human sin, following the rationale of 6:5-7, should require more punishment in the postdiluvian world, a “daily deluge” as Calvin put it, but here the Lord commits to forgiveness.”

(NAC) – “Instead of destruction, the earth will be blessed with the regularity of predictable environmental patterns that are undergirded by the directive hand of God. This promise is dependent upon the goodness of God and not the righteousness of humanity, for humanity will always languish in sin...” “While the earth remains” shows a permanency for the world, but it also infers that the present heavens and earth will someday cease.”

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