



SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 7:17-24

SERMON NOTES:

"Memento Mori" is the Latin phrase "Remember death." During the time of the English Puritans (1500's-1700's) you could easily find those words on headstones in graveyards you walked by. You certainly would have heard sermons at the church about the reality of death, and how remembering death actually helps you to live. You would go back to your home where family members, likely including children, had died. There was no quarantining the sick and dying in medical facilities away from view. No, death took place in homes where people shared life together. The unshakeable reality of death remained in their minds and thoughts each day. It surrounded them.

Today we avoid thoughts of death as often as possible. We put the dying in hospitals or facilities. The dead are put in funeral homes. We've even changed how we talk about death calling it moved on, left this earth, went home, and others. I understand there is some spiritual reasoning for that, but it's also because we have an allergy to saying "died" or "dead." Funerals are now called "celebration of life." Again, not terrible, but also an indicator of our society wants to do anything but "memento mori," remember death.

Our passage today puts death front and center. God promised judgment. The wages of sin is death. And death is the prominent feature of this text.

Scripture Exegesis: Genesis 7:17-24

VS 17 -- The flood continued forty days on the earth. The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

The rain continued for 40 days and 40 nights. The waters built and increased on the earth. This lifted the ark from the ground and onto the waters.

VS 18-20 -- 18 The waters prevailed and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the face of the waters. 19 And the waters prevailed so mightily on the earth

that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. 20 The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.

The waters continued rising and growing until there was nothing but water covering the earth for the ark to float on. Even the mountains were covered the rising water on the planet. It says here that the waters passed the mountain tops by 15 cubits, or 22.5 feet.

VS 21-23 -- 21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind. 22 Everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. 23 He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.

The result of the rains and flooding...death. All flesh died on the earth: birds, livestock, beasts, swarming creatures, and all mankind. Only Noah and those with him on the ark survived. Total destruction.

What about sea creatures? Some fish and sea creatures can only live in freshwater or saltwater. So it's possible that if there was a mixing of fresh and salt water in the floods, some of those creatures wouldn't have survived.

I want to discuss a few major points from this passage for our consideration.

I. The Instrument of Judgment

God uses the Flood as an instrument of His judgment. He uses it as a means to execute His wrath on the earth.

One of the questions some skeptics ask is: did this Flood actually happen? Is this metaphorical in the Bible or just a made up story? Our answer is a resounding, "Yes! It really happened." How do we know?

A. Because the Bible tells us, and we can believe the Bible. It is the authority over our lives. It is God's inspired and inerrant Word. We also have the testimony of Jesus about Noah and the Flood.

Matthew 24:37-39 -- 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

If Jesus is who He says He is, the Lord. He's the Son of God, fully God and fully Man. He's existed from all eternity. Then He knows about Noah and the Flood, not because He read about it in Genesis, but because He was a part of the execution of the judgment. He was there. It was His glory offended by the sinfulness of man. And when the Second Person of the Trinity comes into the flesh in the person of Jesus, He testifies about the historical nature of this event. The Bible tells us, and we can believe it.

B. It's a universally told story.

There are over 200 myths from all over the world that tell of an ancient flood that covers the earth. The oldest known recording of the event is from the Babylonian Epic called Gilgamesh from the 1800 BC. This was written before Moses wrote the account in Genesis. Now, just for clarity, just because it was written down first, doesn't mean its contents are original or correct. Moses likely never encountered the Gilgamesh tale. But what's amazing is that every ancient culture has testimony of ancient flood. Of course they would, because they all arose out of the repopulating of the earth after the flood, and were then scattered at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. They are all descendents of Noah before the great scatter.

C. Science confirms it.

I don't want to get lost in the details of this, but there are multiple strands of arguments for the flood from the study of geology and archeology. A few evidences that have been discovered:

Evidence 1: Fossils of sea creatures high above sea level due to the ocean waters having flooded over the continents

Evidence 2: Rapid burial of plants and animals

Evidence 3: Rapidly deposited sediment layers spread across vast areas

Evidence 4: Sediment transported long distances

Evidence 5: Rapid or no erosion between strata

Evidence 6: Many strata laid down in rapid succession

For some of you, that means something. For most of us, we're like, "Cool, what does it mean?" So I'll encourage those who want to dive deeper to go explore some of the resources on answersingenesis.org.

So we see the Flood as the instrument of judgment God chooses to use.

II. Death

The inescapable message in your face in this text is "they died." 5 times in different ways we read that death reigned. They all died. They were blotted out. Only Noah and his family remained. Reading those words on the page often blunts our senses from grasping the devastation. It's like reading on a piece of paper that 6.5 Million Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. You know it's a lot, but you don't feel the weight of it.

In Israel several weeks ago, we took time to visit the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. We saw pictures of families, scattered around Europe in death camps. We read stories of parents being separated from children. We saw a giant pile of shoes worn by those who were marched to gas chambers. We saw the real uniforms that covered the malnourished bodies of prisoners. At the end of the museum we walked into the room of names, that's filled with thousands of pictures and the names of every victim. I cried throughout the entire 1 1/2 hour exhibit. The words "6.5 Million Jews died at the hands of the Nazi" became a little more real.

The devastation of 7.5 Billion people dying from a flood, including billions of creatures, cannot be imagined. It's nearly 1200x the number killed in the Holocaust. The corpses of humans and animals would have been floating on the water. There would have been some likely floating on things for a period as they scrambled for cover. Some may have died of dehydration or starvation as the rains and flood kept rising. There was no escape. No one found a way to avert the judgment. They didn't all likely die instantly or at the same time. But they all died.

Death. Blotted out. A reminder of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. A reminder that the eating of the forbidden fruit affected more than Adam and Eve.

This passage can help us remember death. And remembering death has incredible benefits to us in our lives.

James 4:14 -- yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Another way to interpret James 4:14? Remember death.

Psalm 90:12 -- So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Learning to number our days, and remembering the reality of death, is not supposed to make us somber or scared, but to make us intentionally grateful. We only have so many days in the world. We should get a heart of wisdom.

One of the ways we get a heart of wisdom is to live for things that last eternally.

****Relationships** -- There is a continuity of relationships and memories in Heaven, that will carry into the New Heavens and New Earth as well. The martyrs around the throne know who they are and what happened to them (Revelation 7). The rich man in Hades knows his brothers are not living for the Lord and want someone to go to them (Luke). Samuel knows what is happening on earth and who Saul is when he is conjured up by the witch of Endor (1 Samuel). Moses and Elijah know each other and Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 19).

****Christ's Kingdom** -- It doesn't matter what your job or vocation is, you can all live for Christ's Kingdom. If we are in Christ, then our lives should be lived to further the gospel of His grace. A rescue from the wrath of God against sin has been given through Jesus. We want others to know. We want others to believe. We want to live to honor Jesus. We want to obey. We want to serve others, build the church, use our gifts and resources to further the work of Christ in the world. This is what I mean by living for things that last eternally.

Remembering death helps give us perspective. Our problems gain a new perspective in light of death. I can testify this is true. My wife and I talk regularly that many of the things people get tore up about don't phase us. It's not because we're robots, but because we've walked through death up close and that puts a lot of the things that consume others in perspective for us. You just can't shake my nerves very much. There are very few things that cause me to lose sleep. We're currently working through the lending options and work for construction on the building. We don't know how soon we'll be able to get funding. It's not the news I want, but it doesn't wreck my day. The same can be true

for you if you'll do as these passages teach us: number your days, remember you are but dust, and always keep things in perspective.

Jonathan Edwards, the great pastor and philosopher of the 1700's here in America. He had a list of 70 resolutions that he lived by. Many of them dealt with the issue of time and perspective about your life.

6. Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live.

5. Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can.

7. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life.

17. Resolved, that I will live so as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

19. Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do, if I expected it would not be above an hour, before I should hear the last trump.

50. Resolved, I will act so as I think I shall judge would have been best, and most prudent, when I come into the future world.

51. Resolved, that I will act so, in every respect, as I think I shall wish I had done, if I should at last be damned.

52. I frequently hear persons in old age say how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again: Resolved, that I will live just so as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age.

55. Resolved, to endeavor to my utmost to act as I can think I should do, if I had already seen the happiness of heaven, and hell torments.

Nine of his resolutions are rooted in the idea of remembering death. We should embrace Edwards' perspective and let our lives be shaped by the reality of death and not waste it.

Lastly, remembering death keeps the power of Christ and His promises on the front of our minds. The fact that death comes is not something we should ever grow complacent with. Death is the result of a broken world. And Christ came to redeem a broken world.

Death ought to remind us of these three powerful truths about Jesus:

1. **He defeated death through His resurrection**
2. **He alone provides our solution to the problem of sin and death**
3. **He is coming back to defeat death forever**

REVIEW:

- ❖ What does Genesis 7:17-24 teach us about God?

REFLECT:

- ❖ How do we see God's patience in Genesis chapter 7?
- ❖ What does this passage of Scripture teach us about patience?
- ❖ Why do we avoid thinking about death so much?

RESPOND:

- ❖ How can you live differently today in light of the fact that, unless Christ returns first, your death is imminent?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ John 11:25-26 - *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Revelation 21:4 - *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Lead Pastor - **Erik Reed**
- ❖ Ministry - **Knowing Jesus Ministries**
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Batgama in Sri Lanka
- ❖ **Population in country:** 389,000
- ❖ **Global population:** 389,000
- ❖ **Christian Adherent:** 1.48%
- ❖ **Evangelical:** 0.00%
- ❖ **Primary Religion:** Buddhism
- ❖ **Primary Language:** Sinhala
- ❖ **Summary:** A civil war raged in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2009. The Buddhist Sinhala were victorious over the Hindu Tamils in the war that killed hundreds of

thousands. As a Sinhala speaking, Buddhist people, the Batgama fought for the Sinhala majority. The traditional occupation of the Batgama is agriculture. Many of the Batgama have become college educated and are among the elites and leaders of Sri Lankan society.

- ❖ **Prayer Focus:** A small fraction of Batgama claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. Pray the church would grow as Batgama share their faith with family and friends. Ask the Lord to send the Holy Spirit anointed workers to the Batgama of Sri Lanka. Pray that Batgama would be led to listen to Sinhala radio programs. Pray that the Lord would raise up pastors who are faithful to the word of God among the Batgama churches. Pray they would make disciples who will make more disciples.