

Sunday School Lesson

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of the Flood are indicative of the J and P accounts were brought together.

Some Historical Evidence

Undoubtedly the idea of a universal flood arises out of some historical situation, probably some catastrophic experience that seriously affected the Hebrews and their Mesopotamian neighbors. The finds of the English archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley seem to substantiate this idea. While excavating the tombs of the Sumerian nobles of Ur, Woolley discovered large clay deposits which seemed to represent silt from a gigantic flood in the Tigris-Euphrates valley area.

We may logically assume that the Babylonian and Hebrew flood stories arose out of

such an occurrence as Woodley describes. But of greater interest is the contrast in the interpretations these different groups gave to the experience.

The Babylonians, like many ancient peoples, regarded the Flood as due to the capricious decisions of the Gods. The Hebrews, on the other hand, moralized the happening and attributed it to the God of law and order. God was understood to be acting responsibly and justly to punish universal wickedness through a universal disaster.

Interestingly enough, though God judged that the magnitude of man's sin required extreme measures, he was grieved by the necessity of this course of action. Thus, early in the history of God's relationship to his creation, we find a picture of the Creator's concern for his wayward children.

The Interrelatedness of Life

Although the wickedness of creation originated in and centered in man, havoc and discord touched all the earth. Since all creation is interrelated and interdependent, when the highest of the creatures becomes corrupt, the lowest partakes of that corruption. The birds and beasts are not uninvolved in the good or ill of life. They ultimately prosper or perish according to the decisions and fortunes of mankind.

In the light of this reasoning, the prophets of Israel later claimed that with the redemption and renewal of man would also come the regeneration and restoration of all creation.

A Remnant

But God did not choose to destroy all life. A remnant was chosen for survival. God commanded Noah to build an ark in which to ride the flood

waters, saving his family and pairs of all animal life.

The biblical explanation for Noah's selection is that he was righteous and blameless. He "walked with God." This statement means, perhaps, that he lived in communion with God. Within the context of such a relationship Noah doubtless developed a sensitivity to the will of God and the foreboding shadows indicating a gathering storm. Others, too, might have been able to read the "signs of the times" had they been more perceptive. Noah displayed the acceptable spirit that made him open to God.

Noah's willing obedience, then, was, in part, the reason for his selection. This path was not easy for Noah to take. How foolish he must have seemed, building an ark when there was no apparent reason for doing so! How disconcerting must it have

been to cry "flood" when no threatening clouds darkened the sky! Yet Noah was faithful to what he understood to be God's will. And because of Noah's response to God, his name, like Abraham's, is numbered with those who took risks in the name of their faith.

God's Promise

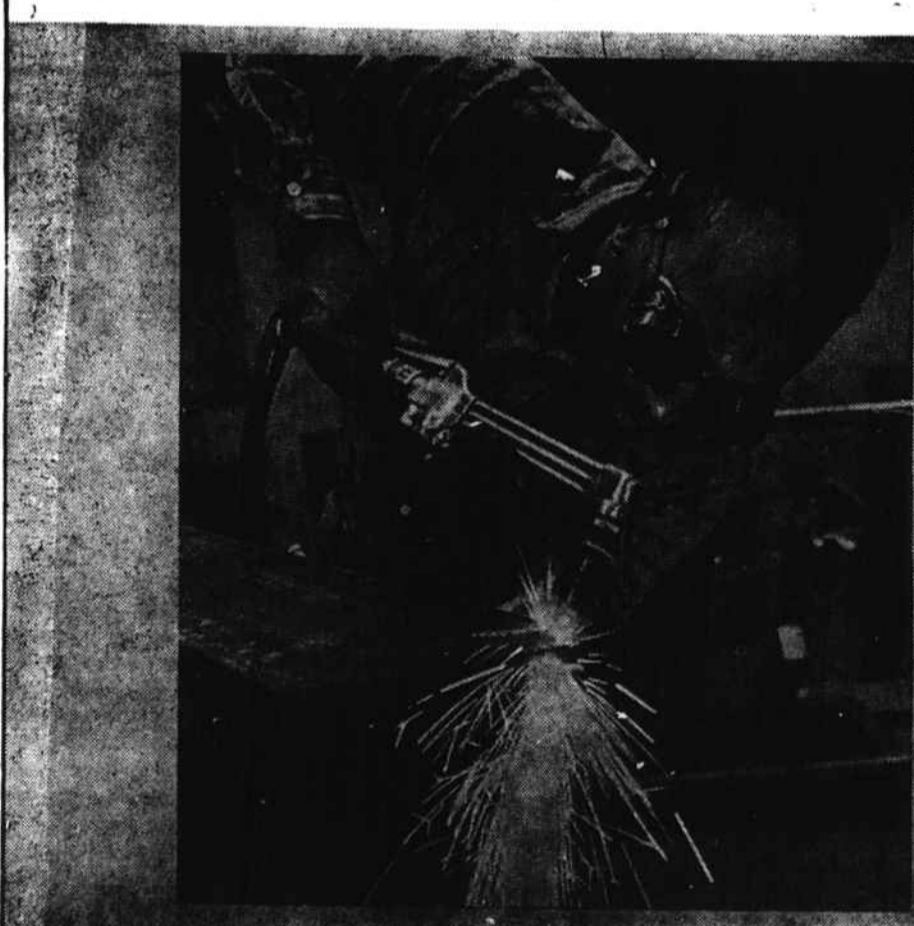

After the flood waters had receded and the ground was given time to dry, Noah and the host with him made their way from the ark. Noah's first act was one of worship. He built an altar and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. Upon receiving Noah's offering, God made a promise that he would never again curse the ground or destroy man, though the imagination of man's heart is filled with evil still.

In an even greater act of grace God promised constancy of life.

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