

## No More Floods

**T**here are many beautiful and awesome things that we see in the sky: clouds, lightning, the blue colour of the clear sky, the panorama at sunset, the silver lining around dark clouds, the sun's rays penetrating the morning mist. But there is one particular phenomenon that is glorious and colourful, majestic and beautiful, that bridges the earth with the heavens and runs from one end of the sky to the other. It is the rainbow.

The Bible has numerous passages, particularly in the Psalms, in which natural phenomena like clouds, rain, hail, snow, dew, frost, lightning, thunder or earthquakes are regarded as being symbolic of God's majesty, power and splendour. But God has chosen to associate himself specifically with the rainbow and it is his sign of peace with mankind and all living beings. Whenever we see a rainbow in the sky, it should be our time to remember God's tender mercies, love and salvation.

The first rainbow appeared in the aftermath of the great flood, the story of which is narrated in detail in the book of Genesis<sup>1</sup>. It tells us how God was grieved due to man's wickedness and the evil inclination of man's thoughts and decided to wipe out his own creation. There was only one man, Noah, who had found favour with him, *and God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood... and you will enter the ark, you and your*

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis Chapters 6-9

*sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you."... Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*

And then, as the Bible says, all the springs of the great deep burst forth, the floodgates of the heavens were opened and rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days. Every living thing that moved on the earth perished, but Noah and those who were in the ark were saved.

When the flood waters had receded, and God's purpose had been accomplished, he said: *Never again will I curse the ground because of man... never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease... Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.*

And God said, *I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.*

God has certainly kept his promise and from the Bible we can see that he intends to keep it to the end. The Bible itself has not reported any other instance of widespread flooding. When the Israelites were on their journey to the promised land, as many as ten different plagues of increasing severity

were inflicted upon the Pharaoh and the Egyptian people.<sup>2</sup> They included pollution of river waters, attacks by frogs and locusts, and death of the first-borns, but not floods.

When Jesus' disciples asked him about the signs of his second coming, he said that among other things, famines and earthquakes will occur in various places<sup>3</sup>, but he did not speak about floods. Even the book of Revelation that very vividly describes the horrible tribulations which the earth will have to face at the end of this age, does not make any mention whatever of floods on earth.

However, while there is no further record of global floods in the Bible, it recognizes the reality that river floods have occurred and continue to occur on earth. Jesus himself talked about floods in two different contexts. Jesus said that a person who hears his words and acts upon them is like a wise man who built his house on a firm foundation, so that when the river burst against it and the flood rose, it could withstand it.<sup>4</sup> In another discussion, he told his disciples that just like the people on this earth were living life as usual, unaware of the impending flood until Noah entered the ark, no one would know about his second coming except the Father.<sup>5</sup>

The Bible also acknowledges that floods are a part of the earth's natural processes. In the account of the Israelites camping on the banks of the river Jordan and waiting to cross it, we are told that the river was in flood, as it always is during harvest. However, water from upstream stopped flowing and piled up in a heap a great distance away and the entire nation of Israel was able to cross over on dry

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 7-11

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 24:7

<sup>4</sup> Luke 6:46-49

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 24:36-39

ground.<sup>6</sup> If this were a unique geohydrological phenomenon, no explanation is forthcoming in the Bible, and if it were a miracle, God has not taken credit for it.

However, David summarizes the situation beautifully in one of his psalms: *If the Lord had not been on our side....the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, the raging waters would have swept us away....Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*<sup>7</sup>

In today's times, floods do occur for various reasons. Rivers get flooded when there is a prolonged spell of heavy rainfall in their catchment areas and upstream regions. Rivers change course and take people by surprise. Cities get flooded because of inadequate drainage systems. Vast croplands get deluged when reservoir floodgates are opened to release water. So, floods are going to be there around us. But there is one difference: God is now on our side. *And if God is for us, who can be against us?*<sup>8</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> Joshua 3:15-17

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 124

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:31