

“But God” – Our Hope for the New Year

Genesis 8

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC: January 3, 2020

Well, it was a year like no other. I read about this family that was the most locked down of any I've ever heard of. For all the months they never went out of the place where they lived. In fear of the death all around them they followed orders to stay inside and they kept totally isolated from the rest of the world. Zero contact with human life outside their family in all that time!

They never went to a store or talked to anyone except their kids and in-laws.

Earlier in the year they had stored up enough food and supplies to last more than a year. Their jobs before were no longer an option and now they're just taking care of their animals. They wonder when this will all be over, what the world will be like after all this, will it ever be normal again, and when it will be safe to go out. They're looking for some sign or reassurance. They tried to warn people before, but even friends didn't listen or take it serious.

They understood the death rate to be 100% if not living in their structure.

I'm not talking about 2020, I'm talking 2500 or so BC, Noah and the ark.

Turn to Gen 8 for the true story of this family and the flood

Think about it: No outside jobs or contact and God gave the orders for them to be shut in. Noah's family indoors about a year. Everyone had died in this global calamity outside of the ark. It was literally a dark time in every way. But the 1st day of the new year proved to be a turning point with new hope in Gen 8. This first Sunday of this year I want to look at the first book of the Bible. Gen 8:13 is the first mention of a New Years Day (Jewish calendar):

*In the six hundred and first year[Moses writing of Noah] **in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth.***

So on the Jewish calendar this happens on the first day of the first month of a new year. And this would be a **new beginning** for the people of God. And look at Gen 8:22, what God says:

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

Noah's family finally came out to a changed world, but an unchanging God reminds them of His faithfulness in the changing of seasons, days, and years

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun, moon and stars
in their courses above, Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love

Great is God's faithfulness! In this new year, morning by morning new mercies we'll see. In our changing world, He changes not, as He has been, He forever will be. All we need His hand provides. Great is His faithfulness.

I want to read just the first few verses of Gen 8 and on this first Sunday of a new year I pray it gives us strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

Gen 8:1 *But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.* ² *The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,* ³ *and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated,* ⁴ *and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.* ⁵ *And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.* ⁶ *At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made* ⁷ *and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.*

DISCUSS CONTEXT – V. 13 TAKES US TO START OF THE NEW YEAR

WHAT'S YOUR HOPE FOR THIS NEW YEAR? JUST 2020 OVER?

2021 could be worse in some ways, politically or personally. A new year will have new challenges. Where's your help and hope in this coming year?

NCC: What is our only hope in life and death? That we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus

Our Savior Jesus said in Lk 12 we're not to fear who or what kills the body, but can do no more than that, and He added '*do not worry about your life... or about your body... Consider the ravens* [Jesus brings up the very bird in Gen 8 that Noah sent out to see if there was dry land or food on earth, Jesus says consider how] *God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?*'¹

He says '*do not be anxious*' about tomorrow – don't fear this year ahead. Consider the ravens, Jesus said, and even birds we don't value much, Jesus said '*not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more...*' Gen 8:1 says God remembers, He never forgets, He cares for all His creatures, and how much more those made in His image who He loves. He sovereignly numbers the hairs on our head and all our days and all details. This is a word for us in a world of fear, worry, anxiety, uncertainty financially, etc.

None of that can change a single hour to your life God is sovereign over.

Jesus went on ‘do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”²

We’re little but we have a big God. He’s in charge. He rules His kingdom and graciously gladly gives. Gen 8:1 says He cares for all His creatures. He remembers His people and never forgets a single bird or star in a galaxy no telescope will ever see. He’s sovereign over viruses only microscopes can see and hairs on our head we can’t count. No bird falls apart from His will, and you have greater value and worth to God. This is our Father’s world. He hasn’t given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.³

Gen 8 shows God was the only hope in ages past so we’ll trust in the future.

O God, our help in ages past, **Our hope for years to come,**
Be Thou our guide while life shall last, And our eternal home! ...
 Under the shadow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt secure;
 Sufficient is Thine arm alone, And our defense is sure

Our sufficiency is in the Lord. Our sure defense isn’t government protection – it’s God’s provision. We need to live by faith for our eternal home, not by fear in our earthly home. We need to look less at the media in 2021 and look more at the mighty God. The guidance we need most is in His Word, He is our guide while life shall last. And I love how the song says what lets us dwell secure is when we’re ‘under the shadow of Thy throne.’ That’s His rule and reign, when we’re under that, His sovereignty overshadows all else.

What’s **the big takeaway** from Noah and the flood? Ps 29:10: *The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, And the LORD sits as King forever. The LORD will give strength to His people; The LORD will bless His people with peace.*⁴

VISUAL (SLIDE?) - WHERE JESUS IS STILL ON HIS THRONE

I remember when I first preached on this chapter. We had been in ER the night before from dinner-time until a few hours before the Sunday service. My wife that Saturday started to have memory loss, loss of faculties, slurred speech, vision impairment and seeing auras or prisms of light, numbness that had worked through her body. Her arm was moving up spontaneously without her doing it. She didn’t recognize church friends who had called or came by. It was a scary time as they ran various tests on her brain and vitals. It was later diagnosed as a mysterious migraine with no lasting effects, PTL. When your spouse might be having a stroke, or when you’re going through the storms of life, you need to remember the big God of Gen 8:1. It says ‘**God remembered,**’ that means He gave special thought, attention, care to.

That weekend meditating on Gen 8 helped me remember God’s sovereign care and this past week seeing a rainbow reminded me of covenant grace.

That word **remember** at the start of Gen 8 shows up again in Gen 9 and v. 16 where God says **the rainbow** is to remember **God's covenant grace promised to the world**. In Gen 19, **God remembered Abraham** in mercy. Gen 30 says '**God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.**'⁵

She felt forgotten in her barrenness but God remembered her and heard her cry. When Gen 8 says God remembered, that's the same phrase in Exodus 2:
'*The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them* ['took notice']'.⁶

So when Gen 8:1 says God remembered Noah and all with him on the ark the idea is He mercifully took notice of their need, was concerned for them.

This has been a hard year for many, but try to imagine the year before Gen 8
SANCTIFIED IMAGINATION HERE ... BUT GOD

I won't preach through this chapter today, just the first 2 words: *But God...*

I don't have an outline with multiple points today, just one point in 2 words.

The hope for humanity in Gen 8 is the hope for humanity in 2021: *But God.*

Judgment was raining down, so many they knew had died ... *but God, 8:1.*

They didn't know where this was going or when it would end ... *but God.*

If an iceberg could sink a bigger steel ship like the Titanic, imagine what would happen to a wooden boat hitting a jagged rock or mountain... *but God*

Imagine how family can get on each other's nerves all confined ... *but God.*

Aware of their sin like never before. Afloat for over a year. The sea was lonely. The ark was dark. Drifting with no control, clueless as to where they were, enduring only on the promise of God, not sure if they would ever see land. No escape possible. They could never go out for a walk. *But God.*

I couldn't get past those 2 words, they're the key to the past and future year.

Things we want to forget about last year but 1 truth to remember above all.

My wife put those words above the window in my office: **BUT GOD ...**

Key in looking out at our world, counseling, difficult shepherding meetings.

Hope doesn't depend on a better year in our view, it's a bigger view of God. *But God* in this context speaks means it's not the last word, God is at work.

Turn to Gen 48 and I want to walk through how this book uses this phrase.

This *but God* hope for Noah became the hope for Jacob, who became Israel.

But God is how Gen 8 starts and this starts a pattern of hope in God's Word.

48:21 *Then [Jacob] Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, **but God** will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your fathers.*

Application:

Acts 7:9 *Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. **But God** was with him ¹⁰ and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace⁷*

Turn to Gen 45:4: *Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, **but God**.*

Turn to Gen 50:20: *As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God** meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them... 24 And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, **but God** will visit you ...”*

Application:

Turn to Ex 13. This hope of Noah and Jacob and Joseph was Israel’s hope in plagues and persecution far worse than anything we’ve seen. Ex 13, v. 17: *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, “Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.” ¹⁸ **But God** led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.*

Judges 15:18–19 (NASB95) [Samson] *became very thirsty, and he called to the LORD and said, “You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant, and now shall I die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” ¹⁹ **But God** split the hollow place that is in Lehi so that water came out of it. When he drank, his strength returned and he revived...*

Application:

1 Sam 23:14 (ESV) *David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness... Saul sought him every day, **but God** did not give him into his hand.*

Application:

BUT GOD not only protected David, Samson, Israel, Joseph, Jacob, Noah.

Paul said in Acts 26 *'I preached...that all must repent of their sins and turn to God...Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and they tried to kill me. **But God** has protected me right up to this present time...'*⁸

Phil 2:27 *Indeed he was ill, near to death. **But God** had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

Application:

TURN TO PSALM 73.

2 Chr 20:15 (NKJV) ... *Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, **but God's**. [NLT 'Don't be discouraged by this mighty army...but God...']*

Application:

Ps 73, v. 21 says he was embittered, v. 23: *Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.*²⁴ *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.*²⁵ *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.*²⁶ *My flesh and my heart may fail, **but God** is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

Application:

TURN TO ACTS 10

Isaiah 17:13 (NKJV) *The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters; **But God** will rebuke them and they will flee far away ...*

Application:

In 2020 nations and racism were big topics. The phrase 'but God' speaks to that too. Acts 10:28 Peter *"said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, **but God** has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.'"*

Application:

10:39: *we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, **but God** raised him on the third day...⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name*

Look at Acts 13:29, it adds a few more details: *And when they had carried out all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.*³⁰ **But God** raised him from the dead,³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had

come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.
³² And we bring you the good news

...

Application:

TURN TO ROMANS 5.

The most common *but* God in the Bible is the gospel, death and resurrection

- Acts 2:23: *This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.* ²⁴ **But God** raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him...repent and be baptized
- Acts 3:15: 'You killed the author of life, **but God** raised him from the dead...' ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...⁹

Application:

Look at Rom 5, v. 6: *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.* ⁷ *For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—* ⁸ **but God** shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

*QUOTE EPHESIANS 2:1-7

Last week Pastor Corey said these 2 words present the gospel and they do. Lloyd-Jones said in a sermon on the text '*But God...* These 2 words, in and of them-selves, in a sense contain the whole of the gospel... There is only one hope for man in sin... *but God...* the Christian message to the world.'¹⁰

TURN TO 2 CORINTHIANS 7.

What's our hope in temptation and sin? 1 Cor 10:13 NKJV: *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God** is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*

Application:

2 Cor 7:5 *For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—[or harassed, conflict] fighting without and fear within.* ⁶ **But God**, who comforts the downcast, comforted us ... [NAS '*But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us ...*']

Application:

Heb 12:10 NIV *Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; **but God** disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.*

Application:

2 Tim 2:9 NIV *I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. **But God's** word is not chained [His Word can't be quarantined]*

Application:

Spurgeon: "I wish, my brothers and sisters, that during this year you may live nearer to Christ than you have ever done before. Depend upon it, it is when we think much of Christ that we think little of ourselves, little of our troubles, and little of the doubts and fears that surround us. Begin from this day, and may God help you." Amen. More of the Son in 2021. But God ...

PRAY THEN TRANSITION TO COMMUNION

¹ v. 4, 22-26 NIV.

² v. 29-32 NIV.

³ 2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV.

⁴ NKJV.

⁵ Genesis 19:29, 30:22.

⁶ Exodus 2:23-25 NIV, "took notice" in v. 25 is NASB wording.

⁷ NIV.

⁸ v. 20-22 NLT.

⁹ Both quotations from NIV84.

¹⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "The Christian Message to the World," in *God's Way of Reconciliation: An Exposition of Ephesians 2* (Baker, 1972), 59, 72.