

BEGINNING AGAIN

The chance to start over again is one of the greatest blessings God grants to men. The Bible story from its beginning is one of man's fall into sin and God's gracious call to repentance and beginning again. But it is vitally important for men to realize that God's gracious mercy in giving man a second chance is not of eternal duration.

When God looked upon His creation in the days of Noah He was sickened at heart over what He saw. Man's thoughts and actions had declined to the point that he had given himself over completely to evil. When God saw how that which He had made in His own image had deteriorated He said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth ... for it repenteth me that I made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." (Genesis 6:7-8)

When God opened the floodgates of heaven the earth was deluged with water and for one hundred fifty days the water prevailed upon the world. God poured out His divine judgment against sin by destroying every land dwelling creature which he had created. Only Noah, his family, and those animals in the ark with him were saved from God's wrath against sin. By God's grace Noah was saved because he alone was faithful to God in a world of wicked men.

Our world today is filled with wickedness and sin. Men are inclining their hearts more and more toward evil, embracing that which is abominable to God and calling it good. All of us have sinned and rebelled against the Lord who created us. We are hopelessly lost in sin and doomed to eternal destruction. Yet our gracious God, not wanting any of us to perish, has by His marvelous grace provided the means of our forgiveness that we might be cleansed

of sin and begin again. Peter wrote that "God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20-21).

Noah and those who were with him were shut up in the ark for just over one year. When the flood waters had receded and they finally stepped out onto dry ground, they stepped out into a world that had been washed clean of wickedness. The waters that had washed away those who had walked in sin had saved Noah by lifting the ark above the sinful world and separating him from it. Noah, as the apostle Peter wrote, was saved through water from that sinful world. And just as Noah was saved through water, we too can be saved from our sins by being buried with Christ in the waters of baptism. Baptism, according to the scriptures, is what puts us into Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27). In fact, baptism is the only thing which the scriptures teach can put one into Christ. Just as Jesus was put to death, buried, and raised by the power of God, in baptism one who has sinned against God has symbolically crucified his old way of life and died to it. That one is then buried in the watery grave of baptism and raised by the power of God to a new life as a Christian (see Romans 6:3-5). Through baptism into Jesus Christ God gives us the chance to begin again. That's why Peter said that baptism saves us. It's not the washing of dirt off the physical body that enables us to start again, but the fact that by faith we have trusted God's grace in sending His Son to die for us and have submitted to Him by obeying His will. God saves us through the blood of His Son when we respond to Him in obedient faith. And just as Noah stepped out of the ark into a clean world with a chance to

begin again, so we are raised from the waters of baptism forgiven of sins and with the opportunity to begin a new relationship with our Lord.

But it is vital that we understand that God's gracious invitation for us to be saved is not of eternal duration. Just as He rained His wrath upon sinful men in the days of Noah, God has promised to destroy sin once and for all in a final judgment upon His creation. Some mock the idea of the Lord's return. They were doing so in Peter's day. Some were saying, "Where is this Jesus whom you say is coming to judge us? The sun came up this morning just like it did yesterday and the day before, and we still see on evidence of His judgment!" But Peter said that those who say such things have forgotten that God did destroy the world in the time of Noah (2 Pet. 3:5-10). And God has said that the present heaven and earth will also be destroyed by fire. Jesus will come as a thief in the night in judgment against sin. At His coming time itself will end, the world will cease to exist, and God will no longer grant men an opportunity to repent. Those who have walked wickedly before the Lord will be eternally lost, while those who have walked by faith will have a new beginning in heaven with God. Learn from Noah's example. Walk by faith so that when Jesus comes, you can begin a new life in heaven that will last throughout eternity.

Mike Dubose adapted from Charlottesville Beacon

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." **2 Peter 3:9**

ANNIVERSARY

Chris and Sara Edwards, 12-29.

BIRTHDAYS

Jessica Carter, 12-30; Tim Dillingham, 12-31.

ILL

Sunday: Verna Hanson; Millie Robertson (PM); Debbie Schleif (AM); Tom Tucker (PM).

Louise Dodson is recovering from her foot surgery at home. Tom Tucker is being treated for an eye disorder.

Those battling cancer: Ledgia Campbell, Betty James and Cleo Stone. Please remember these in your prayers.

HOME BOUND

Kathleen Camp is in Room 101 at the Royal Terrace Nursing Home in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Barbara James' aunt, Evelyn Marquardt is at the Sweet Life of Rosehill in Shawnee. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Several were out of town on Wednesday. Among them were: Chris Edwards; Debra Gragg; the Nelson's; Clara Scott; and all of the Thrasher's. The Brown's and the Nemechek's planned to be out of town this weekend.

GUEST SPEAKER

Brother Jim O'Connor will be our guest speaker today. We are glad to have Jim and Judy with us in Olathe!

LADIES CLASS

The Ladies Bible Class will resume on December 31.

FIFTH WEDNESDAY SINGING

Our 5th Wednesday Singing will be held December 31.

POT LUCK DINNER

Our monthly Pot Luck Dinner will be held on Sunday, January 4 following our AM worship.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 51; Sunday PM, 35; Wednesday PM, 24.

Those To Serve

December 28, 2008

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Brown

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... Trent Thrasher
SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
OPENING PRAYER Steve Brown
PRESIDE..... Jared Nelson
ASSIST..... Jeff Nemechek
ASSIST..... Dave Parish
CLOSING PRAYER..... John Cody Carter

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER George Thomas
CLOSING PRAYER..... John Dodson
LORD'S SUPPER..... Jared Nelson

WEDNESDAY 31st

SONG LEADER.....Fifth Wednesday Singing
INVITATION John Cody Carter

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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