

## Made Alive in the Spirit

*By Linda Rex*

**February 18, 2024, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Preparation for Easter / Lent**—There are ways in which every generation resembles that which existed before the flood story which we read in about in Genesis 6-9 and in other ancient records. Whatever we may believe about how and if the flood occurred, the important thing to remember is that all of this is part of God's story, and is fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. In other words, when looking at these texts, we need to observe it through this lens—Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

When we do that, we see a glimpse of what Peter meant when he indicated that the event of the flood was in many ways a baptism, and that it teaches us about what it means to leave our old life behind and be immersed in Christ, as those who die with Christ and rise with Christ, and live new lives centered in Jesus' own life with his Father in the Spirit.

In our New Testament reading for this Sunday, 1 Peter 3:18–22, the apostle Peter reminds his readers that Jesus “died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust” (NASB). In other translations, we read “the righteous for the unrighteous” (ESV, NRSV, NIV), which helps us to understand that Jesus, the only One in right relationship with his Father in the Spirit, died for every one of us, for we all have turned away from this face-to-face relationship with our God. The whole purpose for Jesus' incarnational life—of becoming God in human flesh, living our life, dying our death, and rising again—was so that “He might bring us to God”. How beautiful is that?

When we read the flood story, then, we see a world drowning in sin, evil, and death, which desperately needs to be brought home to God. The Father's heart is breaking at the sight of such destruction and ruin of all the glory he had given his creation, and he knows he has to do whatever it takes to free the world from its slavery to evil, sin, and death. So God immerses that world in water, to wash it and cleanse it, and bring it to a place where new life could emerge and once again fill the earth.

The only reason Noah and his family escaped this merciful inundation of the world was because Noah believed and obeyed God. He trusted in God's word, that if he built the ark (large boat), filled it with animals as directed, and entered into it, he would be saved. It was not Noah's efforts which saved him—imagine how difficult it would have been to build that large boat and save all those animals! No, it was God's grace which saved Noah and his family. It was God's love which enabled him to endure the floodwaters and emerge safely on the other side, to enter into the new, clean world.

In the same way, our human flesh has given itself over to evil, sin, and death, even though what God created was “very good”. Lost in our darkness, we are enslaved when we have been created for true freedom based in the love of God. No matter how hard we try, no matter what efforts we make, we cannot save ourselves. But God will not leave us in this place, for this was never his plan for us. We were created for relationship, for oneness with God and each other, to live in other-centered, self-giving love both now and forever.

So the Word of God, the Son of God, came and took on our human flesh, living the life we were meant to live, in right relationship with God and others. He was the truly righteous One, the Just One, living in our human flesh, so that he might bring us home to his Father. In Jesus, our human flesh was immersed in the divine life and love in such a way that he purified, cleansed and renewed all that we are. In living our life, dying our death, and rising again, Jesus made and is making all things new, and in his ascension, Jesus sent the Spirit so each and every person might

participate in his new life. What Jesus did for all, by the Spirit we each can experience personally as we trust in his finished work.

Like Noah, we need to trust the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and do as he asks in order to fully experience the healing, cleansing flood of his Spirit, without it destroying us in the process. “Trust me,” he says. “Leave your old life behind. Turn, and get into the boat. The flood is coming.” Repent, and believe. Be baptized by the Spirit. Jesus, in his resurrected and glorified human flesh, now reigns over all, and is our intercessor and advocate with his Father in the Spirit. He prays for us and with us, and offers our worship, prayer, and praise to his Father on our behalf. He is our Lord and Savior. Trust him to rescue you from the flood of evil, sin, and death, and to immerse you the cleansing flood of his heavenly Spirit, receiving the gift of new life in him. And as a testimony to this amazing, glorious spiritual renewal, be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*Heavenly Father, we so desperately need the forgiveness you offer us in your Son Jesus Christ. Grant us the grace to turn away from all we have given ourselves over to which leads to evil, sin, and death. Grant us repentance and faith, and cleanse us by your Spirit. Immerse us the loving, living waters of your Holy Spirit, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

*“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.” 1 Peter 3:18–22 NASB*

*“[From Adam till Noah to Now.] Christ died once and for all, in order to conclusively separate you from a distorted identity. Thus, restored righteousness [shared likeness] triumphed beyond the reach of any identity that is not in sync with innocence and oneness, [righteousness bringing closure to unrighteousness]—in order that he might lead you-mankind to be face to face with God; his body was murdered, but he was made alive in spirit. Thus, through the doorway of death, his spirit entered the very domain where those who died before were imprisoned. There, he announced his message. His audience included all who died in unbelief, in the days of Noah when he built the Ark. Jesus is the extension of the patience of God, who waited for mankind at a time when only 8 survived the flood. There is a new baptism. Immersed in his death and co-quickened in his resurrection, mankind once dead and drowned are now made alive and crowned. Jesus emptied whatever definition we have of hell, and came back with the trophies [humanity] and the keys [Isaiah 22:22]. Oh, what an insult it is to the entire gospel, to continue to preach a defeated devil and an empty hell, back into business.” 1 Peter 3:18–22 Mirror Bible*

*“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.’ Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” Mark 1:9–15 NASB*