

Burial Ground

{By Christy A. Cook}

When I was young, I remember visiting various mountain ranges. I remember the awe and confusion of happening across seashells embedded into rocks along the landscape. How did those seashells get there? How is it possible for the bones of fish and treasures of the ocean to become buried in high mountain ranges? Well, a worldwide deluge could do that!

The powerful fountains of the deep sprang up, violently tearing the ocean floors. The heavens opened to unleash copious amounts of rain. The intense pressure and power of the waters shifted and moved the landscape and drowned every living creature...that is, every creature that wasn't safely secured in the ark-Noah's ark.

Open your Bible and carefully read the account of the flood in Genesis 6 and 7.

My family has been blessed with multiple opportunities to visit The Ark Encounter in Kentucky. It's fascinating, humbling, inspiring, and yet frightening. One of the small models of the ark especially brings tears to my eyes. Displayed is the ark floating on water. Nearby layers of shifted rocks are surrounded by the rising waters. The people-the wicked people that Noah preached to for over one hundred years- are flailing in the waters, making desperate attempts to reach higher ground. Some are looking toward the ark and appear to be begging for Noah to come rescue them. Soon, they will drown and be buried with the corruption that God intended to put to death.

How does God describe the level of wickedness wrought by the people in Noah's day in Genesis 6:5-7:11-13?

Based on your assessment of our world and culture today, have times changed much?

Based on Genesis 6:6, 8-9 and Genesis 7:7, describe Noah's character.

Consider the model display from The Ark Encounter. The water has a different effect on the wicked and the righteous.

What does the water do to the wicked? _____

What does the water do for the righteous? _____

Water is certainly powerful. We have seen its devastation since the beginning of time. It can drown and destroy. Yet, water is life-giving, refreshing, and rejuvenating. Man must drink water to survive. Water cleans wounds and calms fears. It can warm us and cool us. The impact and influence of water touches every part of our lives. Does it not seem fitting that God requires a burial in it—something man must live near and keep close by for physical health and endurance—to represent our spiritual birth and renewal as well?

Read 1 Peter 3:18-22:

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.***

What is being compared to Noah's Ark and the flood of Genesis 6 and 7?

What or who is being put to death in verse 18?

What or who is made alive in the Spirit?

When we die to sin, self, and Satan, we bury our pride, selfishness, and worldly desires. We submit our will to Jesus.

What saves us according to verse 21? _____

The word baptize/baptism is a transliteration from the Greek word *baptizo*, which means to immerse, submerge, or overwhelm—essentially a burial in water. Do you see the connection? It was not a singular raindrop that saved Noah and destroyed the earth. It was not a small pouring of water from a cup. Neither is baptism today a sprinkling or pouring, but a complete immersion.

Read Romans 6:1-11:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

At what point are we buried with Christ? {verse 4} _____

How am I to be set free from the slavery of sin? {verse 7} _____

Jesus, being the servant leader He is, did not leave us to die alone. We are united *with* Him in death (verse 5). He paved the way. He showed us the way. He demonstrated our path to salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection {1 Corinthians 15:1-4}.

When someone is baptized, that is the point at which they make contact with the blood of Christ. The water is not the WHAT, but the WHEN. The water itself {whether it be an ocean, lake, river, or pool} is nothing special. But that moment in time is. The moment at which we die to self, submit to being buried with Christ, the moment we are placed into the kingdom and we become Christians.

We must consider the urgency and necessity to obey the Gospel as laid out in the New Testament. Consider the people of Noah's day who disregarded his preaching. They did not heed his warnings.

Read 2 Peter 3:4-7:

They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth

that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

The wicked people thought life would continue as it had been, until death and destruction came. May we consider the teachings of God's Word, lest we too behave as though our world will go on just the same. Peter tells us though, that next time the Lord will destroy the earth with fire, not water. Do we believe He destroyed it the first time in the days of Noah? Do we believe in the great deluge? If we do, we can make a sturdy assertion that He indeed will come back with fire.

The great flood of Genesis represents the *judgment* of God, yes. But even still... His *grace*. We see that in the lives of Noah and his immediate family. Noah was considered righteous among the people. Why?

Read and write down Genesis 6:22.

Are you like Noah? Have you done all that God has commanded? From the scriptures we have looked at today in the New Testament, along with a host of others, may I submit to you that we are commanded to be baptized and buried WITH Christ to be pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

Let's not be overcome by death on judgment day. Rather, let's be overwhelmed in that precious blood of the Lamb, which is found in Christ by being buried with Him in baptism.

Matthew 24: 37-39

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Though the physical body of Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah, the Bible says "he was gathered to his people" {Genesis 25:8}. Interestingly enough, Abraham's bones were not put in the tombs of his ancestors. So what people was he gathered to? The scripture reveals that although Abraham died, he still lived with the faithful who had gone on before.

He was buried, but he didn't stay there.

The body of Moses was buried in a valley in Moab {Deuteronomy 34:5-6}, yet we read that he visited with Jesus and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration {Luke 9:28-33}.

He was buried, but he didn't stay there.

Jesus the Christ was placed in a tomb for three days {John 19-20}.

He was buried, but he didn't stay there.

Today, penitent and obedient believers are buried with Christ in baptism.

But they don't stay there {Romans 6:4}.

Let's not be swept away with the wicked on judgment day, like those who were in the flood. Let's choose to get on the boat like Noah. In full assurance of faith, let's be pleasing to God. Let's study the scriptures and find out what He wants of us and be ready to obey His commands.