

Then Noah Built an Altar to the LORD and He Sacrificed Burnt Offerings On It

8: 20-22

DIG: Why do you think ADONAI has decided not to destroy the human race again, even though mankind is still evil? To what future and final solutions does God's mercy point? What is the LORD's evaluation of the basic nature of mankind?

REFLECT: What motivates you to worship God? What is more important, method or motivation? Why? How do you make a pleasing aroma to ADONAI?

The first thing Noah did was to build an altar to ADONAI, to thank Him for His gracious protection and pray for His mercy in the future. This is also the first mention in the Bible of the word **altar**. At this point the garden of Eden has been destroyed by the Flood. They no longer had the visible Shechinah presence to whom they could bring their offering. So Noah sets the pattern that will eventually be written down in the book of Leviticus and builds an altar.

Noah sacrificed some of the clean animals and clean birds, probably the seventh of every kind that he had taken into the ark (8:20a). The idea of cleanness in the TANAKH is rooted in the holiness of ADONAI. Certain animals were *set apart* for worship, they were **the clean animals**. The LORD looked upon these with favor. However, others were *not to be used* for worship because they were deemed unclean and unacceptable to Him. Earlier, Cain had brought an unacceptable offering to the LORD, while He looked with favor on Abel and his offering (4:4-5). Noah was fully aware of the oral tradition of the system of worship that would eventually be written down by Moses in the book of Leviticus. Therefore, his offering was not only acceptable because clean animals and birds were used, but also because Noah sacrificed burnt offerings on the altar (8:20b). Burnt offerings were a voluntary act of worship and atoned for unintentional sin in general. They were an expression of devotion, commitment and complete surrender to the LORD (see my commentary on Exodus Fe - The Burnt Offering). The burnt offering had to be a bull, ram or male bird, a dove or a young pigeon for the poor. Noah was to burn all of it on the altar. It was a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to ADONAI (Leviticus 1:6-9).

The LORD is pictured as smelling the pleasing aroma of Noah's offering (8:21a). Sacrificed animals do not atone for sin, as the writer to the Hebrews states so beautifully: it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). Only Christ can do that. So before the Messiah came, the sins of TANAKH believers were temporarily set aside when they brought an acceptable offering as Abel had done. On what basis was their sin set aside? It was their faith. **When they brought their offering it demonstrated their faith** because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). The reason the aroma of the burnt animal was pleasing to the LORD, was that it represented **faith**. **And ADONAI said in His heart**, indicates that it was something that He was going to commit Himself. But, it had both a negative and a positive aspect.

Negatively, He promised this: **Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood (8:21b)**. This is the LORD's way of saying that mankind has a sin nature. **This becomes the source of the rabbinic doctrine of the evil inclination. The rabbis teach that everyone is born with an evil inclination and a good inclination. But the evil inclination often gains mastery over the good inclination.** While Judaism does not believe that man has a sin nature, it comes close with this concept of the evil inclination. But in spite of that fact that **every inclination of man's heart is evil from childhood**, ADONAI promised that He would never again destroy all living creatures, as He had done with the Flood. The LORD had taught mankind that sin inevitably brings judgment. Destroying mankind every few generations would serve no useful purpose.

Positively, as long as the earth endures, certain things will never cease. He mentions four things. First, **seedtime and harvest**, secondly, **cold and heat**, thirdly, **summer and winter**, and fourthly, **day and night**. As long as the earth exists, the cycle of life will continue (8:22). This is what Jeremiah calls the covenant with day and night (Jeremiah 31:35-37, 33:17-26). **The rabbis teach that this oath would only be enforced as long as the earth lasts. But in the last days, ADONAI will destroy the earth completely and renew it, and at that time He will not be restrained by this oath.** This closely resembles the view of Peter in the Renewed Covenant. **The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (Second Peter 3:7)**. After the thousand-year rule of Jesus Christ on this earth, there will be a new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and first earth will have passed away (Revelation 21:1).

Although there would never again be a worldwide judgment there would be a perpetual testimony that could be **clearly seen** by all mankind yet to come. The testimony of the Flood is seen everywhere in the structure of the rocks of the earth's surface, the worldwide *fossil graveyard*, and the universal evidence of *catastrophism*. Man's **sin** nature has distorted both into a system of *evolution* and *uniformitarianism*. But the Bible says that even though **they deliberately forget they** are still held accountable (**Second Peter 3:5**) because **what may be known about God is plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20)**. Mankind is held accountable because the evidence is everywhere for all who have eyes to see. **The Lord is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9b)**.

ADONAI was going to make a covenant, or an agreement, with **Noah**. We will see this new beginning as we begin the next chapter. This covenant is a very important one. When **God** made it with **Noah**, He made it with you and me and the entire human family that is on the earth today.¹⁵⁹