

275.1: Flood and Tower of Babel (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 6 Updated)  
[“Noah ... Prepared an Ark to the Saving of His House”](#)

Framing

As usual, I am going to encourage us to focus on the lessons from these stories. It is easy to get obsessed with the question of whether the flood really happened according to our global, satellite image way of thinking, or muse about the earth being baptized (were there angelic witnesses making sure that Everest was completely covered?) And I love languages more than most (and have studied 12), but the exact history of the thousands of languages on the earth is a far less urgent issue than whether we can communicate effectively with our loved ones.

Productive Sunday School

1. Reminder: Ways to read scripture (Like order of operations)
  - a. Literary: What does the text say and mean?
  - b. Personal application: What are the implications for the way we live our lives, personal and relationships?
  - c. Theological: What does this text teach us about God and the gospel? How does this text relate to other scriptural passages on the same topic?
  - d. Historical: What is the relationship of this text to what happened in history, including the story of how the text itself was written, transmitted, and collected?
  - e. The good news is that we can feel the spirit and apply the scriptures even if we don't understand the history or all the theological implications, but it is essential that we feel empowered to test scripture by the spirit, to “challenge and be challenged” by the scriptures, rather than feeling we need to defend a particular interpretation. Sometimes literal interpretation of scripture can make God seem like a jerk, including this story of a global flood.
2. Catastrophe and Preparedness
3. Theodicy and natural disasters
4. Tower of Babel: Guess what? Each of us DOES speak a different language!
5. Covenants, rainbows, and the promise to do better

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Catastrophe and Preparedness (external preparedness, but even more important, internal, spiritual, emotional. Can we adapt to change and challenge?) Life is an adventure navigating the forces of order and chaos (chaos brings both life and death, order both stabilizes and stifles)

Floods to happen, both metaphorical and literal. Our inner and outer worlds are overwhelmed by forces beyond our control, and we need to be ready, both internally and logistically.

Theodicy and natural disasters (tragedy is inevitable, but I refuse to believe that God commands it. There are human-caused disasters and natural disasters, and human treatment of the planet is increasing natural disasters)

Tower of Babel: Idiolect!! (No, not a dumb language, YOUR personal language!) The challenge of interpersonal communication. The metaphor of learning a new language can motivate us to learn to understand someone else's language and way of experiencing the world. Challenges and importance of communication, how we all speak idiolects, need to find ways to cross the communication barriers

(Just finished a book called Listening and Caring Skills, mentioned that most of us have a primary way of experiencing the world and thus communicating, visual, auditory, or feeling) (Listen for key words: That is clear, vs. that rings true, vs. my gut tells me...)

Most important is that we need to be aware that what we hear is shaped by our assumptions, biases, and own feelings, so it is important to have a conversation and be willing to be corrected. Summarize back what you are hearing, be humble, ask if you have understood. The distance between one person and another can only be transcended through this humble and open and loving communication

1. Covenants, rainbows, and the promise to do better

Two Flood Stories stitched together:

J source, folksy, hands-on God	Priestly source, interested in numbers, purity etc.
7:1-5,7,16b-20, 22-23; 8:2b-3a, 6, 8-12, 13b, 20-22	7:6, 8-16a, 21, 24; 8:1-2a, 3b-5, 7, 13a, 14-19
<p>7 Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation. <sup>2</sup>Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and its mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and its mate; <sup>3</sup>and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth. <sup>4</sup>For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.’ <sup>5</sup>And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him. <sup>7</sup>And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. <sup>16</sup>...and the LORD shut him in.</p> <p>17 The flood continued for forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. <sup>18</sup>The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. <sup>19</sup>The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; <sup>20</sup>the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep. <sup>22</sup>everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died. <sup>23</sup>He blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air; they were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah</p>	<p>6 Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth.</p> <p><sup>8</sup>Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, <sup>9</sup>two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. <sup>1</sup></p> <p><sup>0</sup>And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.</p> <p>11 In the six-hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. <sup>12</sup>The rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>On the very same day Noah with his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons, entered the ark, <sup>14</sup>they and every wild animal of every kind, and all domestic animals of every kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature. <sup>15</sup>They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which</p>

was left, and those that were with him in the ark.

<sup>2</sup>...and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained, <sup>3</sup>...and the waters gradually receded from the earth.

<sup>6</sup> At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; <sup>9</sup>but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. <sup>10</sup>He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; <sup>11</sup>and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. <sup>12</sup>Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

<sup>13</sup> ...and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying.

there was the breath of life. <sup>16</sup>And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him... <sup>21</sup>And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; <sup>24</sup>And the waters swelled on the earth for one hundred and fifty days.

<sup>8</sup>But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; <sup>2</sup>the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed... At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; <sup>4</sup>and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup>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 appeared. <sup>7</sup>and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

<sup>13</sup> In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth... <sup>14</sup>In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. <sup>15</sup>Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup>‘Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. <sup>17</sup>Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.’ <sup>18</sup>So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’

<p>20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup>And when the LORD smelt the pleasing odour, the LORD said in his heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.</p> <p><sup>22</sup> As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.’</p>	<p>wives. <sup>19</sup>And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.</p>
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The Flood and the ANEworldview (bring up the other flood narratives)

Tower of Babel

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Sunday School

- I. Framing thoughts/warnings (bring up how problematic literal belief in this story is. This section will present it as constructively as possible, but I still recommend towards the end asking if anyone has any questions or comments about the flood story, or if it would go over even ask if anyone has ever been bothered by it)
- II. God of the Flood (focus on Moses reading, sorrow, regret)
- III. Go over Bible reading (Use the Jewish Study Bible, lots of good points to bring up even in a Sunday School context)
- IV. Environmentalism and the Flood
- V. <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/environmental-stewardship-conservation>

VI. Covenants and renewal (both scriptural and personal application)

275.3: Flood and Tower of Babel (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 6, Study Notes)

[“Noah ... Prepared an Ark to the Saving of His House”](#)

- A discussion of the flood and Tower of Babel narratives in Biblical and historical context (as well as reviewing a few other Ancient Near Eastern Flood stories)
- Some theological possibilities for understanding the relationship between these events and LDS scripture
- Insights from science
- Reflections on the nature of God
- The benefits of wrestling with scripture in a “challenge and be challenged by” approach.