

The incredible story of Noah and the flood



Highland Views

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Columnist

With all the late spring rains it won't surprise anyone that floods, faithful families and floating zoos came to mind. Most people, even many Jews, Christians and Muslims, may never read biblical stories after childhood, but in this case, I suggest a re-reading.

You heard it right. The secular guy is inviting you to go find a Bible and read the story of Noah again, or for the first time.

But first, a warning and disclaimer: Rather than inspiring faith, this story may actually do the opposite. There are shocking surprises ahead.

The biblical story of Noah can be found in the book of Genesis, chapters 5-10. Now I assure you, a story taking up to six chapters in sacred scripture is exceptional. Six chapters of God's holy word centering on one story of one man: Noah.

I suspect most of you won't read the story, so I'll offer some highlights:

- Noah is 600 years old (he dies at 950, so he's feeling very youthful here).

- He's "righteous" and "walks with God" (we aren't told what that means — where did they walk?)

- The New World just created by the Lord of the Universe is suddenly "wicked" and "evil" and "violent." The "thoughts of their hearts" were inclined to "evil." (This isn't explained either).

- God is sorry He (the male deity here) made the earth, infested with these terrible humans (the original says that God "repents" — He's VERY sorry).

- Rather than fix this mess, God decides to "destroy" and "blot out" not just a little bit of creation ... "Everything shall DIE!"

- Noah is given divine blueprints and told to build a boat, hustle his family on-



"Beginning of the Flood," a photo from Pisgah National Forest. CHRIS HIGHLAND

board and gather up all birds, beetles, butterflies and buffalo, male and female. A Big Storm is coming.

- It rains a lot, for 40 days and 40 nights, and the water covers the earth for a year! (That's a long time to be on a boat with all those animals ... let alone with your family. And no books, no television, no phones. This is definitely not a cruise ship.)

- Out of great love, compassion and justice, every living thing is wiped out.

- A crow is sent out first (actually a raven). Then the famous dove.

- What is the first thing Noah does after saving all those animals? He rounds up the best ones and ... burns them! Yes, that's right, he "offers them

up as burnt offerings" to the Lord. You would think God would NOT be happy, but God apparently likes the smell of barbecue.

- Noah and his family are "blessed" and told to make lots of children (let's not think about the fact that only Noah's family has survived. On the other hand, this is God's Word, so shouldn't we think about it?).

- Finally (for this secular summary) God puts His "bow" in the sky (why He has a bow isn't explained). But Why does God put a rainbow in the sky? To remind people of faith that He won't destroy the earth again? To do something pretty we can take pictures of and store in the Cloud?

No. God puts His bow in the sky to remind HIMSELF to never again flood the earth and destroy all life. Think about that. Or, maybe better not to.

Here's the God that the Story of Noah presents:

- Plays favorites. Makes huge mistakes; feels real bad about His mess, but the "best option" He can think of is: kill everything that lives! (Now think here: He is unable or unwilling to find a better option ... can you think of a better option?). Loves the smell of barbecued endangered species. Needs a "sign" in the sky to remind Himself NOT to destroy all life again.

We might ask how this amazingly disturbing story teaches values or faith. Is it fit for Sunday school, theological school or any other kind of education?

The Story of Noah. Read it.

Postscript: some of my liberal/progressive believer friends wave this off as "a myth." I learned that way back in seminary, too. But it's in The Book; this myth is in scripture. What do you DO with it? Do you agree with the "values" in this? Do you believe in the God presented in this story? If not, and you remove these six chapters from "inspired scripture," what's next?

Why would someone take seriously a book that presents a story like this?

Some will say this whole discussion is disrespectful. I understand. But are we not to read, think about and question what we read in any book, including the holy books?

To "know-ah" more about the history of faith, maybe we should read about Noah, and other Bible stories, again.

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