

Mount Ararat: A Reflection on God's Resting Place

Genesis 7 v 24 to Genesis 8 v 5 reads:

The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky.

*The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month **the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.***

*The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month **the tops of the mountains became visible.***

This is the Word of the Lord.

The ark built by Noah finally came to **rest** after the devastating flood. On a *range of mountains the ark rested*. Imagine the moment. After so many seemingly never-ending days of incessant rain, rising waters, anxious waiting, with nothing but water everywhere, and only a watery world to look out upon, the ark finally stopped. It has reached its **resting place**. *The mountains of Ararat.*

Noah and his family must have been mightily relieved that the storm was finally over and God had brought them to a place of safety. A resting place. Ararat became the starting point for a new world. Everything had gone except what God had saved on the ark.

God gave Noah and his family and all those creatures aboard the ark the chance to begin again and God did not leave them without hope. Hope emerged quickly in the form of a rainbow – a new beautiful creation arched over the sky above.

Genesis 9 v 12-13

*And God said "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, **a covenant for all generations to come.** I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.*

God promises to all creation, *to every succeeding generation*, that there will be a future which will be provided by His hands and which will rest on the power of His almighty word of promise. God's rainbow promise has never failed and continues to our day!

Mount Ararat remains a powerful reminder of God's protection and faithfulness as seen in the safe resting place for Noah and his family. Noah and his loved ones stayed safe through the worst storm the world has ever seen. They were safe in the ark. I am reminded of the rousing words of faith in Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength, and ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters

*roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. **The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.** (our ark) Psalm 46: 1-2,7.*

The ark was their refuge during the flood and when the time came for the flood to end, God brought them to a resting place. I am blessed by words from another Psalm about God's sovereignty and control over all things: Listen to this word from the Lord who reigns supreme:

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever. The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. (Psalm 29: 10-11)

Friends, God is not only our powerful refuge and fortress, He is not only our ark of refuge, God is **our resting place**. We find that perfect resting place for our souls in God. Oh, how this world of violence and turbulence needs a resting place! As the great Augustine of Hippo once prayed: *O Lord, our hearts are restless **until they find their rest in you.** Amen!*

Jesus said to his followers, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened (by the storms of life) and I will **give you rest.**" (Matthew 11:28) Anyone in this world can find the perfect resting place in Jesus. The wonderful thing about Christ and the uniqueness of the Christian faith is that we can enter God's rest **now – in this world.** (Hebrews 4:1 f) Yes, there is eternal rest to come, but there is a resting place **here and now**, whatever national, international, political, or social tempest rage around us. We rest in and with the One who can still storms.*

God brought the storm in Noah's day to an abrupt end. He shut the heavens. He closed the doors of the springs under the earth. Jesus stilled a powerful and unruly storm on Lake Galilee. We are told God sent a wind that the waters might recede. Many centuries later God would send a powerful wind to part a sea – the Red Sea. The people who crossed on the sea on dry ground *were heading to a mountain* to worship. (Exodus 3:12)

God does not forget his people – ever! God **remembered Noah**. God remembers you. God remembers you when there is chaos around you.

When the ark came to rest, Noah did not just get off and get on with life. The first thing he did was to **worship God**. His new life began with thanks and praise. In the bible there is an abiding connection between mountains and worship, great mountains, and great sacrifices. You may recall the words of the Samaritan woman to Jesus:

"Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is Jerusalem." (John 4:20) Note the Temple in Jerusalem was built on a mountain.

Genesis 8:20

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings to the Lord.

Noah did not forget the One who had kept him safe. He took time to thank God and to show his gratitude for everything God had done. Do we take special time out to thank God for His daily goodness and protection over us?

Ararat speaks about **God's mercy**. Even though the flood destroyed so much, God was still there to guide and guard Noah and his family toward a new beginning. We too can be assured

by the fact that God's love and mercy are always there for us, (Psalm 23:6) no matter how hard life gets. Those mercies never fail. Eternal goodness never dries up! The mercies are new each and every morning. (Lamentations 2: 22-23)

When we think about Mount Ararat, it is a reminder that God can bring you and I through any storm and offer us a brand-new start. Are you in a storm now? Remember Ararat. The Resting Place. God is always faithful just like he was to Noah and his family. Even when everything seems lost, God has a plan and a future, and he will guide us to a place of safety and rest.

As Noah's story show us, God does not forget his people and He always keeps His promises. And we too can begin again after the storm. Mountains like Ararat were often places where God entered covenants of faithfulness with His people. Here the rainbow arose in the sky and continues to do this in our fearful generation. The old covenant under Moses came about at the base of **Mount Sinai**, the new covenant from the arms of Jesus, from the cross of **Calvary's Mount**. We worship and follow a God of faithful love and mercy, and covenantal authority and power. We need not fear. God is our fortress. Our ark.

As we share in this period of reflecting upon the importance and theological symbolism and significance of mountains in the bible, may our sense of spiritual confidence and strength grow in Jesus Christ the Rock of Ages, the Ancient of Days. May our faith become as strong and secure as a great mountain. May we speak as the Psalmist once did;

O Lord, when you favoured me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face I was dismayed. (Psalm 30:7)

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion which cannot be shaken but endures for ever. (Psalm 125:1)

May we know the favour of our God resting upon us (Psalm 90:17), and may we know the reality of God's surrounding and protection. Let God be our resting place.

*As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people **both now** and for evermore. (Psalm 125:2)*

Amen

(Revd Peter J Clarkson 13.1.26)