

Noah's Flood, The Ark, and Hollywood

You cannot overestimate the seriousness of the Biblical Flood as described in Genesis 6-8.

Something occurred, some behavior of mankind, which caused the Creator-God to destroy all life on the planet and start all over again. What exactly that sin was is a great mystery, but it had something to do with the mixing of seeds, and it certainly was not unequally yoked marriages between the “sons of god” (Sethites) and the Cainites! Something happened in the angelic realm, something so serious that it affected human life as God created it (maybe even animal life). It was so serious it provoked the Creator to utterly destroy His Creation, one that He was very pleased with at the beginning. The fallen angels who precipitated this sin, according to Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, are being kept in chains until the final judgment (Jude 6). It was apparently significant for Jesus, for after his death on the cross, He descended to their place of confinement and made a proclamation of victory to these same angelic beings (I Pet. 3:19-20). Noah and his family were apparently not affected by this mixing and found “favor” in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). Noah is described as a righteous man, and in the New Testament he is listed as a great man of faith. The Apostle Peter informs us that Noah was a great preacher of righteousness (II Pet. 2:4-5). What we learn from the biblical account is that God, after announcing His intent to destroy the world, gives mankind a grace period of 120 years. It was during this time period that Noah was to construct an Ark while preaching on the side. Amazingly, he had nary a convert as a result of his preaching!

The Flood that God brought about on the world at that time was so catastrophic that it altered the

world's geology forever, and probably caused the land mass to breakup into the continents we now know. Today, for the most part, when we dig into the earth's sediments we have a clear testimony of this catastrophic and tragic event. There is a bright side, however; God made a covenant with Noah never to judge the world in this manner again signified by the rainbow. It is also obvious, though not explicitly stated in Scripture, that the Ark of Noah is a beautiful type of Christ in that it illustrates how today we are saved by being *in Christ*.

The Ark itself not only testifies of God's grace but is also a great testimony of the utter reliability of the Scriptural account of the Flood. How? Ancient Mesopotamian flood stories have interesting parallels to the biblical account indicating there was a collective memory in the mind of ancient men of this tragic event. But there is one problem: several of these extra-biblical accounts (Atrahasis, and Gilgamesh) describe an ark that is either a cube or one that is circular (a coracle). Neither would be seaworthy in the kind of flood the bible describes. On the other hand, the physical dimensions of the Ark as described in the bible are the maximum ratios (30 length, 3 height 5 width), you would need to ride out a storm involving great tidal waves and earth upheaval. Tell me how can this be? If the biblical story of the Noah had a mythological origin, how would Moses have known this? It's not an option to not answer the question! It can't be an accident that the writer of Genesis knew (or was told) how to build a boat that would have the maximum stability in violent seas! This was no river flood. If it were just a river flood, why would you need an ark 475 feet long with a capacity of over 500 railroad cars? Or, why would you need an ark at all? Why not just have the animals and man migrate to higher ground? Yes, you need to answer the question. Now, some, calling themselves Evangelicals, are assigning the flood story to some level of myth status. Oh really! You mean you can pick and

choose which is true history? Well then, what about the Resurrection? Is that myth, too? That's pretty hard to believe as well!

Now Hollywood is fully aware of the popularity and interest in the story of Noah's Ark.

Throughout the year for the last several decades a plethora of stories about the discovery of Noah's Ark have appeared in the tabloids. It seems it is discovered every summer! This is not to mention the many documentaries on the subject on the cable channels (and sometimes the major networks) all of which must make money, or they would not continue to make them. They also know that the first biblical story the child of a Christian family is exposed to in Sunday School, is the story of Noah, the Ark and the animals. So, why not take this great dramatic tale and make it into a movie? I applaud the move. However, knowing the animosity Hollywood has toward anything Christian I would be amiss by not having my doubts about how they would treat such a film.

Months ago, before the release of the film, *Noah*, (3/28/2014), I started collecting reviews by people (mostly Christian leaders) who were shown various versions of the movie. Hollywood wanted to appear to be open minded about suggestions for how to treat this biblical drama. Most of the reviews were mixed in their appraisal. Hollywood, i.e., Paramount Studios, sensing it would be controversial, made frequent use of focus groups, along with much polling and consulting with these same influential Christian leaders. After all, much is at stake when you have a \$130 million budget movie. This does not include another \$50-60 million spent to promote it!

So, uncharacteristic of me, I was there to view the movie on opening night. I was certainly prepared after reading through a three-inch thick file of reviews. One thing is obvious, this movie sets a record for the number of reviews, and they are still coming. I hope you can endure one more.

The movie was about what I expected. The story line only vaguely resembled the biblical account: there was a flood, and a family was saved by entering an ark. What Hollywood loves to do, especially with biblical stories, is to empty them of biblical values and replace them with their own materialist, pagan, and or, new age values. This movie was a prime example. Aronofsky long ago saw the possibilities of the Noah story as vehicle for his own environmental and Gaia religion. This movie is not about a catastrophic judgment brought about by God because of man's sin (as described above) but because man is destroying the environment. Noah was chosen to build an ark primarily to save the animals because the Creator saw that he cared and would get the job done. Mankind, according to Noah in the movie, and according to the movie's creator, is a virus that is destroying what was once a pristine planet. Aronofsky says his movie portends another flood that is coming if we do not stop global warming (*New Yorker*, May 17, 2014, p48).

In the movie, Noah is not a preacher of righteousness who is untainted by the wickedness of the antediluvian world, but rather a vegetarian and the world's first environmentalist who is desirous of all human life being destroyed including his own family. He consents to building an ark when he receives some sort of a revelation via a dream from "the Creator." The main purpose of the ark is to deliver the animals and not save man (Earth First!). Well, this is what I would have

expected from Aronofsky who was asked about his belief in God and his worldview. This is how he replied: *The Big Bang happened, and all this star material turned into stars, and stars turned into planets, and planets turned into life. We're all just borrowing this matter and energy for a little bit, while we're here, until it goes back into everything else, and that connects us all.*" He went on to say: *"The messed- up thing is how distracted we are and disconnected from that connection, and the result of it is what we're doing to this planet and to ourselves...What are we doing to ourselves? It's a complete disconnect. To me, that's where the spirituality is. Whatever you want to call that connection—some people would use that term God. That to me, is what I think is holy.* (From *The Christian Post*).

So, in the movie, many elements of the original biblical story are turned on its head. The Nephilim, i.e., the rock monsters, turn out to be good in that they help Noah build the Ark and defend it from the Cainites (the meat eaters). In another major divergence, Noah did not want any child-bearing women to be on the ark. The wife of Shem was a young girl (Ilya) adopted by Noah's family as a child, and as a result of previous abuse, she is barren. Methuselah, the grandfather of Noah, heals her, however. The latter is depicted as a Shamanistic hermit living in a cave who seems a quart low on the dipstick! When Shem's wife gets pregnant Noah vows to kill the baby if it happens to be a girl. Later, on the ark she gives birth to twin girls. Noah immediately moves to kill them, but upon looking at their faces he finds he cannot do it. He then apologizes to the Creator and tells him he just couldn't do it. You are left with the impression that he did not carry out the Creator's wish.

Now all art is somewhat subversive. Your original attention is supposed to be attracted to the

beauty and the creativity of the work. However, the artist, who has a worldview, makes all art biographical. He wants to and works hard to get his message across in a latent rather than a blatant manner. Aronofsky's movie is certainly no exception; his environmental religion is not so latent, however, but there are other elements that you may only pick up after multiple viewing. The Shamanism, as mentioned above, magic, occultism, and the Jewish mysticism (The Kabbalah) are ever so subtle. The snakeskin even seems, dare I say, Luciferian!

Do I believe a movie maker artist should have creative license? Of course! We know very little about Noah's character and the other characters in the biblical account. What Aronofsky does, however, is far more than license. He himself said: *This is the least biblical film ever made*. I'm sorry, but I'm not overly impressed with Aronofsky's end product. For me, the film is not a biblical epic at all; it fits more into the category of a disaster film with elements of a cartoon (the rock beings) and a horror flick. Hollywood has come a long way in developing its art form. I refer to the quality of the acting and technical aspects. In this film, you never really latch on to any of the characters. Russell Crowe, as Noah, has a good reputation (Academy Award) for his art. Here, however, he seems uncomfortable in his role. I found his dialog at times hard to discern; his voice seemed raspy and indistinct. The reviews I read (several dozen), for the most part, raved about the special effects. I'm not one of them. These computer-generated scenarios are fake, and they looked that way (the ball of snakes, etc.). It would be interesting to know exactly what percentage of the movie was computer-generated.

All in all, I can't give this movie a very high grade. Seeing it once is enough. This isn't true if a movie is a great work of art, and it is not one you would want your children to see. Ironically, it

is a preachy movie. No one caterwauls more than Hollywood when some Christian organization (Sherwood Baptist Church, Watermark, etc.) makes a film with a message. For me this is a message movie: “If we take care of planet earth, perhaps we will be spared future destruction.” Noah says as much in the movie: “If we work to save it, maybe He will save us.” (Not exact wording).

For more insight into the mind of Darren Aronofsky, I recommend the article *Heavy Weather*, from the March 17, 2014 issue of *The New Yorker*.