

When God Seems Silent

(Genesis 8:1–22)

The Flood has destroyed every living thing on earth. Noah and his family have been in the ark for 150 days (7:23–24). They must have been depressed being cooped up with around 70,000 animals and no air freshener. And, apparently, Noah has not heard one word from God during this time. Have you ever had a lingering problem you prayed about, but God remained silent? Did it seem as though God had forgotten you? If so, this chapter is for you. It reveals four actions to take when God seems silent. First is ...

Be persistent (8:1–5)

Though He has been silent for about five months, God remembers Noah and all the animals with him in the ark (8:1a). Does this mean God temporarily forgot Noah? No! When the Bible says *God remembered Noah*, it means, with loving care, God is about to intervene in Noah's life. Whenever the Bible states God remembers someone, it means God is ready to deliver that person. Of course, God has not forgotten Noah! What does Psalm 139:2 declare?

God has not forgotten you either. Even though He may not have given you any new direction in life for a long time, God will intervene at the proper time. Meanwhile, be persistent and continue to faithfully obey what was last revealed as God's will for you—however long ago that may be.

After 150 days, God causes a wind to blow. At the same time, the *fountains* of underground waters stop flowing, the rains from the sky cease, and the waters recede (8:1b–3). Where did all the water go? With water covering the entire world, wind and evaporation cannot account for lowering the water level by any significant amount. However, the rearranging of the earth's surface, because of the oceans of pressurized water that burst from beneath the earth's crust, probably caused many areas of the earth to collapse. This would cause a deepening of ocean basins to receive the waters. How does Psalm 104:8 describe what happened?

Then, we read in Psalm 104:9 God has set a boundary that water cannot pass, so it will never again cover the entire earth.

After five months, the ark comes *to rest on the mountains of Ararat*. The water continues to recede for two and a half months, until other mountain peaks become visible (8:4–5).

Today, on the border between Turkey and Armenia there is an impressive 16,854-foot peak known as Mount Ararat. It's higher than Mount Whitney (14,505 feet) in the Sierra Nevada range in California—the highest peak in the continental United States.

Although Mount Ararat is the traditional site of the ark's landing, the Bible doesn't specify which peak, just the general area of the *mountains of Ararat* (8:4). To prove the truth of the Bible, many have gone to Mount Ararat looking for evidence of the ark. However, material evidence is not necessary. This is because of what truth in 2 Corinthians 5:7?

When God seems silent during the storms of life, like Noah, be persistent and ...

Be perceptive (8:6–13)

After patiently waiting another forty days, Noah releases a raven. It keeps flying back and forth until the floodwaters dry up (8:6–7). The raven is a scavenger bird that will eat carcasses, so it doesn't return. Therefore, after seven days what does Noah do (8:8)?

The dove returns because there is no place to land or make a nest. After seven days, Noah releases another dove, which returns with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. After seven more days Noah releases it again and it does not come back (8:9–12). This means the storm and the danger are over. To this day, the symbol of a dove carrying an olive branch is a sign of peace.

Sometimes, when we feel God has abandoned us, He gives us a sign, like the olive leaf. The sign may come through a friend who happens to show up, bringing concern and love when we think nobody cares. It may come through a phone call, a letter, an event, or a spiritual impression. God always sends a sign that says, "I love you and will see you safely through the storm." In the midst of life's storms, God will give you a sign of His love and care, if you are perceptive.

Noah does not impatiently disembark the ark. Instead, he removes the *covering* from the ark and sees the ground's surface is dry (8:13b). The fact Noah removes the *covering*, or roof, means the ark will rapidly deteriorate. Therefore, it is highly unlikely any remains of the ark will ever be found. Though expeditions to Mount Ararat have produced much speculation, I don't think God wants us to find the ark and prove the Flood. Why, according to Jesus in John 20:29c?

God doesn't want us to rely on the ark, or any other relic, to sustain our faith. He wants us to perceive His working in our lives. Therefore, when God seems silent during the storms of life, be persistent, be perceptive, and ...

Be patient (8:14–19)

Noah does not rush out of the ark; he patiently waits for God’s instructions. Then, *in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month* (8:14), or a year and ten days after Noah entered the ark (see 7:11), God tells Noah to come out of the ark, along with the rest of his family and all the animals (8:15–19).

It appears the last time God spoke to Noah was when He told him to go into the ark (7:1), more than a year before. Why does God sometimes seem silent in the midst of life’s storms? You pray, but it seems your words don’t get past the ceiling. When there is a tragedy, an unfair situation, family problems, or financial reverses, we seek God’s direction, but He seems to be silent in the midst of it all.

We often can’t hear God speak when we have problems because we make so much noise complaining. You may have been waiting a long time for God to intervene. You may have been waiting years for your spouse to get right with God. You may have been waiting for healing or for things to change at work. During those kinds of storms, remember what promise in Isaiah 40:31?

When God seems silent during the storms of life, be persistent, be perceptive, be patient, and ...

Be praiseful when the storm is over (8:20–22)

After Noah, his family, and all the animals come out of the ark, he builds *an altar to the LORD*. On the *altar*, he sacrifices some of the clean animals from the ark (8:20). This is the first time the word *altar* is found in the Bible. Noah’s sacrifice is to express gratitude and praise for what God has done for him. What is the New Testament equivalent, according to Hebrews 13:15?

Delighted with his generous sacrifice, God says in His heart He will never again curse the ground and never again destroy every living creature as He has done (8:21). Does God change His mind, for we are told in 2 Peter 3:10 the entire earth will *one day be burned up*? No, God promises He will never again destroy the earth “*as I have done*” with water. The earth will endure until Christ returns to destroy evil and this present earth. What does John see in Revelation 21:1, which is a fulfillment of Isaiah 65:17?

This chapter ends with God saying as long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, as well as day and night (8:22). This means the uniformity of the seasons will now continue until the end of time. This doesn't mean there won't be temporary interruptions, such as famines and droughts, but the earth's rotation and orbit around the sun will be predictable and dependable until the end of time. How is this certainty revealed in Psalm 50:1?

The Hebrew word translated summons, or "called" (QĀRĀ', kaw-raw'), includes calling by name. In fact, God has named every star (Psa. 147:4).

When God seems silent in the storms of life ... **be persistent, be perceptive, be patient, and be praiseful when the storm is over.**