

HERE BEGINNETH THE HISTORY OF NOAH {WHICH IS READ IN THE CHURCH ON} THE FIRST SUNDAY IN SEXAGESIMA¹

Caxton added this life to his edition of the Golden Legend, but it was not a part of Voragine's original.

NOAH'S ANCESTORS AND CHILDREN

After that Adam was dead, died Eve and was buried by [beside] him. At the beginning, in the first age, the people lived long. Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years, and Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years. St. Jerome saith that he died the same year that the flood was. Then Noah was the tenth from Adam in the generation of Seth, in whom the first age was ended. The seventy interpreters say that this first age dured two thousand two hundred and forty-four years. St. Jerome saith not fully two thousand, and Methodius full two thousand, etc. Noah then was a man perfect and righteous and kept God's commandment. And when he was five hundred years old, he gat Shem, Ham, and Japhet.

THE SINFULNESS OF NOAH'S CONTEMPORARIES

This time men began to multiply on the earth, and the children of God, that is to say of Seth, as religious, saw the daughters of men, that is to say of Cain, and were overcome by concupiscence and took them to their wives. This time was so much sin on the earth in the sin of lechery, which was misused against nature, wherefore God was displeased and determined in his prescience [foreknowledge] to destroy man that he had made, and said, "I shall put man away that I have made, and my spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is flesh." As who said, "I shall not punish man perpetually as I do the devil, for man is frail, and yet ere I shall destroy him I shall give him space and time of repentance and to amend him, if he wild [goes wild]. The time of repentance shall be one hundred and twenty years." Then Noah, righteous and perfect, walked with God, that is in his laws, and the earth was corrupt by sin and filled.

GOD COMMANDS NOAH TO BUILD THE ARK

When God saw the earth to be corrupt, and that every man was corrupt by sin upon the earth, he said to Noah: The end of all people is come tofore me except them that shall be saved, and the earth is replenished [filled] with their wickedness. I shall destroy them with the earth (*id est*, with the fertility of the earth). Make to thee an ark of tree [wood], hewn, polished, and squared. And make there divers places, and lime it with clay and pitch within and without, that is to wit with glue which is so fervent [strong?] that the timber may not be loosed. And thou shalt make it three hundred cubits of length, fifty in breadth, and thirty of height. And make therein divers distinctions of places and chambers and of wardrobes.

¹ Sexagesima Sunday is the second Sunday before Lent – that is, the eighth Sunday before Easter.

And the ark had a door for to enter in and come out, and a window was made thereon which that the Hebrews say was of crystal. This ark was on making, from the beginning that God commanded first to make it, one hundred and twenty years.

In which time Noah oft desired the people to leave their sin, and how he had spoken with God, and that he was commanded to make the ship, for God should destroy them for their sin, but if they left it. And they mocked him and said that he raved and was a fool, and gave no faith to his saying and continued in their sin and wickedness.

Then, when the ark was perfectly made, God bade him to take into it of all the beasts of the earth, and also of the fowls of the air, of each two, male and female, that they may live. And also of all the meats [foods] of the earth that be comestible [edible], “that they may serve and feed thee and them.” And Noah did all that our Lord commanded him.

Then said our Lord to Noah: Enter thou and all thy household into the ark, that is to say thou and thy wife and thy three sons and their three wives. I have seen that thou art rightful in this generation. Of all beasts that be clean thou shalt take seven, and of unclean beasts but only two. And of the birds seven and seven, male and female, that they may be saved on the face of the earth. Yet after seven days I shall rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and shall destroy all the substance that I made on the earth.

And Noah did all things that our Lord commanded him. He was six hundred years old when the flood began on the earth. And then Noah entered in and his sons, his wife, and the wives of his sons, all into the ark to eschew the waters of the flood. Of all the beasts and the fowls, and of all that moved and had life on earth, male and female, Noah took in to him as our Lord had bidden.

THE GREAT FLOOD

And seven days after they were entered, the water began to increase. The wells of the abysms [the reservoirs of water beneath the earth] were broken, and the cataracts of heaven were opened, that is to say the clouds, and it rained on the earth forty days and forty nights. And the ark was elevate and borne upon the waters on height above the mountains and hills, for the water was grown higher fifteen cubits above all the mountains, that it should purge and wash the filth of the air.

Then was consumed all that was on the earth living, man, woman, and beast and birds. And all that ever bare life, so that nothing abode upon the earth, for the water was fifteen cubits above the highest mountain of the earth. And when Noah was entered he shut the door fast without forth, and limed it with glue. And so the waters abode elevate in height an hundred and fifty days from the day that Noah entered in.

And our Lord then remembered Noah and all them that were in the ark with him, and also on the beasts and fowls, and ceased the waters. And the wells and cataracts were closed, and the rains were prohibited, and forbidden to rain no more. The seventh month, the twenty-seventh day

of the month, the ark rested on the hills of Armenia. The tenth month, of the first day of the month, the tops of the hills appeared first.

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE

After these forty days after the lessing of the waters, Noah opened the window and desired sore to have tidings of ceasing of the flood. And sent out a raven for to have tidings, and when he was gone he returned no more again, for peradventure she found some dead carrion of a beast swimming on the water, and lighted thereon to feed her and was left there.

After this he sent out a dove which flew out, and when she could find no place to rest ne set her foot on, she returned unto Noah and he took her in. Yet then were not the tops of the hills bare. And seven days after he sent her out again, which at even returned, bearing a branch of an olive tree, burgeoning, in her mouth. And after other seven days he sent her again, which came no more again.

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY LEAVE THE ARK

Then in the year of Noah six hundred and one, the first day of the month, Noah opened the covering of the ark and saw that the earth was dry, but he durst not go out, but abode the commandment of our Lord. The second month, the twenty-seventh day of the month, our Lord said to Noah: Go out of the ark, thou and thy wife, thy sons and the wives of thy sons. He commanded them to go conjointly out which disjointly entered, and let go out with them all the beasts and fowls living, and all the reptiles, every each after his kind and gender, to whom our Lord said: Grow ye and multiply upon the earth.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH

Then Noah issued out and his wife, and his sons with their wives, and all the beasts, the same day a year after they entered in, every one after his gender [genus]. Noah then edified an altar to our Lord and took of all the beasts that were clean and offered sacrifice unto our Lord; and our Lord smelled the sweetness of the sacrifice and said to Noah: From henceforth I shall not curse the earth for man, for he is prone and ready to fall from the beginning of his youth. I shall no more destroy man by such vengeance.

And then our Lord blessed them and said: Grow ye and multiply the earth and be ye lords of all the beasts of the earth, of the fowls of the air, and of the fishes. I have given all things to you, but eat no flesh with the blood. I command you to slay no man, nor to shed no man's blood. I have made man after mine image. Whosomever sheddeth his brother's blood, his blood shall be shed. Go ye forth and grow and multiply and fill the earth.

This said our Lord to Noah and his sons: Lo, I have made a covenant with you and with them that shall come after you, that I shall no more bring such a flood to slay all people, and in token thereof I have set my rainbow in the clouds of heaven: for who that trespasseth I shall do justice otherwise on him.

Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. From the time of Adam until after Noah's flood, the time and season was always green and tempered; and all that time men ate no flesh, for the herbs and fruits were then of great strength and effect, they were pure and nourishing. But after the flood the earth was weaker and brought not forth so good fruit, wherefore flesh was ordained to be eaten. And then Noah began to labour for his livelihood with his sons, and began to till the earth, to destroy briars and thorns and to plant vines.

HAM LAUGHS AT HIS FATHER AND IS CURSED

And so on a time Noah had drunk so much of the wine that he was drunk, and lay and slept, and his privy member lay bare and open. Ham, his middlest son espied it, and laughed and scorned his father, and called his brethren to see, which came backward for to cover their father, and would not look on it, and rebuked Ham of his folly and sin. And when Noah was covered with the mantle, anon he awoke, and when he understood how Ham his son had scorned him, he cursed him and also his son Canaan, and blessed Shem and Japhet because they covered him.

All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years and then he died. And after his death his sons dealed all the world between them, Shem had all Asia, Ham Africa, and Japhet all Europe. Thus was it departed. Asia is the best part and is as much as the other two, and that is in the east. Africa is the south part, and therein is Carthage and many rich countries, therein be blue and black men. Ham had that to his part of Africa. The third part is Europe which is in the north and west, therein is Greece, Rome and Germany. In Europe reigneth now most the Christian law and faith, wherein is many a rich realm. And so was the world departed to the three sons of Noah.

The [iconography of Noah](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

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