

**Proper 4**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Genesis 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19**

We have two interspersed accounts of the flood in Genesis, the older one from the Yahwist (J), writing in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and the other from the Priestly writer (P), writing after the Exile to Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Today's text derives from P and emphasizes the corrupting role of violence (*xamas*, 6:11) between humans and humans and between humans and beasts. Noah, however, is a righteous man—perhaps the world's only righteous man. God's justice would not allow Noah to die in the same way as his neighbors.

P is very interested in genealogy, weights, measures, and calendar, and those interests show themselves here. The *cubit* is a measure based on the distance between the elbow and the extended middle finger. The parallel story from J blames the flood on the rebellion of the sons of the gods in Genesis 6:1-4. J is the robust narrative of the flood that P expanded.

**Psalm 46**

This *hymn* celebrates God's defense of Jerusalem against her enemies. The first strophe (46:1-4) promises that God would preserve the city even if the primeval waters broke forth as they did in the time of the Flood or if the mountains surrounding Jerusalem were to fall into the water. The second strophe (46:5-8) compares this chaos of waters with the peaceful underground stream of Gihon that constituted the city's secret water supply in times of danger. The third strophe (46:9-14) reminds the inhabitants of Jerusalem that God and not the city's ancient walls comprise Jacob's true stronghold.

OR

**Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28**

In the ancient world words written in public view were not only there for the literate person to read but also for the gods. Although most Israelites were not literate, Deuteronomy commands all Israelites to inscribe the words of the Law on their doorposts and as phylacteries on their bodies as "a sign" (Hebrew *'ot*), a sign both for themselves and for God. Additionally, parents are to teach Torah to their children so as to inscribe the words of Torah on their hearts, a figure for memorization. The author of Deuteronomy believes that all Israelites, not just the king and priests, have responsibility for keeping the Torah.

**Psalm 31:1-5, 19-24**

This psalm includes both a *lament* (verses 1-18) and a *thanksgiving* (19-24). As is the case with several of the laments, the complaints are fairly general, thus allowing worshipers to use the prayer in many different situations; but the principal complaints are about enemies. After praying a lament, the worshiper would return to the Temple later to thank God for fulfilling the petition. This public declaration of God's faithfulness was designed to encourage others to call upon the Lord in times of distress, thereby enhancing God's public reputation, God's name.

**Romans 1:16-17; 3:22b-28 (29-31)**

Paul was preparing to visit Rome and its Christian community for the first time when he wrote this letter. He knew that opponents had slandered him by saying that he taught that salvation has nothing to do with the way one lives but derives only from correct belief. This misunderstanding of his teaching about salvation by faith is the subject of his letter to Rome. In this passage Paul

summarizes what he actually believes about Christ's atonement. Christ's death is like that of the Day of Atonement sacrifice, winning forgiveness for sins. This atonement was necessary since human beings had failed to gain atonement by their own works of the Law.

**Matthew 7:21-27**

These sayings are paralleled in Luke's Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:46-49) and thus derive from the Q source, a collection of sayings common to Matthew and Luke that are missing in Mark. Like all Jewish teachers of wisdom, Jesus emphasized the fact that abstract teachings are of no value to anyone but must be reflected by actual deeds in the lives of his students.

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