

Week 2. Let the waters be separated

Genesis 1.6-8

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

Introduction

Water is a powerful symbol in the bible. It represents chaos and danger, all that is unpredictable and overwhelming. It also represents God's generous provision and indeed life itself.

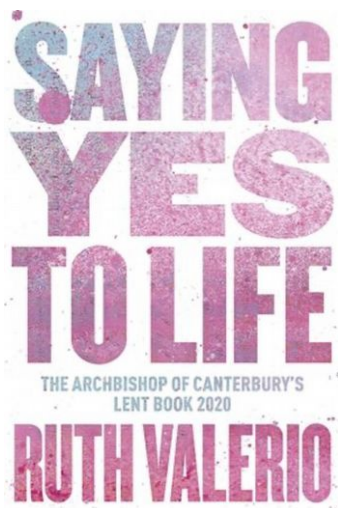
In the first verse of Genesis, the primordial chaos is represented as water, over which God speaks the creative word and order comes into being. In this passage we see God addressing the waters directly, dividing the waters in the heavens (where the rain is stored) from the waters on earth (yet to be divided from the dry land). This division provides the space between the two realms of chaos for God's orderly creation to come into being.

In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrates his lordship over the waters (e.g. Mark 4.35-41) as a pointer to his divine identity as the Creator.

Questions for Groups

Q We now know that the rain is not stored separately above the sky, but is part of a water cycle with the seas and rivers. If you wanted to make the same point as the author of Genesis about God bringing order out of chaos, how might you do it? What images would you use?

Q Ruth Valerio writes of a moment in the rain when she was overwhelmed by a feeling of closeness to God, “Saying yes to his life”. Has anything similar happened to you? Did it involve water?



Q Psalm 69 speaks of being overwhelmed by water. Looking at these verses, where would you say you are at the moment?

2 (troubled) I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.

3 (helpless) I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God.

5 (repentant) You, God, know my folly; my guilt is not hidden from you.

10 (bullied) When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn;

24 (angry) Pour out your wrath on [my enemies]; let your fierce anger overtake them.

29 (pleading) But as for me, afflicted and in pain— may your salvation, God, protect me.

30 (thankful) I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving.

35 (hopeful) for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah.

Q The River Ganges has 108 names speaking about its importance to local people, e.g. *Nata-bhiti-hrt* which means 'carrying away fear'. Think of a stretch of water important to you. What name might you give it?

Q Three theological terms and their meanings:

Perichoresis – the mutual relationship (dance) of the Trinity.

Panentheism – the idea that Creation is within and part of God.

Kenosis – the self emptying of God to make way for Creation and the self emptying of Jesus to become fully human.

Have you come across them before? Which of these do you find helpful?

Further reading you may choose to do later on

Job 36, 37 – Elihu, one of Job's 'comforters' speaks of God as utterly beyond us and completely in control of the world. How does this mesh with your experience? How do you react to God's reply in chapter 38?

Think of all the symbolism wrapped up in the water of Baptism. Read Matthew 3.13-17, Matthew 14.22-33, 1Kings 17, 2Kings 5, Ezekiel 36.25-27.

“This Changes Everything” by Naomi Klein. The book that arguably launched the environmental activist movement.