**‘Seven Pairs not Two Pairs. What?’**

***17And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. 19And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. 20Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. 21And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them.”***

***22Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.*** Genesis 6:17-22

AND…

***1Then the Lord said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. 2You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; 3also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth. 4For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.” 5And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him. 6Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth.***

***7So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood. 8Of clean animals, of animals that are unclean, of birds, and of everything that creeps on the earth, 9two by two they went into the ark to Noah, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.*** Genesis 7:1-9

These two passages are rather interesting. In the Genesis 6 passage, God instructs Noah to take into the ark *(remember the animals come to Noah, so all he has to do is take them into the ark)* two of every kind of living creature on the face of the earth. But in Chapter 7, a change is introduced into the text. Now Noah is told to take into the ark seven pairs of clean animals, but only a single pair (a male and his female mate) of the unclean animals.

Why the change, and why do we suddenly have the terms “clean” and “unclean”? These terms seems out of place. We would expect to find them in Leviticus but not in Genesis. There are two possible explanations for us to consider.

First, some biblical scholars suggest that the sudden and unexpected introduction of the seven pairs of clean animals represents a later edition to the original text. Many people recoil at such a suggestion – particularly people who have a western cultural mindset. For such people, making changes to the biblical text is not acceptable at any time. People who have an eastern cultural mindset aren’t bothered these by things. For them, the scriptures were more fluid. They could be edited, if the edits would bring greater clarity to the text without doing harm to the sacredness of the text. Westerners may have to realize that the Bible is not a product of the west but of the east and get past the possibility that the text might have been edited.

The second explanation is that the instructions Noah initially received from the Lord were given years before the animals would be brought into the ark. At this point, there wasn’t a need for the Lord to give intricate details of which animals would come to Noah. But in Genesis 7, the ark has been completed and the flood waters would soon come upon the earth. Now Noah needed specifics, and God gave them to him.[[1]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2018/02/" \l "_ftn1) Seven pairs of clean animals would come on-board but only two pairs of every unclean animal. Had the Lord not added this important detail, every clean animal and every clean bird would have become extinct when Noah sacrificed them to Lord after the flood (Genesis 8). For practical reasons, that would not have worked and God knew it. Noah was instructed to bring the seven pairs of every clean animal with him. In the end, the animals did come to Noah in pairs, so the Lord’s first instruction to Noah was also accurate.

*Kathleen*

[[1]](http://yourbibleblog.com/2018/02/" \l "_ftnref1) http://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/genesis/7.htm