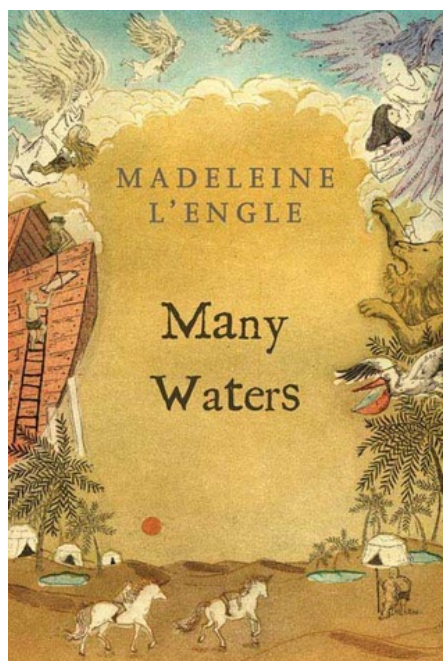




Many Waters

Madeleine L'Engle

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Some things have to be believed to be seen.

Sandy and his twin brother, Dennys, are the practical, down-to-earth members of the Murry family. They have never paid much attention to their scientist parents' talk of highly theoretical things like tesseracts and farondalae. But now something has happened to Sandy and Dennys that drastically stretches their powers of belief. And, when disaster threatens the oasis where they have made their home, can they find a way back to their own time?

Many Waters is the fourth book in Madeleine L'Engle's classic Time Quintet.

Many Waters Details

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From Reader Review Many Waters for online ebook

Els says

HOOW DID THAT HAPPEN SOMEONE PLEASE EXPLAIN. How did the pure beauty and *truth* and utter heartbreaking melody of *A Wrinkle in Time* turn in to this monstrous, sensualized, romantic Bible Fanfiction.

Did I just read that.

Did my eyes behold those pages.

I really hope that was some nasty, Echtroi-induced dream.

Unfortunately...

Andrew Leon says

Yes, there will be spoilers, but, seriously, it doesn't matter, because you don't want to read this book.

All right. So this book deals with Sandy and Dennys, who have been little better than side characters in the other books. They are Meg and Charles Wallace's "normal" brothers. Twins. It also takes place prior to *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, while the twins are sports stars in high school. The impression I got is that they are probably juniors and about 17 years old. Basically, the boys walk into their mother's lab and, when they walk out of it, rather than going back into the kitchen of the house, they end up in the days of Noah. Yes, that Noah. The one that built the big boat. Hence the title of the book.

There's never any firm conclusion as to how they got transported back in time. It may or may not have had to do with an experiment that was going on in the lab, though the type of experiment is never explained, or it may have had to do with them messing with their dad's weird computer, or, maybe, it was just God.

They end up in the desert. Of course, they're wearing winter clothing, which they soon discard... all the way down to their skin. Because that's always a smart thing to do in the desert. Get nearly naked, that is. The end result of that is that about 1/3 of the book deals with them being nursed back to health by Noah's family, who mistake the twins for giants, because no one in Noah's day was even near to being 5' tall. A lot of this section of the book also has the repeated conversation with, well, every freaking character they meet, "We're not giants." And it's not that I don't think they wouldn't have had to have had that conversation, but does L'Engle really need to repeat it 10 or so times.

This book also follows the pattern of all of the books in the series: The characters really don't ever do anything. Sandy and Dennys talk a lot about how they will get home... um, no, wait... They ask that question a lot. Every few pages it seems. "How will we get home?" "I don't know." "What should we do?" "Let's go garden." Seriously, that's their solution every time the question comes up, to work in Noah's father's garden. Basically, they end up being observers to the action going on around them and that's pretty much it. And what that comes down to is that the rising action in this book is about like a road in West Texas with a speed bump on it when Sandy gets kidnapped.

Aside from the lack of any real story or character development, the book is full of all kind of ridiculousness:

1. There are mammoths. Yes, in the desert. But these are not the mammoths you're thinking of. You know, the big, hairy elephants. No, these are tiny mammoths. Terrier-sized mammoths. In fact, they pretty much are small dogs that look like mammoths. The mammoths can scent things and follow trails like a bloodhound,

but they are also used as dowsing rods to find water. Which explains why the desert people keep them as pets, I suppose, but how did they get tiny? Well, evidently, they... evolved to be that way? The explanation is something along the lines of them having grown smaller and smaller over a great time.

2. However, the Earth in this book is a brand new Earth. A very young planet still going through its growing pains, so the whole thing with the mammoths doesn't really make any sense. L'Engle seems to want to have the Earth both be billions of years old and only 5000 (or so) years old as in the strict Creationist viewpoint.

3. There are manticores and griffons. Or a manticore and a griffon. It's never clear on whether there are more than one of each. The manticore is "bad" and just shows up rather like a cartoon character to shout "hungry" and try to eat the little doggy-mammoths and have to be shooed away. The griffon shows up to chase "bad" girls away from Sandy and Dennys.

4. L'Engle seems to have a thing with unicorns, because there are more unicorns in this book. Virtual unicorns, as the twins call them. They don't always exist, only when you decide you believe in them and, of course, they can only be approached by virgins. The annoying thing with the unicorns is that even after the boys have experiences with the unicorns, they go on and on about how they can't believe in them because they don't exist, so they can only believe in the unicorns when the unicorns are actually standing right in front of them. I have to suppose that they ceased to believe in their family, too, when their family quit being right in front of them.

-- The issue with all of this is that L'Engle, from what I can tell, wants us to accept this book as being set in reality, our reality, and, yet, she undermines reality by introducing all of this mythological stuff into what we're supposed to believe is the actual pre-flood setting. It's more suspension of disbelief than I could handle, and I haven't even gotten to the Angels.

5. Oh, yes, the Angels. The pseudo conflict in the book is between the seraphim (the good Angels) and the nephilim (the bad Angels). In fact the whole "conflict" revolves around a girl, Yalith, who everyone is in love with, so it becomes a matter of whom she will choose: one of the twins (or both) or Eblis, the nephilim. It's an empty conflict through which L'Engle seems to deliver her message of "bad things don't happen to good people" (a message which makes me wonder what reality L'Engle lived in, because it's the same kind of message all of her books have: Love will always win and, ultimately, nothing bad happens to people who believe in love).

Speaking of Yalith and male/female relationships in general in this book: This may have been the most difficult part of the book for me to deal with. Yalith is the youngest child of Noah; she's nearly 100 years old (because people in Noah's time lived much longer (Noah is 700ish)), but she's basically a teenager. Because, you know, living longer means slower growth? Which makes me wonder how long would remain a baby in this time. 20 years? Because, man, if I was a mom, I'd be pissed. Having to care for an infant for 20 years... I can't even imagine it, especially since pregnancy still only last nine months (because there was a birth during the book). You could end up with, well, a lot of babies. Actually, what I think she wants us to believe is that everyone ages normally until they hit puberty when they, for whatever reason, quit developing. Still, that means around 90 years as a teenager! That would be the worst!

Oh, back to the twins and male/female relationships:

So Sandy meets Yalith; Yalith is basically naked, because the people in Noah's time only wear loincloths. In the desert. Because we have examples of people today who live in the desert but only wear loincloths? At any rate, Yalith is all but naked, and Sandy is a teenage boy confronted with a naked girl and his response is to get a "funny feeling." Um, what? A funny feeling? What does that even mean? And that's how all of the interactions between the twins and girls go: They get funny feelings. I'm sorry; these boys are supposed to be 16 or 17 years old, and L'Engle is treating them as if they're, at best, 10. It's ridiculous.

The twins do end up back at home after spending at least a year in the desert with Noah. One of the Angels removes the boys' tans and, I suppose, the year or more they had aged, although that's not actually mentioned. So they end up back at home right at the point they'd left and nothing has changed. There was no character growth for the twins and nothing of consequence affected in the past. The flood still happens and all of that. It's a book where the goal is to return to the status quo but without even the benefit of the characters learning anything from the journey. In fact, the boys pick up talking about getting their driver's licenses as if nothing had even happened.

Matt says

Just barely edged out as my favorite book in the series (right behind "A swiftly Tilting Planet"). Tells a story less concerned with love and justice and all about the hard choices that people (and deities) make in a flawed world.

An out and out retelling of the Biblical Deluge from the point of view of two modern teenagers. Unique in that it makes no apology for all the fantastical stuff the Bible referred to in antediluvian times. Angels getting it own with the village girls, men who live for centuries, strange voices in the forest. Surprisingly, this was one of the most original fantasy lands a novel had taken me to up till that point.

Mayra says

No one seems to acknowledge these books as much as A Wrinkle in Time, but this one was by far my favorite. And maybe this is an overreaction, but I thought this one story was really beautiful. I really liked the Biblical time that the twins Sandy and Dennys went back to, and how in that time, angels were on the earth with humans. It was interesting that they could take the form of an animal, and it was clear that the Seraphim were good and the Nephilim evil. There were so many characters in this story that it was a little hard to keep them straight, but I love when there are a lot of characters. I was surprised at some of the content, as this book is supposed to be for kids. I mean, I first read it when I was a kid and I didn't really understand the whole concept of unicorns unable to be touched by anyone who isn't a virgin. I didn't get what the word "slut" meant.

This one has a surprising take on the idea that women are never named or included in the Biblical stories. It's always "so-and-so and his wife. such-and-such and his daughter." So though the main characters are two boys, Many Waters had a sort of feminist take on it.

What amuses me about the Time books--mostly the third and the fourth--is that the summaries make them seem like a science fictiony adventure, but really they deal a lot more with religion and the nature of good and evil. I love Many Waters because I always wanted to hear about the twins and what was going on with them. I did find it slightly creepy that they were thought of as one person, and near the end Yalith was all, "I love you both!" and kissed them. It seems like something odd to be taken lightly. But then again, this book was crazy, and if you haven't read it yet, you should! Or maybe not, since I probably spoiled a lot of it.

Becca says

It was such a dissapointment in comparison to the first three books in the series which I enjoyed greatly. Unfortunatly it focused on the two most boring, flat characters in the series and was such a terrible read, it

took me 3 years to finally bring myself to finish it. I love the author and her writing, but this particular book was not to my liking and very dissapointing. I feel that it really let the series down.

Kat Hooper says

Many Waters is the fourth book in Madeleine L'Engle's TIME quintet. The previous three books, A Wrinkle in Time, A Wind in the Door, and A Swiftly Tilting Planet have all focused on Meg Murray and her strange little brother Charles Wallace as they travel through time and space. Many Waters is completely different. In this story, Meg's twin brothers Sandy and Dennis mess with a computer in their mother's lab and get blasted back to the time of Noah before he built the ark. From there the story turns into a strange historical fantasy whose source text is Genesis 6.

In this well-known biblical story, God declares that humans are violent and corrupt... Read More:
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Alaina Meserole says

Many Waters is the fourth book in *A Wrinkle in Time* series and it's probably my least favorite. It was just a really boring book to breeze through. I mean they are only like.. 12 chapters each book but man was I bored with this one.

Sandy and Denny messed with their dad's new computer and traveled to a different time. They end up within Noah and the Ark storyline which seemed pretty cool.. but was just really boring and disappointing. For some reason, it just didn't work for me and kind of rubbed me the wrong way. No amount of coffee, wine, or puppy snuggles could get me to like this book. I'm just happy that I'm almost done with this series.

The one thing I didn't like, and trust me there was a lot of things I didn't like, was the sex talk. Or sexual references. ANYTHING to do with sex in this book - I didn't like. I think the reason I didn't like it was because this series isn't supposed to be that type of young adult.. more like middle school young adult.. with no sex. EVER.

Overall, this book was a hot mess in my eyes. I just didn't like. I hope the last book is way better.

Kitty says

It always amuses me when people say "coming of age story" when what they really mean is "sexual awakening". And don't be confused, there *is* a difference. Take for instance Hayao Miyazaki's 2001 film *Spirited Away*, this is a great example of a coming of age film. Yes, the protagonist Chihiro does meet a certain dragon/boy she may like more than a friend but this is not what pushes the character development, what pushes her to "grow up" are the lessons she learns about hard work, sacrifice and caring about others. Sandys and Dennys on the other hand don't change much throughout *Many Waters* - they exit our story much as they enter it, self sufficient, hard working and caring. What changes in their story is the capacity of sexual and emotional desire they become aware of.

Reading this I got a very different vibe from the rest of the Time books. While this one is no exception to the

publisher's rule where it's cover has the words "a companion to a Wrinkle in Time" written across the front, unlike all the other books in the series, I felt that this was the only one that was self sufficient enough to stand on its own. Almost to the point where I wonder if Le'Engle, after having written these books several decades apart, didn't write this as more of an adult novel, knowing like many authors who undertake long IR series (such as Harry Potter), that the original demographic would have grown up by then. After all, there's quite a few things that make this book a questionable choice for the younger set that AWiT was aimed at. Sandy, tied and bound in a tent hears his captors voice and calls her name. When she expresses delight at him recognizing her she thinks it's by her voice and yet we see him say to himself quite clearly "I recognized you by your scent you slut". And earlier on Dennys tells of his afternoon walk through the oasis bazaar and his difficulty in looking at all the faces around him for he knows they're to be drowned. Again, not exactly elementary school stuff.

However, that being said, you'd think a children's book by a Christian author set in biblical times where the village seductress is called a slut would be pretty stuffy when it came to messages on sex and women, but surprisingly it's not. Le'Engle makes a pretty radical move by having some of her characters call the Noah story chauvinistic from the get go, addressing some of the tension head on. And while the story does not drastically alter from that in the bible Le'Engle surprised me by angling the story from a pretty feminine perspective. Yes, two young adolescent boys are the main narrators, and yet most of the story revolves around activities like watering animals and plants, gardening, cooking, caring for the elderly, birthing and marriage - all the things our society typically considers to be feminine. The first place Dennys is taken to that is considered safe and whole in the story is the tent the women use for menstruation, and while there are an equal number of men and women in Noah's tent less time is given to the sons than the daughters. It would have been easy to center this story around the building of the arc, hunting and other masculine activities and yet we spend time in the women's tent and out on rocks under star lit skies where sisters talk about husbands and children.

And the sex. Ah the sex. This isn't your grandma's bible story that's for sure. Or maybe not, but somehow the constant sexual tension of a might-have-been threesome never made it's way into any of MY Baby's First Bible. The message here is not so much one of abstinence as other's have suggested as it is understanding that who you have sex with the first time matters just as much as who you have sex with once you are settled down. The message here isn't "don't do it" it's "don't do it carelessly".

So in the end did I like it more than AWiT? Yes, and no. It's a horse of a different color to be sure. I think as a piece of children's literature I loved, and always will love, AWiT the best. But as a grown up's book Many Waters is a finely crafted and startling re-imagination of Biblical times that belongs right up their with The Red Tent. Highly recommended.

Jordan says

You know that sliver of Genesis between the interminable lists of old dudes ("And Methuselah lived 969 years, blah blah blah...") and the tempestuous God-rage era of Noah and the Flood? Yeah, *that's* the setting for this book.

Sandy and Dennys, the unbearably logical Vulcan-esque children of Mr. and Mrs. Murry, end up in biblical times through an accidental encounter with their parents' magic computer. Noah's son, Japheth, rescues them from the desert heat with the help of two unicorns (more unicorns!!!), and they find themselves in a Genesis they never knew existed.

In addition to unicorns (!!!), Noah's desert oasis also offers us tiny mammoths, and two varieties (races?

species?) of supernatural humanoids: seraphim and nephilim. While the seraphim reflect the glory of El (God), the nephilim are somewhat more complex. The intentions of the nephilim are unclear: they are pointedly commingling with humans, but also wary of El's undefined plan for Earth. Eventually, L'Engle reveals the nephilim as (view spoiler), but that's not until the veeeeeeery end.

I found L'Engle's fantasy elements just as, well, fantastical as always. The unicorns (squee!), mammoths, seraphim, and nephilim are all intricately rendered, and make for a mystical tour of the Book of Genesis. She offers me so much more than the stale lists and epochs of the original work.

However... I don't know. It felt a little flat with me. There was so much buildup for too little resolution: (view spoiler) It felt tacked on, underdeveloped.

Plus, how creepy-weird is the love triangle between Sandy, Dennys, and Noah's daughter, Yalith? They both want to bang her, and she wants to bang both of them, but they never exactly talk about it. Quasi-twincest is a strange choice for a kids' book, L'Engle, but okay.

Overall, a welcome return to the Murry family, and a fresh and intriguing look at biblical riffraff.

Oh, and: unicorns!!!!

Buy this title from Powell's Books.

Jenny Clark says

I enjoy L'Engle's books, for the most part. This one was no exception, but my favorites will always be *A Wrinkle in Time* and *A Wind In The Door*, since they don't have the main problem this and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* do, mainly the fact that the twins in this one and Charles Wallace in *Planet* don't really DO anything. Sure, they go to a different time and place, but then what? They just wait to go back home.

That's not to say that the book was written poorly, it just feels like there was not much point to Sandy and Den being there. They just went about their daily life as much as they could, and helped Noah and Grandfather with basic chores. Even at the end, when the arc was being built, they just helped build it; they did not really have anything to overcome. Sure, the nephil were there and halfway worked against them, but the only times either of the twins were in danger, it did not feel like there was any doubt at all that they would be saved, or able to get themselves out of it, and it did not feel like the nephil would have actually hurt them.

Overall, it was a well written story, and does add some depth to Sandy and Den. It is also an interesting way to read the story of Noah and the flood.

Lauren Alise Schultz says

Many Waters, the fourth book in Madeleine L'Engle's *Time Quintet*, continues to follow the fantastic time/space travel exploits of the Murry family. Instead of focusing on Meg and Charles Wallace, however, this novel is about their "normal" siblings Sandy and Dennys. The twins have always been the ordinary members of the extraordinary Murry family and haven't taken part in previous adventures, but when they fool around with their father's computer and inadvertently mess up his experiment with "tessering" through time and space, they suddenly find themselves in the midst of the story of Noah and the Ark, straight out of the Bible. (It's just like those "Greatest Adventure" cartoons with Derek, Margo and Moki that they used to

make us watch in Sunday School!)

This begins their unbelievable new life in pre-Flood Earth—and by unbelievable, I mean hard for *me* to believe. I find a lot of elements of L’Engle’s writing difficult to swallow even for Children’s Literature, and this novel is probably my least favorite of the series (although I have yet to read the fifth) in part because the beginning is so badly written. Sandy and Dennys have a very cliché conversation that smacks of speedy, lazy character exposition à la Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys or the Sweet Valley Twins. Then for no particular reason, the two boys are typing a request into the computer that they be transported some place warmer than the cold New England climate where they live. Magically, the computer is able to comply – and I find myself wishing that going on a vacation to Maui were really that simple. L’Engle tries to explain some of this with a lot of talk about quantum leaps and particle physics, but even in a science fictional world where time/space travel is possible, this all sounds like a load of hooey.

If a reader doesn’t get hung up on these things, though, I admit that there’s a lot of interesting stuff going on in this novel, even though the plot is rather slow. Seraphim and nephilim, creatures which L’Engle developed from a few vague biblical references, live amongst the humans in pre-Flood Earth. At first, it is not clear exactly who or what they are – they are described as beautiful giants with wings that are able to assume animal forms. Neither is it clear whether they are good or evil at first; the race of men know that these creatures are a different species and some consider it to be an honor to be chosen as a mate for these glorified beings. A great deal of tension comes from the interplay between the humans, seraphim and nephilim as some of the characters wrestle with whether to trust the nephilim in particular. Over the course of the novel, it becomes clear that the seraphim are angels and the nephilim are fallen angels, and it is the development of this largely-ignored Biblical mythology that I find to be the most interesting aspect of the novel. Though the nephilim are only mentioned twice in the Hebrew Bible, there is a lot of potential to mine from those brief references.

Sandy and Dennys find themselves amidst the tension between the seraphim and nephilim, as well as the tension between Noah and his father. Though the two boys initially suffer life-threatening heat stroke from prolonged exposure to the desert environs, they manage to help reunite the Biblical patriarch and his stubborn, aging parent – thus securing themselves a place within Noah’s family. Though they miss the rest of the Murrys, who remain back in the twentieth century, they have no idea of how they might return home and so they adjust to life in pre-Flood civilization. They cannot dismiss the nagging question, though, of what will happen to them when the torrential rains come.

As in all of L’Engle’s Time Quintet novels, the journey across time and space is a catalyst for the characters to learn something about themselves and grow into the world around them. Sandy and Dennys are fairly immature and thoughtless at the beginning of the novel, messing with their father’s computer equipment, and they are extremely dependent on each other, functioning as two halves of a whole. Separated while they recover from their heat stroke and severe burns, the two begin to think and operate more independently of one another, and living in the much more harsh environment without the comforts of twentieth century technology forces them to mature in other ways. Finally, while they have generally ignored girls and romance up until this point, they both fall in love with Noah’s youngest daughter Yalith, which becomes another source of tension and a catalyst for further emotional development.

While I found these coming-of-age themes to be interesting, there is a lot of sexual content to this novel that is not present in the first three novels of the Time Quintet. In fact, when reading *A Wrinkle in Time*, *A Wind in the Door* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, I got the distinct impression that L’Engle went out of her way to avoid any overt romantic or sexual activity. Throughout the first two novels, Meg and Calvin’s relationship is referred to as a “special friendship,” and even when they are married and expecting a child in the third novel, Calvin is attending a scientific conference out of the country and Meg is in many ways still characterized as a young and innocent girl. This novel is therefore quite different – the nephilim seduce and marry human women, then have their women try to seduce the twins in order to discover more information

about them. Meanwhile, Sandy and Dennys struggle with their attraction to the same young woman throughout the novel. But although I don't have a problem when books have sexual content, I find it unsettling that a novel written at the children's level so openly discusses lust and seduction.

Overall, Many Waters was fairly unappealing to me for these reasons; I found the science fiction aspects to be too incredible for readers any older than eight or nine years old, yet the sexual content to be inappropriate (?) for anyone of that age. Yet I will admit that there were enough aspects of the story that I found interesting that by the time I had read two-thirds of the novel, I wanted to see exactly how Sandy and Dennys would escape the Great Flood and return home. The last one hundred pages were more absorbing, and though I can't really say that I ever became engrossed in the novel, I will say that I can see why some readers would enjoy this story. If you love L'Engle's other writing, or if you are really interested in the concept of traveling back through time to experience the events of the Bible, then you will probably like this novel well enough. Therefore, I'll rate it with a "provisional" three stars – a good read for those of you with specific tastes and interests. Generally, though, I consider this to be more of a two star book and for most readers, the novel probably isn't worth your time.

Alexis says

so... this was the first of all the books which made me realize while i was reading it that it was all christian imagery. i mean, the arc and all - noah... hard to miss, right? and that's what people say about aslan - just a jesus allegory - but i didn't have any christian education as a child, so i missed all of that. and most people say the same "when i was a kid i didn't realize it had all that christian metaphor." which i think means that in effect, it didn't. if we don't know the corresponding reference than it means only what it describes on the surface, and whatever else we can relate it to in our own experience. if you're not christian, they're not christian books. they are just books, and you can place them in your universe of experience however you see fit.

that said, i remember thinking if the bible was as sexy as this book. i think i was fourteen when i read it and those boys are supposed to be CUTE. and there's that "angel" who keeps trying ot have sex with one of them... i mean, that's pretty cool.

Anna says

fascinating blend of science, mythology and Bible epic

In this adventure, the twins Sandy and Dennys take center stage. They are thrust into the prehistoric world before the Great Flood and encounter early civilized men, supernatural beings like the seraphim and nephilim, as well as creatures like the mammoth, manticores, griffiths and unicorns. Along with the mythic elements, it's an incredible coming of age story.

The usually inseparable twins are actually apart for most of the story both physically and emotionally. They find themselves in a time in which things have gone wrong and this society is on the verge of imminent change. The twins experience the best and worst of humanity and must constantly face temptation in different forms. It is a story of endurance, perseverance, faith and family.

I liked this one as much as "The Tilting Planet" -- both are definitely highpoints in the series.

Rebecca ♥ Warner, Kishan, Magnus ♥ says

I am surprised how much I enjoyed this, since I found the first 3 pretty mediocre. This is my favourite so far. One more to go. I suspect it had to do with the twins and Yalith's little romance. It was very interesting.

Ali M. says

Still reflecting on this one. It's so lyrical, thoughtful, and strange. Nothing like the other Time books. Though L'Engle uses simple language and descriptions, the world she paints has so much contrast and so many unexpected elements that I was wholly immersed, thinking about it even when I wasn't reading - and it's been awhile since that happened.

If you're anticipating this to be a piece of preachy historical Bible-fiction because of the subject matter, you'll be surprised, as I was. It never goes quite where you think it will, and there is a pervasive sense of melancholy and wisdom - the kind of wisdom gained only from seeing the darker parts of people. I could actually feel the twins growing up as the book progressed.

The following passage really struck me when I read it; a good summary of the book's main themes:

"I don't like entropy," Sandy said. "The universe winding down."

"I don't think it's winding down," Dennys contradicted. "I think it's still being birthed. Even the flood is part of the birthing."

"I don't understand." Sandy's voice was flat. "Everybody knows that entropy--"

"Everybody doesn't. And entropy is in question, anyhow. Remember, we had that in science last year. There's no such thing as an unbreakable scientific rule, because, sooner or later, they all seem to get broken. Or to change."

"Grandfather Lamech said that these are last days." The occasional slow drops of rain made Sandy on edge, and argumentative.

Another spash of rain touched Dennys's face, muting the stars. "There have been many times of last days," he said, "and they mark not only endings but beginnings."
