

## The Gospel in the Flood

### The Story of Salvation Series #3

Too often we approach the Old Testament with a methodology that starts with the question, “What does this story teach me about being a better Christian?” Such is the case with Noah and the Flood – a quick Google search came back with results ranging from the farcical: *“10 Life Lessons from Noah”* and *“5 Critical Lessons from Noah’s Ark”* or my personal favorite, *“Everything I Need to Know About Life, I Learned from Noah’s Ark<sup>1</sup>”* to the pharisaical, *“Noah’s Ark: A Lesson in Obedience and Protection<sup>2</sup>.”* We take this Bible study approach perhaps, because Hebrews 11 is full of Old Testament examples intended to encourage New Testament Christians to maintain their faith in the Lord Jesus (Noah is mentioned in v. 7). Certainly Romans 15:4 contributes to this approach as well, “For whatever was written in former days” Paul stated, “was written for our instruction...” I do not want to suggest that there is no value in this method of Bible study but if it is our only interpretive approach, then we have fallen woefully short of understanding the importance of the Old Testament scriptures.

On the day of His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two downtrodden disciples as they walked the road to Emmaus. During their journey, Jesus used the Old Testament as a witness to Himself and His gospel. The text records, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). It is doubtful He recalled the story of Noah and began teaching them that they needed to plan ahead, because it wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark. More likely, He cited the story of the Flood and said, “Here, in the story of Noah, the Ark, and the flood, is the gospel of salvation by grace through faith.” Jesus wouldn’t have merely worked His way through the Old Testament scriptures to point out how to be better Christians for Him, but to help us see clearly what God had done for us through Christ! That’s our goal this morning with the Flood account – to see Jesus and His glorious grace.

#### 1. THE GOD OF THE FLOOD (Genesis 6:5-7)

- a. As God surveyed the landscape of humanity, He “saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (6:5). The text states that the Lord “regretted He had made man... it grieved Him to His heart.” God even said, “I am sorry that I have made them” (6:6-7). After this God resolved to bring the flood.
- b. God took no pleasure in the flood, it was not the act of a vengeful, capricious God (cf. Ezekiel 18:23, 32). Rather, the flood was a just judgment against sin, springing from God’s grieving heart.

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<sup>1</sup> The lessons include: 1) Don’t miss the boat. 2) Remember that we are all in the same boat. 3) Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah build the ark. 4) Stay fit. When you’re old, someone may ask you to do something really big. 5) Don’t listen to the critics: just get on with the job that needs to be done. 6) Build your future on high ground. 7) For safety sake travel in pairs. 8) Speed isn’t always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs. 9) When you’re stressed, float a while. 10) Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals. 11) No matter the storm, when you are with God, there’s always a rainbow waiting.

<sup>2</sup> The writer exalts Noah’s constant, exact, and unwavering obedience. The writer states Noah “was chosen to be saved in the ark because he ‘was a just man and perfect in his generations, and [he] walked with God.’” Not once does the writer mention God’s favor (grace) and faith only gets one mention at the end – the whole article is centered on obedience and reeks of works-based salvation. The article concludes by stating, “Noah’s obedience provided vital protection from the flood. Your obedience can provide vital protection from the floods of wickedness in our day. Teach your family to follow God’s commands always, with exactness and with unwavering faith so you can feel the protection of the Lord.” From this point of view, if you don’t feel God’s protection you must not be obeying enough and must try harder. Sad.

- c. The same is true today. God has proclaimed that judgment is coming, not by water but through a flood of fire (cf. 2 Peter 3:1-7). In view of this day, God “desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God is grieved by humanity’s sins and thus desires for the wicked to repent and be saved; that’s why He graciously provided a way to escape.

## 2. GOD’S GRACIOUS PROVISIONS:

### a. A RIGHTEOUS SAVIOR (Genesis 6:8, 22)

- i. God graciously offered salvation to the wicked world through a righteous savior - Noah. Against the backdrop of total wickedness was Noah, who “found favor [or grace] in the eyes of the Lord” (6:8). Furthermore, Noah is described as a “righteous man, blameless in his generation” and one who “walked with God” (6:9). Through Noah, God made a covenant of salvation (6:17; 9:9-17).
- ii. Therefore, it shouldn’t surprise us, after we read God’s instructions for the construction of the Ark, the text states “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him” (6:22; 7:5). The faithful actions of God’s savior brought about the salvation of eight souls and all the animals.
- iii. Jesus, THE Savior, came to fulfill all that the Father had commanded Him – even death on the cross (cf. Matthew 26:39-42; John 14:31; Hebrews 10:7). The Lord Jesus accomplished this through sinless perfection. Therefore, it can be said, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Romans 3:21-22a; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; 2 Peter 1:1). The faithful actions of God’s Savior – Jesus – brought salvation to all who believe.

### b. A MEANS OF SALVATION (Genesis 6:14-21; 7:7, 17, 22-24)

- i. The focal point of the Flood narrative is the ark and the waters. The giant boat that would save all flesh with the breath of life, both human and animal, male and female, was built by a righteous and blameless man, according to the plans of God, for the salvation of creation. Yet, it was God’s flood that lifted the ark high above the destruction.
- ii. Through the ark, Noah, his family, and the animals would “escape the waters of the flood” (7:7). The “waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth” (7:17). Once the flood covered all the earth, “Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark” (7:23).
- iii. The apostle Peter picked up on this means of salvation and applied it to baptism, “the ark... in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:20-21). Baptism, Peter said, corresponded to the salvation experience of Noah and his family – they were “brought safely through water” by the water lifting the ark up. Immersion is the means by which God has chosen for all to put their faith, hope and trust in their Savior’s death, burial and resurrection. Our faith is not in the water, rather our faith is in the One who acts through the water “to wash away our sins” and create in us a new person (Acts 22:16; cf. Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:4-7).

c. TIME TO REPENT (Genesis 6:3; 7:4)

- i. As God surveyed the wickedness of humanity, He resolved, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for his is flesh; his days shall be 120 years” (6:3). God could have wiped out the world with one fell swoop of His mighty hand, but He did not. He gave them 120 years to repent.
- ii. During this time, while God patiently waited (1 Peter 3:20), Noah a “preacher of righteousness” called for people to repent before the rains fell (2 Peter 2:5). Certainly, he proclaimed his message by building the ark (cf. Hebrews 11:7), but no doubt preached with words of warning as well.
- iii. Finally, before the flood came, God gave humanity seven more days to repent (7:1-5).
- iv. God graciously gave the wicked world ample time, concrete evidence, and a clarion call to repent. But they chose not to.
- v. Today, God is still graciously and patiently waiting. While some might view God’s delayed coming as evidence that He does not exist, or is not coming back, Peter said, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).
- vi. The difference between those who survived the flood and those who perished in the flood was their response to God’s grace. Even today, the difference between those who will be saved and those who will be lost won’t be the fact they lived a good life, or was known for their good works, or anything else. It will be for this one reason - how did they respond to the grace of Jesus Christ? Did they reject it or accept it? Did they resist or did they submit? Did they hate or did they love their Lord?

3. BY FAITH NOAH AND HIS FAMILY WERE SAVED (Genesis 7:1-8:19)

- a. While the world mocked, Noah and his family responded to God’s grace with faith.
- b. Hebrews 11:7 put it this way, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”
- c. The question we must answer is this, “How will you respond to God’s grace?” He has promised there is a judgment coming and He does not want you to perish. So He has graciously provided you a Savior, a means of salvation, and time to repent. All that is required of you is to accept His grace by faith. Move with a “reverent fear” and put your whole faith, hope, and trust in the Lord’s Savior, Jesus Christ. Be baptized into Him. “Walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

As we continue working our way through *The Story of Salvation*, we don’t want to merely make observations about the behavior of the godly, and then try harder to be more like them. Let’s dig deeper, looking for how the Old Testament informs us about the gospel of Jesus Christ. A richer faith is to be found in the pages of the Old Testament for all who will invest time in looking for Jesus and His gospel. Like those two disciples on the road to Emmaus, may our hearts burn with a more passionate love for Jesus and His gracious work of salvation as we see Him in the Old Testament (Luke 24:32).

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