



What Noah has Taught Me

Lessons from the Life of Noah

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The great flood has been of great interest in the world. In ancient civilizations the “flood story” became the subject of myth and legend. There are some that deny the historicity of the flood or diminish it to localized events, while others believe that discoveries in archaeology and geology have verified flood layers around the world and evidence of a cataclysmic event that drastically changed the habitation of mankind. The Bible clearly describes the flood as an act of destruction by the Creator of heaven and earth, and the continued existence of humanity as the result of God’s favor to the family of Noah.

Noah and the ark have been favored subjects of Bible classes for little children. I recently met a craftsman who has made a business of his woodworking and design skills, making large “Noah’s Ark” play sets. He told me that several religious people who live near him do not allow their children to “play” on Sundays unless their toys are “Sunday toys” based on Bible stories. The Internet is filled with lists of “things I learned from Noah,” but the purpose of this article is not to offer whimsical and humorous statements such as “Noah should have swatted those flies.” It is to look at key thoughts from the example of Noah that might help us live lives that will find favor with God and also be lights to the world.

Only two men in scripture are noted as having walked with God. Enoch, father of Methuselah, walked with God for 300 years following the birth of his son, fathering other children also. He was taken by God, without death, from the earth (Gen. 5:22-24; Heb. 11:5). Methuselah’s son Lamech was the father of Noah, who also “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9).

Noah did more than to build an ark. Before he was given that responsibility and privilege, he was living a life that pleased God. He was a striking contrast to the rest of the people in the world. Noah found grace (favor) in the eyes of the Lord in the same world that had surrounded him with violence and unimaginable wickedness (Gen. 6:8).

The grief of God and the regret of His creating the world had made Him determine to destroy the world. The God who had declared His creation as “good” and the creation of man “very good” had seen good people corrupted by their evil companions. Word

and deed, even every thought of man, was only evil . . . all the time. Yet, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." (Gen. 6:9) "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

The hope of the salvation of our own souls is based on the grace (favor) of God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). Believing that God exists and rewards the diligent seeker is illustrated for us by the example of Noah. Noah had never seen a flood brought on by constant rain and waters from beneath the earth's surface; I am not sure he had even seen rain, since such is not mentioned in scripture from the passage that tells us that God watered the ground with a mist from the earth (Gen. 2:5-6).

Still, Noah believed God! He moved with fear, which would also be defined as proper caution and reverence for God. He prepared the ark as God had instructed. His faith in God moved him to righteous obedience. His righteousness is even more obvious when contrasted with the ungodly world around him. He became the heir of righteousness (Heb. 11:7), not only a practitioner and preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). Eight souls were saved by water, which perhaps refers to being saved from increasing violence of the wicked against the righteous. Yet this happened only after long years of preparation and toil to build such a massive lifeboat and stock it with food to save the lives of the humans and the living creatures which would enter.

The details of the flood, the ark dimensions and structural details, and the loading and the landing are so well known as to be unnecessary for this article. However, the character of Noah is worthy of examination in more detail than is usual. Noah is listed with Job and Daniel as righteous men who could not deliver even a son or daughter by their own righteousness, and certainly not the nation of Israel even if they had been in it (Ezek. 14:14-20). What a triad of righteous men!

The ground had been cursed by God to require toil and sweat of man to bring forth its fruit. This must have been a real barrier to productivity. Yet there was hope for better days ahead, for the name Noah suggests "comfort." Lamech "called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed" (Gen. 5:29). Evil had multiplied, and God had made his decision to destroy all flesh. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. . . Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:8-9).

Detailed instructions were given for construction of the ark, and for gathering food for man and beast. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he. And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I

seen righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. 6:22-7:1).

Noah was instructed to take in the animals, numbering them based on whether they were clean or unclean. "And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him"..."There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah"..."And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in" (Gen 7:5, 9, 16).

Even the departure from the ark was an act of obedience to the instruction of God (Gen. 8:15-19). Noah, the man who had been chosen to preserve the existence of mankind because of his righteousness, then made a burnt sacrifice from every clean beast and fowl upon an altar. In response to the sacrifice, God resolved never to curse the ground again nor to smite all living things. He also pronounced a continuation of seasons and time-markers for the duration of the earth (vs. 20-22). God now gave man permission to eat meat as well as the "green herb," but not blood (Gen. 9:2-4). He also commanded a penalty of blood for the shedding of mankind's blood (vs. 5-6). The reproductive process of man was to begin again (vs. 1, 7), and man was given a covenant of promise, symbolized by the bow in the cloud, that universal destruction of the world by water would not occur again (vs. 8-17).

Hundreds of years later, a descendant of Noah according to the flesh would be born into the world (Luke 3:36). This One, like Noah, would be the source of salvation for the human race. However, He would not come to save us from a flood of water, but from the sin that floods the world. His sacrifice has been made, and He will return. His return will be like the flood of Noah in that men, though warned, will be continuing life as usual, and be taken away as if they had no warning (Lk.17:26-27; Mt. 24:37-39). Though some will scoff and declare He is not going to return, Peter warned that while God's longsuffering is delaying the fiery dissolution of this world at the return of Christ, His coming is as sure as the flood (2 Pet. 3:3-14). In Noah's day, it was the longsuffering of God which delayed the flood while the ark was being prepared . Others in addition to the eight could have been saved, but they did not heed the preaching of Noah (1 Pet 3:20-21; 2 Pet. 2:5).

I would appeal to the reader to make a personal list of things you have learned from Noah, as well as reading what others have said and written. Here are some items that stand out to me:

- You never get too old to provide a haven for your children if they have no other place to go. (Noah was 600 when the flood came.)
- If God tells us to do something, it is really smart to do it. "Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did" (Gen. 6:22).
- Walking with God involves more than just an occasional stroll.
- When you come through a crisis safely, don't let your guard down. Stay sober (Gen. 9:20-27).

- When the rains come down and the floods come up, look forward to the rainbow when the storm is over.
- It takes time to prepare for some crises of life, but thank God for the time if you have warning.
- God warned Noah of things he had never before seen, but he prepared anyway. Good move.
- Keep doing the will of God, even when the neighbors scoff and your warnings are ignored.
- Just because everyone is thinking evil continually doesn't give you an excuse to do likewise.
- No matter how long you live, it is appointed for man to die. "And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died" (Gen. 9:27).
- Isaiah believed in the Noah story. "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee" (Is. 54:9).
- Righteousness cannot be borrowed from others for ourselves. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God...Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezek. 14:14, 20).
- The coming of the Son of Man is sure, just like the flood. "And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26-27; cf. Matt. 24:37-39).
- If you live right it will please God, but it will make others look bad. That's okay. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).
- As the water cleansed the world and separated Noah's family from it, my sins are cleansed by Christ's blood when I am baptized. Thank God for His longsuffering to lost mankind! "...the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God" (1 Pet. 3:20-22). Give praise "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5).
- The destruction of the earth will be by fire rather than water next time (2 Pet. 3:5-7). Since this will certainly happen, let us heed the inspired warning of Peter: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Pet. 3:17-18).

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