

# Noah and His Family – Righteousness in an Unrighteous World

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## INTRODUCTION

The Biblical account of Noah and the ark is well known to most of the world. In fact, the ark and the flood are often popular subjects for television documentaries. Many civilizations have similar stories which have been handed down from generation to generation concerning a world wide flood. According to Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 1980, a historian by the name of Aaron Smith is said to have tallied all the flood stories that he could find. He came across 80,000 works in 72 languages. (Kneisler) Many expeditions have searched for the ark made from gopher wood. Countless numbers of scientists and explorers have spent a great part of their lives in search of Noah's ark. As recently as 2006 claims were made about the discovery of the ark. On June 29, 2006 a team of Texas archaeologists reported that they may have located the remains of Noah's Ark in Iran's Elburz mountain range. "I can't imagine what it could be if it is not the Ark," said Arch Bonnema of the Bible Archaeology Search and Exploration (B.A.S.E) Institute, a Christian archeology organization dedicated to looking for biblical artifacts. Bonnema and the other B.A.S.E. Institute members hiked for seven hours in the mountains northwest of Tehran, climbing 13,000 feet before making the apparent discovery. (ABC News)

It is quite clear that many are interested **IN** the ark which carried eight souls to safety. But have no interest whatsoever in **WHY** the ark provided these people with safety, nor just **HOW** this all came to be. Many are enamored by the physical ark, yet care little if anything at all about the Bible or the spiritual attachments to this great event. Try as they may men have not found the physical ark. The ark and the eight souls which were saved by water are inseparable. Yet most of mankind search for the ark and dismiss the reason those eight souls were saved.

In the beginning God created the entirety of the universe in six literal days. This process included all life upon the face of the earth and these things were good; "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31). Notice how God felt about the creation, "it was very good." Therefore we must conclude that things were in a wonderfully pleasant and agreeable condition following creation.

Within about eleven-hundred years from the creation of all things a man named Noah was born. Noah was the son of Lamech who was 182 years old when this child was born. Methuselah was Noah's grandfather and Enoch was his great-grandfather. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch "walked with God three hundred years" (Genesis 5:22-24), and then was translated without tasting death. His life on earth spanned three hundred and sixty-five years and he was the "seventh from Adam" (Jude 1:14). He is not to be confused as being the son of Cain, the third from Adam (Genesis 3:17). He is one of those mentioned in the "role call" of the faithful in the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:5). When Enoch was translated only Adam, so far as is recorded, had died from natural causes. Noah was not yet born. Jude 1:14 records that Enoch proclaimed a judgment which would come upon mankind. It is without question that both Methuselah and Lamech heard Enoch's message and knew that "God took him"

because he was a man who "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24). It is also interesting to realize that the message of Noah was heard by his father and grandfather. Yet his preaching fell on deaf ears.

### **The Condition of the Pre-flood World**

Genesis chapter two closes with the establishment of the home and family and verse 25 reveals the innocent condition of these two people. Chapter three records the downfall of mankind. Satan came into the garden and tempted Eve to disobey God and she in turn tempted Adam to violate the divine commandments. When the temptation was carried out in their actions they were separated from God by the sin (Isaiah 59:1-2; Proverbs 15:29). In Genesis chapter four we see the sad commentary of mankind after sin entered the world. Cain kills his brother Abel. In Genesis chapter five, Lamech, the fifth generation from Cain, kills two men and by the time we get to chapter six the whole earth is filled with violence.

We may feel as if we live in a world that has had no equal when it comes to violence. We certainly are living in a wicked, wicked society. Every day as we see the news we might feel as if it could get no worse and yet tomorrow brings even more gruesome news. Children abused, exploited and murdered are very often the headlines of today's news. We may sometimes feel that our world, as terrible as it is, is in spiritual bankruptcy and in the worst shape that has ever been. Yet, if we take a closer look at the world of Genesis six we will realize we have not yet gone as deeply into wickedness as was in Noah's day. However, we just keep inching more and more in that direction. And we continue to remember the words spoken by God; "...my spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3).

Genesis six gives several clear details as it describes the state of the pre-flood world. Verse 5 says that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Notice the verse does not say the thoughts of his heart were sometimes thinking of evil. His thoughts were on evil **continually**. The word "continually" is derived from two Hebrew words, KOLE and YOM. Kole means whole, all, or altogether. Yom means day or more literally from one sunset to the next. Therefore we conclude that the world before the flood thought of evil things every hour of every day. Verse 11 further states; "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." What a sad picture of mankind's condition. So sad in fact that God could no longer tolerate such lifestyles (Genesis 6:13). We must take seriously the statement in Genesis 6:6; "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." *Jamison, Fausett and Brown Commentary* says of verse 6; "God cannot change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17); but, by language suited to our nature and experience, He is described as about to alter His visible procedure towards mankind--from being merciful and long-suffering, He was about to show Himself a God of judgment; and, as that impious race had filled up the measure of their iniquities, He was about to introduce a terrible display of His justice (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

The book of Job gives a good insight into the mind-set of mankind before the flood. In Job 22:15-17 we read; "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?" The unrighteous in the days of Noah, who appear to have had an

abundance of all worldly goods, said by their manner of living, “depart from us”. When Noah preached unto them the terrors of the Lord, and the necessity of repentance, they rejected his preaching of salvation by asking, “what can the Almighty do for us”? Their attitude of heart was we have all that we need, therefore we do not need God! Truly, they had become their own gods.

Jesus had somewhat to say about the condition of mankind prior to the flood. He said; “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark” (Matthew 24:38). The things mentioned in this passage indicate their attention was on the affairs of this life rather than on what was to come upon them. Keep in mind the sentiment found in Job – We are fat in the things of the world, why do we need God. A prevailing condition in today’s society.

### **Noah Was a Righteous Man**

The Bible describes Noah as a righteous man because he lived his life according to God’s plan and wishes for him. The scriptures say; “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.” (Genesis 6:8-9). The word just means lawful or righteous. Noah is described in the same manner as was his great-grandfather. The scriptures teach that Enoch “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:24).

What caused God to describe Noah as being “just and perfect in his generations?” Hebrews 11:7 says of him, “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.” Notice that he was warned of God, that is to say he had divine instructions. God revealed His intentions to Noah (Genesis 6:5-7, 13, 17) and Noah moved with godly fear. His actions were based upon hearing God’s instructions and by acting upon them even though he could not fully comprehend what was going to take place (Romans 10:17). He was warned of God of **things not seen as yet**. However, his reverence and love for God caused him to move with fear, and prepare an ark to the saving of his house. The proof of his righteousness is found in Genesis 6:22; “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.” What a great tribute, “according to ALL that God commanded him.” Not just the easy tasks but everything that was asked.

### **Righteousness in an Unrighteous World**

Even though all others choose to live unrighteously it is possible to live a life which is pleasing to God. Noah is an excellent example of the righteous mind-set. When all else around him was evil, he continued to show his resolve and dedication to Jehovah. He stood firm on his belief even though he was in the minority. He did not allow family ties to influence him against the Lord. Can we even begin to imagine that his father, grand-father and many, many of his relatives were numbered with the unrighteous? It must have been sad for him to day by day see their rejection of the Lord’s message. He did not allow those things to stop him nor keep him from his task. He preached for one hundred and twenty years without even one convert!

Just think how easily he could have become discouraged. Remember God told him to build an ark because the world would be destroyed by something that had never been seen before (Hebrews 11:7). He was told to build an ark three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits tall. A monstrous task for even a large work force to accomplish. These eight souls went about doing the Lord's bidding as the unrighteous mocked and chided them. Now just think, for one hundred and twenty years they continued doing God's will. Some might have grown weary or started to think; "We have worked hard and yet nothing has happened. How can we know for sure that this ark will be of any value?" In the midst of the hard work and the jeering audience many would have grown impatient or skeptical. The Bible tells us these eight souls kept the faith and finished the task set before them. The situation is much like Paul's encouragement in his letter to the Galatians; "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9).

Righteousness is a choice we make every day of our lives. God chose us to salvation, yet we must accept the choice He made for us. Have you ever noticed how many are losing their sense of responsibility and are finding comfort in blaming others? We hear that people are not guilty of perverted lifestyles anymore – it's their genes. Many do not want to take responsibility and so they blame heredity, pressures from their surroundings, abuses as a child and their economic standing. You can be sure we are influenced by many situations, however these things do not dismiss the fact that we are responsible for the choices we make. Romans 14:12 clearly tells us that we will give account for the lives we live. (Also Galatians 6:5; 1 Peter 4:5) The choice is whether we serve God or our own bellies; "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:19).

It certainly is possible to live righteously even in the midst of the unrighteous. Daniel is a good example of one who kept the faith though surrounded by sin. He had found favor in the eyes of Darius the king; "Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Daniel 6:3). Jealousy caused the presidents and princes to look for ways to discredit Daniel. However, they found nothing against him; "...but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (Daniel 6:4). The king was encouraged to sign a decree which forbid praying to anyone other than himself. Daniel's faith and steadfastness to God was not swayed by the decree. "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did formerly" (Daniel 6:10) [emp. mine - tls]. His unrighteous surroundings did not move this righteous man. He did not become unrighteous due to his environment or by circumstances.

Sin has a way of creeping into our lives. It begins by tempting us in the most subtle of ways. Just as in the days of Adam and Eve, Satan still has his devices for tempting us. These enticements come through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). In Matthew 5:21 Jesus shows that the heart is the seat of every evil action (Matthew 15:18-20; Mark 7:21). Sinful actions do not just happen, they come from hearts that are making wrong choices. Violence and every evil way is brought to reality by making the choice to carry out our inward thoughts. Most of the world has not realized this fact. Wrong choices originate in the mind and when carried out they become

ungodly behavior. James said, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). We are told that there are some 4,500 abortions performed each and every day. Can we not realize that physical lust is what leads to this violence? Make no mistake, it is violence! Violence that is at its zenith. Unborn children being murdered because someone did not make the choice to do God's will!

Even though the world around us seems to be decaying at a rapid pace God's people must not give over to the worldly mind (1 John 2:15-17). We have been given every avenue by which we can escape the enticing nature of sin (2 Timothy 4:16-17). Matthew 4:1-11 illustrates the powerful influence of the word of God. When Jesus said; "It is written," we understand that by the inspired word we have a way of escaping the temptation of sin. We are told that the truth will make us free (John 8:32), and that the word of God is truth (John 17:17). When we apply these truths we will be able to overcome the temptation to sin (Psalm 119:11).

### **God Made a Promise in the Rainbow**

After the flood waters had receded God made a covenant by way of a rainbow. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." (Genesis 9:12-16)

Every time a rainbow appears in the sky we should be reminded of the great event which took place in the long ago. Remembering that God grew tired of the sinfulness of mankind. We should carefully consider the wickedness recorded in Genesis 6. We must realize that even though we are surrounded by violence, wantonness and every evil thing, a righteous person will be preserved. God is still in control and the world of Satan cannot destroy God's promise to save the faithful. The colorful rainbow ought to remind us of God's grace. His grace was extended to everyone but not all chose to accept His grace. It should remind us also that one day God's longsuffering will come to an end and we will be judged just as surely and as justly as the people before the flood. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord because he was obedient to all God commanded (Genesis 6:22), God gave ample time for repentance in the days of Noah; "Which sometime were disobedient, when once 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" (1 Peter 3:20-21).

### **Conclusion**

The ark clearly declares God's reward for righteousness and His displeasure with unrighteousness. 1 Peter 3:20-21 shows the likeness of the flood and baptism. With the flood waters, God cleansed His creation. The world was wicked but Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). God informed Noah of the plan and instructed him as to how to save himself and his family. The world was rebellious and it caused God to sorrow deeply over the situation. What was it that really saved Noah?

We could say the ark saved him because it did (Hebrews 11:7). We could also say that his faith and obedience saved him because it did (Hebrews 11:7). We could also say he was saved by water and he was saved by water according to 1 Peter 3:20-21. But all of this was made possible because God gave instructions that brought about this salvation.

The same is true of mankind today. We are saved because God had a plan and gave the instructions by which we carry out His plan. Sinners are cleansed by the blood of Christ in baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). The old man is buried and the new man arises to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Salvation follows baptism and not before as some claim (Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 6:1-5). Baptism puts one into Christ, His death (Romans 6:3). By baptism we put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).

The fact is that God gave mankind the plan whereby he could be saved even when surrounded by unrighteousness. Man must not live according to the world (1 John 2:15-17) but by the word of God which is able to save our souls (James 1:21). Christ "...became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). Some may say that man has nothing, "not one wit" to do with his salvation. And many are carried into this false and damnable teaching. However, we must ask; Did Noah have any part to play in his salvation? Was he active or passive so far as his salvation is concerned? When we read Hebrews 11:7 we cannot mistake the truth "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..." Salvation, Noah's included, has always been by grace (God's part) through faith (an active obedient faith on man's part). This is made abundantly clear in Ephesians 2:8-10. Notice that we are to do the work which was before ordained of God. Peter encouraged the hearer on the day of Pentecost; "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). When everyone else is rejecting salvation and living ungodly lives there is still the plea to save ourselves from the wickedness of the world. Never forget that God is able to save the righteous in the worst of times.

### Works Cited

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