

GENESIS 6:14-22 (TO BUILD AN ARK)

The Bible is full of great and wonderful stories which excite our imagination, but very few of them are as memorable as that of Noah and the ark. There is almost no one who can't repeat at least a portion of the story. At the same time as being exciting and memorable, it's one of the first stories people discount as myth.

Mark Isaak, on his website talkorigins.org has compiled individual flood stories from Europe, the Near East, Africa, Asia, Australia, the Pacific Islands, North America, Central America, and South America. In all and to date, he has 264 individual stories right there for you to read about a great flood from our past

The million dollar question is "Did all of these stories originate from a real account and devolve into various myths," or "Did one myth evolve into many?" Which is more likely and why? Obviously, even the answer to that will be based on personal biases, but the chances of 264 individual cultures possessing a similar historical account must be more than mere chance.

In addition to direct stories, there are lots of other hints that a flood really occurred in history. The Chinese alphabet includes references to the flood as well as other accounts from Genesis even though they weren't discovered until modern times.

In the end, we are left with hope and faith. Hope in the promises of our great and awesome Creator, and faith that His word and that these promises are true. As the psalmist said so long ago –

"My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word. ⁸² My eyes fail *from searching* Your word, Saying, "When will You comfort me?" ⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,
Yet I do not forget Your statutes"

Introduction: Whether we believe that the story of Noah and the flood is true or not is irrelevant if the story is true. One thing is sure, both Jesus and

the apostles believed it was true and they spoke of Noah as a real person and the flood as a real occurrence.

Our faith in what **they** say is only as strong as our faith in the story they attest to. If we don't believe in the flood, then we have no reason to believe anything else that Jesus says, nor should we believe anything else the apostles say. Peter wrote this to us –

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” 1 Peter 3:18-20

Not only does Peter speak of Noah as real, but he speaks of the flood as real. And not just any flood, but a global flood which left only eight survivors. In the same passage, he says that Christ died for our sins and that He was resurrected by the power of God. If the flood of Noah isn't true, then everything else Peter says is equally unreliable, including the resurrection, and we are left in a world... without hope.

The Bible is a unified whole and to disregard any part of it is to relegate the entire book to both a waste of time and an unnecessary dust collection device. So when you sit in a church with a female pastor, you alone have to justify why you're there. When you decide to have an intimate relationship with someone you're not married to, it's up to you to face the Lord and explain why.

Text Verse: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:36-40

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Building the Ark

It's not known **how** Noah was told to build his ark, only that he was told to do so. But two things we know, and which are clarified in the New Testament, is that he built the ark by faith and that his instructions were because of a divine warning. Let's read what the author of Hebrews says about it –

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Hebrews 11:7

A guy closing in on 500 years of age is told that the entire world would be destroyed by flood and that he needed to get ready for it. The author of Hebrews said that he was "moved with godly fear." In other words, God had spoken and he'd best not dither in getting ready for what he was told was coming.

And today, there are jillions of people in the world today who have been told exactly the same thing – that judgment is coming. We have the same divine warning, the Word of God, and we have exactly the same choice – godly fear or dithering and denial. Either the Bible is true or it's not... who will become the heir of righteousness in this generation?

Noah's divine warning had arrived, alerting him to what was coming and the divine instructions are as follows –

¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.

¹⁵ And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

¹⁶ You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with lower, second, and third decks.*

So how big was the ark according to modern measurements? We have a historically reliable estimate that a cubit was from about 18 to 21 inches in length. This means that the ark was from 450 to 540 feet long, 75 to 90 feet wide, and from 45 to 55 feet high. This then would be a ship of 1.5 to 2.7 million cubit feet of space.

Anything this large would have required immense carpentry skills, even if it wasn't lavishly fashioned. If it was only used to protect the life in it and not for any other reason, it could have been constructed as just a big box and it wouldn't have needed sails, a rudder, or anything else. But no matter what, it would have needed to be seaworthy in construction.

The word for ark here is used 28 times in 25 verses of the Bible. It's used in only two accounts and for two reasons – Noah's Ark and the ark which held Moses when he was placed in the Nile River. The word is *tebah* and implies a vessel of indeterminate shape, unlike the Ark of the Covenant which resembled a coffin.

In other words, it was a hollow ship made and used for people, animals, goods, etc. Beyond that, we can't assign any particular shape to it. The shape itself is left up to the imagination of whoever is reading the story... a nice mental present from our God.

No matter what it looked like, the sizes given mean that it would have been perfectly capable of holding all of the people and animals that it was asked to hold and it would have had enough room for a year's worth of food as well. In all, it would have been approximately 81062 tons in displacement.

This ship then would have been the largest ship built for the next 4100 years. Not until the giant metal ships of the late 19th century would there again have been ships this large on the ocean's waters.

Along with getting the size instructions, Noah was told to build it of gopher wood. Unfortunately, this word predates the Hebrew language and nobody is really sure what gopher wood is. A good guess though is cypress.

The word for cypress in Greek is *kuparissos*, or in its shortened form *kupar* which sounds a whole heap like gopher. This would be reasonable because cypress is a non-corruptible wood which is impervious to bugs and worms. Lots of other suggestions have been made though and just like the shape of the ark, we don't have anything more to go on.

Noah was told to build a window for the ark. Again, there are several possibilities as to what this looked like. He was told "to finish it from a cubit from above." Some drawings show a long raised window going down the middle of the ark, some show a raised window going along on top of the deck of the ark, and some show it being an open window along the sides of the ark.

No matter which is correct, it allowed in light, kept out the rain, and vented the entire ark of the lovely smells of life which surely wafted from its individual compartments. Also, we'll see later that he opens the window, so we know that at least some of it was a fixed material that could open and close like we would open or close a window today.

Noah was told to cover the ark with pitch. This word in Hebrew is *kaphar* and gets its meaning from being a covering. Another use of this same word is when it's used as the price of redemption. I don't mean to stretch the meaning of the word too far, but isn't this exactly what Noah is doing.

He was using a covering to save his life from destruction. This then might be a veiled reference to the work of Jesus, who covers us with His blood and grants us His garments of righteousness.

Finally, in the construction, Noah was told to make it with lower, second, and third decks. Some believe this is a picture of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but this is stretching things.

Each of the members of the Trinity are fully God, but each of the decks on the ship are only fully parts of the ship, not fully the ship. In other words, just as an egg is a bad example of the trinity, so is the concept of a ship with three decks.

A triangle isn't a triangle if you take away one of its sides, but the ship would still be a ship if you took away one of its decks. The three decks then aren't a picture of the trinity, but they show a wise use of the immense size of the ship. They would also have added to the structural integrity of it, and they would also allow for a logical division of the cargo she was carrying.

Looking at the construction of the ark, we can make some pertinent connections to our own lives. Noah was given some very explicit instructions about the size of the ark, the number of levels in it, the type of wood to be used, and so on. In the same way, God has given us very specific instructions for our own lives in the Bible.

We'll see a bit later that Noah followed the instructions he was given exactly as they were received. However, there were lots of things that weren't included in the instructions. They don't tell what he couldn't do, only the things he was to do. It doesn't say that Noah couldn't bring any personal items onto the ark, and this therefore allowed him to do it.

If Noah wanted to bring along a board game, he could have done so. If he wanted to bring his favorite orchids, then he could have brought them along too. And if Noah wanted to bring along his favorite horse drawn buggy, there was nothing to stop him.

In the same way, the Bible gives us explicit instructions for our life. There are some things we can do and some things we can't do. Christians are supposed to marry Christians, but it doesn't say we have to stick to any certain race, color, or hair style.

The Bible tells us that all foods are acceptable for us, but it doesn't mandate that we eat any particular foods. In other words, I'm not forced to eat tomatoes if I don't like them and I'm not restricted from eating alligator tail if I like that.

What we need to do then is to be obedient to do what God mandates, stay away from what God forbids, and enjoy the freedom of what is left unstated. If we can do these things, then we're walking by faith in a world lovingly given to us to enjoy and participate in as long as it is in line with His will.

While we're looking at the verses which detail how the ark was built, we can see that it resembles a type or picture of how God has ordained worship throughout the ages.

The ark was made of a non-corruptible wood. In the same way, the tabernacle furniture, such as the Ark of the Covenant, was made of incorruptible wood. Both of these represent the incorruptible body of Jesus Christ and they also anticipate the incorruptible nature of the church who will bear the image of Christ when He comes.

There was only one door into the ark just as there was only one door leading into the tabernacle. And in the church, which is the dwelling of the living God, there is only one way of access – Jesus Christ. He calls Himself “the door” in the Gospel of John. Our worship then is directed to Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church and the One who brings us close to our Creator.

On the ark were many types of animals and in the church there are people of every race and color and culture. There are Jews and there are gentiles – all of which are sanctified by the same Lord. In the book of Acts, Peter had a vision where he was shown a sheet coming down from heaven with all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

He was told to eat what he saw and being a Jew he said “no,” but God told him that he shouldn't call anything unclean which God has cleansed. This symbolism was given as a reference to the gentile people of the world – all cleansed by the same perfect Savior. All prepared to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

On the ark there were three decks with a single window on the top deck. In the tabernacle there were three divisions. The first was outer court where the sacrifices of sin were offered. The second is where the bread, menorah, and incense were offered, and the third was where God met with man.

In the same way, in our worship we start at the first deck and come to the final sacrifice – which is the cross of Jesus. It is also where we wash and are sanctified as we progress in our lives.

On the second deck we commune with God through the Bread of His Body, live in the Power of His Holy Spirit, and offering prayers to and through Him as our Mediator.

And on the third deck, we enter the most Holy Place where we commune directly with God in His presence – there the window is opened and our new lives begin in earnest. We unite directly with God through the Person of Jesus Christ in the perfect worship of purity and holiness. That day is coming for all believers who will simply, by faith, allow Jesus Christ to come in to them.

II. The Lord Has Spoken

¹⁷ And 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.

¹⁸ But 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.

The floodwaters were coming because of the wickedness of man. There's no other way to interpret this and it implies that God is behind it as a judgment. As disturbing as it may sound, nothing else can be interpreted from the disasters which happen today too – each of them is a result of and a judgment upon sin.

This doesn't mean that good people are immune from them either, but that what happens is a result of man's overall disobedience – whether you're talking about hurricanes, earthquakes, or any other calamity. Let me give

you one example which may help us look at disasters a little differently in the future.

The Lord has spoken in history in very specific ways and in one of them is that He has given the land of Israel to the people of Israel. America has long been Israel's ally and defender. Many times, when we have worked to harm Israel's rights to the land, disasters have resulted because of those policies. Here a just a few –

October 30, 1991: President Bush opened the Madrid Conference with an initiative for a Middle East peace plan involving Israel's land. That same day, the Perfect storm hit America's coast.

August 23, 1992: The Madrid Conference moved to Washington D.C. and the peace talks resumed. On that same day, Hurricane Andrew produced \$30 billion in damages and left 180,000 homeless in Florida.

January 16, 1994: President Clinton met with Syria's President in Geneva. They talked about a peace agreement with Israel that included giving up the Golan Heights. Less than 24 hours later the Northridge earthquake hit California and became America's second most destructive natural disaster behind Hurricane Andrew.

March to April 1997: The combination of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat touring America, and Clinton rebuking Israel for not giving away her land for peace, coincided with some of the worst tornadoes and flooding in US history. The day Arafat landed in America, powerful tornadoes devastated huge sections of the nation, ripping across Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee. Arafat's American tour also coincided with storms in the Dakotas resulting in the worst flooding of the century. When Arafat finished his tour and left the US, the storms stopped.

September 27-28, 1998: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright worked on the final details of an agreement in which Israel would give up 13 percent of Yesha and the same day Hurricane Georges hit the Gulf Coast with 110 mph winds and gusts up to 175; it stalled over the coast adding to the disaster.

On September 28, Clinton met with Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House to finalize that land deal. Later, Arafat addressed the United Nations about declaring an independent Palestinian state by May 1999, while Hurricane Georges pounded the Gulf Coast causing \$1 billion in damage. The exact time Arafat departed the US, the storm begins to dissipate.

October 15-22, 1998: Arafat and PM Netanyahu met at the Wye River Plantation in Maryland to continue talks. On October 17, rains and tornadoes hit southern Texas. The San Antonio area was deluged with 20 inches of rain in one day. The rains and floods in Texas continued until October 22 and then subsided. 25 percent of Texas was ravaged and it had over one billion dollars in damage.

May 3, 1999: Clinton wrote to Arafat and encouraged him about “aspirations for his own land” and that the Palestinians had a right to “determine their own future on their own land,” and that they deserved to “live free, today, tomorrow and forever.” That same day, the most powerful tornado storm system ever to hit the United States swept across Oklahoma and Kansas.

August 29, 2005: Exactly one week after Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon completed the forcible eviction of Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip, done at America’s behest, hurricane Katrina struck the states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama causing immense destruction. 80% of the entire city of New Orleans was left under water. This may have been the worst natural disaster ever to hit the country.

Each of these disasters cost America an immense amount of money and many lives were lost because individual foreign policy decisions that were directed against Israel’s best intentions. However, in the past three years, we have seen it become the overall policy of America to work against Israel.

Instead of individual disasters costing billions of dollars, our nation has gone into economic decline and has cost us trillions of dollars. The only way to reverse what is happening is to restore leadership to America which will

support and defend Israel's right to exist without applying pressure on them to establish a Palestinian state.

Such is the case with every disaster and calamity. They are, in the end, a result of man working against God and relentlessly rejecting Him and His offer of peace which comes by the marvelously simple demonstration of faith in Him and His work.

Going back to the Noah account, God clearly indicated that He was bringing the destruction upon the world because of man's wickedness. It is His world and every form of life on it belongs to Him. But despite the calamity to come, God promised to establish His covenant with Noah.

This is the first time the term covenant is used in the Bible. God was going to destroy the world, but He would save Noah through the flood. Noah then was expected to obey the command and build the ark. When it was finished, he was to enter the ark with his wife, his sons, and their wives. These are the terms set out for Noah.

In other words, this covenant was binding and it was a covenant of life. But it was also a covenant of death. Noah wasn't allowed to bring anyone else – brothers, friends, his doctor, or his lawyer. God's covenant was established and obedience was expected.

And how does this apply to us today? Jesus established the New Covenant in His blood and it is just as binding as what God did for Noah. He has set down the conditions and all who obey it will be saved. The obvious question is, "Saved from what?" When someone comes up to you and asks, "Are you saved?" They usually don't even know what their asking.

The impression is that "being saved" means you're going to heaven. But that isn't at all what being "saved" means. The term "saved" is used 106 times in the Bible and it is always used to indicate being rescued "out of something" or "from something." Not for something.

What then does it mean to be saved? Exactly what it meant for Noah – that we won't perish when God judges. Paul explains salvation in Chapter 5 of the book of Romans –

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Salvation is a work of God, it is a work accomplished by God, and it is done for God's people and no one else. The salvation is, as Paul says, **from** His wrath. The Bible says we are enemies of God and yet He accomplishes the work necessary to restore us to Him and then asks us to believe that what He has done will work out.

Getting saved isn't going to heaven. Going to heaven is only a result of getting saved.

III. Two by Two

It never ceases to amaze me what hang ups people have with the Bible. One strong Christian, who is very close to me, struggles with – or at least struggled with, the notion that Samson killed 1000 men by himself with the jawbone of a donkey. Another family member says he simply can't believe in the virgin birth.

I've heard people doubt that the Nile really turned to blood and others can't believe in a literal 6-day creation. There are all kinds of things that people find too hard to stomach in the Bible.

Believers may accept the overall premise, but struggle with the details. Non-believers may reject the Bible because of the details **or** because of the

overall premise. Jesus being the “only way” to God is a big stumbling block to many.

Recently, I had lunch with someone who was asked to talk with me about Jesus. The first thing he asked was about evolution. The next thing he brought up was that he simply couldn’t believe that Noah could bring two of every type of animal into the ark. This was the starting of his doubts... Doubts begin in all kinds of places.

¹⁹ And 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.

²⁰ Of 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.

²¹ And 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.”

While destroying the world, God was going to save the world. And Noah’s Ark was how he was going to do it. If you find it a clumsy way of doing the job, then think about it from God’s perspective. What would be the best way of accomplishing the task while maintaining faith as the overall premise of being right with Him?

If you think about it from that perspective, the ark is the perfect tool of employing His saving grace while at the same time demonstrating His righteous judgment. Just imagine the sight of Noah, working day after day in the sight of the people of the world – building a ship where there was no ocean.

And as nutty as it seemed to those around him, he was gathering animals into one location like a zoo. God directed them to him and Noah made things ready for them. Because it says the animals “will come to you” we can assume that any animals that didn’t come weren’t meant to be a part of the new order.

In other words, if there are species which became extinct at the flood, it was because they weren't meant to continue on – possibly because they would be incompatible with the new ecosystem.

And what would prompt a person to store up food when everything went along in its normal fashion? According to Jesus' own words, in the days before the flood people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark. But Noah, by faith, built an ark and prepared for what was yet unseen and unimaginable.

One of my close friends has all kinds of food stored up in case things go south. I know another person who has spare fish nets, guns and ammunition, tools, and other things set aside just in case the ball drops. Why are they doing this? Are they nutty survivalists anticipating the overthrow of the country? No.

They are faithful believers in God's word who have looked around at the world today, read the prophecies from thousands of years ago, and see clearly that the time is short. Israel is back in the land and the nations are lining up against her. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see what's happening... it takes a believer in God's word – one who lives by faith. As the Bible says –

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. And so we too will be commended for hearing and believing God's word; taking to heart by faith the very things that seem incredible.

When the ball does drop, they will cry for relief, but relief won't come. Such are the workings of our righteous, just, and holy God.

IV. Noah's Obedience

²² Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

This is our final verse today and the final verse of chapter 6. It is a verse of obedience to the Master's word and in fact it repeats the word "did" twice

in order to emphasize Noah's obedience. God gave the instructions and Noah obeyed.

And not only did he build the ark, gather the animals, and store up the food, but he was also a preacher of righteousness during this time. We find this out in the book of 2 Peter 2:4-5 –

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;”

During the entire time that Noah built the ark, he preached to the people of the world about righteousness and the judgment to come. And he did it by the Spirit of Christ.

However long it took to build the ark, Noah continued with his preaching. Some of the people on the earth may have responded and died before the flood just like Methuselah and Lamech, but out of everyone else, not one person was found worthy to join Noah.

And the call has been ringing out ever since – yes, there is a God, yes, He is there and has offered you forgiveness. But the call has been rejected far more than accepted. Instead of understanding the purpose of the nation of Israel and calling on Jehovah like Ruth did, most people waged war against her. And finally, even the people of Israel left behind the truth.

When Jesus came and walked among them, fewer believed and more rejected. Thirty eight years after His cross, they were overthrown and dispersed. Since that time, the church has faltered and failed to properly proclaim the word, but each generation has renewed the battle and time has progressed onward. But the world is moving further away from the gospel, not closer to it.

Enoch was taken before the flood and the church will be taken before the Day of the Lord. Noah was carried through the flood and Israel will be

carried through the tribulation until Jesus reigns in her midst, leading the nations in the Kingdom Age.

Next week, we'll look over Genesis 7:1-24, The Flood of Noah. Take time to read those verses and ponder what they have to say in anticipation of another Church on the Beach.

Noah Builds an Ark

Noah was a prophet speaking the word of the Lord
In righteousness he plead with the world's people
But they were having fun and his message made them bored
They were all going astray, wayward little sheeple

Noah was a carpenter building an ark to keep him secure
He fashioned it from gopher wood where no ocean was found
The people thought he was nuts, oh but he was so sure
And unlike all the people, Noah wasn't drowned

He built the ark bigger than a football field
300 by 50 by 30 was the ark's size
Against the strongest waves this ship wouldn't yield
And safety from the flood was his obedient prize

The ark had three decks, a window, and a door
All that hammering and cutting, must have made him sore

Noah was a farmer gathering lots of food
He stored it up for years getting ready for the flood

And while he built the ark the animals came his way
He had twos of every kind getting ready for that day

Birds and animals and creeping things to be kept alive
Each came two by two after their own kind
What about the bees? Two don't make a hive
Maybe he brought more because he had honey on his mind

Noah did everything, just as he was supposed to do
He prepared every detail getting ready for the big day
But as he did, people mocked him and said "You're kookoo"
But Noah kept on preaching and gathering in the hay

Noah was a man of faith living not by sight
His life is recorded as a righteous soul
Everything he was asked to do, he did just right
And so his deeds are recorded in God's eternal scroll

It's faith that God loves in the people of the earth
But the faith must be directed to Him and His word
It is Jesus who alone will grant you the new birth
So just like Noah, please believe the message you have heard

Hallelujah and Amen...