

BY FAITH

# Noah

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***By Faith Noah***

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**Companion tape:** GR-310. For further study: GR-S4

For more information about the flood, read *The Genesis Flood* by John C. Whitcomb, Jr., Henry M. Morris and John C. McCampbell; The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 1961.

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Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. . . . By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (Heb. 11:1,2,7).

# *By Faith Noah*

## *Faith Is Practical*

Hebrews 11 is not a doctrinal analysis of faith. Rather, it emphasizes everyday, practical faith presented through the lives of Old Testament individuals who were known as men and women of faith.

The people to whom Hebrews 11 was written had endured much suffering and many trials because they believed in Jesus Christ. In chapter 10 they were called upon to remember the early days of their salvation when they had met their trials with boldness and confidence. Some of the people were becoming weary and considering pulling back, because it seemed that their boldness and confidence had only brought them trials, opposition and more trials:

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised (Heb. 10:35,36).

To encourage these discouraged believers and stimulate their confidence, the writer of Hebrews gives examples of real men who experienced major difficulties, yet whose faith allowed those trials to produce endurance and steadfastness in their lives.

Noah is an outstanding example of this endurance and steadfastness. Hebrews 11:7 tells us, “By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark.” When God told Noah there was going to be a great flood, Noah had probably never seen rain, much less a flood! Yet he believed God and “prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.” That took tremendous faith on Noah’s part—and tremendous endurance!

Of course, it is easy for us to read about Noah’s faith and endurance. We say, “Wow! Wasn’t he something special!” and go on

our way without it affecting our lives in the least. But let me challenge you to consider how faith affected the way Noah lived his life, and to apply these same principles to your life. God gave us these verses to encourage and motivate us to “hang in there” when the going gets tough. I pray that it will do just that in your life.

### *Faith Is Essential*

Faith is *the* essential ingredient for being pleasing to God. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6). The content of that faith is twofold: (1) “He who comes to God must believe that He is,” and (2) “that He [God] is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

To “believe that God is” goes beyond believing in the existence of God. Satan “believes” that God exists, but Satan does not have faith that leads to salvation. The kind of faith that Hebrews 11 is talking about is faith that believes that the God who has revealed Himself through the Bible is the only God Who is. There is no other God besides Him.

That kind of faith leads to the pattern of life Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and the others in this chapter exhibited. They gave reverent obedience to God’s Word regardless of the cost, regardless of whether or not they lived to see all that was promised (see Heb. 11:39,40).

### *The Evidence of Faith*

“By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark” (Heb. 11:7). The construction of the ark was Noah’s response of faith to what God revealed concerning coming judgment: “Being warned by God about things not yet seen.” Noah was given a revelation from God, and he believed that revelation.

Now it is one thing to believe something when you have experienced it or have seen someone else experience it, but it is quite another thing to believe something when neither you nor anyone else has ever heard of such a thing! Noah’s faith was that kind of faith—faith that could believe the impossible if God said it.

I cannot help but compare Noah’s response with Thomas’ response in John 20:19–28. The first time Jesus appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, Thomas was missing. When the other

disciples told him they had seen the resurrected Christ, he did not believe them. Later Jesus appeared personally to Thomas, and then, of course, Thomas believed. But Jesus said to him: “Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed” (John 20:29). Noah had never seen a flood, yet he believed God and built an ark on dry land.

### *The Test of Faith*

Genesis 6:5,6 tells us why God warned Noah “about things yet unseen:”

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Man’s sinfulness and violence had so corrupted the human race that God planned to intervene and destroy it. But before He did, He revealed His plan to Noah:

The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark . . . and behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish (Gen. 6:13,14,17).

In Hebrews 11:7 we are told that Noah was “warned by God about things not yet seen.” Obviously Noah had never seen a world-wide catastrophe or anything that could compare to the destruction of the whole human race. In all probability Noah had never seen a flood. In fact, it is doubtful that he had ever seen rain! So for Noah it would have been a little difficult to conceive of a great flood of waters. But Noah’s faith went beyond what he had seen or experienced.

### *Did You Say Rain?*

Three places in Scripture indicate that Noah probably had never seen rain. After the creation of the earth was completed, Genesis 2:5 tells us,

Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of

the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth; and there was no man to cultivate the ground.

Originally the earth may have been surrounded by a canopy of water. As a result, the entire earth would have been a tropical paradise watered by heavy dew or mist which came up from the face of the earth. This would explain the archaeological evidence of tropical vegetation under the polar ice caps.

A second indication that there had been no rain on the earth until the flood is found in Genesis 9. Here we have a description of events after the flood,

“And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I will set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth” (Gen. 9:11–13).

If this is the first time the rainbow appears, that would suggest that this is also the first time it had rained on the earth.

The third indication that it had not rained before the flood is found in Genesis 8:1 where “God caused a wind to pass over the earth.” This is the first reference to wind in the Bible. Today we know that wind is only possible with changes in temperature; so under the tropical canopy before the flood there would have been no wind. It is also possible that oceans did not exist as we know them today.

The amazing thing is that when God said He was going to destroy the earth with a flood, without any knowledge of or experience with rain and floods, Noah believed God.

### *A Reverent Response*

If you or I had just received the mind-boggling news that it was going to rain and flood the whole earth and the only way to be saved was to build an ark, I wonder how we would have responded. Noah not only responded in obedience to all that God commanded him (Gen. 6:22), he responded *reverently*.

Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being warned by God about

things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark.” The word *reverence* has a twofold meaning. It denotes both “fear,” as it is translated in the King James Version, and “respect.” Because Noah respected and feared God, he obeyed by building the ark.

It is important to understand that you cannot revere or respect God and fail to obey Him. Reverence and obedience are inseparably linked. For all eternity God will be the sovereign, and we will be the created beings who worship Him. That element should always be present in our relationship with Him. We ought never to lose our respect and honor for God or our healthy fear of Him.

As believers we sometimes slide into being flippant or casual about God. But God is our Father, and each of us must function in our relationship with Him with healthy, proper fear, even as we each have a proper sense of fear in our relationship with our earthly father.

Noah was a man of faith, a righteous man. He had a proper fear of God. The result was, he rescued his family from the coming judgment.

### *The Ark: An Act of Faith*

“By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark for the salvation of his household” (Heb. 11:7). Noah received God’s revelation. He responded reverently to that revelation. And his family was the beneficiary of that faith.

Sometimes we get so caught up in the interesting facts about the ark and the flood that we lose the key message. We fail to consider the impact our faith or lack of faith has upon our family members and close friends. If a father takes lightly the revelation of God and fails to believe it or does not become serious about what God has said, his son will pick up his attitude. *Oh, Dad goes to church, but his job is the most important thing in his life—right after football!* (Unfortunately, our televisions often wear out before our Bibles do.)

It is exciting that Noah believed and obeyed God. As a result, there were eight people on the ark—Noah, his wife, his three sons and his three daughters-in-law.

Do not lose sight of the emphasis of Hebrews 11—that true faith results in endurance. Because Noah believed God, he did the



hard thing, the thing that was difficult and unpleasant. But it was the only thing of real importance, of eternal significance.

We, too, ought to live in light of the importance of eternal issues and determine that our children will see that we give spiritual matters top priority in our lives. The most important thing Noah could do was to communicate to his family that it was of all-consuming importance that they obey God and get ready for the coming judgment.

### *The Ark Described*

God said, “[Noah] make . . . an ark” (Gen. 6:14). Now that seems like a simple statement. But it was not going to be an easy job for Noah. It was going to take *endurance*. Listen to the dimensions of this ark! “This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits” (Gen. 6:15).

A cubit was anywhere from seventeen and one-half to twenty-two inches. Taking the smallest measurement, the minimum size of the ark would have been approximately 438 feet long, 73 feet wide and 44 feet high. According to verse 16, it had three decks. That would have provided about 95,703 square feet of deck area, or a total volume of almost 1,396,000 cubic feet. This was a big, big ark!

Can't you just hear most people's response? “Lord, I do not even live near a creek. Lord you are talking about water coming down from heaven. Could you just give me a sample to encourage me? Maybe a vision of the flood would help.” But not Noah. There is no indication that he argued with God.

Not only did God tell Noah to build an ark, there was more: “And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female” (Gen. 6:19). *Now* Noah finds out he is going to be living on a floating zoo!

All kinds of questions are raised about Noah and his ark. People always ask, “Do you think it would have been possible to get two of every kind of animal into the ark?” The fact is, Noah was not instructed to bring two of every animal to the ark, but just two representatives from every species.

If you were going to do that today, you would need 150 boxcars to hold two of every species. And since the ark had a volume equivalent to 522 boxcars, you cannot reject what Genesis 6 says on the basis of the animals not fitting into the ark. There was plenty of room for two of every species and enough room left over for food for all of them for a year.

The ark was shaped like a large, rectangular box, not like the boats we think of today. It had three decks on it with compartments for all the different kinds of animals. It had a window for air and ventilation—probably an open window that ran all around the top of the ark.

I find it interesting that modern shipbuilders have determined that the most appropriate proportions for a boat are the same as those God gave to Noah for the ark. Isn't it amazing that thousands of years before man figured it out, Noah had been given instructions by God on how to build an ark that would have the right dimensions for making the most stable vessel possible? The ratio of the ark's length, width and height was perfect. When the ark was full, it would have lowered itself about halfway into the water.

Dr. Henry Morris, a hydraulic engineer, has done considerable work on the study of the ark and has concluded that for the ark to capsize, it would have had to lean completely on its side.<sup>1</sup> It was a very stable vessel.

### *Getting the Animals In*

Can't you just imagine Noah and his wife and three sons and three daughters-in-law out beating the bushes, chasing the animals into the ark one by one? "I got one! Go look in the ark to see if this is a duplicate of the 22,000 we already have."

Obviously, that would not have been a very successful way of rounding up the animals! So, how was it done? Genesis 6:20 says, "Two of every kind shall come to you to keep them alive." Evidently God caused a supernatural migration of the animals toward the ark at the appropriate time. We have seen this on a limited scale where

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The World that Perished*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Nutley, New Jersey; 1973; p.22.

impending natural catastrophes have somehow given the animal world a sense of need and a desire for migration. There has never been, however, another migration of the magnitude of the one in Genesis 6.

God moved the animals in the direction of the ark. All Noah had to do was say, "Open the pens. Here they come!" And there they were.

At this point someone always asks: "What about all the waste material?" Since I do not have the answer, I will not go into any details. Noah and the animals were on the ark for 371 days, a little more than a year. I am a city person, so a short trip to the barn is adequate for me.

Somebody *always* comes up with the question: "How many rabbits would you have after 371 days on the ark?" I guess that would have been a problem, so God took care of it. When the animals came off the ark, Scripture indicates they came off two by two, just as they went on. Evidently they were not reproducing during this year on the ark. It may be that God caused something like supernatural hibernation to come upon the animals. That would be no big problem for God. It would also have cut down on the food needed during the course of the year on the ark. However God did it, He preserved representatives from each species on earth, along with Noah and his family.

The population of the earth at the time of the flood is another interesting sidelight. How many people do you think would have been living when Noah got on the ark? Henry Morris gives some interesting equations in a paperback book: *Biblical Cosmology and Modern Science*. He came up with an absolute minimum figure of 325 million people, which he thinks is a gross underestimation of the earth's population at the time of the flood. If births in Noah's day occurred at anywhere near the rate they occur in our day, the population of the earth would have been about 3 billion people.

Quite truthfully, before I read the book, my concept of the earth's population in the days of Noah was a small town—maybe a few hundred or a few thousand people. But that is not an accurate picture at all. There were hundreds of millions of people, and they had become so depraved and corrupt that God determined they must be destroyed.

### *The Test of Endurance*

Think how Noah must have felt when God gave him the dimensions of the ark. Do you know how long it was going to take him to build this boat? One hundred and twenty years! But do you know what that says to me? It says, Gil, you give up too easily. After one hundred years of work, Noah still had nothing to go on but the fact that God had told him to do it those many years before. If God tells us to do something and three days later the going gets tough, we tend to change our course. *God must want me to do something else or it would not be so hard.* How many Christians do you know who came on like gangbusters, but when they found out that the Christian life is hard work, that it takes endurance, they quit because they did not have that kind of faith? Noah had a faith that did not give up.

A philosophy of “fun” Christianity pervades the Christian world today. There are numerous best-selling books that promote this theme, and people by the millions are buying and reading them. When you read Hebrews 11, you do not get that idea. You have examples of men like Moses who chose “rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Heb. 11:25). You have Christians who “were tortured . . . experienced mockings and scourgings . . . chains and imprisonment . . . stoned . . . sawn in two . . . put to death with the sword . . . destitute, afflicted, ill-treated” (Heb. 11:35–37). And you have Noah, who hammered on a boat for 120 years. Christianity takes endurance!

Second Peter 2:5 tells us that all the years Noah was building the ark, he was also preaching God’s righteousness. That, too, requires endurance—to keep on and on for 120 years, warning people who laugh in your face!

Recently the newspapers carried an article about a woman in an eastern state who was building an ark on a city lot. After complaints by the neighbors, she was ordered to tear it down. I cannot help but think that Noah must have seemed just as foolish to those who watched him build his boat as this woman did to her neighbors. Yet Noah was willing to risk everything to obey his God.

I wonder how many of us are as unashamed to be as publicly committed as he was? We give up so easily because we lack endurance. When we are called on to do something, how often do we say

to ourselves, *If it is not enjoyable, if it will not give me a good feeling, then I am not going to do it.* What do you think would have happened to Noah if he had decided that building the ark was too much work? Instead, he trusted God and worked within God's timetable, in God's way.

It is interesting that those who walked around finding fault with what Noah was doing were not individuals of faith. Noah had faith and he was busy doing. In the same way, we have many people today who seem called to examine and criticize what other believers are doing. They, however, are not the ones manifesting faith. Those who have faith are busy. In fact, if you really believe what God says, you are probably weary in well-doing. That is a good sign. If you have too much time on your hands, you had better evaluate whether you really believe what God says and then get about doing what He says. There is so much to be done—even as there was much to be done in Noah's day.

After preaching the righteousness of God for 120 years, do you know how many converts Noah had? Seven people. Only his wife, his three sons and his three daughters-in-law got on the ark with him. And they may well have been believers before he even started preaching. That is not a very good success ratio when you think of the hundreds of millions of people on the earth at that time. It tells us how corrupt man really was.

Talk about a man who could have been discouraged! Noah could have complained, "God, you not only gave me a hard ministry, You gave me the hard job of building a humongous boat. And besides that, You will not even give me any evidence that what You are telling me will really happen." But Noah did not question God. God's Word was all the evidence and proof Noah needed.

### *Testimony to the World*

"By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark, for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world" (Heb. 11:7). Note that "by which" refers back to "by faith." Noah's building the ark was the result of faith, but the building of the ark condemned the world. Long before the flood, Noah was proclaiming God's righteousness and the necessity for God, in righteousness, to judge man's sins. Nobody, however, believed him.

It was not only Noah's message that condemned those ungodly people. His life of faith and obedience to God condemned them as well. It is the same today. When a person believes what the Bible says about Jesus Christ, that person's very existence is a condemnation to those who do not believe it.

### *How to Become Righteous*

The third evidence of Noah's faith is that he became righteous. "By faith Noah . . . became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7).

Noah did not become righteous because he built the ark. He built the ark because he was righteous. Genesis 6:9 says, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God."

Why was Noah out there sweating and toiling on that ark for 120 years, preaching between his hammering? He believed God, and he built the ark because of his belief. Because Noah believed God, he was righteous.

As we have already seen, faith that saves will manifest itself in obedience and endurance. The only way to get God's righteousness is by faith, by believing in the revelation God has given.

And what, you ask, is the revelation He has given us today? That Jesus Christ came into the world as a man, died on the cross for your sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Only by believing this revelation can you become righteous. There is absolutely nothing you can do on your own to attain the righteous perfection God demands. But when you believe what God has done through Jesus Christ, He imputes His righteousness to you, which makes you acceptable to Him.

### *Applying Righteousness*

Peter applies the message of Noah to both believers and unbelievers of his day and ours. In his second epistle, he writes,

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:3,4).

### *To Those Who Do not Believe*

Uniformitarianists believe that we live in a closed system where things continue as they have always been. They deny that God has ever intervened. This is the position of the majority of our scientific community today. But Peter goes on to explain,

When they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water (2 Pet. 3:5,6).

Even though Genesis 1 tells us that the earth was covered with water at the time God created the heavens and the earth, the ungodly man chooses to be ignorant of that. He chooses to believe that things will go on as it appears they always have.

But things have not always been as they are now. God intervened and created all that was created. He also intervened with a flood, as pointed out in 2 Peter 3:6: "Through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water."

The earth as it was created was held for judgment until the days of Noah. The earth as it exists now—and since the days of Noah—is being held for coming destruction and judgment. Peter tells us, "But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Pet. 3:7). This next destruction will not be with water; it will be with fire.

"Oh sure," you say. "This has been preached for thousands of years and the earth is still here." Have you read 2 Peter 3:8?

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

A thousand years seems almost insignificant when you put time on a scale with eternity and think in terms of billions or quadrillions of years. A thousand years with God is no big deal. The fact that Peter wrote this two thousand years ago and it still has not happened does not mean it will not happen.

You see, God is faithful. He has always done what He said He would do, and He will always continue to do what He says He will do. Peter says,

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

Isn't it amazing how people twist the grace of God? If God intervenes in judgment, men say He is cruel and hard. If He delays His judgment so men can believe and be saved, they say He is never going to do it. But the very fact that He has not yet intervened is an evidence of His grace. If you have not yet believed in Jesus Christ, you ought to be glad He has not intervened. If He had intervened last week, you would have been caught in the judgment.

But God is patient. Why? Because He wants you to experience His salvation. It is not His desire for you to be judged and destroyed, but rather for you to be forgiven and saved from eternal judgment. For just as surely as judgment came in the days of Noah, judgment will come again.

### *To Believers*

What about those of us who do believe in Jesus Christ? Peter outlines our responsibility beginning in verse 10:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

Judgment is coming. We have never seen the earth destroyed by fire, but we have God's Word, just as Noah did.

Peter makes a strong point to us as believers:

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! . . . Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation (2 Pet. 3:11,12,14,15).

If I really believe this, if you really believe this, we will live godly lives in obedience to God.

Do you see the difference between Noah and us? Noah believed



God's Word and lived it. We try to go around telling people of coming judgment, that the world is passing away, that life is a vapor, that everything we acquire here is going to be destroyed, and at the same time we manifest the world's philosophy of living for *things*. Why doesn't the world sit up and take notice? Because we are taken up with what is temporary, just like everyone around us. That will hardly have a condemning influence on others.

As believers our lives should not revolve around what we can acquire here. Rather, we need to live in a way that makes an impact on our generation like Noah made on his, whether anyone believes us or not.

How has your life been different in the past week because you believed this earth is temporary? If you really believe it is all going to be destroyed by fire and that nothing you can acquire here is of any real, eternal significance, then how you live and what you live for will be drastically changed.

Examine your life. How should it be different?

Do not think you should quit your job, sit on a hill and wait for the Lord. That would not be biblical. The Bible says that if you do not work, you cannot eat. Noah's faith did not allow him to sit back and rest. It spurred him to action!

If you have believed the revelation of God concerning the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ, your life, too, ought to be a radical condemnation to the unbelieving people around you. To those who watch you, the works you produce as a result of your faith ought to be as visible a warning of judgment as Noah's ark was to the people of his day. When judgment arrived, no one was able to complain that Noah had not told them what was coming.

The emphasis of Genesis 6 and Hebrews 11:7 is on judgment, but in the midst of that judgment, we see the manifestation of God's grace towards those who believed Him. We, like Noah, have found favor in the eyes of the Lord and will be spared from the coming judgment—not because of anything we have done, but because of God's grace toward those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Deliverer.

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