

Osaka International Church

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Series: Beginnings #14

Title: Noah's Ark

Scripture: Genesis 6:9-9:17

I. Introduction

Good morning! Today we are going to take a brief look at the story of Noah's ark. This is a truly remarkable story. It is frightening, because so many perished in the flood. It is inspiring, because Noah obeys God and trusts in Him. And, it is comforting to people of faith, because it shows that the Lord saves those who walk with Him.



II. Teaching

The story of Noah's ark begins with Genesis 6:9 and ends at Genesis 9:17. Some Bible interpreters understand the story as speaking of a worldwide flood, and others see it as a regional flood. Those who see it as a worldwide flood generally understand the story as being told from God's point of view. Those who see it as a regional flood generally understand the story as being told from Noah's point of view, with Noah speaking about his experience and how he perceived the events.

We won't go into detail, but let me give you an example of the two approaches. **Genesis 7:19-20**, says concerning the floodwaters, **"They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet."** If you assume a God's eye view, then the entire earth was completely covered with water. But in the original Hebrew, the word, "earth," is the same as, "land," and the word, "hill," is the same as, "mountain." If Noah is telling the story as he experienced it, then the meaning may be that the land and hills Noah was familiar with were covered with water. What about the part that says the mountains were covered to, **"a depth of more than twenty feet?"** How could Noah know such a thing from inside the ark? Well, Noah knew that the ark extended 20 feet under water, and that the ark drifted in all directions, but never ran aground until the flood ended. So Noah might infer that the water was more than 20 feet deep everywhere.

In a similar way, the statement that all of the animals outside the ark died could simply mean that Noah looked North, South, East, and West and did not see any surviving animals after the flood. That would require a very large flood, but it would not have to be worldwide. In the English translation, the story sounds as if it is told from God's viewpoint and it sounds as if the flood is worldwide. But that impression may partially be from language and cultural differences. Of course, the arguments for and against a global flood extend into issues of science as well as Bible interpretation, but we won't take time to go into that today. I will leave that as homework for those who are interested.

What was the ark like? Take a look at this photo. Johan Huibe built this replica of the ark in Holland and put it on display in 2007. It looks pretty big doesn't it? But actually, this is a scale model. Noah's ark was twice as long, twice as high, and twice as wide. So Noah's ark was 8 times larger in total volume than this replica. Noah's ark was huge. The length of the ark was ten times its height and six times its width. These proportions have been demonstrated to be very stable for floating in rough seas, ideal for the purpose of a giant lifeboat.



I think the basic story of Noah's ark is familiar to most people, so today we will read only a few selected verses, but I want to encourage you to read the whole story carefully on your own. **Let's begin with Genesis 6:9-14.**

"This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his

time, and he walked with God. [10] Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. [11] Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. [12] God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. [13] So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. [14] So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out."

The world was corrupt and full of violence. But Noah was a righteous man. So the Lord determined that He would destroy all of the people except Noah and Noah's family. Here we see that God judges the wicked. But, as we discussed last week, we should not assume that all of those people went to hell. On the contrary, the rising flood may have brought many to repentance and salvation. But it is far better to be like Noah and walk with God and experience the joy of a loving relationship with the Lord. Noah and his family built the ark and were saved. But the story tells us that only Noah was righteous. But, for Noah's sake, Noah's family is also allowed to enter the ark. This example gives hope to many Christians who have non-believers in their families. God gave detailed instructions about how to build the ark, and I think that God probably supervised every detail by the leading of His Holy Spirit. A human design was not safe enough. The ark had to be built according to God's design and plan. Human wisdom is not enough to save us either. We must follow God's instructions and be saved according to God's wisdom and plan.



When the ark was finished and all of the animals were aboard, the flood would come. The Scripture tells us that one pair of every unclean animal and seven pairs of every clean animal went into the ark. After the flood, Noah would offer sacrifices to God and give thanks, so Noah needed more of the clean animals for sacrifice and for food. Noah did not have to round up the animals. The Scripture says the animals came to the ark.



Genesis 7:11-12, 15-16, "[11] In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month--on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. [12] And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights. [15] Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. [16] The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord shut him in.

Noah built the ark, but, **"the Lord shut him in."** The Lord Himself closed the door and sealed it. Noah and his family were protected from the flood waters by more than the ark. They were protected by the hand of the Lord. And then the flood came. This 19th century painting by Joseph Mallord William Turner shows the scene on the eve of the deluge. The rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights. The springs of the great deep and the floodgates of heaven were open. For 150 days the waters flooded the earth. But God remembered Noah and finally the flood began to recede.



After the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, Noah sent out a raven and then a dove, but no place to land was found. So Noah waited and then sent out the dove again. **Genesis 8:11, "When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth."** Many people know that the dove and the olive branch are symbols of peace, but some do not know that these symbols come from the Bible, and that the original meaning is peace between God and man. When the dove returned bearing the olive branch, Noah and his family rejoiced. The Lord's anger and the time of judgment had passed. Peace had been restored and they faced a bright future.



Genesis 8:13-15, "By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw

that the surface of the ground was dry. [14] By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. [15] Then God said to Noah, [16] "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives."

Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark and now Noah is 601. The dates show that Noah and his family were in the ark a year and ten days. We are not told any details about what life on the ark was like, but it must have been a memorable year full of many challenges. But finally the day came when they were able to leave the ark and stand on dry land again.

The, Noah built an altar and made an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord. And the Lord made a covenant promise that He would never destroy the whole earth by flood again. The rainbow was appointed as the sign of that promise and it must have been a very important assurance to Noah and his descendents in the following years. Without the promise and the sign, they might have been terrified every time it began to rain. But if they believed God's promise then they had peace even when storms came.



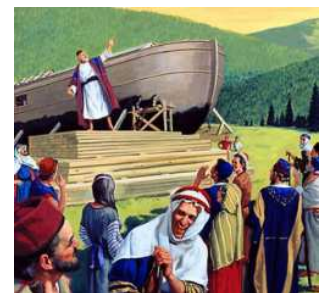
When Noah and his sons came out of the ark, it was a new beginning for mankind under new conditions and with new promises. For the first time, God said that the animals were given to mankind for food and for the first time, the animals began to fear man. When Cain murdered Abel, Cain's life was spared, but now God says in **Genesis 9:6, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."** Life is so precious that no ordinary penalty is adequate for a murderer. There is a preventative element here also; when Cain's life was spared, Cain built a city of wickedness and violence increased so much that the ancient civilization had to be destroyed. Now, after the flood, murderous violence is to be cut off as soon as it occurs. However, the verse may be a prophetic statement of how societies will operate, and not a command. I would say that the Bible indicates that the death penalty for murder is permitted, but not required. The reasoning is based on man's life being precious, so a common criminal's life is also precious, and the death penalty would not be justified for any crime other than murder.

Genesis 9:1, "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." After the flood, the command that was once given to Adam and Eve is given to Noah and his family. It is a new beginning for mankind. Noah and his family have seen what happened when sin went unchecked and violence was allowed to fill the earth. And they have seen how those who trust in the Lord are saved and blessed. Noah and his family have the opportunity to make a fresh start, it is a second chance for mankind.



III. Closing

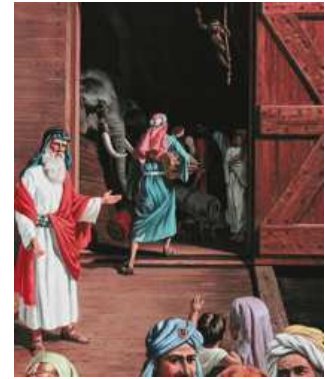
In Noah's time, the wicked were destroyed, and that is a strong warning for us as well. Make no mistake, God will judge the wicked. But God also provides for forgiveness and salvation. Those who trust in God and His Word are forgiven and saved. From Peter's letters, we know that Noah was not only a farmer and a shipbuilder, Noah was also a preacher. Noah preached to the people and urged them to turn away from sin and to be saved.



Earlier, we saw that it was the Lord who closed the door of the ark and shut Noah and His family in. And I said that this showed how Noah and his family were secure, protected by the hand of the Lord. But I wonder whether there might not be one more reason why the Lord closed the door. When the people saw Noah and his family building the ark, they probably laughed at him. When the people heard Noah preach they scoffed. But when the people saw the animals go into the ark, they must have been amazed. After all of the animals were on board, Noah's family would have entered the ark, and I think that Noah himself would have entered last.



I imagine Noah standing at the door of the ark, preaching one more message. Urging the people to believe the Word of God and to leave sin behind and come into the ark to safety. Remember, God never said that other people could not get into the ark. I believe that everyone was invited and welcome. But the people refused, because they did not believe God's message that judgment was coming. But Noah doesn't give up. I imagine him standing there, waving his arms. He argues, he pleads, he shouts, he begs. *"Come inside, come inside and be saved!"*



But the Lord had seen that the people would not respond to Noah's preaching, so the Lord closed the door and sent the floodwaters. Perhaps the people finally repented and cried out to the Lord for mercy when the waters rose. If so, the Lord would certainly welcome them into heaven. But it would have been much better to enter the ark and escape the flood.

In the New Testament, (1 Peter 3:20-21), Noah's flood and the ark are compared to baptism. Because of Noah's faith, he and his family were saved through the waters of the flood. When we believe in Jesus and His work on the cross, we are saved because of our faith, and our salvation is proclaimed through the waters of baptism. In baptism the old, sinful man is buried in the waters, but the new man comes forth out of the water to new life and a new beginning (Colossians 2:12).



What about us? Have we made the choice to believe God and to obey His Word? Are we working hard for the salvation of our families and of others as Noah did? In Noah's day, the ark was the only way to be saved from the flood. There was only way of salvation then. And there is only one way now. Today, Jesus is our ark. In **John 14:6**, Jesus says, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** Don't stand outside when a flood of judgment is coming. Get in the ark. Don't turn away from Jesus. Trust in His love and His finished work on the cross. Run to Jesus and be saved. And when you come up out of the waters of baptism, you will see a new world of new possibilities. Just like when Noah came out of the ark. Let's pray.



IV. Closing Prayer