

Do you know what Noah said to his sons when they were fishing off the Ark? *“Don’t waste the bait boys. We’ve only got two worms.”*

This morning we’re continuing our series: *The Gospel in the Old Testament* and we’re looking at Noah and the universal flood catastrophe that came across the whole earth. Yet, the Ark is a wonderful picture of the Gospel.

There’s widespread archeological evidence every culture has some story of a flood. This isn’t some minor event that took place in a little corner of the world. Many cultures have stories about a flood dating back, we believe, to this flood. There’s geological evidence there was at one time a great flood on planet earth. There’s meteorological evidence. It’s said if the polar caps of our planet melted, every square foot of land on earth would be submerged. When you think about it, the idea of a worldwide flood isn’t far-fetched.

The story of Noah and the Ark is more popular than ever before. People who don’t know the Bible, who never come to church know about Noah and the big boat, and all those animals coming in two by two. Most know about the great flood and how the big boat floated until the waters receded. Then the animals departed two by two. Finally, the rainbow appeared and God promised never again to send a flood that would cover the entire earth.

It’s one of the most popular Bible stories. If you travel across America, you’ll find Noah’s Ark restaurants, Noah’s Ark paintings, Noah’s Ark T-shirts, Noah’s Ark coffee mugs, Noah’s Ark earrings. You’ll even find a recipe for Noah’s Ark brownies. The largest waterpark in the United States is located in the Wisconsin Dells and it’s called – Noah’s Ark ([picture](#)). Ken Ham has just recently opened the Ark Encounter ([picture](#)).

Someone came up with *“All I need to know I learned from Noah’s Ark.”* Let me share them with you.

1. *Don’t miss the boat.*
2. *Remember we’re all in the same boat.*
3. *Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the Ark.*
4. *Stay fit. When you’re 600 years old someone may ask you to do something really big.*
5. *Don’t listen to critics, just get on with the job that needs to be done.*
6. *Build your future on high ground.*
7. *For safety’s sake travel in pairs.*
8. *Speed isn’t everything. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.*
9. *When you’re stressed, float awhile.*
10. *Remember the Ark was built by amateurs, the Titanic by professionals.*
11. *No matter the storm, when you’re with God there’s always a rainbow waiting.*

There are basically two ways to approach this familiar story. The first is to focus on the controversial issues – What was the extent of the flood? Did it really cover the entire earth? How large was the ark? How did Noah get the animals into the ark? I’d include in this category the very pressing question sometimes asked (usually by teenagers), How did Noah and his family keep the ark clean with all those animals inside?

Those questions are useful and important, but if we concentrate only on the technical elements, we risk missing the larger message. Even though it’s important to ask, “How did a flood cover the entire earth?” if we stop there we miss the larger spiritual lessons the Lord intends for us to learn. It’s worthwhile to enquire about the civilization that perished, but the emphasis in the account is not on those who died, but on the one family that survived. It’s where we want to focus our attention. How did Noah and his family escape the terrible judgment of the flood? We’re going to see there’s a deep spiritual reason behind the flood that came and who God rescued. This truly is **The Rescue Boat of the Gospel**. Turn to Genesis 6:1-8 (p. 5). The whole plan of salvation, the entire Gospel is in this powerful narrative of Noah and God’s rescue plan.

Favor here is the word grace. *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* It’s the Hebrew word, *chen*, which appears 38 times in the Old Testament. The Bible says mankind had become so wicked every imagination of his heart was evil all the time. Sometimes we think we live in the worst age that’s ever been. Yes, things are bad, but go back through history, and as long as there has been sinful mankind; their imaginations have been toward evil. So if you’re taking notes, first there is...

1. The condition of sin before the Flood. *“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth”* (Genesis 6:11-12). The word “*corrupt*” means rotten or putrid or utterly foul. It describes a world in the final stages of moral decomposition.

Having rejected the Lord, the inhabitants of this world sank into a deep pit of violence, hatred, abuse, murder and every ugly expression of the debauchery of the human heart. If we're honest with ourselves, we all think things we'd never dare to speak aloud (nor should we). The heart is wicked beyond belief. But in civilized society, many evil thoughts are left that way—as thoughts, never to be mentioned or spoken or written or acted upon.

In the days before the flood, evil thoughts became evil words that ultimately led to acts of unspeakable atrocity, brutality, lust and perversion. The unthinkable became thinkable, then speakable, then doable. Finally, the unspeakable was done openly and praise given to those who did it openly.

Sin is like cancer of the soul. It often starts unnoticed, perhaps with a small compromise. There may be a few bothersome symptoms, but we dismiss them or excuse them as caused by some other problem. But the cancer is there and growing, working corruption in the individual and tainting his relationships. If unchecked, it contaminates an entire society. The first lesson of the flood is the doctrine of sin. The Gospel makes no sense without sin, because Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 2:5). The first point of the flood is we're sinners and deserve judgment. And...

a. Like today there was extreme violence. Turn back a few pages to Genesis 4:22-24 where we meet a descendant of Cain, a man named Lamech.

It's not accidental that the development of bronze and iron implements (4:22) is followed by Lamech's boast about murder (4:23-24). The development of bronze and iron implements was good for society. Many useful tools helped people cultivate the land and perform other tasks. But the same knowledge was used to develop weapons to kill. And so Lamech takes the good thing developed by his son and uses it wrongfully to defend his pride. The lyrics of the first song in history promoted violence! "Gangsta Rap" is as old as civilization! In our culture, inventions which could benefit man are perverted to promote destruction. Human life was no longer regarded as sacred. It's the same today. The devaluing of life is spreading not only through violence in our inner cities but through abortion on demand and the push for euthanasia. **Like today there was extreme violence.**

a. Like today there was sexual perversion. As the population grew, "*When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose*" (6:1-2). So who are the sons of God and the daughters of men? The debate is centuries old, with godly men holding differing views. And whichever view is right, the application is the same—the human race before the flood was corrupted by sin, and that corruption began with compromise.

Some hold the sons of God were powerful rulers, perhaps controlled or indwelt by demons, striving for fame and fertility. In some ancient cultures, kings were called the sons of one of the gods. Even in the Bible, the Hebrew word "Elohim" is used for men in positions of authority. The daughters of men refers to all women. The sin of these rulers was their lust for power and women; they're trying to achieve immortality through immorality.

A second, more widely held view, is that the sons of God refers to fallen angels (demons) who came to earth in human bodies and cohabited with women, resulting in a superhuman race called the *Nephilim* (6:4). Many respected Bible scholars hold this view. The strongest argument for this view is that every other time the term "sons of God," is used in Scripture, it refers to angels. Several New Testament passages referring to the flood mention demons who disobeyed by abandoning their proper place, thus incurring God's judgment. It's argued these fallen angels left their proper abode of the spirit world and cohabited in the physical world with women.

But, how could angels do this? In Genesis 19, the angels visiting Lot in Sodom were desired by the men of that evil city for homosexual relations. If you object that Jesus said angels can't marry, the response is that Jesus said in heaven the angels do not marry (Matt. 22:30). But neither will men and women marry in heaven. Thus, there is no inherent problem with angels cohabiting with earthly women.

It's sexual perversion as we could never dream of in our worst nightmare. Satan wanted to thwart God's promise to bring a deliverer by the seed of the woman by corrupting the human race with a superhuman race of giants. It's his diabolical plan to bring immortality to the human race illicitly, bypassing God's curse of death. Like our day, those in Noah's day thought nothing of the extreme violence and sexual perversity. It'd become their norm. We don't like to think of ourselves as sinners or our world as evil.

A few years ago boxer, Macho Comacho (**picture**), was being interviewed. He was bragging about his wild past--a father at age 15, drugs, loose living. The sportscaster said to him, "But don't you believe that as a sports hero, you have an obligation to be a model for our youth?" Comacho shot back, "Look, I did my dirt, but I ain't no Hitler." Comacho's response is the typical human response to the biblical doctrine of sin. "I may have my faults, but I'm not a big sinner. It's not surprising that the world thinks that way, since Satan *"has blinded the minds of the unbelieving"* (2 Cor. 4:4).

2. God always judges sin. Though God is patient even in the face of rebellion and blasphemy, His patience eventually ends. Sin will be judged sooner or later. It's judged in this life through suffering and pain that comes to those who

presume to live life apart from God's holy commandments. It's judged ultimately in eternity when the unrighteous are sentenced to everlasting punishment in hell. The flood is a stark reminder no one gets away with sin. As Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, "*The arm of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice.*"

This is the most remarkable judgment event in the Old Testament, the destruction of the entire human race, with the exception of just eight people. History tells us God will judge sinners. The Bible tells us God will judge sinners. And He does. He judges every sinner one at a time. *It is appointed unto man once to die and after this, the judgment.* The flood is in human history the worst of all cataclysmic judgments. It's the second most astounding event in the Old Testament. The first and most astounding event in the Old Testament is the Creation. The flood is next to that as the most monumental event.

How ironic a rainbow today symbolizes sexual perversion but in the Bible, it's a reminder that God judges sin. He judged evil with a global flood at the time of Noah. But He's merciful and made a covenant of grace with Noah that He'd never again judge with a worldwide flood. The rainbow was given as an outcome of God's grace in the context of His holiness and judgement.

3. God is always gracious to those who trust Him. "*But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord*" (6:8). The word *favor* means acceptance or grace. When used of God's favor toward man it means His undeserved favor. Noah didn't earn favor with God, he found it. He was as much a sinner as his contemporaries. The difference was, Noah was willing to accept God's view of his sin and turn from it to God, seeking His grace. The result was a righteous life.

This is the first time the word *grace* appears in the Bible. It's not the first time grace appears, since God's grace is seen in His treatment of Adam and Eve in clothing them with animal skins rather than judging them for their sin. When sin was at its peak, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. That's a great encouragement.

It means in spite of the corruption, horrible violence, immorality and degradation around us, God's grace still shines through. Where sin abounds, grace super-abounds (Rom. 5:20). No matter how terrible your sin, you can find grace if you'll turn to Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't come to save the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. If you'll agree with God's view of your heart (6:5), and cry out to Him, "*Be merciful to me, a sinner,*" He will pour out His grace and salvation on you, just like He did Noah.

4. The Gospel is specific and exclusive. The flood account shows before He brings judgment, God graciously provides a means of escape from judgment.

a. God reveals the Gospel to us. Noah didn't think up the idea of the ark himself. The Ark was God's initiative. God revealed it to Noah. He designed it and gave him the directions he needed. No human plan would have saved Noah or anyone else. They could have climbed the highest mountains; the flood went 20 feet over the tops of those mountains. There was no means of escape except the one God provided, and it was sufficient. The Bible is the only place we find the Gospel. We don't find it in Creation or in nature. Just as the Ark was given by God's special Revelation, the Gospel is given to us by God's special Revelation.

b. God is patient. God's patience is seen in His not closing the door until the last possible moment. The people watched Noah work for 120 years. They watched the animals streaming in from all parts of the globe. They watched Noah and his family board the ark. The door was still open for any to come aboard. Nobody did. They watched as God shut the door. The rain started and it was too late.

Though the door was open until the last possible moment, there's a sense in which those outside the ark had sealed their own doom years before the flood. There are very few deathbed conversions. A person fixes his mind in unbelief so he can continue in his sinful ways. He deliberately ignores warning after warning. Perhaps he thinks when he has one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel, he'll repent. By then it's too late. God has closed the door of salvation.

Speaking of the last minute conversion of the thief on the cross, the Puritans wisely observed, "*We have one account of a deathbed repentance in order that no man need despair; we have only one, in order that no man may presume.*" God's grace has a limit. We can't go on and on in sin, ignoring His gracious warnings without consequence. Today is the day of salvation!

c. The Gospel is exclusive. There was only one means of escape provided by God. It wasn't particularly fancy or inviting: A great big box daubed with pitch. A luxury liner like the Queen Mary might have attracted many more. A good advertising campaign, along with a few shows on board may have drummed up a bit more interest.

There was only one door. The proud lions and lowly lizards all entered the same way. It was very narrow and restrictive. Some of Noah's neighbors may have said, "All that matters is that a person is sincere and tries to do the best he can. Noah's way is just too confining." They perished in the flood. Others urged tolerance. They said, "Noah's message is too judgmental. We need to preach love, not judgment." They perished in the flood.

d. It's not enough to know the Gospel. It wasn't enough to know about the Ark. Many in Noah's day knew about the Ark, but never got on board and died in the flood. It wasn't enough to admire the Ark. Many marveled at the size of the boat, but never got on board and they perished. It wasn't enough to intend to get on board the Ark some day. There were some with good intentions, but were too busy. They were lost in the flood. Others said, "I don't want to give up my business; it's just beginning to turn a healthy profit." They perished in the flood. Others said, "I'll get on board when my mate decides to come." But their mate never decided; they perished in the flood. The only ones saved were those who got on board before the flood.

God has ordained only one way of salvation from the judgment to come: The Lord Jesus crucified for sinners. Whether you're wealthy or poor, moral or immoral, educated or uneducated, there's just one way to heaven, the way of the Cross. Jesus is the only means of salvation God has provided. And don't delay...the flood of God's judgement could fall today.

5. The Gospel is be shared. I read of a Chinese farmer who had cataracts removed from his eyes at a mission clinic. A few days later, the missionary doctor looked out his window and noticed this farmer, who now has his sight, holding the end of a long rope. In single file holding on to the rope were several dozen blind Chinese who'd been rounded up and led for miles to the doctor who'd worked a miracle on this farmer's eyes. That's how we who have received God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ should be. Our lives are so revolutionized, we want everyone to know so they can receive the same good news. Are you burdened for the salvation of lost souls? If you're anything like me, you have to answer honestly, "Not as much as I should be." Noah though was burdened for his world.

a. Noah faithfully shared the Gospel. This fact is implied in Genesis 6 and stated explicitly in II Peter 2:5, where Noah is called a "*preacher of righteousness.*" Noah wasn't just a boat builder who knew how to construct a huge ship. Nor was he some silent witness, a godly man who let his life speak for him. During those 120 years before the flood, Noah built the ark and he preached righteousness to his own generation. I'm sure he warned them of judgment to come and invited them to join him in the ark.

But no one seemed to listen. Perhaps they were too busy to pay attention. After all, it seems as if no one had ever seen rain before. Certainly no one had ever seen a worldwide flood. Why should they take Noah seriously? To his contemporaries he was like those people who preach on the street corners. It's easier just to walk on by than to stop and listen.

The Lord Jesus made a direct comparison between the days of Noah and the days preceding His return to the earth (Matthew 24:37-39). As it was then, so it shall be again. The past is the key to the future.

Go back to Noah's day. What do you find? Widespread unbelief and skepticism, a generation with no time for God. Violence and immorality permeate the culture. Freedom and rights are buzz words. People did as they pleased. The result was a putrefying mass of evil so sickening God decided to start all over again. On one level it's "business as usual," on another it's "sin to the 12th power." This combination of moral corruption and "business as usual" will be the order of the day when Jesus returns.

Noah didn't just preach the word of God for a week, a month, or even a year. He preached it for more than 100 years! We don't see Noah complaining. After a month or year of preaching, Noah would have noticed his preaching wasn't working. He had all the reasons to stop but he persevered. He continued tirelessly, warning everyone of the coming great deluge and so must we! Judgement is coming!

b. Noah won his family to the Gospel. Noah's world was similar to ours. It was an evil day. So we need to ask: *How did Noah manage to save himself and his family in such an evil environment?* The answer is spelled out for us in Hebrews 11:7. "*By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*" Noah was a righteous man who walked with God and his faith spread to his entire family.

How do we know that? When Noah entered the ark, his wife, sons and their wives went with him. It's the power of a godly spouse and parent. Noah loved God, believed so deeply and obeyed so completely and walked so intimately with God, it was natural for his entire family to do what he did. They believed because he believed. It's the power of a godly example.

I hope you win your friends to the Lord. I hope you win your neighbor but please win your family. Does your spouse know Jesus? Do your children? Your grandchildren? Please don't tell me they said a prayer when they were a child. Do their lives indicate they truly know Jesus?

The biblical fact is if you live out your faith every day, not just that you talk about it or go to church, but you live it out, then it's normal to expect your family to follow in your steps. All of us should take heart from Noah's example. We can be godly in a godless world. Let's stop complaining about the evil of our day. As bad as things are, they were worse in Noah's day. Back then, there were only eight believers in the whole world. All we need is the courage to do what Noah did and believe what God has said.

What should frighten us is that there were grandchildren of godly Enoch who perished in the flood. They knew about God. Perhaps some even claimed to know God. But they'd blended in so much with the evil around them, they didn't listen to God's repeated warnings of judgment.

This passage repeats the names of Noah's three sons to remind us of the effect his godly life had on them. They easily could have been influenced to leave Dad and his crazy project of building this ocean liner on dry ground to blend in with the world. The reason they stayed with Noah and got on board the ark was they saw in their father a life that rang true.

If we want children who learn to stand alone in our evil day, we must be parents who live out our convictions, as Noah did. Kids are smart; they read our lives much more than our lectures. They can smell phoniness and want no part of it. But if they see reality with God in us, there's a much better chance they'll stand alone against the tide of ungodliness in our times.

Does your spouse know Jesus? Your kids? Your grandkids? Are you sure?

6. The Gospel means judgement is coming. In a sense this is a children's story, because its lessons are plain enough for a child to understand: *God hates sin and punishes unrepentant sinners.* When Jesus came into the world, He taught the same thing about sin, only He made the punishment eternal.

God's patience always has a limit. In Noah's day, it was 120 years. The flood came and everyone was lost except Noah and his family. In our day, we don't know when time will run out. We do know our day, like Noah's, is a time of unparalleled corruption, with people going on about life without regard for God. We know God *"has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31).

We're all infected with the cancer of sin. Only Jesus can cure it. He's ready and willing, if we'll respond to His gracious offer. The only other option is to live in sin and face final condemnation. God calls out to you, *"Now is the acceptable time, behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2).

Conclusion: Jesus and the Ark are similar because for both Jesus and the Ark, inside the Ark was the only safe place when judgement fell. In Noah's case the judgement was the floodwater from above and below. The only safe place was in the Ark, because God's judgement was poured out against every other place and every other person. When God's judgement falls on sinful mankind, the only safe place is in Jesus! It's why the New Testament again and again speaks about how important it is for us to be IN Christ.

As there was only one door into the ark, there is only one place you can go to escape God's judgement – that's Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6 *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Light. No man comes to the Father, but by me."* I can imagine there were many people swimming up to the Ark clawing onto the sides of it, beating on its sides, "Let me in! Let me in!" because they realized Noah's faith and obedience would save him from the flood.

Jesus said, *"On that day there are going to be many people who cry out 'Lord, Lord. In your name we did many wonderful works!'"* They're going to realize they are going into a Christless eternity. There's only one way and the only safe place is IN Jesus just like the only safe place was in the ark.

How about you? Are you in the Ark of Safety? I'm not asking about your religion or your giving or good works or religious background. I'm not inquiring about your baptism or church membership or even about your Sunday School attendance. Those things are of small value when it comes to the issue of eternal destiny. If Christ is the Ark, are you "in" Christ by faith? Or are you "outside" Christ because you've never trusted in him?

I fear many otherwise good and decent people are somehow hoping to "dog paddle" their way to heaven. They're not in the ark but they figure they can swim to safety if the need arises. That's like saying, "I can swim from California to Hawaii." It can't be done. You're sure to drown and it doesn't matter how far you can swim.

If you want to go to heaven, you must be in the Ark and Jesus is the "Ark of Salvation." He alone can save you from your sins. He alone can deliver you to the shores of heaven. He alone can rescue you from the judgment to come.

I've said this many times before and I say it again now, with a slight change of wording. Run to the Ark! Run to the Ark of Salvation! Put your trust in Jesus Christ. May you and your family be found safe in the Ark of Salvation!