

ECF 8th October 2017 Genesis 6:9-22 Obedience That Comes From Faith

At the end of August of this year, Hurricane Harvey dumped an incredible 1.2m of rain in some parts of the State of Texas. This caused flooding that destroyed many homes and business and displaced more than 30,000 people. But some people were more prepared than others. [Video: Aqua Dam](#)

You've got to admire a guy like that who, despite what other people thought and the effort and cost involved, took action and protected his home and his family.

But for the worldwide flood that God was going to send, something more radical was required. And for that, God chose a man called Noah. Genesis 6:9-22: ["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. ¹⁵ This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. ¹⁶ Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷ I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.

²¹ You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

²² Noah did everything just as God commanded him."

1. A Real Man

Genesis 6:9, introduces another new section in this book: ["This is the account of Noah."](#) But like much of the early chapters in Genesis many people reject it as a myth from superstitious and ignorant people. Even some who call themselves Christians claim that this is nothing more than a helpful legend that we can learn from.

a) Observable Evidence

And of course we understand why this record is difficult to accept. But as we've seen before, there is evidence to encourage us to believe that this worldwide flood was an actual historical event. Much of this is to do with fossils and rocks:

- Fossils of sea creatures that have been found high above sea level.
- Fossil graveyards with millions of highly preserved fossils in a single sediment layer.
- Evidence for rapid deposition of sediment layers across vast areas.
- Lack of erosion between rock layers that indicate continuous deposition of one layer after another.

But there's also other kinds of evidence. It has been recorded that up to 270 different cultures across the world have flood legends as part of their folklore. These come from as scattered places as China, Australia, Tanzania, Scandinavia, Peru and Hawaii.

And although the details are often diverse, they all seem to be telling a remarkably similar story. The logical conclusion is that all of these different people groups have descended from a few people who actually survived a real global flood.

b) Jesus' Words

But there is a more important reason to believe that this actually happened. Jesus said, ["As it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all."](#) Luke 17:26–27

Jesus was comparing that circumstances of his second coming with the circumstances of Noah's day – and he clearly believed that this flood was a real event. And if Jesus believed that, then I'm convinced we should too.

2. A Righteous Man

But Noah wasn't only a real man. ["Noah was a righteous man."](#) Genesis 6:9

a) A Good Man

This means that he was a good man; someone who was morally innocent and upright in his life and his dealings with other people.

When the prophet Ezekiel described a righteous man, he said that he “does what is just and right.” Ezekiel 18:5. For example:

“He does not commit robbery,
but gives his food to the hungry
and provides clothing for the naked.

⁸ He does not lend at usury
or take excessive interest.

He withholds his hand from doing wrong
and judges fairly between man and man.” Ezekiel 18:7-8

That’s the kind of man Noah was. He avoided doing wrong and focused on doing good. And as a result, he was “Blameless among the people.” Genesis 6:9 He was a man of integrity in his community.

i) In A Corrupt World

And this is all the more amazing, because at that time, “The earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence... for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.” Genesis 6:11–12

As we saw last week, Noah lived in a world that was wicked, corrupt, brutal and cruel. People had rejected God’s design for their lives and instead did whatever they wanted, whoever it hurt.

But Noah refused to go with the flow. He refused to follow the crowd. And so he challenges us that can’t use our culture or society as an excuse for sin in our lives. If Noah can live for God in a world so bad that God was going to wipe it out – then so can we.

b) A Godly Man

But why did Noah live a good life? Well, like Enoch, his great grandfather, this was because, “He walked with God.” Genesis 6:9 Noah wasn’t just a good man. He was also a godly man. He lived in communion with God, enjoying friendship with God.

i) A Covenant Relationship

And this wasn’t just a brief and passing association. Instead this was a covenant relationship. “I will establish my covenant with you.” Genesis 6:18

This is the first mention in the Bible of this important concept of covenant. As we go through the Bible we can see this develop with God’s covenant with Noah after the flood, then with Abraham, with Israel at Mount Sinai, with King David, and ultimately the New Covenant with us through Jesus.

A covenant is an agreement, a contract, a pledge of commitment between two parties. And here God promises to confirm his commitment to Noah. It shows that God has brought Noah into a special committed relationship with himself.

ii) Through Faith

But how was this possible? After all, none of us are good enough to be accepted by God into his family on the basis of our achievements as “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

So how could Noah be in a special relationship and walk with God? Well Hebrews 11:7 says that “By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”

Noah was able to walk with God because of his faith in him. Yes, this changed how he lived his life. This impacted his attitudes and actions towards others. But it was his faith that brought Noah into relationship with God. It was faith that saved him.

And that true for us: “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no-one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8–9 The only way that we can walk in covenant relationship with God is through faith in Jesus and his death on the cross.

3. An Instructed Man

Noah was a good and godly man. And because of this, God shared with him, not only what he was going to do – but also what Noah had to do to escape.

a) What God Was Going To Do

“I am going to put an end to all people... I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.” Genesis 6:13. Some people try to make this more believable by saying that this flood was limited to the area where Noah lived.

But clearly God was saying that there is a worldwide catastrophe coming that will wipe out every living creature: “I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.” Genesis 6:17

b) What Noah Had To Do

But God had a rescue plan for Noah. “So make yourself an ark of cypress wood.” Genesis 6:14. God could have rescued Noah and his family in a different way, without Noah lifting a finger. But instead he invited Noah into partnership with him – to build this rescue boat.

And today, God still invites us into partnership with himself in his rescue plan for the world. Paul wrote: “We are God’s fellow-workers.” 1 Corinthians 3:9 God could take the gospel to the world without us. He could draw men and women to faith in Christ without our input. But in his grace and his wisdom, he invites us to work with him to accomplish his ultimate rescue plan of saving all who put their faith in Christ!

But we need to be clear. This was going to be a partnership – but God was in charge! Noah was not a weather watcher or climate change scientist who read the signs and predicted a coming downpour. Neither was he an inventive boat builder who came up with the idea or design for an ark.

i) The Plans for the Ark

The plan for this ark, its purpose, substance, dimensions, structure and occupants, were all given to Noah by God! “This is how you are to build it.” Genesis 6:15

Today, we can’t be sure what it looked like, but some people think it looked like this. It had a roof, a door, three decks. The size was measured in cubits (the distance from the middle finger to the elbow), probably around 45cm. And so this ark was probably 140m long, 23m wide and 13.5m high.

Amazingly, these proportions are just like a modern cargo ship. And 1993 Korean study by a world-class ship research team found that the proportions of this ark carefully balanced the conflicting demands of stability, comfort, and strength.

ii) The Occupants of the Ark

It was going to have to be so large because not only was Noah told to take “you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.” Genesis 6:18.

He was also told to take “Two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.” Genesis 6:19 This was going to be a rescue ship, to preserve human and animal life.

A lot of people ridicule this. They claim that it is impossible for Noah to have collected two of all the 1.4 million or so animal species and bring them into the ark. But that isn’t what Noah did. The next verse says, “Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.” Genesis 6:20

Noah’s job was to care only for flying creatures and air-breathing land animals. And God said that he was going to bring to him two of each ‘kind’ of those animals – and kind isn’t the same as species.

Back in Genesis 1:24, we read that God created “living creatures according to their kinds.” Through selective breeding these different kinds of animals can produce amazing diversity. However they are distinct from each other - each kind of animal always reproduces the same kind.

So Noah only had to take each kind of animal on-board. What level of taxonomy this refers to, nobody can be sure. Some suggest the genera level, others the family level. They propose, for example, that all members of the cat family could have descended through selective breeding from one set of cat-parents on board the ark.

If this is true, then in order to preserve all the living species that we have on the planet today, Noah maybe only had to have something like 1000 different kinds of animals onboard.

4. An Obedient Man

But here's the crucial part. When Noah was given all of these detailed instructions, did you notice his amazing response? "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." Genesis 6:22 Noah listened and obeyed.

a) Even although he hadn't seen it yet

And he did this, even although he hadn't seen it before. Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah was "warned about things not yet seen." When Noah started to build, he hadn't seen a worldwide flood before. He hadn't experienced God's judgement on humanity in this way. He couldn't even see signs to show that this flood was coming.

b) Even although no-one else was doing it

He also was the only one who was building an ark. For Noah to obey, he had to go it alone. He had to stand out from the crowd. He had to do something that nobody else was doing. And that is tough!

The Bible doesn't tell us what his neighbours thought about his building project, but it is easy to imagine that they wouldn't have been very supportive.

c) Even although it took a long time

It also took a long time. The Bible doesn't say exactly how long it took, but it must have taken years. "Noah was 600 years old when the floodwaters came on the earth." Genesis 7:6

It is relatively easy to start following God's commands. It is much harder to keep on going, year after year, decade after decade.

d) Even although it was costly

It was also exceptionally costly. It must have cost Noah a lot in terms of materials, energy, resources. This was a huge project that required Noah to give himself completely to.

e) Even although it sounded impossible

And for Noah it all probably sounded to him just as impossible as it sounds to us. How would God flood the whole earth? How would he get all those animals onboard? How would he keep them from killing each other? How would he and his family survive?

f) Through Faith

And yet, despite all of these barriers, Noah obeyed. Why? Well, Hebrews 11:7 tells us that "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family." Noah obeyed because he had faith in God. He took God at his word, he believed in his promises. And he did exactly what God had told him to.

And that's the challenge facing us today. God has a plan and purpose for our lives. He wants us to follow him, not just do what we want. He calls us to a life of obedience that comes from faith. Like Noah, we are called

- To obey his commands even although we can't see everything that God is doing: "We live by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7
- To stand for God, even although at times no-ones else is doing it. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2
- To keep going for God, even although it takes a long time: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Galatians 6:9
- To serve God, even although it costs us everything we are and have. "In view of God's mercy... offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." Romans 12:1
- To follow God, even although his promises at times can sound impossible: "For nothing is impossible with God." Luke 1:37

Conclusion

So what are we going to do?

- Are we going to follow the majority of people as they head unknowingly for destruction?
- Or are we going to follow in the footsteps of Noah – a man, who in faith, lived a righteous life and built an ark that saved his family simply because God told him to do it.

I pray that each of us will fulfil God's plan for our lives through the obedience that comes from faith.