

Noah

Preacher of Righteousness

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By faith Noah, when he was warned about things that had not been seen before, built an ark, in reverent fear, in order to save his family. By it he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that is by faith. Hebrews 11:7 (EHV)

Note that Noah “became an heir of the righteousness that is by faith.” This “righteousness” is being “right” with God—being sinless. Our natural state is that we are sinners. We are born as sinners. The miracle of God’s grace is this: God brings us to faith, and in doing so, adopts us as his sons and daughters—heirs of the righteousness bought by the blood of Jesus. Noah trusted his Savior—his Redeemer from sin. God redeemed us by buying us back from our enslavement to sin, freeing us from the consequence of sin—eternal death in hell. Because we are redeemed, we will spend eternity with our Redeemer God in heaven. The Old Testament hymnbook, the book of Psalms, talks about God redeeming us and taking us to heaven,

But no one can by any means redeem himself. He cannot give God a ransom for himself- (For the ransom for their souls is costly. Any payment would fall short.) ...But surely God will redeem my life from the power of the grave. Yes, he will take me to himself. Psalms 49:7-8,15 (EHV)

Believers in Old Testament times were brought to faith by God in the same way that we are brought to faith today. First, God leads us to see that we deserve punishment for our sins—we are lost and there’s nothing we can do about it. We lack the righteousness God demands of us. Then God gives us the free gift of righteousness, which we receive through faith. Noah was no exception. Like believers today, God made Noah righteous by giving him the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

A Preacher of Righteousness

God did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, along with seven others when he brought a flood on the world of ungodly people. 2 Peter 2:5 (EHV)

God reveals that Noah did far more than build an ark. Noah was “a preacher of righteousness.” He told others about their sin and their Redeemer: that God forgives sin—by redeeming us and giving us righteousness through faith.

Let’s take a moment to consider the circumstances in which Noah preached. It seems that God told Noah to build an ark a full 120 years before the Flood would destroy all life on Earth (Genesis 6:3). God would give the godless people of Noah’s day 120 years to come to faith. The Apostle Peter referred to this time when he wrote, “God’s patience was waiting in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” 1 Peter 3:20 (EHV)

Noah probably worked on building the ark for that full 120 years. Imagine how the unbelieving world might have viewed an enormous 450-foot-long, 45-foot tall ship! Such news must have traveled throughout the world. People may have traveled great distances to see the amazing sight, and to ridicule the fool building such a worthless vessel. How could it ever be taken to the ocean and launched? How would it move on water without sails or oars? You can almost hear the preflood people mocking Noah, “This Noah says the entire world will be flooded, and everyone not on the ship will die. Noah is insane.”

But Noah was a preacher of righteousness, reaching out to the godless people of his time. Many centuries later, another prophet, Jonah, preached to the godless people of Nineveh about coming destruction. The Ninevites, including their king, came to faith in their Redeemer, so God spared their lives (Jonah 3:1-10). In contrast, the people to whom Noah preached rejected God’s offer of free forgiveness. No one joined Noah and his family on the ark.

Why Such a Big Ark?

It appears there were fewer than 7,000 animals on the ark.¹ Assuming that estimate is even close to correct, the massive ark was far bigger than needed for the animals and their food and water.² Why was the ark larger than needed? Could it be to provide room for thousands of people to come to faith and board the ark? God wanted these people to listen to Noah, for God “wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4, EHV). Sadly, no one came to faith and boarded the ark with Noah’s family. There was room for them, but they rejected the offer of protection from the Flood. Sadly, and of far greater importance, they rejected God Himself and His free gift of eternal life in heaven.

Living in a Godless World

God gave Noah the faith to endure hardship, ridicule, and danger in a godless world. Today, God still promises to give his people—you and me—the ability to remain faithful in a godless world. The Apostle Paul writes in Scripture that God “who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, EHV).

Friends, let us stay in the Word, by regularly reading and hearing what God says in Scripture. Let us recall our baptism and regularly take Holy Communion. These are the “means of grace” —the way that God creates and strengthens our faith. God is faithful. He keeps every promise without fail.

He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 (EHV)

1 *There are many estimates of how many animals were on the ark. A recent and extensive research effort estimated 6,658 individuals in 1,373 kinds.* Craig Froman, ed., *How Many Animals Were on the Ark –Understanding the Animal Kinds* (Green Forest AR: Master Books, 2016), 47.

2 *It is estimated that the ark could hold more than 16,000 animals.* John Woodmorappe, *How Could Noah Fit the Animals on the Ark and Care for Them?* in *The New Answers Book 3*, ed. Ken Ham (Green Forest AR: Master Books, 2009), 52-55. www.LutheranScience.org/ArkCareAIG (accessed 8-26-20)