

LESSONS DURING TIMES OF DANGER: THE STORY OF NOAH

We are living with as much social distancing as prudence demands. And that's difficult because we are used to being out and about, sometimes running in a million directions at once it seems. But, now it is a very different way of life. While we are mindful of the dangers, we need to also appreciate something that we have long ago forgotten—the peacefulness of just taking the time to be still. So while we yearn for this dreaded virus to pass, don't lose sight of the advantages we do enjoy by simply slowing down and taking stock of those blessings that God has so graciously given to us. There are various models that we may want to consider who show us how God's people react to such trying times as these. And remember this: Quarantines are not something new in the history of God's people. For example, think about Noah and his family.

Noah lived in a time when people had forgotten God. It was a time that took on many of the attitudes that a vast horde of people have today—a time when people thought they knew everything; a time when people took great pride in themselves and their worldly knowledge and possessions; a time when people rejected God altogether. And none of this went un-noticed as God looked down from Heaven. The Bible tells us that: ⁵ **“The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and He saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶ So the LORD was sorry He had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke His heart. ⁷ And the LORD said, ‘I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.’ ⁸ But Noah found favor with the LORD.”** Genesis 6:5-8 (NLT2)

In a time when the world had turned its back on God, Noah kept the faith. In fact, we are told that **“Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.”** Genesis 6:9 (NLT2) Despite the plague of evil that was spreading in the world around him and infecting the hearts and minds of the rest of the people, Noah determined to distance himself from the sinful horde and to maintain a close walk with the Lord. Now, this put him out of step with everyone else, but it was the very thing that God was looking for—someone who would trust Him when everyone else had bailed and trusted only in themselves. And because of Noah's faith, God decided to give humanity one more chance. And so, God gave Noah a plan. It may well have been the first quarantine plan ever implemented in the history of mankind. But, Noah's quarantine facility was

an unusual one. It would be an enormous boat, for God gave him a plan for building the ark. It was a very specific plan and given in great detail.

The Scriptures continue: ¹¹ **“Meanwhile, the crime rate was rising rapidly across the earth, and, as seen by God, the world was rotten to the core. ¹² As God observed how bad it was, and saw that all mankind was vicious and depraved, ¹³ he said to Noah, ‘I have decided to destroy all mankind; for the earth is filled with crime because of man. Yes, I will destroy mankind from the earth. ¹⁴ Make a boat from resinous wood, sealing it with tar; and construct decks and stalls throughout the ship. ¹⁵ Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. ¹⁶ Construct a skylight all the way around the ship, eighteen inches below the roof; and make three decks inside the boat—a bottom, middle, and upper deck—and put a door in the side. ¹⁷ Look! I am going to cover the earth with a flood and destroy every living being—everything in which there is the breath of life. All will die. ¹⁸ But I promise to keep you safe in the ship, with your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹ Bring a pair of every animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you, to keep them alive through the flood. ²⁰ Bring in a pair of each kind of bird and animal and reptile. ²¹ Store away in the boat all the food that they and you will need.’ ²² And Noah did everything as God commanded him.”** Genesis 6:11-22 (TLB)

When Noah heard of the coming disaster, he didn’t run to Food Lion or Family Dollar to stock up on toilet paper and bottled water. He didn’t rush to the bank to pull out all of his money. And he certainly didn’t rush to his attorney to have his will written. No, there were too many other things to attend to; and so, Noah directed his efforts to following God’s plan right down to the last detail. And that was the truly amazing thing about Noah. You see, there is no indication that Noah’s profession was that of a construction engineer skilled in the ways of nautical design. There is nothing that says that he knew anything about ship-building or that he was even a sailor. And Noah didn’t offer any excuses as to why this task was too much for him to accomplish. Unlike Moses, who would one day try to shirk God’s appointed task by pleading that he was ill-equipped for the job, Noah just moved forward following God’s commands. He didn’t demand that God give him some miraculous sign like Gideon did before he’d obey. Even though Noah had reached the ripe old age of 600, he didn’t use age as an excuse, as Abraham had done when God assured him that he would have a son. No, Noah didn’t offer one objection at all. God had given him instructions and, as far as Noah was concerned, all he needed to do was to carry them out. And so, true to his faith, Noah believed that if he followed God’s Words as instructed, then he would live—he would be saved. And, unlike so many who came before and after him, Noah was absolutely right!

God gave Noah an extended weather forecast and informed him that a flood was coming—not just a few days of rain, but a world-wide, gully-washing deluge that would not let up for 40 days and 40 nights.¹ Now I want you to notice something here about the trustworthiness of God’s Word. A lot of people today believe that the Bible is a myth and that the things that it describes have been proven to be untrue by science. So take notice of what the Book of Genesis states about the source of all this water just prior to the Great Flood. Genesis provides a remarkable geological truth that has only recently been recognized. Apparently, this floodwater would not only fall from the skies, but the source of the flood also would spring up in massive fountains from underneath the earth’s crust as well. That is exactly what Genesis 7:11 says: ¹¹ **“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.”** Genesis 7:11 (NASB) For years, geologists laughed at this and called this description of water bursting up out of the ground to be nothing more than fantasy. But, God’s word is true, it is not fictional. For years, college and university professors taught that underground caves were gradually formed over the course of many years as surface water slowly seeped into the earth. Recent discoveries, however, prove this theory to be completely erroneous and support the Genesis account. Rather, some scientists are now realizing that the waters that created the great caves and caverns beneath the earth did not come from water from above the surface. No, the water that carved out these caves and caverns sprang in a very dramatic fashion during some great cataclysmic event (like the Great Flood in Genesis) when acidic waters far below the earth’s crust suddenly burst upward with great force and created these underground holes before spraying in a flood-like manner upon the earth’s surface. And just in case you are wondering if this new theory was concocted by some overzealous creationist to fit the biblical story in Genesis, rest assured that that is not the case. Rather, geological experts who developed this most recent theory of cave-formation emerged from the largely atheist nations of the old Soviet bloc countries—hard to argue that any bias on behalf of God’s Word was manifested from that geological community.²

Now, I am sure that you all know how the story of Noah ends. God had assured Noah that he and his family would be saved, and that is exactly what happened. The floodwaters receded and Noah sent out a raven to test the extent of potentially dry ground, and then he sent out a dove. And eventually, the dove returned with an olive leaf in its beak.³ Ever since, we have associated olive branches with an offer of peace. And so it was that God was once again offering Man the chance to have true peace through Him. Of course, Man gravitated back to his sinful ways and rejected that peace

offer. And because of that, God had to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the Cross as the ultimate sacrifice to make a way to restore that peace to those who accept Him as Lord and Savior.

What a tremendous message we get from this one marvelous story of God's faithfulness to Noah—a faithfulness that extends to you and me as well! So, what is the lesson that we can gain from all of this? Basically it is this: When the world around us seems to be in utter panic, those in Christ need not fear. They can live, even among such chaos, in complete peace. Why?—because they can look upon the story of Noah (as well as hundreds of other places in the Bible) and have complete confidence that God is faithful and that He has a plan for our lives. God said to Israel during one of its panic-stricken times, as He says to you today: ¹¹ ***“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen. ¹³ If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,” says the LORD. “I will end your captivity [or any quarantine in which you may find yourself] and restore your fortunes.”*** Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NLT2)

That is the message from the Flood story in Genesis—***GOD HAS A PLAN AND IT IS A GOOD ONE MEANT SPECIFICALLY FOR YOU!*** The lesson is this: ***STICK WITH HIS PLAN.*** His plan is for you to trust in Him. You don't have to be a religious expert to understand and follow His plan for your life. Noah was just an ordinary guy—not a ship-builder or nautical engineer, not a pastor, priest, theologian or biblical scholar. And while some people might think Noah's ship didn't have a rudder simply because it wasn't mentioned in the construction plans, that simply was not the case. Noah relied upon God as his rudder. He let God steer his ship through the crashing waves. And Noah knew that he could have complete confidence in the ark surviving the great dangers of the Flood because he had followed the blueprint that God had given him. And that is a problem for so many today, they know about God's blueprint for their lives (it is called the Bible), but the blueprint does them no good because they fail to take the time to study it and implement's instructions in their lives. People today always want to be the captain of their own little ship—always in control of their lives. But, is that anything new? Of course, not—rather, that has been the nature of humanity since the creation of Adam and Eve. God steered them away from the tree with that poisonous fruit of sin, but they couldn't wait to re-navigate their own path to destruction and ventured back to pick an apple. Toward the end of the period of the Judges in Israel, people didn't follow God's plan—not hardly. Judges 21 tells us: ***“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*** Judges 21:25 (NASB) It is a dangerous thing when people decide to only do ***“what is right in their own eyes,”*** because when Man is left to his own devices, he thinks that he sees very clearly when, in fact, all he sees is darkness.⁴

In these trying times, we need to come out of the darkness and know that our God is faithful and we can rely upon Him. We need to stop our worrying and listen to what the Lord calls us to do—and what does He say to us? Quite simply, it is this: ***“Be still, and know that I am God!”*** Psalm 46:10 (NLT2) Do this, and you will weather this pending flood.

Amen.

Forest Hill Baptist Church
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¹ Genesis 7:4 “One week from today I will begin forty days and nights of rain; and all the animals and birds and reptiles I have made will die.” (TLB) Genesis 7:12 “The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.” (NLT2)

² Mike Matthews, “Caves—Underground and Upside Down,” Answers in Genesis, <https://answersingenesis.org> (May 1, 2018).

³ Genesis 8:10-16 ¹⁰ After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹ This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹² He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back. ¹³ Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began, the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface of the ground was drying. ¹⁴ Two more months went by, and at last the earth was dry! ¹⁵ Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶ “Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. (NLT2)

⁴ Matthew 6:22-23 ²² “Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! (NLT2)