

In those days everyone was just going about normal life, doing what they wanted to do: working and playing, eating and drinking. Everyone was so busy pursuing the “good life”, however, they forgot God. Everyone except Noah, that is. In a world that had become full of violence and full of evils of every imagination, only Noah “found favor” with God. God looked at all the evil of human beings and condemned all living to complete destruction. Only Noah was spared from this condemnation. Only Noah was given the opportunity to survive the coming destruction and save his immediate family also.

Noah is one of those amazing people of faith and obedience whose history is found in the Bible. So many questions come to mind: Why had the people become so evil that God condemned them to destruction? How did Noah have the courage to stand apart and be different? In a world that had forsaken God, who taught him about God and what God required of him?

As the history of Noah unfolds in Genesis chapters 6 through 9, Noah’s unique faith and courage become even more evident. As many times happens, the servants of God are commanded to do things that would have seemed very strange at the time. Noah

was told to build a huge boat, Abraham was told to leave his home and go to a strange country. Later he was told to sacrifice his one and only son. Ananias was told to baptize the man who had been persecuting the disciples of Jesus. Each of these obedient, faithful men would have wondered in his mind why God commanded these things. Like the faithful prophets and disciples after him, even though Noah would have found the command of God to build a boat perhaps a little strange, he obeyed. In the “faith” chapter where the faith of so many is recounted, the following witness is given:

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Hebrews 11:7, NIV)

Notice that Noah believed God, that is he had faith, and because of that faith he built the ark according to God’s command.

Noah did everything just as God commanded him. (Genesis 6:22, NIV)

So let’s consider the following:

- Noah lives in a world sur-

rounded by violence and wickedness.

- Noah is the only one who serves the living God.
- Noah is warned that God is going to destroy all living by a flood.
- God commands Noah to build a boat so that he and his family along with some of the animals can be saved from the coming destruction.
- Noah believes God and does exactly what God has commanded. It may have taken him as much as 100 years to build the boat and prepare for the flood.
- As he builds the boat, Noah tries to teach those around him about God. (See 2 Peter 2:5)
- No one listens to Noah. Not one.
- God commands him to take his family and many animals with them and take refuge in the boat.
- Noah obeys.
- It starts to rain. It continues to rain. It keeps raining. For

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Only Noah

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40 days and nights it rained. The water on the earth flooded everything.

- All the people outside Noah's immediate family died. Noah would realize that his own extended family including aunts, uncles and cousins died in those rising waters. In fact it's possible that his own grandfather, Methuselah, died in the flood.
- Finally, after more than a year had passed and the waters had receded, God commanded that everyone was to leave the safety of the ark.
- Noah obeys and the ark is deserted.
- Noah and his family, a total of eight people, had to start all over again in building homes, planting gardens, raising their families.
- Noah is given a promise by God, that there will never be another flood that will totally destroy all living.

Only a strong faith and complete commitment to God would bring Noah through the traumatic events that took place in his life. Each step of the way Noah believed and obeyed. In the end, Noah and his family were saved from destruction because of that

faith and obedience.

Jesus tells us that traumatic events will take place at his return. He warns us that the last days will be as the days of Noah. He warns us that many will be destroyed because of their lack of faith.

Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

"Just 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.

"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." (Luke 17:22:35 NIV)

Thankfully, for you and me, Noah listened to God's warning about the coming destruction. He obeyed God's command even though it seemed strange and difficult to understand. He preached to all those around him even though no one listened to his warnings. He, with his family, endured the trauma of the destruction of everyone and everything around them, yet maintained his faith in God. In the end he saw the saving of himself, his family, and all the animals with them. The earth was renewed and filled with life. Like Noah, we have received a warning. Will we listen to the words of Jesus and be prepared for the coming destruction and then for the final renewal of all?

Tuesday evening Bible Study Group

We would like to invite you to a Bible study group which meets every Tuesday at the Hampton Inn and Suites, 12251 Jefferson Ave, across the street from the Patrick Henry Mall. The class starts at 7:00 PM and ends at 8:30 PM. We are currently reading and studying from Paul's letters in the first half of the class and in the second half we are looking at a number of passages from both the Old and New Testament that have to do with the Gospel of Peace. (Rom 10:15). What is that "gospel of peace" and what are the "glad tidings of good things" that Paul talks about in Romans? Please join us.

In his first letter to the believers the Apostle Peter likens the experience of Noah and his family being saved from death as symbolizing baptism:

"...when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God." (1 Peter 3:20-21)

Notice that Noah and his family were "saved through water" and that baptism is not a matter of washing dirt from the body but involves a "pledge" or dedication of one's self to God. Certainly the faith and obedience that we see in Noah is proof of his dedication or pledge to God.

The New Testament never tells us that when a person decides to follow Jesus that baptism is just a matter of choice. It is a command that is given by Jesus and repeated by the apostles. In obeying the command an individual follows Noah's example and pledges or dedicates himself to God. Follow the history of the followers of Jesus that is given in Acts and also in the letters to the churches:

Acts 2: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thou-

sand were added to their number that day."

Acts 8: "But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Acts 8: "As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."

Acts 9: "Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized..."

Acts 10: "Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Acts 16: "One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home."

Acts 16: "At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized."

Acts 18: "Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

Acts 19: "So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?' 'John's baptism,' they replied. Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus."

Galatians 3: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 4: "There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Colossians 2: "In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

Notice in Colossians 2 that the description is given of baptism as

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being buried and then raised. This is the concept that baptism is a symbol of dying, being buried, and then raised to life. Baptism involves a hearing and understanding of the Gospel, a repentance from dead works, a belief in and following of Jesus, the Son of God, and a response of obedience to the command. Paul, in Romans 6, tells the believers the full import of baptism. It's worth reading the entire chapter but here are the first four verses:

Romans 6: "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Notice again the symbolism of

baptism: buried in his death and raised to a new life. It involves going down into the water, being completely covered or buried in it and then coming up out of the water to a new life.

Through the centuries there has been a misunderstanding of what faith is all about. Many will say that they believe in Jesus and baptism is not necessary. They say we are not saved through works. However, true faith brings action. Noah because of his faith built the ark that God had commanded he build and through it saved himself and his family. James writes this teaching very clearly to the church:

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he

did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. (James 2: 20-24 NIV)

True faith brings obedience. It is not a matter of "salvation by works". The action of being baptized, being buried in water, has no value in and of itself. The value comes in the obedience to the command. Jesus himself was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" even though he had no need to repent of any sin. Jesus' disciples will follow his example and obey his command.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20 NIV)

Take a Quiz—Find the Answer:

These are questions from the Bible readings for the months January, February, and March. Check your answers against the answers found in the cited Bible verses.

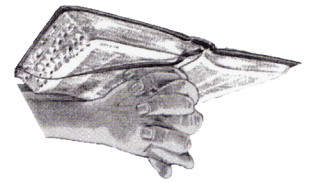
Question	The Answer is Found:
1. What of all God's creation did he declare was <u>very good</u> ?	Genesis 1:31
2. How much land was promised to Abraham and to his descendants?	Genesis 13:14-17; Exodus 3:8-9
3. How did God describe himself to Moses on the mountain?	Exodus 34:5-7
4. Why were Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, consumed by fire?	Leviticus 10:1-3
5. Why did the Israelites wander in the desert for 40 years?	Numbers 14:1-45
6. Name two of Jesus' forefathers.	Matthew 1
7. What did Jesus pray for in the Garden of Gethsemane?	Matthew 26:36-46
8. Will Jesus be seen when he returns to the earth?	Matthew 24:23-30; Acts 1:9-11
9. How many people were baptized on the Day of Pentecost?	Acts 2:38-41
10. What does baptism symbolize?	Romans 6

So much of the Bible is history—history that God wants us to know and remember. Genesis includes the creation of the world, the first disobedience and consequence, the destruction of the world by the flood, and the promises given to Abraham and his children. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers tell the story of salvation from Egypt, the giving of the Law, and the wandering in the wilderness. So much of human history is a history of one war after another but the history of the Bible is the history of God working with individuals. It's the faith of the individual that's important to him. People full of faith like Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Miriam, and Joshua are all found in these first five books of the Bible. This is the history of their faith and obedience that is given to us as an example to follow. Hebrews chapter 11 is a role call of the faithful and their obedience:

Hebrews 11	Person	Where Found
Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.	Abel	Genesis 4
Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death;	Enoch	Genesis 5
Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.	Noah	Genesis 6-9
Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went	Abraham	Genesis 12-15
Heb 11:11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed...she bore a child when she was past the age,	Sarah	Genesis 17,18,21
Heb 11:17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son	Abraham	Genesis 22
Heb 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.	Isaac	Genesis 27
Heb 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons,	Jacob (Israel)	Genesis 48, 49
Heb 11:22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.	Joseph	Genesis 50
Heb 11:23 By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born,	Moses' Parents	Exodus 1,2
Heb 11:24-28 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter...By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger...By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.	Moses	Exodus 2-15
Heb 11:29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land;	Israel	Exodus 13

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Daily Bible Readings for January, February and March *Read the Entire Bible in One Year*

Day	JANUARY		FEBRUARY		MARCH	
	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa
1	Gen 1,2	Matt 1	Exo 11,12	Matt 28	Lev 23, 24	Acts 24
2	Gen 3,4	Matt 2	Exo 13,14	Psalm 9, 10	Lev 25, 26	Acts 25
3	Gen 5,6	Matt 3	Exo 15,16	Psalm 11,12	Lev 27, Provb 7	Acts 26
4	Gen 7,8	Matt 4	Exo 17,18	Acts 1	Provb 8-10	Acts 27
5	Gen 9,10	Matt 5	Exo 19,20	Acts 2	Num 1,2	Acts 28
6	Gen 11,12	Matt 6	Exo 21,22	Acts 3	Num 3,4	Psalm 19,20
7	Gen 13,14	Matt 7	Exo 23,24	Acts 4	Num 5,6	Romans 1
8	Gen 15, 16	Psalm 1,2	Exo 25,26	Acts 5	Num 7,8	Romans 2
9	Gen 17,18	Matt 8	Exo 27,28	Acts 6	Num 9,10	Romans 3
10	Gen 19,20	Matt 9	Exo 29,30	Acts 7	Num 11,12	Romans 4
11	Gen 21, 22	Matt 10	Exo 31,32	Psalm 13, 14	Num 13,14	Romans 5
12	Gen 23,24	Matt 11	Exo 33,34	Acts 8	Num 15,16	Romans 6
13	Gen 25,26	Matt 12	Exo 35,36	Acts 9	Num 17,18	Romans 7
14	Gen 27,28	Matt 13	Exo 37,38	Acts 10	Num 19,20	Romans 8
15	Gen 29,30	Psalm 3,4	Exo 39,40	Acts 11,12	Num 21,22	Romans 9
16	Gen 31,32	Matt 14	Provb 3,4	Acts 13	Num 23,24	Romans 10
17	Gen 33,34	Matt 15	Provb 5,6	Psalm 15,16	Num 25,26	Romans 11
18	Gen 35,36	Matt 16	Lev 1,2	Acts 14	Num 27,28	Romans 12
19	Gen 37,38	Matt 17	Lev 3,4	Acts 15	Num 29,30	Romans 13
20	Gen 39,40	Matt 18	Lev 5,6	Acts 16	Num 31,32	Romans 14
21	Gen 41, 42	Matt 19	Lev 7,8	Acts 17	Num 33,34	Romans 15,16
22	Gen 43, 44	Psalm 5,6	Lev 9,10	Acts 18	Num 35,36	Psalm 21,22
23	Gen 45, 46	Matt 20	Lev 11,12	Psalm 17,18	Provb 11,12	Psalm 23-25
24	Gen 47, 48	Matt 21	Lev 13,14	Acts 19	Provb 13,14	Psalm 26-28
25	Gen 49, 50	Matt 22	Lev 15,16	Acts 20	Provb 15,16	Psalm 29,30
26	Provb 1,2	Matt 23	Lev 17,18	Acts 21	Deut 1,2	Mark 1
27	Exo 1,2	Matt 24	Lev 19,20	Acts 22	Deut 3,4	Mark 2
28	Exo 3,4	Matt 25	Lev 21,22	Acts 23	Deut 5,6	Mark 3
29	Exo 5,6	Psalm 7, 8			Deut 7,8	Mark 4
30	Exo 7, 8	Matt 26			Deut 9,10	Psalm 31,32
31	Exo 9,10	Matt 27			Deut 11,12	Mark 5

See page 4 for some thoughts on the daily readings.

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