

The Lonely Man

Heroes, Part 6

Hebrews 11:7b

Something global has obviously taken place. Hundreds of stories about a flood are literally told among people living in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, the Far East, the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific islands.

Something global, involving a flood of water and the rescue of a few people literally abounds.

Our own countries Native American Indians have their legends of a catastrophic flood. One west coast Indian tribe tells the legend of how one man is saved from a flood by riding on the head of a mythological creature named Earth. Another Indian tribe in Arizona talks about a man named Montezuma and a friendly coyote who survive a flood in a boat that Montezuma had prepared and kept hidden on a mountain top. After the flood the coyote is sent out to see how much land is visible.¹

In other parts of the world, remnants of the Genesis Flood are twisted, yet still contain kernels of truth.

Even the ancient Chinese characters that form the word for a large boat are three symbols – one symbol for a person, one symbol for a boat and another symbol representing 8 people inside – there were 8 people on that ark, centuries ago.

Travel to Peru where the legend lives on that many years before there were any Incas in the world, all people were drowned by a great flood, except a handful of people who became the forefathers of the now-existing races.

Travel to Cuba where they tell of an old man who knew a Flood was coming so he built a great ship and brought his family on board along with a host of animals.

The Mexican flood tradition talks about a man who saved himself, his family and some animals by floating on a raft. As the waters began to subside, he sent out a vulture to find land, which didn't return, so he sent out a hummingbird which did return, carrying a branch with green leaves on it.

Even the natives of Alaska tell the legend of the father of their ancestors who was warned in a dream that a flood would destroy the earth. So he built a raft on which he saved himself, his family and all kinds of animals. The animals could talk in those days and they soon complained of the long journey. I guess they kept asking, "Are we there yet?" After the waters had gone down, they all alighted from the raft, but the animals lost their powers of speech as a punishment for complaining.

Tell that one to your kids.

The Hawaiians say that in the old days there was great wickedness on earth and that only one man was righteous. His name was Nu-u (sounds a lot like Noah, doesn't it?) Well, Nu-u built a great canoe and filled it with plants and animals and then escaped with a flood came. After the flood ended, he saw the moon for the first time, and thought it was a god, named Cane. So he worshipped Cane. But Cane, was displeased and he came down on a rainbow to scold him. Nu-u apologized and Cane went back up into heaven on the rainbow, but the rainbow remained as a token of Cane's forgiveness.

The Lithuanians tell how their supreme God decided to destroy everyone by a great flood. After twenty days of raining, only a small group remained high on a mountain. They would have drowned too, but their god accidentally dropped the shell of a nut

he was eating and the people used it as a boat and were saved.

The Hindus of India tell of a man who not only built a ship and along with 7 others survived a great flood because of a fish that that drew the boat to ground on top of the mountain in the Himalayas; they also tell the story that this same man later got drunk and his two sons had to take care of him.ⁱⁱ

I could go on, but you get the picture. Without any record of scripture, these stories have been handed down from one generation to another.

All that to say, something global happened!

And on every continent and throughout hundreds of people groups, the story has been handed down and adapted and changed and corrupted over time.

A story preserved and delivered by the inspiring Spirit of God through Moses the prophet.

His name was Noah.

He was the only man prepared to hear from God. And God came with news of a coming judgment along with blueprints for a large vessel never before conceived of in the mind of man.

In our last session we noted that Noah's faith was demonstrated as clear profession of trust and belief even though he was surrounded by unbelief.

We also noted his piety – his holy reverence for God and for God's will even though he was surrounded by uncertainty.

He had no experience in building boats. He was not experienced in handling elephants along with 70,000 other animals that came to the ark two by two.

How in the world could that one event occur without the supernatural oversight of God?

Our family was in England a couple of years ago to be a part of our son's graduation from his graduate school in the beautiful country of Wales.

We toured some of the highlights of England and Wales and on one occasion, watched as a royal stallion was being walked up a gangplank into a huge trailer there at the royal mews at Buckingham Palace.

Stunning, huge, black stallions . . . and he didn't want to go up that gangplank. He reared, snorted and complained and kicked . . . and eventually they got him onboard.

Some people can't imagine the miracle of animals arriving 2 by 2. Frankly, I can't imagine the miracle involved in getting them to go up a gangplank.

Do you think Noah was in control of all that?

No, this was God at work in His creation – He drew the animals to the ark; He controlled the animals in their ascent into the ark; I believe He supernaturally put them into hibernation for the year they would spend on the ark; God controlled the underground fountains of water that He released; God even controlled the direction of the ark as it floated because, as we pointed out, there is no mention of an anchor, a wheel, sails, oars or even a rudder.

Noah probably wondered about that too.

In spite of his uncertainties; in spite of his insecurities; in spite of his inexperience, Noah simply trusted the word and will of God – he did what he could do as God commanded – he built the ark and preached the gospel – and God would do what only God could do.

Now I want to make two more observations about the characteristics of Noah's faith.

- 1. First, I want to note that Noah's faith will be demonstrated by perseverance in the midst of mockery.**

The writer of *Hebrews and chapter 11 adds this commentary on the biography of Noah. Notice verse 7. By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household – now notice – by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness with is according to faith.*

In other words, Noah's actions revealed his genuine faith in the word of God.

And his actions – did you notice here – *by [them] he condemned the world.*

Genesis informs us that for 100 years, as Noah is building the ark, he's periodically preaching to the crowds that came to mock him.

Can you see him turning around and from that scaffolding, preaching the gospel; inviting everyone and warning everyone that whoever enters the ark will be saved from the wrath of God and those who don't will perish in a coming flood of water.

And you can only imagine how foolish this all sounded to Noah's generation.

This 18,000 ton boat out in Noah's field would have been on Ripley's Believe it or Not Tour. Noah's farm would be on everybody's radar – tour busses would be pulling up.

You can hear them mocking,

*“Tell us again – what’s that thing you’re building?”
“It’s an ark.”*

*“What’s an ark?”
“Well, I’ve never seen one before, but according to the blueprints it’s a hollow boat intended to float on water.”*

*“Noah, you’re more than 100 miles from the nearest body of water . . . where’s the water going to come from?”
“God’s going to send a flood.”*

*“Oh, and that boat’s going to float on that flood?”
“That’s right.”*

*“Well, okay . . . but why’s this thing so big?”
“It’s going to hold a pair of every species of land animal which breathes through the nose.”*

*“Oh, and you’re going to round them all up?”
“No, God’s going to bring them to the boat.”*

*“And how are you going to take care of thousands of animals on a boat?”
“I’m not quite sure.”*

*“And what about us – you know, people – we breathe through the nose too, unless it’s hay fever season.”
“You’re invited to join me – there will be plenty of room many people to come on board.”*

*“And what if we don’t?”
“You’ll drown.”*

*“Who told you that?”
“God did.”*

*“You mean everybody who doesn’t buy your story of coming flood and get on that boat with you will be killed by the judgment of God?”
“That’s right.”*

And you can imagine that the tone of the conversation would change. Why? Because Noah was delivering the message of potential judgment of God upon people who wanted nothing to do with God.

Genesis 6:5 has already informed us that the thoughts and plans of everyone are entirely given over to evil continually.

This was the description of Noah’s generation – the entire human race.

And for 100 years he warned them that judgment was coming.

Try warning your world the same way Noah warned his.

The Apostle Peter informs us that the next worldwide cataclysm is going to be fire – at the end of human history fire will destroy the earth and God will remake and new heaven and a new earth (**2 Peter 3**).

And then, just before the creation of this new world, judgment will take place and all who refused to believe the Gospel will be cast into an eternal lake of fire.

You mean to tell me that a billion Muslims and 2 billion Hindus and a lot of other people are going to face the judgment of God if they don’t believe in your gospel? Is that what you’re saying?

No . . . that’s what God said and I’m just repeating the warning.

It’s actually easy to miss the fact that Noah was a messenger and an agent of rescue. And so are we.

It’s actually easy to miss the fact that everything Noah was doing was calculated to save people.ⁱⁱⁱ

Not condemn them.

You see, the gospel has two sides to it – one of rescue and the other of judgment.

Listen, a world-wide, global flood is coming and everybody’s going to drown who doesn’t get into this ark.

And nobody believes him – nobody, beyond his immediate family.

Let me say here that Noah is a man of integrity and faith – not because people responded to his voice, but because he had responded to God’s.

Are you willing to persevere in your faith, even when surrounded by unbelief and even mockery?

Are you willing to be a lonely man . . . woman . . . young person?

Do you understand that even though your message is an invitation to salvation and rescue it is also a message that surfaces sin and calls people to confront their guilt?

Do you understand that you expose people by the light of your testimony?

Alcibiades was a brilliant, yet ungodly young man living in Athens during the days of Socrates,

around 400 years before the birth of Christ. One day, Alcibiades said to Socrates, “Socrates, I hate you so . . . for every time I meet you, you show me what I am.”^{iv}

Historians say that one of the godliest men who lived in Athens was a man by the name of Aristides. He was even nicknamed, “the just – or the righteous one”. Eventually, however, the leading citizens and the court of Athens voted to exile him – to send him away. One of the men was asked why he so voted and he responded, “Because I am tired of hearing Aristides called righteous.”^v

What does that make me?

Will you persevere in your faith, even in the midst of mockery?

Have you ever been called “goody two-shoes”?

That phrase came to mind as I thought about the scorn of people against the lives of godly people.

I had no idea where this phrase came from and so I did a little digging and found that it originated in a children’s story about a little orphan who only had one shoe. A wealthy man in kindness gave her a pair a nice shoes and it so changed her life because she simply wanted to live up to the gift and people nicknamed her “goody two-shoes.”

It wasn’t out of derision at all.

She was just remarkably different after receiving that gift.

Shouldn’t we all, having been given by our adoptive Father the gift of forgiveness so live that people know our lives have changed?

Have you come to terms with the fact that you – as a committed believer – are different?

Are you willing to live with the fact, as A.W. Tozer put it, that you as a Christian are an odd number anyway? You feel love for One you’ve never met; you talk every day to someone you can’t see and expect to go to heaven because of what someone else has done for you.^{vi}

I mean, how different is that?

You see, the danger of a godly life is that it also happens to expose or highlight the ungodliness of those around you.

And they’re not going to be too happy about the exposure.

I remember working on an assembly in college making microwaves. They moved one guy to another position and I took his. It was my job to take the microwave motor, attach little brackets to it and a small fan and then hand it to the guy on the assembly line right next to me as those microwaves

moved slowly down the conveyor belt. The guy before me was able to put one of them together just in time to be needed and so I was pretty nervous about being able to keep up. But after about an hour – figuring out the movements I needed to make with my hands – repositioning the stock of fans and brackets and motors – I soon found that I was able to make them in plenty of time for the assembly line. In fact, it was so simple that it got boring. So I’d come in, and in a couple of hours have enough of them stockpiled at my desk that all the guy on the line needed to do was reach around and grab one and I started going to different places on the assembly line to help wherever someone needed help. What I didn’t know was that the guy whose place I’d taken was absolutely infuriated with what I had naively exposed. At one point he came over to me – his face beet red and whispered, “What are you doing trying to make me look so bad.”

I was shocked . . . that thought hadn’t crossed my mind. But later on I wanted to walk over to him and say, “Hey, you were effectively lying every time you showed up to work, why don’t you get busy, you lazy sluggard!” I didn’t . . . he was bigger than I was . . . but I wanted to.

Listen, you do the right thing and you’re going to make waves.

You live a life that honors God in every respect and trust me, you will make waves – and sometimes you won’t even know it.

And your life of faith will need to demonstrate perseverance in the midst of those waves you’ve created.

Faith demonstrates perseverance in the midst of mockery.

There’s one other observation I want to make about faithful Noah.

Secondly, faith is demonstrating:

1. Patience in the midst of silence

Don’t ever underestimate the task God called Noah to do just because we know the end of the story.

God required Noah to believe something would happen that had never happened before; something unlikely; He asked Noah to buy into something that wasn’t possible to even imagine.^{vii}

And here’s the point that is so staggering to me.

For the most part, after God's initial visit with Noah, Noah worked without any further word from God.^{viii}

God came to Noah in Genesis 6 and gave him the command to build the ark along with the instructions. He informed Noah of the coming judgment by water and the migration of animals to the ark.

And that's it. That's all we have record of God saying to Noah for the next 100 years!

And then you arrive at chapter 7 of Genesis where God once again speaks to Noah and tells him to gather his family and enter the ark with the animals.

And they obey.

And then – most people don't read far enough to get this – they are told to wait in the ark, for 7 more days.

I don't know about you, but that 7 days of silence, in the ark, without another word, would have felt like 100 years.

Can you imagine the neighbors? The door of the ark is shut and then nothing happens; one day . . . two days . . . three days . . . four days . . . not a drop of rain or a cloud in the sky.

At this point they're barbecuing next to the Ark – they've built a volleyball pit . . . they're playing horseshoes. Can you imagine the Noah jokes? Can you just hear their outright blasphemy of Noah's God?

And then raindrops began to dance off the sand of the volleyball court and sizzle on the top of the barbecue grill . . . and then suddenly, the springs of water under the earth erupted! And the judgment of God fell on planet earth and the entire human race.

Since the lens of our focus are not on the flood, but upon the biography of Noah, let me fast forward the DVD to the end of the flood and Noah picks up life back on the planet.

God not only records the successes of Biblical heroes, but their sins.

Noah and his family exit the ark and Noah goes back to farming.

In *Genesis chapter 9* we read the first mention in the Bible of the word, "*wine*" and at the very outset, it causes trouble.

In *verse 20* we're told that *Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and uncovered himself inside his tent. 22. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers*

outside. 23. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father.

The key to understanding this text is that Noah's failure revealed the heart condition of his three sons.^{ix}

Two sons will respond in a way to preserve their father's dignity and one son will delight in his father's failure.

The actions of Ham can be paraphrased in *verse 22* to mean, "*he told his brothers with delight.*"^x

In other words, for some time he had evidently resented his father's walk and faith and now that he saw his father's failure, instead of helping his father retain some dignity, he rejoices and shares it with delight.

Isn't it interesting that all of the human race descends from Adam and runs through Noah.

Both Adam and Noah sinned while partaking of fruit – Noah the fruit of the vine and Adam the fruit of the tree. As a result each of them became naked and were provided a covering by someone else. And their actions led to a curse and mankind has been affected ever since.^{xi}

As we wrap up our study of Noah, the ark, the flood and the faith of this imperfect man who yet, to this day, is known for his remarkable faith in God, let me make several comments on the analogies of ark of Noah and the gospel.

We're told that Noah found grace in the eyes of God (*Genesis 6:8*); and it was because of God's grace that Noah found his place of safety in the ark – rescued from the wrath of God.

So we also find our place in Christ – saved by His grace alone – rescued from the coming and eternal wrath of God (*Ephesians 2:8-9*)

The ark symbolized God's atoning work for mankind. In fact, the Hebrew word for "pitch" – that tar-like substance that Noah was commanded to cover the ark with is the same root word (kaphar) used for atonement in the sacrificial system later delivered through Moses.^{xii}

In a very real way, the word atonement first appears in the Bible then in relation to Noah's ark.^{xiii}

In the ark, mankind would be covered – protected from the wrath of God.

Here's another analogy: the ark was strong enough to handle the waves and the storm that pounded against it for more than a year. Christ is strong enough to carry us safely through the storms

of life – He is our shelter, our ark of safety. No matter how strong the wind or how high the billowing waves – Christ is our strong shelter in the midst of life’s storms.

Then again here’s another; there was only one door into that ark. There was only one way in – only one way to safety as the judgment of God came. And there’s only one door that leads to everlasting safety from the wrath of God. Jesus said, “***I am the way the truth and the life – no one comes to the Father except through me.***” (John 14:6) Jesus said, “***I am the door – if anyone enters through me he will be saved.***” (John 10:9)

Have you been saved? Have you entered through the door of Christ, into the ark of salvation by faith in Him alone?

I can remember knowing full well that I was not saved – and I certainly didn’t want to give my life to Jesus Christ. But I also knew that I wasn’t safe.

I knew enough about the Bible, having grown up in a Christian home – I actually believed the Bible was true and that’s what really scared me!

I knew that Christ could come at any moment for His church – to rapture it away (*1 Thessalonians 4:17*). And I was afraid of being left behind as God began to pour out judgment on the earth as promised in the Book of Revelation (*Revelation 3:10 and chapter 4 all the way to chapter 19*).

I was afraid . . . I knew I wasn’t safe.

As a teenager, I would get out of bed at night and tiptoe down the hallway and look in on my little brothers who shared a room – I would quietly open the door to see if they were still there. And I would tiptoe back to my bedroom and try to sleep.

Enter the ark of Christ and be saved and safe forever.

Furthermore, inside the ark there was perfect security. God had shut them in – God had closed the door (*Genesis 7:16*). Noah couldn’t open the door if he’d wanted to and no one else could open it either.

Oh the terror if you were on the outside but oh the security if you were on the inside.

Noah and his family were not only safe, they were secure. They never needed to fear that God would change His mind and cast them out.

So also, the believer in Christ never need fear the same, for Jesus Christ said, “***the one that comes to me will never be cast out.***” You could understand that in terms of this analogy – *you never need to fear that God will change His mind and throw you overboard.* (John 6:37)

Those who entered the ark with Noah emerged to find a newly constructed earth; likewise, those of us who are in the ark of Christ will eventually emerge to find a new heaven and a new earth (*Revelation 21:1*)^{xiv}

One more analogy comes to my mind and spirit and it’s this triumphant truth – Jesus Christ will succeed in His mission. His gospel will be victorious. The ark of salvation and the church of His redeemed will not capsize. The storms and strategies of Hell will not prevail against it.

There’s no lifeboat hanging from the side of Noah’s Ark – just in case they needed to abandon ship.

Noah and his family didn’t bring along life jackets; there weren’t plastic cards in the seat in front of them with instructions should the boat go down. There were no emergency portholes.

They were safe in the ark of God. And it would reach God’s destination just as God had planned and so shall His church arrive safely at her eternal destination.

Let me provide two final truths from the biography of this hero of faith:

1. **First of all, faith is trust in the word of God, even when it seems impossible.**

Beloved,

*Faith is not a leap into the dark
It is a walk in the light of God’s word
Even when all around you is dark.*

2. **Secondly, faith is obedience to the will of God, even when it requires everything.**

In other words, whatever God wants you to do, faith is obedience to His word and His will, even when it requires everything you have and everything you are.

There was no middle ground for Noah. There was no “in-between” lifestyle . . . it was all or nothing. And Noah gave his all.

Amy Carmichael, that Irish missionary to India for some 60 years said that there is much talk in the church but so much shallow living; she would write, “I wonder if it is because there are so few who are prepared to be, like the pine on the hilltop, alone in the wind for God.

A solitary pine tree . . . on a hill . . . alone . . . in
the wind . . . but with God.
That, my friends, was testimony of a man named
Noah.

Faith, beloved, is persevering in spite of the scorn
of unbelievers and, for the most part, the silence of
God

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/14/2012 by Stephen Davey.

© Copyright 2012 Stephen Davey
All rights reserved.

-
- i James Montgomery Boice, Genesis: Volume 1 (Zondervan, 1982), p. 283
ii Ibid, p. 284
iii Richard D. Phillips, Hebrews (P & R Publishing, 2006), p. 433
iv William Barclay, The Letter to the Hebrews (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 142
v Ibid
vi Charles R. Swindoll, The Practical Life of Faith (Insight for Living, 1989), p. 9
vii Adapted from Phillips, p. 427
viii James Montgomery Boice, Genesis: Volume 2 (Zondervan, 1982), p. 189
ix C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the New Testament: Volume 1 (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 155
x Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Record (Baker Book House, 1976), p. 235
xi Morris, p. 236
xii John MacArthur, Hebrews (Moody Bible Institute, 1983), p. 319
xiii Morris, p. 182
xiv Phillips, p. 434