

Sent: Wednesday, February 01, 2017 4:30 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on the Faith of Noah!

"By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith!"

The story of Noah recounts one of the most extraordinary, if not the most extraordinary examples of faith in the Bible--in large part because of the great challenge to which he was confronted, with literally nothing to go on, except for what God said to him! He truly exemplified the words of Paul where he writes: "For faith comes from hearing; and hearing by the word of God!" (Romans 10:17)

Why then is there only one verse included in Hebrews 11 about his faith? Probably since his readers--primarily Hebrew believers--already knew all about Noah's story! You could say they were already "on-board"! And so, we too, right? Well, maybe not, considering all the far-reaching implications it has, among other things, for the doctrine of "justification by faith alone" and of "things to come"--including the "second coming of Christ"!

And so, we've got to go back to Genesis to get the "rest of the story" and gain a fuller appreciation of Noah's faith--but, more importantly, for the God in whom he placed his trust!

The scene is set in Genesis 6 where, just 10 generations into human history, God "saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"--and so determined to "blot out man, and every other living thing that He had created from the face of the land!" (Gen. 6:5-7) Wow!

But, the Bible says, one man, Noah, "found favor in the eyes of the Lord"--and, further that he "was a righteous man, blameless in his time and walked with God"! How can this be? The clear message of Scripture is that "there is none righteous; no not one!" (Roman 3:23), and that it's "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he has saved us!" (Titus 3:5) And that "by grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast!" (Eph. 2:8-9) And many other verses we could cite!

And so, we must conclude that Noah was declared "righteous," because of his faith, which was given (a gift?) to him upon "hearing" and believing God's revelation--and not based on his "works"! He obviously believed that God "existed and that it was worth his while to seek Him"! (Heb. 11:6) And his life was obviously influenced by His great grandfather, Enoch, who also "walked with God;" and probably by learning of Abel's sacrifice, and hearing the story of his ancestors, Adam and Eve, who must have talked about life before "the fall"--and of the promise of a "Savior" (recorded in Gen. 3:15).

Noah's faith was further demonstrated when he responded "with reverence" and obedience to each of the four instances when God spoke to him directly (Gen. 6:13; 7:1; 8:15; and 9:1,8). And yet there must have been a great amount of "wonder and awe"--and probably some fear and misgivings--when God confided with him about His plan to destroy the whole world with a flood, and commanded him to build an "ark" to save him and his family--and even to bring two of every living thing, male and female, into the ark with him, etc. etc. Must have asked himself: how am I going to do all this? Interestingly, among other things, God promised that all the animals would actually "come to him"! (Gen. 6:20) --all of which, in addition to fulfilling the adage "build it and they will

come," says a lot about how God can make amazing things happen for those who can conger up just a little bit of faith!

Also, interestingly, according to MacArthur, the Hebrew word for "ark" was same word used for the "ark" that baby Moses would be placed in to float down the Nile (only a whole lot smaller version, of course)! And so, just as God would use an ark to spare Noah and his family, so He could "save" the human race; and used an ark to save Moses, so he could "save" Israel--so He would send Christ to be the "ark of our salvation"!

Well, Genesis records that Noah did everything according to what God commanded! And yes, just as God said, "all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky opened" (Gen. 7:11), and there was a worldwide flood which "blotted out every living thing..." And only Noah and his family, and the animals aboard the ark, were spared! And after it was all over, Noah's first response was to "build an altar to the Lord"--as an act of worship to God's faithfulness! And then, Gen. 9:1 says: "God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth!" And the rest is History!

Hard to believe, huh? Well, Jesus confirmed the story and that's good enough for me! In Matthew 24:37-39, He is quoted as saying: "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah! For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so, will the coming of the Son of Man be!" Wow!

Peter alluded also to the story (in II Peter 3) where he noted that in the "last days" mockers would come along saying "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation! For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God, the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men!"

Peter's words, inspired by God, take issue with the theory of "uniformitarianism" which holds that all nature phenomena have operated uniformly since the beginning of time--and which is the basic assumption underlying the theory of evolution and much of the scientific thinking of our day! Peter is saying that things in the world haven't always gone as they had in the past--and that such thinking deliberately ignores two major "cataclysmic events which have happened in history: creation and the flood! God intervened in both cases, setting aside the very laws that He had ordained, bringing about catastrophic changes in the world! And, according to Peter, He will do the same when He returns to fulfill His plan for the ages!

Thanks Noah! For your faith that evidenced itself in obedience to God's words--and for treating them with such great "reverence"! For being willing to stand alone, and tuning out the thinking of an evil world, where necessary! For "walking with God! when it wasn't fashionable! For being committed to "righteous living"--in conformity to the Divine will in purpose, thought, and action!

So, everybody "on-board"?

On to Abraham!

Lowell