

3 - Noah // Hebrews 11:7 // *Broken People and Famous Faith: Hebrews 11 #3*¹

Introduction

We are walking through one of the most famous and most powerful chapters in the Bible—Hebrews 11, often called the “Great Hall of Faith.” So if you’ll open your Bibles there, again. (The good news is, once you’ve found it once, you’ll be locked in for the rest of this series.)

I told you in our first week of this series that I love visiting halls of fame when I’m traveling, and some of you told me you were the same way.

There’s a whole list of halls of fame, however, you’ve probably never heard of that you may or may not want to add to your vacation list. We all know about the Baseball HOF in Cooperstown or Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, or the Country Music HOF in Nashville. But anybody in here ever visited

- The **Robot Hall of Fame? It actually exists, in Pennsylvania. I guess this is what one does for fun in Pennsylvania.** I can’t imagine the acceptance speeches are all that great—probably a little *canned* and *stiff*--but, I mean, what can you do?
- And the **Barbecue Hall of Fame** in Kansas City. The “Great Hall of Flavor,” they call it. When I discovered that one, I immediately planned my next vacation. I’m positive our own Chris Prieto of Prime Barbecue either has to be in there or about to be inducted.

¹ Works consulted: Tim Keller, “[Noah and the Power of Faith: Faith as Conviction](#),” September 25, 1994, Redeemer Presbyterian; Tim Keller, “[Lord of the Storm](#),” December 3, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian; Tim Keller, “[Lord of the Earth](#),” December 10, 2000, Redeemer Presbyterian; Joby Martin, “[Scripted #4: How Can You Save the World](#),” September 28, 2014, Church of Eleven22; John MacArthur,

- Closer to home, North Carolina is the proud host of the **NASCAR Hall of Fame**. Which isn’t news to any of you at the Alamance County Campus, of course. That’s like an annual pilgrimage sight.
- And if that’s too intense for you, Wisconsin boasts the **Paper Hall of Fame**--which, frankly, unless your name is **Dwight Schrute**, I can’t imagine anything more boring. “Limitless paper for a paperless world.” The only thing more boring than that might be
- The **Potato Hall of Fame in (where else but) Idaho**. The Potato Hall of Fame? Seriously. It exists. Go with your buds to see some spuds. I’ve never visited this Hall of Fame, but I hope someday to be a spec-Tater there (See what I did? Huh?) (I am a dad; dad jokes are in my blood...)

Hebrews 11 is the great ‘hall of faith’ in Scripture. Now, I told you, I say “Great Hall of Faith,” but please don’t think of Hebrews 11 as some kind of catalog of Spiritual Super Heroes. If you think of them that way, you’re going to be very disappointed. These are ordinary men and women, painfully ordinary, with struggles, faults, and spiritual warts. Sometimes they stumble; sometimes they doubt; and sometimes they do downright embarrassing things.

But each of them, you’ll see, held onto the conviction, no matter how faint or weak that conviction, that God was real, that he would keep his promises, and that seeking him was worth the effort.

Each of them is like an exhibit in a great hall of fame, illustrating **some dimension** of faith like one side of a many-sided diamond.

Our exhibit for today: **By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the**

“Noah: A Preacher of Faith,” preached with Grace to You, April 3, 2017; Levi Lusko, “[Don’t Give Up the \(Mother\) Ship](#),” May 14, 2023, Fresh Life Church; Dr. Tony Evans, “[God Wants you to Obey Completely, Not Partially](#),” March 12, 2018, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship; Sidney Griedanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*. And others as noted throughout.

saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” (Hebrews 11:7)

Now, if you had to name **3 Bible stories that everyone** in America knows, the story of **Noah and the Ark** would always make the list. Perhaps the great irony of this story is that we’ve turned into a cute little bedtime story, where *“in come the animals two by two, the hippopotamus and the kangaroo;”* and we paint it as a mural over our baby’s crib like it’s a soothing, cuddly bedtime image.

I would suggest to you it’s far from a soothing bedtime story. It recounts a global flood that God sent to kill every living thing on earth. **It’s kind of** like dangling the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse from your baby’s mobile. *“Mommy, what are those?” “Those are locusts God will one day send to ravage mankind and destroy the earth.”*

Noah’s ark brings up **a lot of questions** for modern people, like:

- **How could a good God** do this? Where is God’s love and forgiveness in it all?
- Or, maybe you ask: **When it says, “the whole world was flooded,”** does that literally mean *the-whole-world* (as in, every continent was literally underwater?) Or, was it just “the known world”? Like, a regional flood that *felt* like a global flood?
- Or maybe you ask, **“Have they found the actual Ark?”** You’re like, “I saw some guy on the National Geographic channel who said he’d found the Ark, but he had those crazy eyes and looked like he probably had one of those *“In case of rapture this car will be unmanned”* bumper stickers on his car, so I wasn’t sure whether to take him seriously or not.” And my answer is “probably not.”
- Maybe your questions are logistical. You’re like, **“How could you even fit all those animals on one Ark?”** (I’ll answer that one for you real quick, btw: Based on the Ark’s dimensions, it seems it could hold about 35,000 and 50,000 animals...)

But THAT raises even **more questions**:

- How **much poop** would 50K animals produce every day? I know you’ve thought about it. You just figured, “I’m not sure I can ask questions like this in church.”
- Or maybe you wonder, **how did they get all the animals on there in the first place?**
- And **how did Noah ensure he got one from each gender? I mean, honestly, could you tell** the difference in a ‘boy dove’ and a ‘girl dove’? Could you?
 - I can just picture God saying to Noah: ‘OK, Noah, did you get ‘em all? One of each gender?’ And Noah was like, ‘Well I got two turtles, but I honestly don’t really know which one’s the boy turtle and which one’s the girl turtle. So, I just put a pink bow on one and we’re calling that one the girl.’
- And of course, the most difficult theological question of all: **Why didn’t Noah screen** out the two cats from getting on? I mean, think of how much better history would have gone if he’d done that. And all God’s people said...

These are **ALL great questions**, and maybe I’ll devote an “Ask the Pastor” podcast episode to answering some of them. But they are not the main focus of our message today because they’re not the main point of the passage.

We’re going to ask the question the writer of Hebrews asks: *“How is Noah an example of the faith that pleases God, the faith without which it is impossible to please God?”*

I’m going to give you **4 ways Noah showed faith**—that are all alluded to there in verse 7.

First, let’s get a little context for the Noah story so we understand it better. For that, we’ll turn to:

Genesis 6

Vs. 5 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD *regretted* that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him to his heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am *sorry* that I have made them."

Stories of judgment like this in the Bible tend to bother us. These verses, especially the words I highlighted here, show you that they bother God, too, and much more even than they bother us.

- The word for **"grieved to the heart"** used there in vs. 6 is a very **specific Hebrew word** used to describe the grief of someone betrayed by someone they depended on. A spouse. A trusted friend. A child.
- **The prophet Isaiah uses the same word in Isa 54:6** when he said that God, after rejection by his people, was like "a wife who married young, only to be deserted, and her spirit filled with **grieving** (that's the same Hebrew word in Ge 6:6)." **Imagine a young bride filled with anticipation on her wedding day** only to find out that her husband-to-be has run off with her best friend with whom he's been carrying on for over a year. She's not just said, she's heartbroken. She's left with this **sick, hollow feeling**. This is how **God feels about** our sin.
- Frankly, some theologians say, this an **odd word to use to describe God**,² because it makes him sound almost vulnerable.

² From Tim Keller sermon, "Lord of the Storm," on Gen 6.

³ *Born in Croatia, Miroslav Volf came of age in communist Yugoslavia, where he witnessed the ethnic tensions between the Croats and Serbs. After the fall of communism in 1991, those tensions escalated into a bloody war. "My thesis that the practice of nonviolence requires a belief in divine vengeance will be unpopular with many Christians, especially theologians in*

The Hebrew word means literally, "unfulfilled longing" or a "despairing frustration."

Sin, like a disease, has consumed the human race.

- **Vs. 12** says they were **violent**. The strong oppressed the weak, and there was all kinds of sexual perversion.
- **Vs. 5**, their thoughts **were "only evil continually."** And it was only getting worse.

And God wanted to stop that, and he decided to do so by sending a flood to literally cleanse the earth.

You say, "Well, that doesn't sound very loving." Imagine someone you love is being eaten up with **cancer**. You take radical measures to cleanse them from cancer; you literally radiate their body with poison to get rid of it. **BECAUSE** you love them, you want to destroy what's destroying them. That's what God is doing with humanity.

There is an **interesting wordplay** in Hebrew that illustrates this: The word used to describe human violence in **vs. 12** is **"mash-heet,"** (the word literally means the human race was a bunch of 'destroyers'). That's the same word used to describe what God will do to the human race in the flood. He's going to *mash-heet* the *mash-heeters*: **destroy** the **destroyers**.

Maybe you're the kind of person who feels like a loving God would never punish anyone. Miroslav Volf, who survived the genocides of Croatia, said that the only way anyone would ever say that is if they've lived in the suburbs of America all their lives and never experienced real injustice.³ He said **'but when you watch family and**

the West. To the person who is inclined to dismiss it, I suggest imagining that you are delivering a lecture in a war zone (which is where a paper that underlies this chapter was originally delivered). **Among your listeners are people whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit.** The topic of the lecture:

friends get murdered in cold blood'—as he had--the only way you can keep from going **insane** with rage is by knowing that there is a God who will one day give perfect justice.

- Miroslav Volf said upon coming to America he discovered a **deeply held myth**--and that is a belief in a God of judgment will lead YOU to be judgmental and violent. You see this myth, btw, in all kinds of Netflix-type documentaries on religion. If you believe in a God of judgment, these documentaries say, you'll become harsh and judgmental yourself. And we have to acknowledge, of course, that religious abuse is real. But, in some ways the truth is exactly the opposite: **If you believe in a God who will not one day exact justice**, then when you really get wronged, and feel like the person who wronged you is getting away with it, you'll seethe with rage and end up taking matters into your own hands. This is what makes Quentin Tarantino movies popular. It's only when you believe that God will one day execute perfect justice that you will be able to lay your own sword down and be free of the hatred and bitterness that comes from the desire for revenge.

Permission to speak freely, here: Many of you have a lopsided view of God. Our view of God is more influenced by Oprah or the media than the Bible. You don't recognize the importance of concepts like the wrath of God, and that distorts how you see the universe.

- *You're like a guy who only works out his chest and biceps but always skips leg day. When he takes his shirt off he looks impressive, but then you look at his lower half and think, "Man, last time I saw legs like that they were hanging out of a nest."* Any fitness coach will tell you, a guy like that is not that strong. He may look strong, but you'll never be strong if only one half of your body is strong.

a Christian attitude toward violence. The thesis: we should not retaliate since God is perfect non-coercive love. Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to God's refusal to judge. In a

If you have a lopsided view of God, you won't have a "strong enough" worldview to make sense of the Bible, much less your own life.

- **God loves his creation too much to let it persist in wickedness; and**
- **He loves his glory and justice too much to let the wicked go unpunished.**
- **The Bible says (Ps 89:14) that justice literally undergirds the very foundation of God's throne. It's what his throne sits on. A God without justice is not a good God.**
- God was grieved by the violence and corruption of man, so he decided to **do something** about it.

You say, "But what about the kids...? Weren't they innocent?"

- *Well, in one sense, we understand the whole human race is guilty of sin, but at the same time we understand the kids were not guilty of sin to the same extent that the adults were guilty of it, and yet they died in the same way.*
- *The thing to hold onto here is that God is just, and God never holds someone ultimately guilty of sins they haven't personally actually committed.*
- *Scripture urges us to think about situations like this in light of eternity. The **joys of heaven, it teaches us, vastly outweigh ANY temporary suffering** we go through on earth, and so in **situations like this, where the "innocent" get caught up** collaterally in act of God's justice, we should think of it as basically **God collecting them early--all of us eventually die--and the happiness they experience in eternity more than makes up for any temporary suffering they experience on earth.**) And I know there's more to say there, but we're going to have to leave it there for now).*

scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die. And as one watches it die, one will do well to reflect about many other pleasant captivities of the liberal mind." **Exclusion and Embrace by Miroslav Volf, 303–304.**

Verse 8: But Noah found favor (or you could read that word as 'grace,' scholars say. Noah found 'grace') in the eyes of the Lord.

Why? What was special about Noah? Was Noah a sinless man? No. In fact, toward the end of this story, you'll see that Noah had **plenty of evil** in his heart. Noah's story is gonna end fairly poorly, and you're going to see that he's part of the same depraved human race being wiped out in the flood.

No. Heb 11:7 says that Noah *was righteous because he responded* to God's offer of salvation by faith. (Noah's name actually means "rest." Noah was righteous because he rested in God's grace. There are other ancient accounts of a worldwide flood--things like the Epic of Gilgamesh--but in each of them the hero has to work hard to overcome the gods' anger. Noah was the opposite. Noah rests in God's grace & trusts in him to save him. And that's what made him righteous.

4 special ways Noah showed this faith--this is Noah's side of **the faith diamond**:

1. Noah Believed God Instead of His Eyes or His Feelings

"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events *as yet unseen...*" Heb 11:7

Noah chose to believe God instead of what he saw with his eyes or felt with his heart. Nothing around Noah looked like a flood was coming. For 120 years, Noah got up every day under clear blue skies, in the middle of a desert, miles away from the nearest body of water, to go to work on... an Ark. It would be like building an ocean liner in the middle of Kansas. Everything in his heart said, *"This is crazy."* But Noah believed God instead of those feelings.

Faith is basing your perception of reality on what God says rather than *what you see and feel.*

Hear me: It's not that you turn your mind off, it's just that there are different ways to know certain things, and often your eyes and feelings are not the best way to discern reality.

- **Pilots, for example,** say that when you're flying through a storm, you should follow the instrument panel of the plane to know what direction you're going, or how high you are, and never just eyes or some innate sense of where you are in the sky.
- **I read a book that explained that the most dangerous time** in a pilot's career is when or she has between 50–300 hours of experience. That's what they call "the killing zone," because it's when pilots are experienced enough to feel confident in their command on the plane, but still inexperienced enough that they rely on their feelings and instincts rather than on things like their instrument panel and flight plans, and that's by far when the majority of pilots die, because in that situation your instruments are much more reliable than your innate sense of where you are or how high you are. (BTW, I also learned you're 1842x less likely to die in a plane crash if you fly commercial instead of private, so there's always that.)

Many of you trust your eyes and your feelings entirely too much in discerning spiritual reality. But see, this world is in a storm worse than anything an airline pilot experiences up there; sometimes everything is upside-down and you aren't able to tell you which way is up.

When it comes to questions like what your purpose is, or where you came from, or how God feels about you, or what you're missing in life and how to fix it, you need something more reliable than your feelings. The Bible utterly rejects what I call the Gospel of Disney: **Always follow your heart.** The Bible would say, "NEVER follow your heart," because your feelings are usually NOT a reliable guide to what

is right and wrong. In fact, Proverbs warns, “There is a way that seems right (*feels* right) unto man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov 14:12)

- Certain things *feel* right; certain things *seem* true, but they actually lead to death.

God’s Word is an “instrument panel” more reliable than your eyes or your feelings.

Even your reasoning will lead you astray. A lot of people are like, “Well, I just have to figure it out for myself. If I can understand it, I’ll believe it.” But that’s not reliable either. Let me explain why.

There is an ancient problem philosophers call “the **problem of evil**” dating back to at least Epicurus in the 3rd century bC, and it goes something like this: “*If God is loving, he would want to stop suffering. If God is powerful, he could stop suffering. The fact that suffering exists proves that there’s not a God who is all loving and all powerful.*” For years people of all educational levels have let that reasoning cause them to doubt whether there’s a God. And it seems reasonable. But, but...there’s a missing premise, and it is this: If God is all-powerful, and all-loving, it stands to reason he’s also all wise. Just enter in with me here. **HERE’S THE QUESTION**--if God’s wisdom is as high above mine as his power is above mine, then shouldn’t I expect there might be a lot of things that don’t make immediate sense to me yet?

Think with me for a moment about how much higher God’s power is than yours. God created everything in the universe with just a word.

Astronomers estimate the number of stars at more than 3,000 billion trillion. Each one puts out roughly the same amount of energy as a *trillion* atom bombs *every single second*. Recently these images have been coming back from the Webb telescope--my nerd friends at the Robot Museum shared them with me. [Here we have \(PIC\)](#) a picture of the “Cosmic Cliffs” in the Carina Nebula. What you’re looking at here

is **7,600 light-years away**, and it’s the early process of a star being formed. The wall of this nebula—basically a space-cloud of dust and gas—is being pushed down by the incredibly hot UV radiation of the stars above it. You can even see, just above the ridge, what is a kind of steam radiating off the nebula.

God created all that with a word!

Now, let’s compare that to MY power: I can’t lift my mattress over my head. Veronica and I tried to do this the other day, and I almost didn’t make it today because of that. God created the Carina Nebula with just a word; I can’t even lift above my head the thing I sleep on every night.

Here’s the point: If God’s wisdom is as high above mine as his power is above mine, then it makes sense that there are some things beyond my immediate ability to understand, and **it is entirely possible that God has beautiful purposes he is working out that I just can’t see yet.**

And so, I base my understanding of who God is and the purpose in what he’s doing in the world NOT on what I see with my eyes, perceive by my feelings, but understand with my head, but on his Word--namely, what he reveals about himself in the cross and resurrection. There, at the cross, is where I see the measure of his love and there, at the empty tomb, is where I see the measure of his power. That’s the Word of God, and it’s more reliable than what I see with my eyes or feel with my heart.

Hebrews 11:1 calls faith a “conviction of things not seen.” That means becoming convinced, for good and logical reasons, that things you can’t see with your eyes still exist. And then using that knowledge to help you interpret the things you can’t understand yet.

- **For example**, I always tell you, “If Jesus rose from the dead, it stands to reason that he’s telling me the truth about whatever he’s talking about even if I can’t quite grasp the how or why yet.”
- (BIBLE) **I’ve told you that when I’m having trouble believing something the Bible teaches**—and this happens to me fairly regularly—I ask myself if I were standing inside the empty tomb and the resurrected Jesus asked me to believe it, would I be willing to suspend my unbelief because his resurrected body was standing in front of me? *My answer would be yes.*
- (You say, “Ah, but how do we know Jesus rose from the dead, and that this book is God’s Word?” Well, the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that it’s basically undeniable. I know that’s a big statement, but go check it out. And he said this book was his word and that it was reliable. There’s so many things in it that attest to its divine origins: its cohesion; the fulfilled prophecy; the unique and counterintuitive insights. Going into all that is another sermon for another day) but the point is when you become convinced this is God’s word, you accept its version of reality even if it’s not consistent with what you see and feel yet.

Sometimes we say, **“Faith is when the unexplainable meets the undeniable.”** (The *unexplainable* = whatever question I’m struggling with. The *undeniable* = the empty tomb of Jesus). **If the tomb of Jesus is empty, I know that someday, somewhere, I’ll understand the explanation, even if that day is not today.**

For years physicists couldn’t figure out the physics behind why **bumblebees** could fly. They drew out several models and could prove, based on the principles of aerodynamics, that the bumblebee couldn’t fly. The bumblebee, however, oblivious to their research, and totally ignorant of their white papers, kept right on flying.

- **And so physicists, using the irrefutable evidence** that a bumblebee could indeed fly (and this is key), re-examined their calculations and assumptions. And, sure enough, eventually, they

figured out new aerodynamic insights they had been missing. And I’m sure the bumblebee felt vindicated.

- The point was, there was **something unexplainable**--how the bumblebee could fly--meeting **something undeniable**, mainly the thing buzzing around in the air--and that led to *greater* scientific wisdom, not less.
- **Hear me: I am NOT trashing science:** I believe in science. I’m just saying that for some truths, ultimate truths, spiritual truths, life-defining truths, science is unable to answer them. It’s not equipped to. We know those things through the Word of God, and believing God’s Word pushes us deeper into the problems to see how this thing we don’t think can be true actually is true.
- You follow that?
 - Early bumblebee physicists said, “How does the bumblebee get any lift with that wing size? It’s impossible! But (...zzzz...) he’s flying, so I’ll keep looking.” And they discovered new truth.
 - **We say, “How does all this mess work together for good?** It makes no sense. But... he’s resurrected! So I’ll keep looking for the good.” And we discover new truth and meaning.

You getting this? Faith doesn’t mean turning your mind off; it means using God’s revelation as the starting point in your interpretation of reality, and letting that tether your investigations as you go. That gives you certainty in the midst of confusion. God’s word is your instrument panel.

Noah believed God instead of his eyes or his feelings, and he interpreted reality through the lens of God’s word.

2. Noah Feared God More than His Community

Again, vs. 7: **By faith Noah... *in reverent fear* constructed an ark for the saving of his household.**

Noah not only believed what God said, he made it the guiding reality of his life.

Again, you have to remember how bizarre Noah's behavior would have seemed. He started construction on a gigantic Ark in the middle of a desert, miles away from the nearest body of water; all the while the sun shone, the birds chirped, and people around him sinned with impunity. Townsfolk were like, *"Noah, how you even gonna even get that thing to the water? Is God giving you plans for an F-350 SuperDuty you can use to tow that thing to the beach?"*

And yet, Noah persisted. Why? Because he was "moved by a reverent fear." **Fear means a deep, weighty respect.**

- It doesn't always mean you're terrified of something--it can mean you simply recognize how important and weighty something is.
- **I've compared it to my air tank when I go SCUBA diving.** Recently, I've gotten into SCUBA a little bit; a couple of my kids and I got certified together recently. I'm still very much an amateur. One of the things you learn, even as an amateur, is to always mind your tank. One time I actually burned through my air supply below the surface. It was terrifying. I thought, "I will never let that happen again." And now I obsessively check my levels every few seconds.

Noah feared being on the wrong side of God like I fear running out of air below the surface. I don't quake with fear when I look at my air tank, but I know that thing is life or death for me and would never want to be separated from it.

What do you fear the most? Whose opinion do you worry about most? I know we'd probably say we care what God thinks, but think about a time when you were silent when you know you should have spoken up, but you kept your mouth shut because you were worried about what others would say about you. Some of us even change what we believe because we don't want to be out of rhythm with our community.

Noah lifted his eyes up above everybody else and fixed them one Person and thought, "If he is happy with me, that's all that matters." And that's hard, because God is invisible right now. And he'll be invisible for the duration of our lives. That's why it requires faith.

I think about this a lot. I like to be liked; I like to be approved of. And it's so easy for me to make you the ones whose approval I seek. Why? Because I can see you! But, see I know the day is coming when I'm going to look into the face of the one who made the stars, and I know that in that moment I am NOT going to be thinking about what you thought about me. But because he's invisible right now, I have to hold onto him by faith. That's hard.

Faith is the conviction that the things not seen are more important than the ones that are.

Eventually, everyone feared God like Noah did, it's just that their fear came too late. I love how the **Puritan Thomas Manton** said it: "The people of the world did not tremble with fear until the water reached the rooftops. Noah had trembled in fear when God did but speak."

Eventually, everybody got there, it was just too late.

Write this down: Faith is living in a way today that you believe one day you'll be glad you did.

Right now, picture yourself 5 seconds after you die. What's important to you? What matters? Figure that out, and live that way now. ***Faith is living in a way today that you believe one day you'll be glad you did.***

3. Noah Acted Rather than Argued

Again, vs 7: **By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark...**⁴ And then the day came where God said, **"OK, Noah... Today's the day.** Take the animals and go in." (And, I know you say, "Well, that brings up the question I had at the beginning: **How could Noah even have pulled that off?**" **Look**, honestly, I don't know... I'm sure there was something supernatural involved, and I figure if I believe God created all that we see with our eyes with just a word from his mouth, getting a bunch of animals to walk up a boat ramp is no big deal to him.)

However it happened, the last pair got on, and then Noah and his household got on, **Gen 6:16, "...And the LORD shut him in."**

Genesis then says the **fountains above and below the earth** were opened up, which means torrential rains from above and some kind of underground flooding from below--a tsunami, a continental shift, something that flooded the world with water. By the time it was over, flood waters surpassed the highest known mountain by more than 45 feet, and they remained that way for **5 months**. And **every living thing**—every man, woman, boy, girl, and all the animals—who were left outside the ark--drowned. (Did you put all that in the mural beside your baby's crib?)

Eventually the **floodwaters receded** and the Ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat, and **Noah emerged** with his 3 sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their wives, and his wife, Joan... of Ark. Just kidding.

I named this point **"Noah acted rather than argued,"** because it highlights the fact there came a time when Noah had to suspend any questions or confusion that he had and just obey. I'm sure he had some of the same questions we've been asking. "God, how are you going to pull all this off? And why are you doing it this way anyway? Isn't there a better way?"

And listen: God invites those questions. **You know how I know that?** So much of our Bibles is people asking questions of God like this and God answering them. The point is that there comes a time to obey. Noah was either going to build that Ark or he wasn't. He was either gonna get onto it when the time came, or he was gonna stay outside.

You are going to come to that same point of decision with Jesus.

Listen, you've got questions about God. Good ones. That's fine, ask them. But at some point, you have to choose whether you are going to get into the Ark or not, and staying outside is every bit as much a decision as getting onto it.

You can get onto the Ark of Jesus, so to speak, even with your questions. **I've often illustrated it like this:** "Say you had an MIT aeronautical engineer and an uneducated tribesperson both standing beside an airplane. The MIT engineer could explain how the plane flies; he could probably build the plane himself. The tribesperson can't; he's never seen anything like this and he's filled with all kinds of doubts and fear. How does a big metal plane like that fly? It makes no sense. But when it comes time to get on, the tribesperson gets on and the MIT engineer stays on the ground. Who gets to the destination?"

⁴ Steven Furtick, message on Genesis 6: God saw (v5); God said (v7); Noah did (v22)

The one with all the understanding? No, the one who chose to get on. The one who with all his doubts and fears still chose to get on.

You see, at some point, **you've got to make a decision about Jesus:** Either to submit to him, or to stay outside of him.

Some of you say, **“Well, I'm just not 100% sure of all this Christianity stuff.” Fine. Are you 60% sure?** If so, get inside the Ark and be unsure *in there* rather than standing outside of it *mostly* sure. You see, the choice to get on and the choice to stay outside are both decisions.

It's fine to come to Jesus with doubts; it's fine to be like the man in Matthew 9 who says, “I believe, help my unbelief!” Come to Jesus with all your doubts and let him answer those doubts as you walk with him. **In fact, I'll tell you from experience:** there's a certain level of confidence you can only attain from the inside *as you walk with Jesus*. Certain things only make sense from the inside. So if you think there's truth to all this but you're still just not sure, come on into Jesus and let him convince you from the inside. **There comes a time to stop arguing and start acting.** Today's that day for some of you. **Does that make sense?**

4. Noah Condemned the World Rather than Sought Its Approval

Let's look now at the final part of vs 7: **“...by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”**

Saying he “condemned the world” here doesn't mean he went around scolding everybody all the time--preaching at them like some kind of campus pit preacher. It means that the way he *lived* condemned the world.

The way a person of faith *lives* condemns the world, without our even saying a word, because our behavior declares that someone else is in charge and that invisible things are more important than visible ones.

IMAGINE, if you will, you're sitting in a football stadium, watching a gigantic marching band doing its thing down on the field. Everyone is in perfect sync, moving as one. **But as you stare through your binoculars, you see one guy** in formation just doing his own thing.

- When everybody goes left, he goes right.
- When they duck, he jumps.
- When they stand still, he moves.

You say, **“Man, that guy is out of sync!”** But then, **through your binoculars you see** that he has **his noise-canceling AirPods** in. Turns out he's listening to the latest pop hit by Kendrick Lamar being broadcast from a local radio station. **Truth is**, he is **actually perfectly on beat**; he's just **tuned into** a different frequency than everybody else. He's marching to the orders of a different conductor.

Everything about our behavior should scream to the world: You're following the wrong conductor! What we do with our money, our time, our integrity, how we form our opinions on controversial issues--all of it should declare to everyone: “There's something more important than what you see. Something even more real. I don't care what the majority says. I don't care what the majority thinks. There's only ONE Conductor that matters, and he's the one that you can't see with your eyes, HE'S in charge.

Let me ask you, **teenager:** *Why are you so controlled by what your friends think?* **You professors,** why are you so controlled by the opinions of other people in the academic community? **You moms--** why do you care what other moms in your school community think? **Business professional:** why care so much what everyone in your

workplace thinks? Only one opinion matters, the opinion of the One who controls the rain and the rainbows and orchestrates the entire universe. *Only one life to live, 'twill soon be past...*

Noah, for all his flaws, was a person of great faith, because he (1) Noah believed GOD instead of his eyes or his feelings; (2) Noah feared God more than his community; (3) Noah acted rather than argued; (4) Noah condemned the world rather than sought its approval

And the writer of Hebrews wants us to imitate his faith, because, you see, in our day, in our city, we're all in the same position as Noah.

You see, the story of Noah's Ark was never an end in itself. It was always supposed to point beyond it. Think about it: **in terms of purging the earth of wickedness (you remember that was the goal), I didn't really work.** Look around. The same things God condemned the world for in Noah's day are still greatly in abundance today.

Even the writer of Genesis recognized that. The first thing he records God saying after Noah steps off the Ark was, **Gen 8:21, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth."**

- That **sentence doesn't make much sense**, does it? You'd **expect God to say**, "I'm not going to destroy the earth again... because I know this time man's gonna **do much better.**"
- **Instead, he says**, "I know man is STILL evil, so I won't destroy the earth again. (PAUSE) I'll have to pursue a different solution."

And to prove the Ark didn't really work, the writer shows us the end of Noah's personal story. The last scene we have of Noah is him getting stone-cold drunk and wandering around the village naked. (I'm pretty confident that part didn't make it into your nursery-wall-mural, either: "Mom, who's the **crunk naked guy** over there in the corner? 'Oh, **that's Noah**, after he got off the Ark." THAT'S NOT IN YOUR PRECIOUS MOMENTS BIBLE.)

Why does God include that detail about Noah's end? It's not to embarrass him; it's to show us that attempting to purge out evil by destroying all the really bad people will never work. I know that's the theme of a lot of your favorite movies, but it's just not true. The same evil is in all of us. We **need for a more complete kind** of salvation, and God gives us a clue to what that's going to look like in **Genesis 9:13, "I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."**

- Rainbow, right? Sure, but the word for **"bow"** used here is **not the usual Hebrew word** for "rainbow." It's the word GESED, and it means a 'war bow' or 'battle bow,' like a bow and arrow.
- **A rainbow, of course, is shaped like a war bow**, so we know what he's talking about. But he's saying that the rainbow in the sky is a sign that God had laid down his **war bow**.
- **God will not accomplish salvation** by shooting the arrows of his wrath into men.
- **If you look at the rainbow like a bow**, which way is it pointed? Which way would the arrow shoot? Back toward heaven. Charles Spurgeon said the rainbow promises us that God will one day wipe out evil from the earth by taking the arrows of his wrath into himself.

VAMP

And that's where you start to see hints about Jesus all through this story...

Jesus will one day come, like Noah... only he'll be better.

- **Like Noah**, Jesus will **obey God**, even though most people will think he's crazy, and like Noah, **through his obedience he'll** provide an Ark of salvation that anyone can enter and be saved. Unlike Noah, however, Jesus will succeed all the way to the end.

Jesus' life won't end in a drunken stupor, it will end in Resurrection.

- **And like the Ark that Noah built**, Jesus will shield us from the storm of God's wrath and lift us up above the waters of judgment. But **unlike Noah, the Ark** that Jesus provides will not be made of gopher wood, but of his torn flesh. **We will be lifted up above the waters of judgment only** because Jesus will be voluntarily submerged into them.
- **Like Noah**, Jesus will emerge from the storms of God's judgment and begin a **new creation**—but unlike Noah, this **new race will not have hearts whose thoughts are only evil continually**. If any man is in Christ he is a new creation; God is writing his law on our hearts (Jer 31), re-creating us in his image, literally fashioning for good works that we should go and walk in them (Eph 2).

For now, we are left here on earth to proclaim the same kind of salvation that Noah proclaimed, to a world that's not that interested--except the salvation we offer is greater, just like the judgment God threatens is also greater.

the **question for us is this**: Will we believe like Noah believed?

Will we: (1) ...believe GOD instead of our eyes of feelings; (2) ...fear God more than our community; (3) ...act rather than argue; (4) ...condemn the world rather than seek its approval

SUMMIT: Will we show the faith that Noah showed?

- There is an Ark for us to enter into, his name is Jesus. He's the one Door of salvation. And we should get not only ourselves into it, but our households and anyone and everyone who will listen to us.
- We have to tell people that there is a storm of God's wrath coming; it's coming because God said it would come and he always keeps his promises. But for right now, for right now, for however long we have, and we don't know how long, there's a

window of opportunity open, and whosoever will may enter into this Ark of salvation.

- Many of those you tell (our community, maybe your parents, your kids) will think you are crazy. But that's because they only see with their eyes. But by faith we know that invisible realities are ultimate ones, and the day is coming when God himself will shut the door of salvation and there will be no more chance to enter--so we have to tell them today. Today, you see, today, is the day of salvation. The storm may come tomorrow; but this day, today, is the day of salvation.
- Live like it. **As Martin Luther said**, "We should live like Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and is coming tomorrow."

Do you believe like Noah believed?

1. *Noah believed God instead of his eyes and his feelings*
2. *Noah feared God more than his community*
3. *Noah acted rather than argued.*
4. *Noah condemned the world rather than sought its approval.*

This is the faith that pleases God and makes an eternal impact on the world.