

The Lord Remembered Noah

<i>Text</i>	Genesis 6:11-8:19
<i>Readings</i>	2 Peter 3:1-13, Matt 24:36-51; Genesis 6:11-7:1, 7:11-8:5, 8:13-19
<i>Theme</i>	God destroyed the world of Noah's day with a worldwide flood but rescued Noah's family and the animals in the ark.
<i>Purpose</i>	To warn of God's judgement coming in our own day and point to God's salvation in Christ.

Many of the nations and peoples of the world have in their history a story about a large flood. You will find stories like this in North and South America, Australia, Japan, China, India, and the Middle East. Many of these stories pick up some of the details of the biblical story. Some describe people saved in a large boat, others tell how animals came into that in pairs, many tell of one family that was saved. From all these myths and legends we could assume that there was a great flood over the earth. That story has been preserved in people's minds and memories, but also corrupted in its retelling down through the ages. The book of Genesis records the original story of the flood, told first by Noah, and later written down by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 6 began by describing how evil increased in the world. Part of that was due to the compromise of believers as they intermarried with unbelievers. People became arrogant and proud. Sin was extensive in its scope and intensive in its corruption. In response the Lord decided he would destroy the world with a flood and begin again with Noah and his family.

1. He spoke to Noah about making **preparations** for the flood.

We are told about **the physical preparations** which involved building an ark. (vs 14)

The Hebrew word for "ark" in the Bible is only used to describe this boat and the basket that saved Moses. Both were floating containers that rescued those on board.

The ark was built for capacity and stability not for speed or manoeuvrability. Its main purpose was to carry a large cargo and to keep that cargo safe for a long time.

So it was a large boat. The measurements are given in cubits – and there were various ways of measuring a cubit – but the boat was approximately 140 meters long, 23 wide and 13 high.

It has three decks or levels and each deck was divided up into a number of rooms.

It had a series of windows around the top, about half a meter high, just under the roof, to let in light and air. There was probably an overhanging roof to keep out the rain.

Someone has calculated that a boat of this size could have carried 125,000 sheep, so there was plenty of room for all the animals and for the food they had to eat.

The animals may not have needed much food because they may well have been hibernating for much of the time they were in the ark, especially in those cool and dark conditions.

Noah was told to bring into the ark two of every unclean animal and seven of every clean animal (that may mean seven pairs). He didn't have to go and catch them all because when the ark was finished they "came to Noah and entered the ark" (vs 9, 15). The Lord brought them to him.

It must have taken him a long time to build a boat of this size. They had no chain saws, no electric drills, no saw benches. Everything was done by hand. Noah was given 120 years of warning that the flood was coming and he may well have been building this ark for the best part of a century.

Today all large boats are built in dockyards close to the sea or near a large river so they can be launched easily down a slipway. But there was no need to launch this boat. It would rise on the flood waters. So Noah may well have built it far from the sea or a river.

When you think about this, you can see why the writer of Hebrews lists him as one of the great men of faith. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, built an ark to save his family." (Hebrews 11:7). The flood was 100 years away, and he had no proof that it would come, except the word of God. But he believed God. He took the Lord at his word and he acted in faith and obedience.

Here is a lesson for us. Our faith is often minuscule, tiny, compared to this! We hesitate to venture out on small things, even when we have much more evidence that Noah had. Let's pray that God would give us the gift of faith so that we may attempt great things for him.

These were Noah's physical preparations arising out of his faith in God's word and his obedience to God's command.

But we also know that Noah was making **spiritual** preparations for the flood. The Apostle Peter described him as "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), and the writer of Hebrews tells us that by his faith he "condemned the world".

As he was building this large boat over many years no doubt many people came to watch this crazy boat-builder whose craft was going to be impossible to launch! No doubt they came to ask what on earth he was doing?! And in response that "preacher of righteousness", spoke about the flood that was coming on the world and of the judgement of God on their sin. But no one believed him. They ignored him. They laughed at his project, they ridiculed the idea, they scoffed at his message. So Noah condemned the world by his preaching because, apart from his family, there were no converts, no repentant sinners, no response of faith.

Whenever God's word is spoken or preached there are two responses:

Some believe and others do not.

Some turn to the Lord and others turn away.

Some accept the message and other reject it.

That is going on today too. The good news about the Lord Jesus is the fragrance of life to some and the stench of death to others.

There are times in history when many come to faith, but there are other times when few turn to God, as in the days of Noah.

Bear in mind that your task is to present the message, by your life and actions, and it is God's work to bring about faith and conversion. You do your part, to the very best of your ability, and let God do his.

Eventually the ark was completed and the time came for Noah to go into the ark. The Lord brought all the animals to him and they went in. And then he went in with his wife and his three sons and their wives - eight people in all. Here was a faithful covenant family who believed God's word.

This is in contrast to Lot, the nephew of Abraham, who escaped the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah by the skin of his teeth – Lot with his two daughters. His son's-in-law did not believe his warning about God's judgement and so refused to leave the city, and his wife looked back to Sodom and became a pillar of salt.

But Noah entered the ark with his whole family and all were saved. Let's pray that God will be merciful to our families – our children and grandchildren, our parents and grandparents, our brothers and sisters – so that all of them might be saved and not be condemned in the final judgement.

After he had entered we read that "the Lord shut him in" (vs 16). The time of God's grace had come to an end. His patience was over. Now there would be no further opportunity for repentance. The Lord closed the door of the ark, closing in Noah, and closing out those who were unrepentant.

Jesus spoke about this: "In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them away. This is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man." (Matt 24:38-39).

One day Jesus will return. His coming will be unexpected. People will be going on with their normal lives – eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage – not realising that they are about to be taken away in the judgement.

What will be your position when Jesus comes?

Will you be taken away in the judgement?

Have you put your faith in the Lord Jesus?

Do you read and believe God's word?

Are you trusting in God?

All of these are important and vital questions and you need to consider them.

2. If you trust in God then he will protect you in that day, just as he **protected** Noah in the flood.

The waters of the flood came from above and below. Chapter 7 verse 11: "On that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.

When God created the world he separated the waters above from the waters below. In the flood this separation disappeared and the whole world became a watery mass once again.

The highest annual rainfall in New Zealand is in Fiordland. Milford Sound has four meters of rainfall each year. The New Zealand record for the most rainfall is held by Mt Taranaki where 10 meters of rain fell in one year! Sometimes when it rains you think it will never ever stop. This is the sort of rain that causes flooding.

In chapter 7 verse 12 we read; "And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights." The number 40 represents a significant period in God's plan and work of salvation.

Moses was on Mt Sinai for 40 days.

Israel wandered the desert for 40 years.

Elijah travelled to Mt Horeb in 40 days.

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness 40 days.

It rained on the earth 40 days and 40 nights and the floodwaters covered the earth.

Biblical scholars debate whether or not the flood was **local or worldwide**.

There is strong *biblical* evidence to suggest that the flood was universal.

Chapter 7 verse 19 describes how the water covered “all the high mountains under the entire heavens”; and verse 23 tells us that “Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out.” That certainly suggests a worldwide flood.

Then in chapter 9 verse 11 the Lord promised that “never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” There have been many local floods since then but not one that has covered the earth.

And then the New Testament draws a parallel between the flood and the judgement at the second coming. The judgement at the end will cover the whole earth, so that suggests that the flood covered the whole earth.

Also, if the flood was local it would have been a lot easier for Noah and his family to migrate to another part of the world where they would have been safe, and for God to send some of the animals in that direction. But that’s not what happened.

There is also *evidence from geology* to add support for a worldwide flood.

There are huge fossil beds that extend over large distances. Fossils are only formed in conditions of great catastrophe, such as volcanic eruptions. A worldwide flood would explain these large collections of fossils.

It would also explain the placement of fossils at the top of high mountains which would have been caused by the uplift of land masses as the water drained off them into the ocean basins.

There are also structures such as the Grand Canyon that indicate large volumes of water flowing off the land.

A lot more could be said about this and many books have been written in support of a worldwide flood but the Scriptures are clear that everything on the earth perished.

After these forty days of rain we read that “**God remembered Noah**” (8:1).

This is the turning point in these four chapters about the flood.

This does not mean that God had forgotten about Noah before this or that he did not remember him during the flood. Not at all.

You can also be sure that God will not forget about you. Sometimes it seems like that. But he has us in mind. We are engraved on the palms of his hands. He has the names of his people written in the book of life. He never forgets his people and he watches over us with his fatherly care.

He remembered Noah because he had made a covenant with him. In chapter 6:18 God said to him; “I will establish my covenant with you...”

This is the first time the word “covenant” is used in the Bible. A covenant is an agreement; it was a promise of a relationship. God was already in a relationship with Noah because Noah walked with God; but here the Lord formalised it.

God did not forget about Noah because he had promised he would keep them safe and look after them. And this covenant of God with his people continues today with all who believe.

That God remembered Noah means that the judgement had finished and he would now begin his work of mercy and restoration. So he sent a wind over the earth and the waters steadily began to recede.

That took some time. The people in the ark waited and watched and hoped. Noah sent out a raven, then a dove, then the dove again. They counted the days.

They waited till the water had gone, but then had to wait almost another two months for the ground to become dry and firm.

They were in the ark for a year and 10 days from the time they entered it till the time the Lord invited them to come out! So in chapter 8 verses 15-17 we read:

Then God said to Noah, “Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh-birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth – that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

This marked a new beginning. This is the language of the original creation. This is a renewal of the creation with a new covenant community.

God addressed Noah as the new representative of the human race, as another Adam. God was about to start over again.

In all this Noah is a **type of Christ**. This means that he represented the Lord Jesus, he anticipated Christ, he pointed forward to him.

He did this because he was the Saviour of those who entered the ark with him. They were saved through him. They were identified with him and delivered because of their connection with him.

In the same way you can be saved if you believe in the Lord Jesus, if you identify with him through faith, if you trust in who he is and what he did on the cross. You can be saved, not by your own works or efforts or good deeds, but on the basis of your connection with Jesus.

That means you must respond to Jesus. You must be willing to go with him, just as Noah’s sons and daughters-in-law were willing to go with Noah.

Noah is a type of Christ also in the *difference* between them.

Noah escaped the judgement of God. He found favour in God’s sight. God looked kindly on him and protected him in the ark. Those within were saved – those outside were judged. Noah was delivered from God’s wrath.

God did that because later Jesus came and he took Noah's punishment on himself. Noah found favour in God's sight because God saw him in Christ. God knew that Jesus would die for the sins of Noah and for the sins of his family. That is why they could escape the judgement of the flood.

That is true for you and me. We deserve the judgement of God. But Jesus has taken that on himself so that we can be delivered.

There is a judgement coming when Jesus returns.

Will that day find you eating and drinking, living carelessly, without a thought for God, unconcerned about the Lord Jesus?

Or will it find you alert, waiting, expectant, living a holy life by faith in the Son of God?

"...be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect him." (Matt 24:44).

Amen