

May 2, 2010

INTO THE ARK

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Every few years, some group holds a press conference and declares that Noah's Ark has been found. It shouldn't be surprising to us that yet another group has made just such a claim this very week. I don't know if such a claim is true or not; but I do know that even if a large wooden vessel of the appropriate dimensions and age is found on a mountain in Turkey, there are many who still would not believe in a universal Flood as recorded in Genesis. Undoubtedly such a discovery would bolster the faith of those who already believe, and might generate some interest among those who haven't really thought too much about what they believe; but those who already refuse to believe in the Flood would be unlikely to change their minds. I say this based on three observations:

1. Think of all the times in Scripture where clear miracles did not change the minds or hearts of those who observed them: Moses and the plagues of Egypt; Balaam's talking donkey; Elijah on Mount Carmel. The list could go on and on. Remember the priests' reaction to the news that Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead? They *immediately* took council to kill him!
2. Think of the words of Jesus in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to talk to the rich man's brothers and warn them about Hell.

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:29-31).

Jesus was teaching in this parable that miracles cannot generate belief. Rather, God's Word generates belief. If people refuse God's Word, then they will not believe, even when they see a miracle—even if that miracle is in the form of a preserved ark!

3. Finally, we should consider that the natural world itself testifies of God's design and of God's watery judgment. Romans chapter one makes it clear that we can see the invisible things of God—His power and majesty—in the design of the world around us. We've talked about some of the incredible design features of the universe and of living things here on earth earlier in this series. Regarding the Flood, I have a very simple question: if there really were a world-wide Flood as recorded in Scripture, what evidence would we expect to find? We would expect to find billions of dead things buried rapidly all over the world. This is exactly what we find; yet there are many who choose to interpret the Flood evidence as evidence for millions of years of evolutionary development. As the series continues, we will examine the evidence.

For now, let's look at Genesis chapter 7. After 120 years of building and preparation, God speaks again to Noah:

1 And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

The narrative moves from more than one hundred years before the Flood to just seven days before the Flood. All through that long, long period, Noah continued to do as God had told him. If he had been slack, or had not followed God's instructions during that time, he would have been in serious trouble! On a smaller scale, perhaps you have had an assignment given by a teacher or professor at the beginning of the semester, which was due perhaps the week before final exams. Sure, it was a big assignment, but you had months to get it done, right? And let's say you knew that the professor was one of those who demanded that the assignment be completed according to very specific guidelines, including the requirement that it be placed on his desk before the bell rings on the due date. Some of you, I know, would have gotten started right away; and as the due date approached, you could watch the panic begin to build in those who had put off the assignment. No lie—I got *more than irritated* with the guys in my dormitory who would take a type writer into the hallway at 3:00 a.m. on the day their assignments were due! And then they had the gall to complain about the grade they received. Apparently Noah had a better work ethic than that, because he was ready for the next step.

Seven days before the Flood, God gave Noah more instructions. The time had come to gather himself, his family, and the animals on board. This brings us to the issue of how Noah gathered all the animals. There are a few things to consider briefly here. First, this is undoubtedly a miraculous event. Verse nine tells us that the animals proceeded into the ark without a great deal of guidance from Noah. Even today we are aware of incredible migratory patterns of birds and other animals—patterns which continue to astound us. For example, each year millions of Monarch butterflies fly up to 3,000 miles to migrate to a very small area in Mexico; yet every generation of Monarchs dies off before the time comes for another trek. Who teaches the next generation where to go and how to get there? It's instinctive. Other animals perform similar feats. We should not find it surprising that God can send animals to Noah for protection.

The second issue is that the world then is not the same as the world now. It is very likely, although impossible to say with absolute certainty, that the world before the Flood was made of one giant continent that broke up during the Flood. There is ample evidence for this; secular scientists recognize that the world probably had just one giant supercontinent early in its history. There is no need to wonder how kangaroos got to Noah from Australia—there was no Australia at the time!

We also note that God gave an order to take seven of certain animals: "clean" animals. Nowhere in the previous verses do we find a description of a clean animal, nor do we find such a description here; yet Noah knew what a clean animal was. Moses later describes clean animals as those that chew the cud and split the hoof. Camels chew the cud but don't have split hooves. Pigs have split hooves but don't chew the cud. How would Noah know that, though? Well, it's just like with Cain and Abel offering their sacrifices: they had knowledge of God's ways before that knowledge is recorded for us in

Scripture. They had revelation from God as a *spoken word* before it was given as a *written word*.

Remember, the Bible does not tell us everything we'd like to know! It does tell us, though, what we need to know; and the thrust here is not on the mechanics of the Flood or the particular details of the ark, but on the significant theological truths that *God is holy and must judge sin* and that *God is merciful* and provided both a significant delay for His judgment and a particular way of escape for those who believed. Sadly, only Noah and his family believed. God said, "Get ready; make your final preparations, because the Flood is coming in seven days. Come into the ark."

One other thing to note: God did not tell Noah to *go* into the ark; no, He told Noah to *come* into the ark. The significance of the wording is that *God would be with him and his family* in the time of trial.

The next section may seem repetitive to us; but I believe there is a reason for the repetition.

6 And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

14 They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

We have all of these repeated elements here: Noah's age, the gathering in of the animals, the gathering in of Noah and his family. I suspect that the writers, presumably Noah's sons, felt the need to emphasize these facts and emphasize Noah's obedience. The whole world was ending; it was a very solemn occasion. The repetition also makes clear the true nature of the cataclysm. They wanted to ensure that the message was fully understood by later generations. This was not a local flood, in which case all they would have had to do was move to a different location. This was a universal flood, and the entire world as they knew it was destroyed.

Notice also in this passage that Noah and his family made use of the entire seven days. According to verse 13, they embarked the very day that the Flood came. Now what do you suppose they did for those

seven days? I suspect herding the animals into their “nests” and giving them their initial food supply took some of the time; but I also suspect that Noah made known to his generation that time was up. The days of preparation were over, and the day of judgment was at hand. Who would listen? Even seeing the animals journeying to the ark was not enough to persuade the unbelievers. God’s made it clear through the testimony of Noah and the testimony of the beasts that His mercy was at an end.

At the end of seven days, all the living land creatures were represented within the ark. All of the animals were gathered in, and Noah and his family were gathered in. We find Noah’s faith recorded once more: “as God had commanded him.”

The very last thing we will consider today is the end of verse 16: “*and the LORD shut him in.*” I’m sure once the Flood started people began to come knocking! But Noah was powerless to open the door; and if he had been able to open it, everything inside would have died because there would have been no end to the line of people trying to get in; and how can you close a doorway that is packed with people? You can’t! The ark itself would have foundered and all aboard would have died. Furthermore, Noah is absolved from any feeling of guilt: “I should have opened that door and let the people in! This is all my fault!” No, none of it was Noah’s fault; but God, in His mercy toward Noah, took the responsibility to close the door Himself.

It’s hard to overstate the importance of these words. You see, everything that entered the ark entered through one door—just one! There was no other way to be saved from the judgment to come; but all who entered by that one door were saved, and were in God’s care and protection. Remember, God had told Noah, “*Come into the ark.*” But now that door is closed. Noah did not close it. His sons did not close it. The people outside did not close it. God alone closed that door. When God closed the door, the very minute He closed it, there was no way of escape for the judgment to come. No amount of begging, pleading, crying, or reminding God just how good or how important you were would avail to open that door.

The door was closed. The old world, all of ancient civilization, was about to perish. Noah and his family were safe from the crime, violence, hatred, and exploitation of the old world, and safe from God’s judgment of that wicked world, because of their entry into the ark with God through that one door.

We know that Jesus is the One Door of salvation; will you enter in today? Judgment is coming and Hell is waiting. We do not know the day or the hour of our death, but at the moment of death, the Door is closed! Which side of the Door will you be on? Will you suffer God’s judgment or enjoy God’s presence and safety?

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).