

Faith in the Real World

Noah #2 • November 22, 2026

Opening

Can I read you a story? This one is NOT from the Bible. It is an ancient story written in **Akkadian**, and it focuses on a hero-king from Mesopotamia named **Gilgamesh**.



> *On his journey in quest of immortality, Gilgamesh met Utnapishtim. When Gilgamesh asked him how he got (eternal) life, Utnapishtim told him about the flood.*
>
> *When Utnapishtim lived in Shuruppak, the great gods decided to send a flood on the earth to wipe out all humans. The god Ea secretly revealed the gods' plan to Utnapishtim. According to Ea's commandment, he transformed his reed hut into a ship and made all of his kin and relatives, craftsmen, and animals embark on it to escape from the flood. The great rainstorm continued for six days. When the seventh day arrived, the storm and the flood subsided. All humans outside the ship were turned into clay by the flood and the ship eventually landed on Mt. Nisir.*
>
> *After seven days, Utnapishtim sent out a dove to see if the water had receded, but it returned after finding no place to roost. Next, a swallow also returned. Finally, a raven did not return. Utnapishtim offered a sacrifice to the gods. Enlil got angry when he found the survivors. However, appeased by Ea's intervention, Enlil permitted Utnapishtim and his wife to become like gods and he transferred them from the land to "the mouth of the rivers."*[1]



Sound familiar? It should! The Gilgamesh tale is one of many **pre-Christian stories** across the globe that talk about a **global flood** and a **miraculous rescue** from it!

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[1] The Flood Accounts | Answers in Genesis



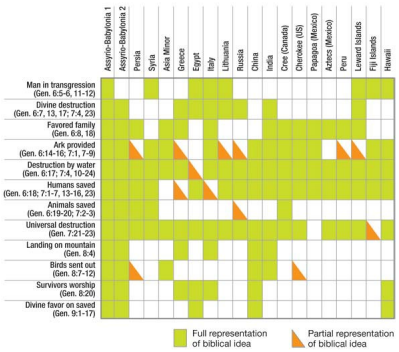
Hawaiians have a flood story that tells of a time when, long after the death of the first man, the world became a wicked, terrible place. Only one good man was left, and his name was Nu-u. He made a great canoe with a house on it and filled it with animals. In this story, the waters came up over all the earth and killed all the people; only Nu-u and his family were saved.

Another flood story is from **China**. It records that Fuhi, his wife, three sons, and three daughters escaped a great flood and were the only people alive on earth. After the great flood, they repopulated the world.[2]



Some scholars have identified over 200 different flood "myths" that come from cultures across the globe. And these flood stories have a number of common elements:

- Angry god/gods
- Destruction of the earth
- One righteous person saved
- Vessel built
- Animals board vessel
- Small group of survivors



(See the chart for some of the overlapping details)[3]

Why do the stories exist? Because they come from one singular, real-world event! The truth we know from Scripture was echoed in other cultures that developed and later scattered in the aftermath of the flood. They retained some of the true story, despite losing and changing many details over the centuries.

"**Myth**" language may be applied to Scripture by skeptics, who see no substantial difference between Noah and Gilgamesh and Nu-u and

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[2] Flood Legends | Answers in Genesis

[3] Chart adapted from B.C. Nelson, *The Deluge Story in Stone*, Appendix 11, Flood Traditions, Figure 38, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1931. Found on Flood Legends | Answers in Genesis



others. But for you and I who trust God's word as truth, we apply a different language to Noah's story: "**Reality**."

It isn't a *story;* it is *real life*.

To a skeptic, talking about Noah is like talking about Zeus or Robin Hood or Batman.

To us, talking about Noah is like talking about Larry Bailey or Ian Darlington or Martin Luther or any other real-world believer you know – any Christian in our church or in history.

Noahs' *real* encounter has *real* insight for our *real-world* experience!

Forget the myths. Forget the children's books. Forget the Little People "Noah's Ark" playsets.

Look at Noah as a regular dude whose real-world faith can serve as an example for you and me.

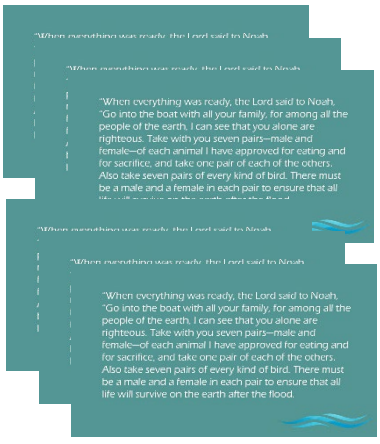
Don't allow your faith to be a made-up myth.

Ground your faith in reality!



Recap

Last week we began our new sermon series walking through the story of Noah found in Genesis 6-10. In chapter 6, we focused on the key detail that **we all desperately need God's favor**. Today, in chapter 7, we will be reminded that **we need to ground our faith in reality**.



Genesis 7:1-24

Please take your Bible and open to Genesis 7. Let's read as the story continues.

> *"When everything was ready, the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life*

will survive on the earth after the flood. Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created."

So Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him.

Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights. That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. Two by two they came into the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the Lord closed the door behind them.

For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, rising more than twenty-two feet above the highest peaks. All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. God wiped out every living

thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed.

The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days." (Genesis 7, NLT)

As we hear this chapter, I want you to pay attention to the real-life details of faith in the text.



Faith Shows Up in Real Preparation

Noah's faith was grounded in reality. And it showed up in **real preparation**. He gathered all the things, creatures and people that were to live on the ark and got them ready for a flood.



You guys know a bit about preparation…

This past week, you've been bombarded with fearful stories in the news. Planes were grounded. Banks were hobbled. Computers stopped working. Threats of destruction were made. The government said, "It's no big deal. No cyberattacks or imminent danger to look at here. It's all just a coincidence."

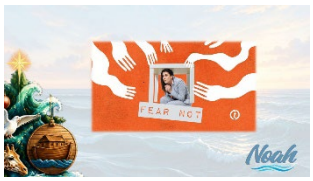
(I feel comforted, don't you?)

Despite those words of assurance, many of you remain skeptical. And that's why lots of people are "prepping" for a disaster – buying essential supplies to have on hand in case our infrastructure and access to goods is impacted. Water. Canned goods. Cash in small bills. Long-range radios.

One guy I know told me about a co-worker of his who was making plans on how to steal a propane truck in case power went down!

You guys know a bit about preparation…

…and I'm saying this to make a point about **preparation**… but first, I need to say this:



*A spirit of **fear** is not becoming for the Christian. If we are going to **GROUND OUR FAITH IN (SPIRITUAL)***

REALITY, *we need to be guided by the most repeated command found throughout Scripture: "Fear not!"*

> *"for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV)*
>
> *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1, ESV)*

If we face troubles or major disruptions, they might be hard and painful…yet, as believers, we shoud **prepare now** for how we will face it. Not with bullets and beans, but with **real faith**. Prepare *yourself*. If it all goes sideways…

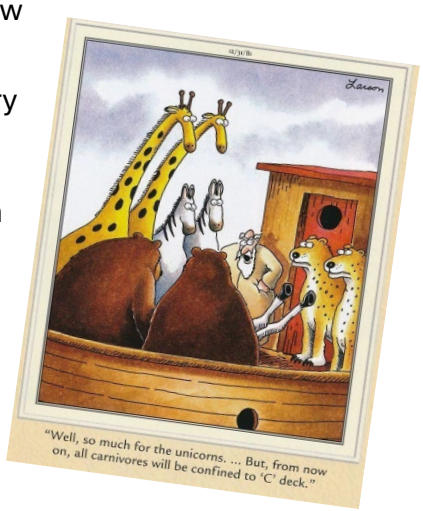
- I want you to be a source of **confidence** (in the Lord – *Jehovah Jireh*, our "Provider").
- I want you to commit to **helping** each other – living in **love**, not a dystopian "every man for himself" selfishness.
- I want you to remember that our **hope** is in heaven, not America, and we need to store our treasures there instead of here.
- I want you to know that **Jesus** matters more than security, and **He** is what people truly need as they face war, famine, poverty, disease, or cyberattacks. Be ready to share Him!

Real preparation (of your soul as well as your supplies) can be wise when we do it for the right reasons.

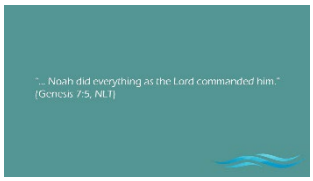


Noah didn't "prep" out of fear; he acted out of trust. He built the ark because God specifically commanded it. **His faith was grounded in a spiritual reality!**

Genesis 7 is filled with facts and figures that point to **Noah's *real* preparations**. The text bursting with numbers and dates that have no place in a myth but have every place in a truthful telling. Just like Scripture shows *real genealogies* to connect God's people to the important people of the past, and like Paul's New Testament letters include *names of real people and places* from churches he knew, Noah's story talks about **real quantities and timeframes**.



Noah's real preparations involved **construction** of the ark and **gathering** the food supplies, storing them appropriately. It involved **managing** quantities of animals (2 of some animals, 7 or 7 pairs of others) as well as **organizing** them.[4]



In all of it…

> *"… Noah did everything as the Lord commanded him."*
> (Genesis 7:5, NLT)

He was working to **ground his faith in reality**. Will you?





Faith Requires Making Real Decisions

Noah's faith was grounded in reality. It showed up in his real preparation. And it also required making **real decisions**.

> *On July 4, 1776, a group of men in Philadelphia stood in front of a document that proclaimed independence from Great Britain. It declared that a new nation was forming, and that it would no longer be under the rule of a king.*
>
> *56 men put their name on the paper, knowing that it could be a death sentence if America lost the Revolution.*
>
> *They had ideas. But signing required a **real decision**.*

Noah had trusted God. He had made real preparations. But now he stood at the threshold and had to make a decision. Just like July 4th is

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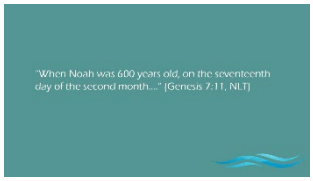
[4] (see the theologically inaccurate but funny "Far Side" comic)



etched as a date in our nation's memory, Noah's decision happened on a specific date on the calendar.

> *"When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month...."* (Genesis 7:11, NLT)

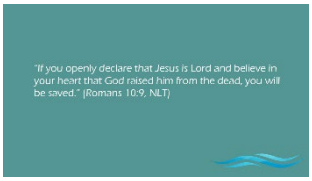
(Yes, he was old – a conversation for another day!) But on the calendar, this was the **moment of decision**. Would Noah *actually* do this? Would he believe and trust God - not just enough to build the boat, but to step aboard and trust that God would send the water...today?

That's a *real* decision. To not just believe, but to act.



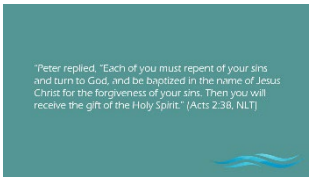
Has your personal faith journey faced a similar moment of decision? You may have been growing in knowledge, gaining trust, starting to believe that Jesus was who He said He was (and is). But you still must make a *real decision*...not only to believe, but to act!

Church, if we want to ground our faith in reality, we must *decide*.



> *"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Romans 10:9, NLT)

That belief and confession is essential! But the Bible also talks about something that is a more tangible, concrete decision that goes hand in hand with it.



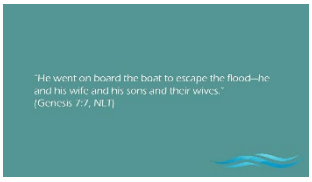
> *"Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38, NLT)

Baptism is a big moment of real decision. It is **public** (known by all, if not performed in front of all). It is **intense** (involves all the senses!). It is **memorable** ("on this date") so you can look back and know, "*I trusted Christ at a definite point in time*."



This week, I talked to several people who recently signed TCC's Membership Agreement to join our church (I'll introduce them soon!). Part of our discussion was about their decision – when did you decide to follow Jesus? When were you baptized? Those two dates might not

match up perfectly, but together they speak of a real decision. Each person had decided to **ground his or her faith in reality**. They made a real decision to trust Jesus…right here, right now.



And the same was true of Noah. Faced with a *real decision*, he made one:

> *"He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives."* (Genesis 7:7, NLT)

He made a decision to **ground his faith in God's reality.**



Faith Results in Real Separation

Afterwards? That same day, the rains *really* came. Genesis 7:16 says that the Lord shut the door, and then it got wet! Water came down, and water gushed up. Noah's ark floated away on the water…and it grounded Noah in one more reality.

His faith resulted in ***real separation***.

Have you ever read a kid's storybook of Noah? The pictures are cute and happy – like a cruise ship on peaceful waters.

But you never see the full story…

Think about the pictures of recent flooding in Nepal. Or do any of you remember the flooding in Lawrence from 1951? Floods aren't pretty things. And here in Genesis 7, it was worse. There was no place of safety to which people or animals could retreat.



[Show picture]

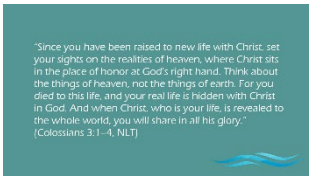
The reality was gruesome. Death was everywhere.

> *"God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat."*
> (Genesis 7:23, NLT)



Noah's faithful preparation and decision grounded him in the reality that he was now **separated** from everyone else…permanently.

Church, we may not be separated in the same way, but our faith still results in real separation caused by "death."



> *"Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory."* (Colossians 3:1–4, NLT)

Your faith in Jesus might mean that your "real life"…

- Can't go…
- Won't do…
- Shouldn't say…
- Wouldn't laugh at…
- Couldn't take part in…

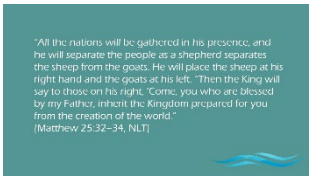
Or, as Peter says,



> *"Dear friends, I warn you as "temporary residents and foreigners" to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls."* (1 Peter 2:11, NLT)

It is a necessary separation. By keeping yourself spiritually distant, you'll be the one left out. You'll often be the loner. You'll sometimes be seen as a weirdo. You'll be different in a way that others will clearly recognize and maybe reject.

But being "separated" in this way is better than you realize!
Faith remembers there is a separation TO something, not FROM.
Remember what Jesus said about the second coming – his final judgment in Matthew 25?



> *"All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will* ***separate*** *the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the*

> *goats at his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world."* (Matthew 25:32–34, NLT)

Your faith may separate you…but it is TO an eternal inheritance, to an everlasting life of blessing that you were created for!

Will you ground your faith in that reality?!

I pray that you will.

Closing



The story of Noah is reality, not a myth. Noah's faith faced tough choices. He had to make **real preparations** and **real decisions** that resulted in **real separation**…



But his real-life choices give us a **real example** to follow.

You and I can choose to live out faith that is grounded in reality. When we face tough choices, our faith can be anchored in the coming salvation we have been promised, through Jesus.

- Will you make real **preparations** for the kind of person you need to be?
- Will you make real **decisions** to follow Jesus with all you are?
- Will you make real **separation**…not clinging to a drowning world but reaching up TO God?

Church, your faith doesn't involve boats and animals and floodwaters. But you know that God's judgment is coming again…



So, ground your faith in reality!

Prayer

Invitation

If you are ready to ground your faith in reality today, come talk to me about your decision as we sing our invitation hymn.

Sermon Notes

Faith Shows Up in Real Preparation

(2 Timothy 1:7; Psalm 27:1; Genesis 7:5)

Faith Requires Making Real Decisions

(Genesis 7:11;Romans 10:9; Acts 2:38; Genesis 7:7)

Faith Results in Real Separation

(Genesis 7:23; Colossians 3:1–4; 1 Peter 2:11; Matthew 25:32–34)

Ground your faith in reality!

Sermon Discussion Questions

- When you think about Noah, do you think of him as someone from history, or as a character in a story?
- How does the reality of a historical Noah affect your reading of Genesis 6-10? Does it make you think more deeply about the content?
- What preparations would Noah have to make in order to make the ark viable for its journey? What might it cost him?
- Do you prepare for the future based on fear or based on trust in God? Explain the difference. Give an example.
- Have you ever prepared for something and then hesitated in the moment of decision?
- What kinds of decisions have you had to make for your faith? How did you come to the decision to follow Jesus for the first time?
- Noah's decision to follow God separated him from all of humanity (see Gen 7:23). Has your decision to follow Christ caused any separations?
- As Christians, what are we separated "from"? What are we separated "to"? (Think eternally…)