

“Noah: How High Do I Jump?”

Hebrews 11:7

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“Noah, this is the Lord.”

“Right.”

“I want you to build me an ark.”

“Right.” Pause “What’s an ark?”

Folks, that was a part of a monologue Bill Cosby did almost 60 years ago. Perhaps you think it is a bit inappropriate to joke about the Bible account of Noah. However, I think we should all agree there is something ironic and probably humorous about Noah being told to build an ark so he could survive a flood.

Why? Because it is unlikely, he had any idea what an ark or a flood were. Many think he had never even seen it rain. It would have been very easy for Noah to say, “Lord, what are you talking about? I’m not going to spend my time building a huge boat in the middle of the desert.”

Yet, as we read the story of Noah in the book of Genesis, we find he did not say that. Instead, Noah built the ark. He did what God told him to do. After God had given him the building instructions, **Genesis 6:22** says, “**Noah did everything just as God commanded him.**” And because of this, he is recognized in the book of Hebrews and by God’s people throughout the centuries, as a man of great faith.

Today, as we continue our tour of the Faith Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11, we come to exhibit number 3, this man named Noah. We read in **Hebrews 11:7a** **By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear build an ark to save his family.** Noah faithfully obeys a command that he clearly could not fully understand since he was “warned about things not yet seen.”

That reveals a depth and quality of faith that seems extraordinary. I get the impression that if God would have told him to jump, Noah would have simply responded, “How high?” He might not have asked the questions many of us do when we read one of God’s commands: “Lord, why do I need to do that?” “That just seems too hard.” “Isn’t there an easier way?” “You will forgive me if I don’t do this, right?”

Folks, today we take a closer look at Noah’s faith, and we will then explore how it can be a model for us today. Let’s pause and pray the Lord would help us hear and heed His word this morning.

Now, I am aware that some of you may not be very familiar with the story of Noah. In the Bible, it is recorded in Genesis chapter 6-9, early in human history, we do not know the precise date, society was characterized by rebellion against God and great wickedness. It was a more immoral age than our own.

The Lord decided to destroy the world through a great flood and, in a sense, start over. The only people He chooses to preserve are Noah and his family; his wife, three sons and their three wives. God tells Noah to build an ark, a huge 450-foot-long boat that will protect his family. It will also preserve a pair of animals from the various species.

Noah builds the ark. The flood comes and it destroys the world. Yet, those on the ark are safe and within a few months they begin to repopulate the earth.

Now, some of that sounds like an incredible fairy tale. Yet, I don’t think there is any reason to reject the historical accuracy of this account. If you have questions, I would be glad to talk with you later and explain why I believe this huge flood really happened. So back to Noah’s faith...

Number 1, Noah’s faith is a reasonable faith. Many folks might consider Noah to be somewhat gullible, blindly building an ark just because someone told him to do so. Yet, remember it was not just “someone” who told Noah to build a boat in the desert. *It was the Lord.*

Last week I mentioned a definition of faith given by Santa Claus in “A Miracle on 34th Street.” “Faith is believing in things common sense tells you not to.” I think that is a description of gullible faith.

Some people choose to believe in things they want to believe in, even when it is contrary to logic, evidence, and common sense. I would give an example, but there might be a true believer here

and I really don't want to argue with anyone over whether or not there is a Sasquatch living near Carey Lake.

Noah's faith, however, is believing things God told him to believe. He believed what God said, even if it went against his own experience and common sense. If anyone else but the Lord would have told Noah to build a boat, I think he would have said, "No way, you are crazy." Yet, because God tells him to build it, he does. The text says in "Holy fear" Noah built the ark. I think that means when God says He is going to send a flood to destroy the world, Noah knows that God can do exactly that if He chooses. He may not even know what a flood was, but he knew it would do exactly what God said it would.

How did he know that? Because **Genesis 6:9 Noah was a righteous man. Noah walked with God.** From his own experience he knows God is real. He has tasted of God's greatness, goodness, and glory. He knows that when God speaks, He speaks truth. He knows that when God says He is about to destroy the human race, He can and would do just that. So, there is nothing gullible or unreasonable about Noah's faith. He understands God is a much higher authority than human reason, experience, or common sense. When God speaks, Noah knows he better listen.

Number 2, Noah's faith caused him to act very differently than other people. Like all of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11, Noah's trust in the Lord causes him to act. He does not sit back and say, "Yes, Lord, I believe you about this flood thing, and as soon as I get done with some projects around the house, I'll get to work on the boat."

If he would have said that I suspect a year later, not one board would have been cut for the ark. Because Noah believed God, he acted. And his actions make him stick out like a sore thumb in his community. He believed God. Others did not.

He devoted his life to obeying God. We don't know the exact chronology, but apparently Noah spent many years building the ark. All the other people, however, according to Jesus in **Matthew 24:38b Were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark.**

In Peter 2:5 we learn Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He continually warned his

neighbors about God's impending judgement. Yet no one really believed him. Only his family chose to go in the ark with him. It was likely a pretty lonely life. Yet Noah had solid faith. He trusted the Lord.

Number 3, in the end, Noah's faith pays off, big time. Noah and his family are kept safe through the flood while everyone else dies. As those torrential rains began to fall, Noah knew that not one second he had spent working on the boat had been wasted. He knew that all the ridicule he had experienced and all the personal sacrifices he had made were well worth it.

As he heard the rain pounding on the roof, I think he knew he was safely in God's hands. Yet, the protection he enjoyed during the flood was just the beginning. Back to **Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.**

This means that when Noah eventually did die, Genesis says he got to be 950 years old, but when he died, he entered the presence of God. He began to enjoy his eternal home in heaven. And throughout the centuries he would be honored and praised as a man of faith.

Folks, I think that is the essence of Noah's faith. He believed God, even when what God said went beyond the limits of human reason and common sense. He acted on his beliefs, even when it made him different from everyone else, and he was rewarded greatly for his faith both in this life and the next.

Yet, what does the faith of someone who lived thousands of years ago have to do with those of us in this room today? Well, I think Noah's faith is a good model for all of us to follow.

The Lord has spoken to us through His word, the Bible. This may not be as dramatic as hearing a voice say, "Noah, build me an ark," but God's words are written for us in this book. We don't have to worry that we are maybe just hearing voices in our head. It is all here for us in black and white.

Some of what the bible teaches seems almost self-evident. For example, nearly everyone agrees with the Bible's teaching that murder and stealing

are wrong. Yet other teachings in the Bible go very much against the grain of popular thought.

When that happens, we should still choose to believe God. Like Noah, we are not called to believe blindly, but we are to believe because we know who God is and we know that His is a far greater authority on truth and reality than all human authorities put together.

Let's look at one important way God calls us to believe and act upon what He says, even when it goes against what we might consider common sense, even when it causes us to act in ways that make us different from people around us.

God tells us to believe that our life on this planet is not all there is. In fact, it is only a fraction of our existence, because heaven and hell are realities that continue forever. These eternal destinies certainly fit into the category of things "not yet seen."

Is there conclusive scientific proof for the existence of life after death? Well, there are some interesting pieces of evidence that point to an afterlife. These include fascinating reports of near-death experiences and a nearly universal intuition, that this life is not all there is.

Deep down inside almost everyone believes there has to be more to life than the few decades we spend on this third rock from the sun. Still, plenty of people insist, often contrary to their own intuition, that science and common sense tell us that this life is all there is.

Yet, even without conclusive proof, we do know that God says, "There is more. This life is not all there is." The Bible frequently encourages us to live life today based on a confidence that heaven and hell are very real. Those who suffer for doing what is right, are encouraged to hang in there, to keep following and obeying the Lord, because as Jesus says, "Great is your reward in heaven."

Those who ignore God as they focus on pleasure and material success, are warned that the fun will not last. Eternal hell is their destiny unless they repent and turn to Jesus Christ.

Now, most people I know say they believe in the reality of heaven, and many believe in hell as well. Yet often their actions are not consistent with those beliefs.

It is like they say, "Oh, yes, God. I believe what you say about the flood," but they never get around to building an ark. If Noah had not gotten around to building that boat, he would have perished in the flood. Likewise, folks who believe that life continues after death, but never get around to preparing for it, are destined to perish.

How does one get ready for the next life?

#1 – By trusting in Jesus Christ. We cannot build or buy a boat to take us to heaven. We cannot get there by plane, train, or automobile. The only way to enter heaven and escape eternal hell is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

In John 14:6 Jesus says, **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.** Then **John 3:36** tells us **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.**

Last week we talked about how Biblical faith means believing the facts about Jesus, His deity, death and resurrection, to be true. It includes delighting in the Gospel of Jesus, and it includes, by God's grace, personally trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Only those with that type of faith are ready for the next life. If you are not trusting in Jesus, you are outside the ark.

You may be a very nice person, you may go to church, you may have read the Bible from cover to cover, but if your faith is in yourself, your religion, or anything else, you are not ready for what comes after you die.

And friends, if you are standing outside of the ark, if you are not trusting in Jesus, now is the time to come in. You don't want to be like those unicorns outside playing silly games when that door closes. Some of you get the reference. It may not be raining, yet, but there are some very dark clouds on the horizon.

No one knows when God will shut the door and it will be too late to get inside. Friends don't delay. Turn to Jesus Christ today. If you are not sure what that means, make sure you chat with one of the pastors very soon.

#2 – To get ready for the next life we should make eternal investments. **In Matthew 6:19,20** Jesus

tells, **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

Friends, many people claim to believe in heaven and hell, but they spend much more time and effort trying to make themselves comfortable in this life, then they do preparing for the next. I find myself falling into that trap sometimes. Careers, houses, cars, vacations, kid’s sports, hobbies and family activities can consume so much time and energy that we really don’t take time to focus on the next life.

We neglect to make eternal investments because we are consumed with trying to make ourselves comfortable and happy. We think we are too busy to focus on loving God, loving others, and making disciples.

Folks, that is a foolish thing to do. Last month I had my 66th birthday. I am not sure when retirement is coming, but I am making preparations for it. It would be foolish not to. Yet, many people who put great energy in preparing for retirement, which lasts at best for a handful of years, put little, if any effort, into preparing for eternity which will last forever. It doesn’t make sense.

I believe we should ask ourselves this question, quite often: Will what I am doing today make any difference 20 years from now? Will it make any difference in eternity? Friends, if your life is being consumed by things that have only short term, temporal values, you need to make some changes. You need to have an eternal perspective.

One way to do that is to focus on the words of the song we are going to listen to as we close. “He is no fool, who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.”

The son tells the story of two men who were eternal investors. One is Eric Liddel, who is the subject of the academy award winning movie, “Chariots of Fire.” If you don’t know his story, watch the movie.

The other is Jim Elliot. He was a gifted young man who could have probably had a very successful career in business, law, education, or maybe even

as a pastor. Yet, instead of pursuing one of those paths that would have likely led to a comfortable life, he chose to do what God was calling him to do.

Some of his friends called him a fool, but he went to South America, Ecuador, to be a missionary to the Auca Indians. In his journal he wrote these words “He is no fool, who give up what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Jim Elliot and four of his fellow missionaries were murdered by the Auca’s a couple of years later, in 1956. His investment brought him little return in this life. But my guess is that Jim Elliot is reaping a great windfall in heaven.

For one thing, I believe that, in heaven, he is able to see how his death, and the deaths of his companions, have inspired thousands of people to go to places where Jesus is not known and share the gospel with them.

Most importantly, I believe that Jim Elliot now knows with absolute certainty, that he was no fool to give up the things he could not keep money, education, success, pleasure... for the thing he could never lose.” The joy of hearing God the Father say, **Matthew 25:21 Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Lord.**

“He is no fool, who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” There have been plenty of times that I have ignored the great wisdom in those words. Yet, there have been plenty of other times that those words have encouraged and enabled me to make good choices, choices that were really eternal investments.

That is what, by faith, Noah did. It is what, by faith, Jim Elliot and Eric Liddel did. It is what, by faith, the Lord is calling you to do. If you do that, if you choose, by faith, in obedience to the Lord, to give up what you cannot keep. You can reject that you will one day, just as God promises, receive a reward, a joy, that you will never lose. Friends listen to this song and be challenged and encouraged.