

The Cloud of Witnesses

Noah

Lesson 1: Noah – Walked With God

Reading

Genesis 5:28-6:10.

Walked With God

Methuselah may have lived the longest on earth, but Enoch, his father, and Noah, his grandson, are the ones who are recorded to have *'walked with God'*. Interestingly enough, we read *'Enoch walked with God'* and went straight into His presence whereas Noah walked with God and remained on earth another 450 years.

I wonder why Enoch and Noah were singled out. Does it mean the others didn't walk with God? They were all recorded as in the line of David and the Messiah, as listed by Matthew. They all had the same opportunity and privilege, but for some reason, they were not all mentioned as those who walked with God.

There were many who walked along beside Jesus but we don't know that they ever became true disciples of His. Today there are many people who go to church and try and live a godly life, and yet they do not have an intimate relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, His Son.

There must be more to the Christian life than going to church, saying a few prayers, reading the Bible and trying to live a good life. Yes, all those things are worthwhile but is it really *'walking with God'*? Saul was God's anointed King, and yet he was disobedient and didn't end up *'walking with God'*.

Jesus said, *"Not everyone who calls me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the Will of My Father who is in Heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). There is a price to pay – and it is called obedience. Not doing my will but doing the will of God for my life. I have to surrender my will and dedicate my life to doing the will of God only.

Yes, nothing I can do will ever gain me right standing with God. As Isaiah tells us: *"All our righteous acts are like filthy rags"* (Isaiah 64: 6). We come into a right relationship with God, solely on the merit of His perfect Son and His perfect sacrifice for us. We need the salvation Christ offers us.

However, once we are saved, once we have accepted the substitutionary death of Christ – He died for me – then my life should reflect that transaction. I should no longer live according to my self-centredness or selfish desires and ambitions, but rather as a slave of Jesus Christ.

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Lesson 1 continued: Noah – Walked With God

As John says, *“Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did”* (1 John 2:6).

We need to walk with God as long as He chooses for us to live on earth, whether it is short or long...

Noah would say to us today...

Christianity is not a religion. You can't do anything to earn your standing before God – it is by grace alone. However, your life should demonstrate that grace.

Prayer

Father, as I read the life of Noah, I realise that there was something dramatic and faithful about it. Furthermore, it wasn't sham because You caused us to know about it – You recorded the facts for us. Please help me remain close to You and make my life reflect the fact that I walk with You. For Your Name's sake. Amen.

Additional readings

Genesis 5:21-24; John 21:15-22; 1 John 1.

Questions

What does it mean to *‘walk with God’*?

Are you walking with God?

How do people who are non-Christian know you are *‘walking with God’*?

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Lesson 2: Noah – Stood Out From The Crowd

Reading

Genesis 6:8-13.

Stood Out From The Crowd

In The Bible we read, *“The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good”* (Proverbs 15:3). This was dramatically demonstrated here. God looked down on earth and saw that everyone was going about their lives with complete disregard to the fact that they had a wonderful and holy Creator.

They had become so arrogant that they saw no need of a relationship with God and that He should seek to have any influence in or over their lives. Unfortunately, it made them increasingly blind to the mess they had created for themselves.

We see it in our kids, don't we? They go off on their own and start doing things their own way, only to find out it doesn't work, and we have to step in to restore it or repair their actions. Usually, they are not very grateful at the time either!

The sad truth is that we are just the same. We get fixated with wealth, power, toys or ambition, and our thinking becomes muddled.

We start off thinking we can do it all ourselves – *just give me that piece of No. 8 wire and I'll fix it*. When that doesn't work very well we decide to use other people to advance our selfish ambition, and that happens through 'climbing over others to the top', back-biting, gossip or character assassination of those who may be or get in our way.

Then we treat others purely as objects, and so no longer cherish long term relationships. If the other person fails to meet our needs, desires or goals, we drop them or abuse them so they get out of the way.

The sad thing is that not only do we hurt them but we destroy ourselves in the process. Doing my own thing or doing it my way becomes my all-consuming passion, and anyone or anything that gets in the way must be destroyed.

If we make the time to stop and consider our true position, we find that life is a shambles, and we are of all people the most to be pitied.

Paul gives an astute description of humanity in Romans chapter 1 – it's as true today as when it was written, and it is the same as what God saw in Genesis 6.

Selfishness and pride do not breed peace, joy, love and community. They breed jealousy,

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Lesson 2 continued: Noah – Stood Out From The Crowd

arrogance, independence and fear. Human relationships suffer the most, and we end up with dysfunctional and desperate families, and a society which has lost its way and any hope of recovery.

Into that milieu Noah spoke. His life was totally different. He looked to God for direction and the eternal principles of life. He stood out like a beacon in a dark world by not only his life-style but also his words and deeds. Peter tells us he preached whilst he built the ark, warning the people of the wrath of God to come in the earth-enveloping flood. The fact that only 8 people were saved did not negate the life he lived or the message he shared.

Noah would say to us today...

Your lifestyle should reveal your relationship with God; your words have to proclaim the message of salvation.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, please help me be a shining light in this dark world as I follow Your ways, and please give me the opportunities to share the truth of Your Second Coming and salvation from the wrath of God, in the right way and at the right time. Amen.

Additional readings

Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:17-22; 2 Peter 2:4-9; 1 Peter 3:15-17.

Questions

Do your neighbours know you are a Christian?

Have you told your work colleagues how to become a Christian?

How does your life stand out from the crowd?

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Lesson 3: Noah – Was Obedient To God’s Vision

Reading

Genesis 6:14-22.

Was Obedient To God’s Vision

I find this passage of Scripture quite mind-blowing. Have you ever stopped to consider the impact of these words on Noah? How did he get his mind around this amazing request from God?

If it has never rained, how would you know it would begin? And why would you want to build a boat big enough for all the species of living things if the biggest building you have ever owned was a home.

How did God reveal His vision of a flood and an ark to Noah? You and I read it today and think of huge container ships or the liner, Queen Victoria, and think the ark must have been a ‘piece of cake’ in comparison – but how many of us have actually built a boat in our back-yard? How many of us have built the equivalent of a cross-straits ferry? Even 4000 years after the Flood it would still have been an amazing achievement.

When we consider the detail given Moses for the Tabernacle, the instructions for the ark are conspicuous by their absence, and the ark was about twice the length of the Tabernacle, let alone having 3 decks.

I also love the almost throw-away comment – *“You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away for food for you and for them.”* That was a huge ask. This was not for a weekend camp – this was for a voyage of more than six weeks where there were no stop-offs or replenishing ports.

I guess Noah was totally overwhelmed by the vision. If he was overwhelmed – what must his wife and kids be thinking – let alone the daughters-in-law? No wonder the locals had difficulty receiving his message. They probably thought he had been struck by lightning and should be avoided at all costs.

Ever received something like that from God? I have. No, not quite so wild, but a vision most Christians told us would never happen. However, it did and today United Christian Broadcasters beams into most of Europe. I guess God means what He says. And yes, I have had the privilege of being part of many God-given visions and they are still going ahead today.

One of the ways we can tell it’s of God rather than a bright idea is that it is far too big for us to do or imagine for ourselves. God does it to prove that His grace and power have not been thwarted or diminished by time or space – He still loves to create something impossible out of nothing.

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Lesson 3 continued: Noah – Was Obedient To God’s Vision

There is another vision we all need to have and share. It is the vision of another Ark. We need the Ark because God is to destroy the earth once more. He made it – it gives Him the right to do what He likes with it. Yes, He is going to pour out His wrath again on all wickedness and unrighteousness. The only escape is to accept the Ark God has made for us – Jesus Christ – and His Blood shed at Calvary, on the Cross, to redeem us and grant us forgiveness and eternal life.

It is that vision we need to share with others who don’t know the truth yet.

Noah would say to us today...

Don’t be surprised if God gives you a vision for something which is beyond your ability or comprehension – for then it is easier to accept it as His vision rather than your good idea.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the awesome privilege of receiving Your vision – the Plan of what You are going to do on earth. Help us receive Your vision for each of our lives. Amen.

Additional readings

Isaiah 6; 1 Samuel 15:1-23; Matthew 25:31-46.

Questions

What is God’s vision for your life?

How can we tell it is God’s vision?

Who do you need to come along side to help you fulfil the vision?

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Lesson 4: Noah – Stayed With The Vision Even Though It Took A Long Time

Reading

Genesis 7:1-10.

Stayed With The Vision Even Though It Took A Long Time

Imagine being Noah. God gives you a vision and expects you to carry it out. But the vision is huge. It is far greater than anything you have ever attempted before. Everyone thinks you are mad and assures you it can't be done – and indeed, there is no reason for it anyway.

Noah was not that easily distracted, or ready to give up. He plodded on, regardless. However, the hard work continued day in day out, week in week out, month in month out, year in year out. The end must have seemed even further away halfway through the project as by then he was beginning to have a greater degree of understanding of how big the vision really was.

The ark was coming together so slowly. The ridicule and discouragement from neighbours, friends and antagonists would have increased by the day, let alone the month and year, and yet he kept his head down and carried on with the project.

I wonder when the full realisation hit him. Not only had he to build this massive ship but also find the animals to enter it. Normally a pair of everything but then 7 pairs of the clean animals, 7 pairs of birds and would you believe it – a pair of everything that crept on the face of the earth?

Most of us would have given up on the boat, those who completed the boat would have given up on trying to assemble all those animals but Noah then had to gather food for everyone to last the whole confinement.

It was not just the enormity of the task, that would have been exhausting enough; it was exacerbated by the whole thing taking so long to complete. I wonder how many times Noah had wanted to give up and put it all in the too-hard basket.

Have you ever asked yourself the question – why doesn't God do it quickly? Indeed, maybe you have, like me, asked God why He takes so long to do something. I've come to the conclusion that it's because I don't see things the way God sees them, and He has a far bigger plan than I can ever conceive. Even the huge vision He gives me ends up being just a tiny part in His overall plan, which I am far too small to comprehend.

I've come to the conclusion that it all comes down to faith, trust and obedience. Usually I find issues further down the line that I'm glad had not been revealed to me earlier on. By the time I reach them, I'm usually in a better place to cope with them as I've learned to trust Him more in the meantime.

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Lesson 4 continued: Noah – Stayed With The Vision Even Though It Took A Long Time

I've also had to learn that it is unwise to look at the circumstances as a means of testing whether or not I am in the will of God. With visions, I've found the circumstances nearly always seem to conspire to 'prove' to me the vision will never take place – but it is usually when I reach the other side that I realise God knew what He was doing all along; His promises never fail and His timing is always perfect.

Noah would say to us today...

Just because God gives you a vision doesn't mean it is going to be completed overnight. Never forget there is always far more involved than what appears on the surface. Be determined to stay with the vision even though everything seems to conspire to make it impossible. Circumstances do not dictate the plans and purposes of God.

Prayer

Father, I want in my heart to see the vision You have given me become a reality. Please help me to overcome the temptation to give in to the imposing circumstances before me; rather help me to keep my eyes focused on You and Your victory, seeing – by faith – its completion. In Jesus' Name, I ask. Amen.

Additional readings

Habakkuk 2:3; Luke 13:31-35; Hebrews 12:1-13; Revelation 2:26-29.

Questions

What are the circumstances facing you today, which need to be ignored in order for you to realise the vision God has given you?

How long will you give God to complete your vision?

How do we stay focused and determined for the long haul?

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Lesson 5: Noah – Saw The Vision Completed

Reading

Genesis 7:11-8:19.

Saw The Vision Completed

Noah must have been an amazing man. Today, we can't grasp the enormity of what he did. We have no real concept of the era of history in which he lived. On top of that, we live in an instant society, which seems to have a pill or card for the immediate relief of every need.

God gave humanity a warning – *120 years and it's all over*. The next thing we read is that He instructed Noah to build the ark – the inference being it took over 100 years to build. The vision took over 100 years to come to fruition. Of course, we can't comprehend that sort of timing, as we don't live 120 years and not many of us have visions as a 6-week old baby.

But let's not dismiss it that quickly. We are told that Noah lived 950 years all up. So 100 years would represent just under a tenth. So for us who average, say 70 years, it would take us somewhere in the region of 7 years. Most of us struggle with a vision that doesn't materialise in 7 months. He was two-thirds through his life when the vision became a reality. Incidentally, Nehemiah took just 52 days to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

However, Noah completed the vision given to him. He kept his eyes on the goal and marked off his to-do-list. I wonder how long that list was at the beginning. I have this funny feeling that all his lists were small. The first read – 1) Assemble the family 2) Build the ark 3) Warn the people 4) Find the animals 5) Gather the food. Then he had other small lists to develop with each requirement.

He had to complete the vision. He had to be meticulous in the building of the ark as it had to float for about 6 months – it had to be sealed tightly. Even so, there had to be the ability to release the waste material created by all that eating! It had to remain on an even keel and not topple over, otherwise there would have been a disaster, and you and I wouldn't be here today.

He had to gather enough food for the whole floating zoo to last the whole journey and enough for his own extended family. He had to make sure he had found and boarded the complete animal list given him by God.

He had to ensure that all the time he was giving the people the opportunity to join him in his vessel of salvation. No matter how much he loved the people he still had to tell them the truth – that God would destroy the world because of its wickedness and rejection of Him – and yet there was a way to escape God's wrath by leaving the world behind and by joining him on the ark.

God entrusted to Noah the message of salvation – *Get on the ark, otherwise you will be destroyed when God floods the earth in judgement of the wickedness of mankind*. I'm sure it broke his heart

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Lesson 5 continued: Noah – Saw The Vision Completed

when his message was rejected. But I am also absolutely convinced he did all he could to warn the people and give the welcoming invitation to get into the ark.

God has entrusted to us a similar message. This world is coming to an end. We don't know when, but we do know that unless we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord we will likewise perish. We need to complete the vision God gave each one of us – to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.

Noah would say to us today...

God gives us a vision to reveal the plan of what He is going to do. He expects us, by His power, to carry it through to completion.

Prayer

Father, thank You for recording in the Bible the accounts of men and women who followed through on the vision You gave them, regardless of the cost to themselves. Please help me to join that wonderful crowd, by Your grace, through Your power and for Your glory. Amen.

Additional readings

Joshua 5; Nehemiah 6; 2 Chronicles 5.

Questions

Have you written out your to-do list to ensure you will complete your vision?

What are the challenges you face right now that you need to break-through in order to complete the vision God has given you?

What are your weak spots that the enemy will exploit to divert you from completing the vision?

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Lesson 6: Noah – Maintained A Life Of Worship

Reading

Genesis 8:20-9:17.

Completing a vision can be a very dangerous thing

Noah walked with God before he was given the vision of the ark for the salvation of all those who would turn from their wickedness to Him in faith. He was singled out by God as a righteous person. His life was already a life of worship.

God saw that he was faithful in the small things of life, so He could entrust him with the larger things in life. Since Noah had been trusting God and following His principles in obscurity, God chose him to be His ambassador to the world in the most momentous decision of all time.

Noah continued to worship God as he built the ark and prepared for the Flood to cover the earth. Indeed, he continued to worship God even when his peers ridiculed him and mocked him. He continued to worship God as he assembled all the animals and led them into the ark, and he worshipped God as he fed them and cleaned out the 'stables' every day they floated around on the high seas.

Noah worshipped God as he encouraged his sons to help him in the construction of the ark. Noah worshipped God as he hammered the nails and stuck the black tar between the planks to seal it water-tight. Noah worshipped God as he loaded the hay and grain; as he tethered the sheep; as he made the soft nests for the birds to settle.

Noah worshipped God as the door closed to the ark. Noah worshipped God as the rain began to fall and the springs gushed forth from the earth. Noah worshipped God as he looked out and saw nothing but water everywhere, covering the whole earth. Noah worshipped God as he looked out on the water-sodden turf.

Noah worshipped God as he let out the raven and saw it disappear. He worshipped God as he released the dove and took it in again, with a sprig of new leaves in its beak. He worshipped God as it left the ark for the last time. Noah worshipped God, when upon God's instruction, he opened the door to the ark and released all the animals on to a new earth.

Noah worshipped God when he once more walked upon dry ground. He built an altar and made a sacrifice to God. He offered up some of the clean animals and birds, and *"the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma."*

What am I highlighting here? Worshipping is not just singing songs of worship – although it can be an expression of worship. Just imagine the sound of worship on the ark! However, worship is best seen in our obedience to God. A true worshipper is someone who has surrendered his/her will,

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Lesson 6 continued: Noah – Maintained A Life Of Worship

his/her life, and his/her ambitions and goals to the plans God has for his/her life. Worship happens when we follow through on the vision God gives us. Worship happens in the mundane routines of life, just as much as in the mountain-top experiences.

Because Noah lived a life of worship, he completed the job God had for him. He also never forgot the grace of God to him and his family, and so offered to God an offering – a sacrifice of thanksgiving. However, the burnt offering he offered was only the outward expression of his innermost worship and life of obedience. We should copy his tremendous example.

Noah would say to us today...

Never get over the wonder of your salvation or the awesomeness of God's holiness, mercy and grace. We should continue to worship Him for who He is as well as for what He has done for us.

Prayer

Father, what can I say to express my utmost thanks for all You have done for me. For Your mercy, Your forgiveness and for Your grace. May I never take them for granted but rather may I live a life of obedience – a life of worship in spirit and in truth – the sort that You are seeking. Amen.

Additional readings

Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 3:7-16; Psalm 51.

Questions

How do we worship God in our everyday lives?

What is the highest form of worship?

How do we maintain a life of worship?