

VERY IMPORTANT PERSONS

GENESIS 6:13-22 SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

Is your job important? As human beings we have an innate desire for significance and we can find it many places. You've probably heard of TED talks. "TED began in 1984 as a Technology, Entertainment and Design conference.¹ Today you can watch more than 3,700 talks their website, many of which discuss the "importance" of particular topics like, "the importance of listening," "the importance of preserving cultural artifacts." Of "emotional tone in a digital age." Of "good conversation" and "self-care." Of "visual literacy" and "diversity in the comic book universe." Of "educating girls" and of "space lawyers." Those are all real topics or playlists on ted.com.²

Noah had the most important human job ever. There was only one job that was more significant: That was the Messiah's job to come and bridge the gap between heaven and earth - a job no mere human could do. But Noah was humanity's only hope for survival. One man, from whom all of us descend. The one man who carried the torch which would ultimately bring the Deliverer to us.

There was a time there when, in my dad's family, I was the *last* Pensiero male who could carry on our family's name. Of course, there are other Pensieros out there somewhere. Hopefully that won't keep you up at night. But if Noah dies - if his family dies - that's the *end* of humanity.

But his life and its work aren't only important because of what he *preserved*. It also gives to us two very important illustrations. It gives a picture and a precedent. On the one hand, it is a *picture* of God's unrelenting work of saving the lost. On the other hand, it is a *precedent* for how we can *also* respond to the call of God and invest our lives in His important work ourselves. It all begins with God's spoken word.

Genesis 6:13 - ¹³ Then God said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

We don't know how God revealed Himself, but however He did, He did so *directly*. God speaks *directly*. He speaks of Who He is and what He's done and what He's *going* to do. Sometimes we wish we had a face-to-face chat with the Lord like Abraham did or Paul or Solomon, but the truth is we have a *much greater* volume of information than they did. We have the completed, inerrant, conspicuous Word of God. In that Word, God loves to reveal His heart and His plans to us. We don't know every detail of every act of providence, but God likes to let us in on what He's doing. In Genesis 18 the Lord will say, "Shall I hide what I'm about to do from Abraham?" And the same characteristic is seen here. God wanted Noah to understand what He was going to be doing. He explained the what and the why. His Word is given to you so that you can *know* Him. Psalms and Jeremiah show us that God wants us to *know* Him. God wants us to *know* His voice and *know* His works and *know* His will.

We've seen that His will for mankind was to fill the world with goodness - *His* goodness. Instead, the world was filled with wickedness and rebellion. In response, a global flood was coming.

¹ <https://www.ted.com/about/our-organization>

² <https://www.ted.com/search?q=importance>

There are those who would rather think of the flood as a *local* flood. Their reasons usually come down to ideas about the volume of water on the earth today and the prevailing assumptions about the age of the earth based off of the theory of evolution. However, both the Old and New Testaments *plainly* indicate a global flood. If it was local, there would be no need for Noah to build a boat. He'd simply need to take a road trip. Additionally, the fossil record serves as an expert witness to the historicity of a sudden, global flood. Like how we've found marine fossils on top of Mount Everest,³ and air-breathing dinosaur fossils found in ocean deposits.⁴ Other fossils are found vertically preserved *across* multiple strata layers, and we see the existence of fossilized, soft-tissue organisms like octopi.⁵ Not to mention the fact that flood narratives can be found in the traditions of various cultures on every continent⁶ - not just in the mid-east, but extending around the globe. For example, the Powhatan tribe of Virginia "have a tradition of the [flood], that all the world was once drowned, except a few that were saved...about seven or eight in a great [canoe]."⁷ The flood was global, sudden, and verifiable.

Interestingly, when God revealed this coming judgment, Noah did not try to intercede on humanity's behalf. Abraham will, famously, try to save the city of Sodom from its judgment. Moses interceded on behalf of the children of Israel, that God would not wipe them off the earth. Not so with Noah. But that doesn't mean he wasn't going to be a part of God's merciful salvation. In fact, after revealing the coming wrath, God gives Noah an urgent commission.

Genesis 6:14 - ¹⁴“Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside.

We don't know what gopher wood was, some believe it was cypress, but here's what's more precious to know: When God told Noah to cover it with "pitch" the word used there is the same word the Old Testament uses for "atonement." The covering of sin. One Bible dictionary defines it as: "the price of a life...the ransom."⁸ In order to save us, our sin must be covered. We must be atoned for, that our lives might be ransomed.

1 John 2:2 - [Jesus Christ]... is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

The ark becomes a picture for us of several things but, first and foremost, it is an illustration of salvation in Jesus Christ. He is the lifeboat, Who saves us from the unsurvivable judgment. He made the way secure by sealing our salvation with His own blood.

Noah was to make 'rooms in the ark.' There's a tender image here - the word God uses for rooms is actually 'nests.'⁹ If you've seen *WALL•E* you might recall that all of humanity has been saved off of planet earth in a giant, ark-like space ship. At the end, as they return to earth, there's a scene where they're all standing on this wide deck and the ship jumps to light speed and all the people just sorta fall over and crash around. That wouldn't be the experience of the animals on the ark. There was an appropriate and cozy place prepared for each of them.

³ <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/3499/mt-everest>

⁴ <https://www.icr.org/article/dinosaur-fossils-found-marine-rocksagain/>

⁵ <https://www.icr.org/article/mystery-octopus-fossils/>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_flood_myths

⁷ <https://www.icr.org/article/extra-biblical-flood-legends/>

⁸ *NASB Bible Dictionary*

⁹ See *NASB Dictionary & Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

This is what God has done for you and me. Of course, we think of that promise Jesus made that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for us, but we also consider how He prepares a nest for us on *this* side of eternity as well. God has scattered us where we are so that we might be knit together with other members of the local flock we find ourselves near. The Lord's work is to give us a home that is safe and firm, built on the Rock, and able to withstand the storms of this world.

Genesis 6:15 - ¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

Some of you have been to the *Ark Encounter* in Kentucky, so you've got a great mental picture of the proportions of this great barge. For those of us who haven't, it might be hard to imagine the size we're talking about. Particularly if your translation uses cubits instead of feet. The cubit was the length from your elbow to the tip of your middle finger. Naturally, that varies from person to person. In the ancient world, there were all sorts of cubits - some as short as 17 inches, some as long as 25.¹⁰ We use the 18 inch cubit in our thinking because it's a good, conservative estimate and aligns with what we know about how the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Egyptians measured the cubit.

The ark had over 100,000 square feet of deck space and 1.4 million cubic feet of storage space. That's the same square footage that engineers use as a rule of thumb for a city block, by the way.¹¹ The ceiling of each deck would be at about 15 feet. Noah would've been able to bring 125,000 sheep-sized animals onto the ark. Of course, many were larger, but many were smaller. Plus, some scholars speculate that the animals would've been juveniles, which would've helped both in size and reproductive longevity after the flood.

This stage is about 12 feet by 16 feet. Noah could build a storage box the length and width of this stage, built up just 4 and a half feet, and that would be large enough to store 2 years worth of water for him and his family.¹² Of course, the animals would need water too, but we can start to get the picture of just how much space this ark would provide.

So, how many animals *did* Noah bring on the ark? There's no way for us to know. But, keep in mind that he wouldn't have to bring each *species* of dog, dinosaur, bird, but only *representative* kinds from which other species would once again spring. Even still, if we look at the world today, it's estimated that there are fewer than 34,000 different *species* of land-dependent animals.¹³ Creation scientists suggest they could've taken fewer than 7,000 animals, but even if they took 80,000, you would still have a ton of deck space left over.

Genesis 6:16 - ¹⁶ You are to make a roof, finishing the sides of the ark to within eighteen inches of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

One door. Remember, the ark was a working object lesson of salvation. Jesus made it very clear that there is one way and *only* one way to be saved, and that is through Him. He said "I am *the* Door." We

¹⁰ <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/janthro/2014/489757/>

¹¹ <https://www.mvorganizing.org/how-do-you-get-square-yards-from-square-feet/>

¹² <https://www.calculatorsoup.com/calculators/construction/tank.php> <https://www.ready.gov/water>

¹³ <https://answersingenesis.org/noahs-ark/how-could-all-animals-fit-ark/>

are the sheep, His beloved lambs, that are called to enter through this Door and if anyone enters by Him, they will be saved but if not, there is no hope.

Genesis 6:17 - ¹⁷“Understand that I am bringing a flood—floodwaters on the earth to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.

God was asking Noah to do something very unusual. Remember: It had never rained on the earth. It had *certainly* never flooded. God had interacted with humans from time to time, but there had never been *this sort* of involvement. And now, the Lord asked Noah to spend his life on this project. It must’ve seemed so absurd to the people around him. But notice that God did not ask for *blind* faith. He didn’t ask Noah to do something silly just for the sake of standing out. He said, “Understand what I’m doing.” It would still have to be done by faith, trusting that what had never been seen *was* really going to happen, but what may have seemed foolish to the unbelieving world wasn’t rooted in foolhardiness. It was rooted in God’s truth. This is the same situation you and I find ourselves in. Peter says in his second epistle:

2 Peter 3:3-7 - ³Scoffers will come in the last days scoffing and following their own evil desires, ⁴saying, “Where is his ‘coming’ that he promised? Ever since our ancestors fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation.” ⁵They deliberately overlook this: By the word of God the heavens came into being long ago and the earth was brought about from water and through water. ⁶Through these the world of that time perished when it was flooded. ⁷By the same word, the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Our belief and activity are based on the Word of God. The Scripture is the bedrock, the blueprint, and the compass of our faith. It has been prepared, preserved, and passed on to you so that you may know the *certainty* of the things about which you have been instructed.

Now, sometimes obedience *does* come before understanding. Abraham had to obey God concerning Isaac before he understood. But God is very up front with us about His plans, His overall will, His commands, and His desires.

Genesis 6:18 - ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives.

This is the first use of the term ‘covenant’ in the Bible. Biblically speaking, a covenant is a treaty - an alliance of friendship. There is "no firmer guarantee of legal security, peace, or personal loyalty."¹⁴ But a covenant is no good unless the other party is trustworthy. Moses was delivering this book originally to the people of Israel, with whom God wanted to make a covenant, full of terms and promises. Could He be trusted? Well, here Moses brings out the record of God’s covenant with Noah. He will do so again with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yes, this God could absolutely be trusted. He was true and His predictions were true and His power was true. He was proven!

What are the terms set by God for salvation from judgment? *Come in!* That’s it. Jesus said, “Come unto Me and I will give you *rest*.” Anyone who hears, anyone who’s thirsty, anyone who desires the water of life must simply *come* and receive it without price because the bill has already been paid.

¹⁴ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

Genesis 6:19-21 - ¹⁹ You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of everything—from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground according to their kinds—will come to you so that you can keep them alive. ²¹ Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.”

Some scholars suggest that the Lord would've put all the animals into hibernation. Maybe. There's not really any indication of that. But here we see that Noah had an awesome responsibility to protect *life*. The life of his family. The lives of these creatures. They mattered to God. To do what God was asking him would require a lot of effort, expense, thoughtfulness, and application.

But did you notice the key thing there? In verse 19 we read, “You are...to bring” but in verse 20 we read, “[the animals] will come to you.” You see, God's work is a partnership - one where He does the heavy lifting. He provides all we need to accomplish what seems impossible. He empowers and supplies and accomplishes and we cooperate with *His* work, not the other way around. We call it “Noah's ark,” but as we see here, it's all God's show. As His people, we are simply stage hands serving Him, to bring Him honor, to further His purpose, to join in the impossible. Noah did.

Genesis 6:22 - ²² And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.

Thank God that He did, because *our* lives depended on it. We talked last time about how Noah was a preacher. Peter says that about him. It was important that he preached, but let's not miss the fact that he *practiced* what he preached. He lived his life *in belief* that what God said was going to happen was *actually* going to happen. And so, when the rain came down, the ark floated up.

This ark tells us so much about how God works. Remember, it is an illustration to us of His effort to intervene and save the doomed sinners of earth. Through this story we see that God's work is long-suffering and patient. He waited so long before judgment finally fell. We see that God's work is *always* rooted in His grace. We see that what He does is sufficient for *anyone* who will believe Him. There's plenty of room. And we see that He is generous. Generous to involve us in His good work, generous to supply what we need, generous to give us the strength and the understanding to do what He asks us to do. But we also see that God's work is *exclusive*. No other way. No other boat.

But what about how this story speaks to us about our own lives? Some scholars estimate that Noah was building the ark for 120 years, maybe 100. The folks at *Answers In Genesis* put it somewhere between 55-75 years. From where we sit, that's a lifetime of work. If you've never read *Robinson Crusoe*, I highly recommend it. It's surprisingly Christ-centric. But in one section the book talks about just how difficult it was for Robinson to fell a single tree and start breaking it down to fashion tools and boards from it. The time and the effort. Now imagine Noah and this undertaking.

We imagine the incredible scope and can't help but think, “Well, yeah. That's Noah. He's a *special* servant of God.” So are you! Hebrews declares that we are links in the same chain of cooperation that Noah was a part of. What's even more amazing is that the Bible shows that it's not the *scale* of what you do that matters. You can make an eternal difference by handing someone a cup of water, by writing a letter, by praying for someone, even the countenance of your face.

So, remove the scale for a moment and see Noah's faithful cooperation with God as a *precedent* set for you and I, who continue in his footsteps. What do we see? We see a man being obedient to the Word of God and carrying out his *personal* calling. We see that our work for God is especially

concerned with the family, not at the expense of everyone else, but it is a primary responsibility. We see that though God does the heavy lifting and pours out His grace, it's going to cost us something to participate in the important work of God and it is meant to be a lifelong cooperation with Him. And we see that, when all is said and done, we are meant to be purveyors of salvation. The goal of Christian work is people getting saved. That was the point of building the ark. Not so Noah could say he was the first to do something or that he built the biggest whatever. The point wasn't for him to make a name for himself, but to save people.

Each aspect of the project was very important. In this work of God, you might be the person keeping the pitch warm or passing the boards along or you may be herding some cats into their nest. You may be answering questions about what God has said to some unbeliever passing by. You might be instructing your kids in the ways of the Lord. What's important, what makes *your* work important, is how you follow Noah's example and carry out your calling according to God's Word and His purpose, being ready to receive whatever He brings to you, remembering that a judgment is coming, but salvation is available to anyone who will believe. Find your importance by drawing near to God, and continuing in your trust in Him, continuing in His revealed truth, and continuing in the tradition of Noah.