

THE "ARC" OF THE COVENANT

God saved the earth in a boat that was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high and divided into three levels. It was taller than a 3-story building. It was 90 feet longer than a football field. It is a true story that is confirmed world-wide. In at least five hundred different ancient cultures, you will find a story of the world destroyed by a deluge of water. The Bible gives us the factual details with the why, the when and the how.

Our hero is Noah. The Bible says, *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7).* The story is epoch. To say the flood changed the world is not using hyperbole or exaggeration. In Genesis 7: 11b, 12 it says, *"...all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights."* From the time that Noah and his family walked into the ark and stepped out on the ground was just over a year. What can we learn from this ancient story of Noah?

1. When we live any way we want, we never engage in God's plans and purposes.

Read Genesis 6:1-6. Multiply is what God wants mankind to do. This was the original command given to Adam and Eve, *"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28).* I must note here that God's intention was not only that mankind should multiply, but he is also to control the environment around him. He was commanded to take dominion, which means to subjugate and rule. The problem is, he did not rule himself. *"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32).*

In Genesis 6:2, the sons of God were referred to as the righteous generations of Seth; the daughters of men as the unrighteous generations of Cain. The phrase *"...they took them wives of all which they chose,"* contrasts with Proverbs 3:5

and 6, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."* In all matters, especially those important life-altering decisions, we are to trust God, not our own wisdom. One of the greatest commendations God ever gave a man was when Solomon requested, *"Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in..."* (II Chronicles 1:10a). He phrased it like this in I Kings 3:7, *"...I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in."* God granted to the man who admitted he did not know how to navigate through life the great gift of His wisdom. We are to bring everything to God and allow Him to direct the paths. We see in Genesis 6:4, these hybrid offspring were called *"...Men of renown,"* but the Lord said, *"...it grieved Him at His heart"* (Genesis 6:6). When man runs contrary to God's plans, his purposes will be thwarted.

2. There comes a time when God's tolerance comes to an end.

Read Genesis 6:5-7. *"And God saw that the wickedness was great in the earth...."* Man was doing anything and everything his wild and intemperate mind could imagine and the telling phrase is, *"...his heart was only evil continually."* There was no let-up so God declared, *"And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them"* (Genesis 6:7). Psalm 103:8 says, *"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."* If we continue to shun His mercy and His call to repentance, eventually time runs out: *"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh"* (Proverbs 1:24-26). Proverbs 1:28-31 goes on to say that those in rebellion would call on the Lord, but He will not answer and instead He will give them the rewards for their evil deeds.

3. Never underestimate the power of one surrendered individual.

Read Genesis 6:8,9. We see in the midst of this wicked world, one man stood alone, *"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD"* (verse 8). He walked perfectly with God and pleased His Lord in every way. We often get discouraged because there appear to be overwhelming odds of wickedness around us. Oh, how wise it would be if we would be that one man, that one woman who is *"...just and perfect in his generations..."* (Genesis 6:9). God used

one man, Moses to lead the children of Israel out of bondage. He used one young man named David to defeat the giant Goliath. He used one boy's lunch to feed a multitude.

4. God is a Covenant-Making and Covenant-Keeping God.

Genesis 6:18 tells us, *"But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."* A covenant is not a contract between you and another person; it is a vow between you and God. It may involve another person such as in marriage, but a covenant is primarily a vow to God that is required to be kept. God always keeps His word, *"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations"* (Deuteronomy 7:9).

Noah built the ark within 120 years. God sent the animals two by two to Noah *"...two of every sort shall come unto thee..."* (Genesis 6:20c). The Bible said, *"And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in"* (Genesis 7:16). When the rains fell and the earth opened up her fountains from the deep all the people and animals on the land perished. All died but Noah and his family.

Read Genesis 9:11-16. God declared, *"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth"* (Genesis 9:13). The word for "bow" is the Hebrew word, "qesheth," which is the same word for "battle bow." When a warrior pulls his bow, the arc is aimed toward the man with whom he is at war. Thank God, the arc is not aimed at us as it was in the judgment of the flood. Through His Divine mercy, Christ took the penalty for our sin. The rainbow ever reminds us of this truth.

Have you ever seen the rainbow from the window of a jet? When looking down, you will see the full circle of color. Yet when you look at the rainbow from the earth you see the shape of the bow. What is God saying? God promised He would not destroy all flesh by water again (Genesis 9:15,16). Remember God hates sin; He must judge it. The bow (which is a battle bow) arches upwards toward the heavens. The only way He is able to hold back His judgment upon the wicked world we live in this long is because Jesus took our sins to the cross. The bow was turned and pointed to Heaven after the flood. When God looks at us, it is through the multicolored bull's-eye of His love. You never see the rainbow on a clear day. You see it in the convergence where the sun and a storm come together. Our stormy sins were conjoined to the Son of God on the cross

and a prism of mercy was formed. The rainbow tells us that the Promiser keeps His promises. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (I Timothy 1:15).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.