



Session 2: The Ark

Introduction

- What was impactful for you from last week's study?

Cruising across a lake on a calm summer day is exhilarating. But getting caught in a powerful storm is something totally different.

- If you've been out on a boat or ship in a storm or rough seas, describe the experience.

Technology

It has often been suggested that ancient people were too primitive to have the technology or construction skills to build a vessel like the ark. But our ancestors achieved amazing feats of construction centuries before mankind harnessed fossil fuels and electricity to build internal combustion engines and computers. Consider the great castles and cathedrals of Europe. Consider earlier still the aqueducts, roads and ancient buildings of the Roman Empire.

Go back even further, and you have the great Egyptian pyramids and several other manmade wonders of the ancient world.

But if God created Adam and Eve as intelligent humans, and those first generations lived such extremely long lives together, should it be totally surprising that mankind quickly developed complex technologies in the centuries before the flood? When the Bible described the depravity of Cain's descendent Lamech, it gave us a quick glimpse. His two wives Adah and Zillah bore him three sons who were pioneers in the pre-flood world.

Genesis 4:19-22a

And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. 20 Adah bore Jubal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. 21 His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. 22 Zillah also bore Tubal-Cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron.

- What does Jubal's mastery of string and wind instruments say of the cultural advancement in pre-flood humanity?

- In what ways could the misuse of these various technologies have turned people further from God?

- Which of these developments would seem essential for Noah in building the ark and caring for the animals that came aboard?

The Sturdy Ark

During the great flood, Noah's ark was exposed to incredibly destructive forces. Had it broken up, capsized, or sunk, none of us would be alive today. This is the reason God didn't leave it to Noah's ingenuity as to how to build the ark; instead, He gave him the exact dimensions for his boat. It was crucial its length, width and height be in proper proportion.

But even so, the ark's survival was not based solely on mathematics, engineering and construction. Psalm 46 speaks of God's protective presence in the midst of life-threatening peril. Martin Luther used this psalm as the basis for his powerful hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." As you read the words of this magnificent psalm, consider how well the words apply to Noah and his family huddled together in the ark.

Read Psalm 46.

- Why is it comforting to remember God is always present to help us in every need?

Today's video hinted at plate tectonics and other mechanisms that may have been at play during the flood; these will be discussed in greater depth in the next two sessions. But clearly the ark was exposed to the powerful, hydraulic forces God was using to cleanse sinful mankind from the earth.

There are many similarities between the ark and the flood on the one hand, and Jesus Christ and Judgment Day on the other. In both cases God's wrath is poured out on a hostile, unbelieving world. Again, in both the flood and Judgment Day, God graciously provides a way for people to survive the desolation—the ark and Jesus Christ. Powerful forces battered the ark, threatening to destroy it. Likewise, on Good Friday, powerful enemies joined forces to batter and destroy Jesus Christ.

- Describe the various things Jesus suffered as He bore the brunt of God’s judgment on Good Friday.

One final similarity between the flood and Judgment Day—just as the only survivors of the flood were found within the ark, the only survivors of Judgment Day will be those found in Christ Jesus.

In the 1700s a famous hymn was written. In a striking way it reminds us that just as Noah, his family, and the animals survived by hiding inside the ark, we will only survive Judgment Day by hiding in Jesus Christ:

*“Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure;
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow’r.”*

Noah the Herald

The flood account in Genesis 6-9 doesn’t explicitly say Noah warned his neighbors of the coming flood. But 2 Peter 2:5 calls him “a herald of righteousness,” making it clear he did. While overseeing construction on the ark, he warned his family, neighbors and hired hands of the deluge to come. As the construction of the ark neared completion, its massive dimensions powerfully predicted the global scale of the coming disaster.

- In what way was the ark itself a silent sermon about the coming flood?
- How did the arrival of all those birds and land animals add to Noah’s witness?

Undoubtedly, Noah pointed out the ark and the animals, pleading with his neighbors to come and find salvation with them in the ark. Sadly, none but his immediately family heeded God’s warning and took shelter inside.

- What encouragement can we draw from Noah’s experience when we receive rejection, scorn and ridicule from people with whom we share God’s coming judgment and His free offer of salvation in Jesus Christ?