

A Light in the Valley

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

August 2015
Volume 1
Issue 2

Noah's Wonderful Oaken Ark

by: Kris Brewer

Almost anyone who is familiar with the Bible at all knows the story of Noah's ark from Genesis chapters 6-9. Most people know that Noah was given specific instructions by God concerning the building of the ark and the animals that were to go on it. There were specific dimensions that were provided to Noah, along with some other specific instructions:

Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life;

everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them." Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did (Genesis 6:14–22).

Of particular importance is the closing statement of the inspired writer: "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." God expressed to Noah what he wanted Noah to do,

and Noah was obedient in every detail. He built the ark just as God commanded him to build it. He loaded the ark just as God commanded him to load it.

There are many lessons that can be learned from Noah and the building of the ark. One in particular that is of great importance is that when God gives instructions for how He wants something done, He expects His people to do just as He says. He has gone to the trouble of revealing His mind to us (Ephesians 3:3-7); it should be evident that He intends for us to be obedient!

With the typical mindset of the religious person today, the account of Noah and the ark would certainly be far different from that recorded by Moses in the book of Genesis. The approach that most have when reading God's instructions today is to think that He is merely making suggestions for what we should practice. It is not uncommon for folks today to make the decision that they have a better way of doing things than what God has instructed. It makes one wonder how this philosophy would have worked for Noah?

Imagine, for a moment, that Noah found God's instructions to be flexible, and that he could make changes according to his own preferences. He could have thought that the dimensions God provided were not large enough, and that he needed to add a few cubits in each direction. Surely, if 300 cubits long was good, then 350 cubits long would be even better! Noah could have decided that gopher wood was not as durable as oak, so it would be an improvement to use oak instead. Noah could have decided that he needed to bring more, or fewer, animals into the ark. After all, how could that many animals even fit into such a confined space?

When we consider the possibility of Noah making such changes, we think it to be ludicrous! And we are correct in thinking that. Yet, when it comes to God's instructions for us today, many think nothing of making changes to what they believe to be "better." We can, for instance, read the book of Acts and see what the early church did as they were instructed by the inspired apostles of the first century. We can see how they functioned, in their work and their worship, and know that they were doing what was pleasing to the Lord as they learned under the tutorship of the apostles. But then people come along today and think they can improve on the instructions of the apostles:

- Autonomous groups are not good enough, so we develop national and international organizations for our denominations.
- Doing the work of the church through the church is not good enough, so we develop man made institutions to fulfill those responsibilities.

- Helping needy saints is not a big enough responsibility, so we begin to try and provide benevolence to anyone and everyone who claims to be in some need.
- Singing, as God instructed, is not good enough to keep us entertained, so we add pianos, then stringed instruments, then full bands.
- Being preachers and teachers is not appealing enough, so we start calling men “Reverend” and “Father” and other elitist titles.
- The plain gospel message contains too many expectations, so we minimize those expectations to, “All you have to do is believe...”
- The life of holiness proclaimed by the inspired writers is too demanding, so we excuse all manner of sinful behavior, declaring, “Well, we are all just human.”

The list could certainly be expanded. These illustrate the manner in which men today make changes because they think they can improve upon God’s way. Every one of these is similar to our hypothetical illustration of Noah making changes to God’s instructions for the ark! If we think it would be ridiculous for Noah to make changes to God’s instructions, then we should think it just as ridiculous to make changes to God’s instructions today!

Noah was praised by God because he was willing to do just what he was instructed to do. He did not go beyond what God had told him to do:

Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did (Genesis 6:22).

Would God be able to say the same as He looks at our practices? What makes us think that He would be pleased with our actions if we go beyond what He has instructed? What about when we fall short of doing what He has instructed?

If Noah had chosen to use oak instead of gopher wood, the inspired writer could not have said that he “did according to all that God commanded him.” He also would not have been saved from the flood, because he was chosen by God because of his righteousness (Genesis 6:9). If we are not willing to do just what God has commanded, we cannot be counted as righteous either. May we be diligent to be like Noah, and do just what the Lord has instructed so that we might be pleasing to Him!

The Bible: God's Inspired Word

by: Justin Brewer

Before we begin this study we should clarify that the intended scope is not a comprehensive study of all available evidences on the topic at hand. To attempt such in this brief space would obviously be an insurmountable task. Our goal instead is to provide a few foundational evidences that will aid in the building of faith in God and/or intrigue the reader enough that they to continue their study of the Bible.

While it is possible to look at the world around us and derive that there must be an intelligent designer, this observation alone cannot reveal the mind of that intelligent designer to us. No matter how well we may know another person, we cannot truly know what they are thinking unless they tell us. Many people today will say that if God exists, than He MUST accept certain things based on their own preconceptions rather than looking to the Bible to see what God has revealed His will to be. In 1 Corinthians 2:11, the Apostle Paul establishes the principle that we cannot know the mind of God unless He reveals it to us, just like we cannot know the mind of another person.

There is a rich history of God speaking at various times to various men and women by various methods. In Hebrews 1:1-2, we are told that God “at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...” The idea, as expressed by the writer of Hebrews, is that God has not left us to wonder what He wants of us, but rather has told us. Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where the Apostle Paul writes that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

What is inspiration? How has God revealed His will to us? God the Father used the prophets, His own Son, and the Apostles to convey His will. Consider, for instance, what is said in Deuteronomy 18:18, “I [God is speaking through Moses] will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” The “Prophet” spoken of here is a prophecy not only about the coming of the Christ, but also of how and what Jesus would speak. In John 12:49-50, Jesus says, “For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is ever-

lasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.” Essentially, we have Jesus confirming that He was the Prophet prophesied about in Deuteronomy 18 and that He spoke only the things given to Him by God the Father to speak.

Refer back to Hebrews 1:1 where we were told that God spoke through the prophets in time past, then turn to Isaiah 59:21 where God is speaking to Isaiah the prophet: “As for Me,” says the Lord, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth...” Note the similarities in what is said to the prophet Isaiah here and what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, the Apostles were inspired both to speak and to write. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, Paul writes that now “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” Paul is informing us that he spoke not of his own volition! Like Jesus, he spoke only what the Father had given him to speak. Consider a statement earlier in the same chapter where Paul writes, “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

The Bible has been provided for us through the inspiration of the writers of Scripture. In many instances, these writers were passing on eye witness testimony. In 1 John 1:1-4, John writes,

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard,

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Lane
Bozeman, MT 59715

For more information:

Phone: 304-690-0269

email: contact@gallatinvalleycoc.com

web: <http://www.gallatinvalleycoc.com>

Everyone Welcome!

which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (1 John 1:1–4)

He speaks frequently about how they were bearing witness of the things which they had seen and handled. Likewise, in Luke 1:1-4 it is written, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” To clarify, the passages from 1 John and Luke 1 show us that in addition to being inspired by God, these writers were conveying their eye witness testimonies.

Again, this article is not meant to be a comprehensive study of the inspiration of the Scriptures. There are many, many secondary texts dedicated to showing how we have compiled the manuscripts now known as the Bible and there is far too much to examine here. It is fair to ask questions about how we obtained the Bible, how it has been translated, and how it has successfully maintained its validity over the course of thousands of years. Consider, however, that if God is the intelligent designer of the world, is anything too difficult for Him? Would it be impossible for God to ensure that we have His complete will? How would the rather simple task of translation be too much for Him?

Because God has provided us with His will, we must strive to live within it and to do as He commands us. In Colossians 3:17 we read, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” The term “in the name of” means, essentially, “by the authority of” the person (in this case, Jesus) named, such as the modern term “open up in the name of the law.” Like Jesus and the Apostle Paul (and all other inspired prophets and authors), we must speak in accordance with the word of God (1 Peter 4:11, 2 Timothy 2:15).

As Peter has written, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11).

Appreciating Our Citizenship

by: Stephen Russell

It is a general truth that those who acquire citizenship by choice have greater appreciation of it than those who have it by birth. That makes sense doesn't it? When you put forth effort to gain something you understand its value more than when you obtain something without even so much effort as making a choice. So it is with God's kingdom.

Under the Old Law citizenship was tied to birth and circumcision. Under the Law of Christ we are "grafted in" (Rom. 11:17). In fact even those who were formerly natural citizens have been made aliens and must become naturalized citizens so that we all must be "grafted in" (Rom. 11:19-24). So it stands to reason that citizens of the spiritual kingdom will (on the whole) have a greater love for their citizenship than did the citizens of the earthly kingdom. But what of those Christians who still seem to take their citizenship for granted? What is the cause of such ingratitude?

We must first consider the idea that perhaps they are not citizens. Citizenship means certain proofs will be in place. There is a foundational knowledge that goes hand in hand with becoming a citizen. Jeremiah prophesies of this and the Hebrew writer repeats that there will be a time when "they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother saying, 'know the Lord,' for they shall all know me..." (Heb. 8:11). So if you need to be told to know the Lord, then perhaps you aren't a citizen. Likewise, if you are unaware of basic truths such as the existence of the Holy Spirit then it will indicate that something is lacking (Acts 19:1-5). But some are citizens and fall back into ignorance forgetting what they once knew (Heb. 5:12).

So when someone actually becomes a citizen and then later fails to appreciate it, it really comes down to forgetting some great truths. They forget in whom they have believed. They did not sign on to become subjects of some imperfect monarch or even elected official. They confessed a faith in the Son of God (Matt. 16:16-18) who was and is God (Jn. 1:1) and to whom all authority has been given (Matt. 28:18). They have forgotten what wretched men they were without Christ (7:24) and have stepped away from the wedding feast to return to feasting on vomit (2 Pet. 2:22). They have forgotten that gaining citizenship was the beginning of a commitment, not an isolated event (Phil. 3:12-14). And no doubt they have forgotten a great deal more than that.

I think of some of the things people have done to gain American citizenship, risking life and limb because they are fleeing misery and see something better available. I wonder sometimes if we are half so appreciative of our heavenly citizenships as they are of their earthly ones. Or do we, like our physical predecessors forget the God who delivered us from bondage and into freedom?

Daily Bible Reading

September Reading

September 1	Exodus 34–37	September 16	Numbers 6–7
September 2	Exodus 38–40	September 17	Numbers 8–11
September 3	Leviticus 1–6	September 18	Numbers 12–15
September 4	Leviticus 7–9	September 21	Numbers 16–18
September 7	Leviticus 10–13	September 22	Numbers 19:1–22:40
September 8	Leviticus 14–16	September 23	Numbers 22:41–26:65
September 9	Leviticus 17–20	September 24	Numbers 27–29
September 10	Leviticus 21–24	September 25	Numbers 30–32
September 11	Leviticus 25–27	September 28	Numbers 33–36
September 14	Numbers 1–2	September 29	Deuteronomy 1–3
September 15	Numbers 3–5	September 30	Deuteronomy 4–6

Gallatin Valley Church of Christ
C/O Kris Brewer
PO Box 11111
Bozeman, MT 59719

Mail To:

www.gallatinvalleycoc.com