

## Prayers

### To God

*Pray in silence for the blessing of God and for the gifts of His Spirit to become evident in your soul*

### For myself

Weekly theme: Pray for joy

*Think for a moment about when it is that you feel most powerless and downhearted, upset or disappointed. Pray now for the Lord God to fill you with such joy that these things are overcome for you this day.*

### For others

**Lord God, who holds all things in the palm of yYour own hands, look on us now with mercy. Look at the sin committed throughout the world, and have mercy we pray, for so many people do not know better than to do what they do. Come to us in Your sovereign power to confront the evils of the world, and stand besides the victims of the world's injustices and hatred. Rouse Your church to be the people You made them to be and bring light not just a small part of this world , but to it all. AMEN**

## Meditation

Come in love, my friend, and worship the Lord:  
For He will accept you as you are.

Bring all your troubles and confess your sin:  
For the Lord will hear and forgive.

Bring your hopes and dreams, and wait on Him:  
For the Lord will bless all faithfulness.

Bring your songs and sing your love and praise:  
For the Lord will be glorified in heaven.

Bring your ears to hear the Word of God:  
For the Lord will teach You truth.

Bring your prayers for yourself and others:  
For the Lord will give you His answers.

Bring your desire to walk in peace and truth:  
For the Lord will guide you by His light.

Then go in love, my friend, to serve the Lord:  
For He will be with you always.

## Bible Passage

### Genesis 6:11-22

<sup>11</sup> Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and was full of violence; <sup>12</sup> and God saw that the earth was severely damaged, for mortals had ruined their lives on earth. <sup>13</sup> So God said to Noah,

***'I have decided to put an end to everyone, for the earth is full of violence because of them. I will definitely destroy them with the earth.'***

<sup>14</sup> ***'Make yourself an ark of cypress; make nesting-pens in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and out. <sup>15</sup> This is how you are to build it: length, 300 cubits, width 50 cubits, and height 30 cubits. <sup>16</sup> Make a skylight, and finish the ark a cubit above; and put a door in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks.'***

<sup>17</sup> ***'As for me, I will bring floodwaters over the earth, to destroy everything alive under heaven which has breath. Everything on earth will perish. <sup>18</sup> But with you I will set up my covenant; you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives will enter the ark. <sup>19</sup> You will bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, that you might keep them alive with you. <sup>20</sup> Of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal, of every kind of ground creature, two must come in with you, to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup> Also take with you all the food to be eaten, and store it away to be used as food for you and for them.'***

<sup>22</sup> Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

## Review

Now, the story of the great Flood begins in earnest. The first two verses (6:11,12) summarise the position, before God decides to act. The depravity of people (6:1-10) changes now to the plan of God for saving not just men and women, but the whole of His Creation. We must be quite clear, the future of the world is linked with the future of the human race. The one depends on the other, and Noah is the man God has decided to use for his plan of salvation, a man already described as *'a righteous man, blameless in his generations'* who *'walked with God'* (6:9).

This simple description saying only a little, but it says enough, and whatever goodness God saw in Noah it was sufficient and worthy of His attention. At this point in the Scriptures, we should not expect more from this word, or try to make out some some theology of 'goodness' whereby God is forever happy to accept simple goodness as worthy of His attention. The fact is that not only is Noah a good man by all accounts, but God has chosen him, a man do the line of Seth from Adam and Eve, to be the focus of His salvation plan. There will be

plenty of occasions for Noah to prove his obedience and faithfulness to God's commands, and Noah has consequently been regarded as a model 'good person', even in the New Testament (see 1 Peter 3:20, 2 Peter 2:5).

In our passage today, God firstly decided to reveal His salvation plan to Noah, or at least the part of it that affected him (6:11-13). The sins of humanity had reached the point where the earth itself had been corrupted and '*ruined*' (6:12), so God told Noah that a work of destruction was necessary (6:13). He did not say how the destruction would take place, and He did not say how he would 'save' Noah, but the whole revelation implies God's concern for him, and it is obvious that He spoke to make it clear that in the circumstances, Noah would have something to do. The underlying design of God was to destroy in order that He could re-create. This is an important theme of scripture, and one that is repeated significantly throughout the Bible, not least in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Noah received instructions for an incredibly large shipbuilding venture, to construct a boat with an estimated 43,000 tons displacement (according to modern calculations based upon the dimensions), which God called an 'Ark'. This word means a storage chest for saving things, and enigmatically, it is the same word used later in Israel's history for the box or chest used to house the Ten Commandments, otherwise known as the 'Ark of the Covenant'! Many of the features of the construction of the boat and all the instructions God gave about its loading (6:17-22) are symbolic, but we should not turn up our noses at the notion of 'symbolic'. The pairs of animals to be rounded up and kept in the ark were symbolic of their species, but through their role in the unfolding drama of God's history they would become the progenitors of their own kind.

It is only in verse 17 that we learn about the plan of God to cover the earth with a Flood that will destroy the whole earth. Two very important features of this passage now become clear. Firstly, what is about to happen on earth is an act of de-creation. As one of His first acts of Creation, God separated the waters in order to make an earth and a heaven where all things could exist (Gen 1:6,7). Now, however, He decided to destroy a large part of what He had made on earth by a Flood of water (6:17). All living creatures previously created on earth (Gen 1:24ff), would be killed!

Secondly, God began to reveal his plan of salvation not just through the details of the building of the ark. He told Noah to take his whole family on board, together with two of each kind of 'living creature' (6:19), so that they could be saved and because all else would die. This is described in scripture as an act of 'Covenant' faith (6:18) between God and all who entered the ark. This is the first time that a covenant is mentioned in scripture, and in it, God is completely committed to this Covenant promise to save people and the remnants of creation that will be the seed-bed for the new world. The covenant also requires Noah to care for this remnant of creation within the ark, thus fulfilling his duties under Gen.1:26,28.

This helps us understand the way the writer to the letter to the Hebrews describes Noah's actions recorded here in Genesis;

*'By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.'* (Hebrews 11:7)

## Discipleship

### ***Application***

***How can we justify what God does here?***

How easy it is to think what a terrible God it is who plans to kill all the people in the world. However, we are only looking back on distant past events with the eyes of those who reported it under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is a universal truth of the world in which we live that 'gain comes out of pain', and if the evil that existed in the world at one time was sufficient for God to feel it must be wiped out, then this has become our gain because of the Covenant of Salvation that was born out of those dim and distant events.

### ***The first 'salvation story'***

The story of Noah is the first story of 'salvation' in the Bible, and this may be one reason why it is memorable and well known even in today's world where many people know little of the Bible. The opening of the story focuses our attention on the Covenant of God with Noah, and Noah's trust and obedience in God who commissioned the Ark. It also anticipates the faith of those who would travel in the Ark in circumstances that were unknown to them.

### ***Is the Flood a 'real' event?***

Arguments amongst academics today about the reality of the Flood are intensive and divisive, and have been for a long time. Adding to this debate, there are a number of fairly recent books which attempt to prove the reality of the Flood and the landing place of the Ark from a plethora of information from either folk sources or scientific endeavour. There is little doubt that cataclysmic events took place in ancient times in the Near Middle East, some of which could well account for the Flood; so belief in the Flood as an event is not, at least for me, an issue. What is important is to interpret the story we have in scripture and find the truths God has given us within it.

### ***Ideas for what to do***

- *Each of us can only be true to our calling as it has been given to us. I suggest that you take time to prayerfully consider this issue. What is your calling, and are you fulfilling it?*
- *If you have the opportunity, try to speak to people outside of the church about the story of Noah and find out what they think of it. If possible, try to explain the purpose of God to rebuild the earth after the sins of people had destroyed it, and again, see what response you get.*

### ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. What mental picture of the Ark did you have before this study, and has this changed by studying the text?
2. What do you know about the meaning of the word 'Covenant' in scripture, and how does this compare with its use here?
3. Is Noah unique in history? Has anyone else been asked to do something unique for the salvation of the world and all things? Who and why?

## **Final Prayer**

God of love, power, glory, truth and grace; open up Your blessings to us. We long to serve You, but feel that there is much for us to learn before we can be of use to You. Help us to

take confidence in the presence of Christ with us now, and on that foundation, anticipate greater things. In Your name, Lord God; **AMEN**