

Two by Two – Seven by Seven First Covenants

The Bible Study

What you will need

- Bible, pen and note pad for each participant
- A stone to add to the altar. Painted in the shape and colours of the rainbow
- Put a small plastic toy animal for each participant on centre table, (available at \$2 shop)
- Use a children's toy ark, rainbow puzzle or anything else suitable as the table centrepiece
- Supper - Animal biscuits



"I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:13 (NIV)

When most people are asked how many animals of each kind Noah took on the ark, they will quickly give the "Sunday School" answer, two. This is not exactly the correct answer and if it were, it would have had some serious consequences to the survival of some of the animals. If a Bible Scholar went no further than Genesis 6:17-22 in their study, they would miss out on the wonderful provision that God made for those chosen to survive the flood.

Let's read Genesis 7:1-3

So we learn that Noah was instructed to take seven pairs of all the animals approved for eating and sacrifice and one pair each of the other animals. God stated that there must be a male and female in every pair as this was to ensure the survival of every kind of living creature.

Let's read Genesis 6:3

This verse helps us understand that God reached the end of His patience with the human population and gave 120 years longer to live before He would destroy the earth by means of the flood. At that time Noah would have been 480 years old. God gave Noah instructions to build the ark and to gather the supplies needed to sustain the lives of his family and the animals that would be on the ark. We can only imagine the reaction of Noah's extended family and his neighbours when they began to notice the strange building project taking shape on Noah's property. If this story were to take place today in our world, Noah would have had to get a building permit and as the animals arrived he would have had to get some kind of permit for his zoo. In some places it would take 120 years to just get the permits let alone begin building the massive ark.

- Think of what "Noah and Sons Ark Builders Ltd" would have faced to accomplish this huge project. With God's help the impossible happened.

Jesus made a comparison between the days of Noah and the days of the Son of Man regarding the state of humankind. (Matthew 24:36-41) People were going about the business of life up to the day Noah entered the ark. After 120 years of seeing the eccentric Noah and Sons building an ark, gathering supplies and animals the people did not seem to notice or heed the warning about the end of the world.

The Church continues to preach about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the World as we know it. Is the "world" paying attention? Are we paying attention? Are you ready?

Genesis 7:5 tells us that Noah did exactly as the Lord commanded him. Faith, real faith in God requires obedience. It could not have been easy for Noah and his family to really believe what God told them. Humankind had not known destruction on that level before the flood occurred. It would have been a great stretch of imagination to understand the need for such a huge ark. Then they needed to comprehend how it would be humanly possible to gather the animals of the world and have them actually enter the ark. God was asking Noah and his family to do an impossible task that required huge leaps of faith and a life of complete commitment to the project.

We do not know if Noah's sons were married before the building of the ark began. If they were not married, it might have made it difficult for them to get married. Can you imagine any sane father giving permission for his daughter to marry into the Noah family? Can you imagine any sane woman agreeing to join the crew? These unnamed women had to be great women of faith to have married or stay married into the Noah family after God gave His instructions to Noah. We also have to give great credit to Mrs. Noah. She is another unnamed character in this story, but she also must have been a woman of great faith both in her husband and in God.

- Imagine how you would feel if one of your family members told you about the conversation they had with God and the seemingly impossible thing God was requiring you to do. Imagine if they told you that God told them to build a time capsule-like ship big enough to hold your family and the representation of all the animals of the world for what would seem like 14 months while the earth was destroyed and rebuilt. Then they told you that you had about 7 years to accomplish this task. How would you deal with the news? How hard would you work to make sure all of your loved ones made it into the ship?

Genesis 8:1 is a key verse to the story as it tells us that God remembered about the survivors in the ark and began to prepare the world for them. He ceased the flood, the rains and the storm. He sent a wind to blow so that the flood water would recede and the land would dry. Two birds were singled out at this point in the story, the raven and the dove. The raven would have gone into the ark with only its mate as it is a bird not considered suitable for eating or as an offering. The dove would have entered with its mate and six other pairs of doves. The raven was released and did not return to the ark but flew until the earth was dry.

Ravens are birds that quickly adapt to their surroundings and are quite adept at survival. Doves have more specific requirements for their nesting and survival. Ravens are able to eat fish and dead things where doves require seeds and more specific foods. When Noah released the dove, it returned because there was no dry place. A week later Noah released it again and it returned with an olive leaf in its beak. A dove with an olive branch in its beak has come to symbolize an offering of peace. Perhaps it was bringing the olive leaf back to the ark to begin building a nest. The third time the bird was released, it did not come back. By then it found a suitable nesting site and nesting materials along with food.

- Do either of these birds appear in the Bible again? If so, can you think of their stories?

Finally Noah receives instruction from God that he can leave the ark and release the animals. The Bible says they came out, pair by pair. After they exited the ark, Noah built an altar and sacrificed the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. (This is one of the reasons it was so important for Noah to bring seven pairs of the birds and animals approved for eating and sacrifice.) The Bible tells us that the Lord was pleased with the sacrifice and said to Himself that He would never again curse the earth and destroy it completely again. He promised that as long as the earth remains its seasons would continue.

God gave instructions to the Noah family to be fruitful and multiply. He gave them stewardship over the earth. They were forbidden to eat the blood of animals and they were forbidden to kill people. This reinforced that all people are made in the image of God. (Genesis 9:6) God made a covenant with Noah, his family and the animals that He would never again send a flood to destroy the earth. The rainbow is the sign of this covenant and a sign that God keeps his promises. The rainbow reminds us of God's faithfulness and that He is a promise keeper. It should also remind us to keep our promises to God. When we make a promise or enter into an agreement, we will be held accountable by God to keep our promise or agreement. Be very careful about what you promise.

- Have you entered into any covenant with God?
- Look at Matthew 5:36-38. What does Jesus say about making and keeping promises?

Let's place the altar stone.

Ask each person to choose a plastic animal from the centre piece to take home.