

## **“Things Written in Earlier Times...”**

### **NT Lessons from the Flood**

**Intro:** A few weeks ago I shared a couple of quotes about history and the differing attitudes people have toward it. One thing is for sure. People who do not learn the lessons of history are destined to repeat them. The writers of the NT believed that. The apostle Paul affirmed the value of knowing the accounts of the OT. He wrote to the Romans:

*“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*  
(Romans 15:4)

**Earlier to the Corinthians he had written about the sins of the Israelites in the wilderness observing:**

*“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”* (1 Corinthians 10:11)

**And so in keeping with this principle, the apostles and prophets of the NT often appealed to the history of the OT to instruct God’s new covenant people.**

**A new monthly series: “things written in earlier times...”**

**One of the historical events that NT evangelists referred to often was the great flood of Genesis 6-9. They used it to teach valuable lessons for their generation. Those lessons are still needed today. Let’s consider some NT lessons from the flood.**

**Jesus appealed to the flood to warn of the unexpectancy of future judgment and the dangers of complacency.**

***On two different occasions Jesus urged his listeners to learn an important lesson from the people who lived at the time of the flood.***

*“For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”* (Matthew 24:37–39)

*“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”* (Luke 17:26–27)

***The people of Noah’s day received warnings of God’s impending judgment through Noah’s preaching and through watching him construct the ark.***

***Yet, they refused to believe his message and ignored his warnings. They were preoccupied with the affairs of this life. They were complacent and did not comprehend the judgment that was coming upon them. And a result they were unexpectedly swept away by the flood.***

***Jesus used their example to urge the people of His generation to take seriously his warnings of His coming and the judgment that would ensue.***

He warned them to beware of being caught off guard.

He urged them to be alert and prepared for His coming.

*“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. “For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.” (Matthew 24:42–44)*

Paul stressed this truth to the church at Thessalonica.

*“For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2–6)*

**Peter appealed to the flood to show that God will punish false teachers.**

***Peter begins 2 Peter 2 with the observation that just as there were false prophets in the OT, so there would false teachers among God’s NT people.***

*“BUT false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;” (2 Peter 2:1–2)*

***But what evidence is there to suggest that God would bring such men to judgment? Peter responds with a list of people of the past who experienced God’s judgment for their sin. He first points out that God did not even spare angels that sinned against him; but then reminds them of a lesson they could learn from the account of the flood:***

*“and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;” (2 Peter 2:5)*

***Lest anyone think God is too loving or too merciful to judge wicked people Peter offers the flood account as an example of God’s divine wrath.***

***Through the flood, God depopulated the earth of wickedness sparing only righteous Noah, along with seven family members. This example sets the precedent for a future and final judgment on the wicked false teachers Peter warns about.***

**Peter also appealed to the flood to show that there will be a final destruction of the present world.**

*God revealed through Peter that in the last days some would mock God's promise of a coming judgment. They would base their mockery on their belief that all things had continued as they were from the beginning. Even today there are those who advocate the philosophy of uniformitarianism. It is the belief that things on earth have essentially continued as they were from the beginning. But Peter found an easy way to refute this false view of his world. He pointed to the account of the flood.*

*"For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water." (2 Peter 3:5–6)*

*Peter affirms that the unbelievers would mock the promise of the second coming based on a false view of history. Peter corrects it! His point is that just as God brought destruction on the ancient world, so also He will in His own time bring destruction upon the present heavens and earth. Just as God had destroyed the world by a flood, so in the future He will destroy the world by fire.*

*"But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7)*  
*And as for the delay, Peter explains that it is not to be attributed to a uninformatarian view of history, but rather to the longsuffering or patience of God and His transcendence over time itself.*

*We are limited in the time we have and are often in a hurry; but God is not subject to the pressures of time. He can wait as long as He wants to bring about His purposes.*

*"But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)*

*Moreover God's delay is rooted in his desire that as many people as possible be saved. The long delay provides the opportunity for more people to hear the gospel and be motivated by it to repent.*

*"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)*

**Peter also appealed to the flood to show how God can use water as an instrument through which to bring salvation.**

*Ordinarily we would not think of the water of the flood being a source of salvation, but rather the object of God's destruction. Maybe this is why the NASB translates with these words, "eight persons were brought safely through the water."*

*But this translation misses the point Peter is making. He is comparing how water was instrumental in the salvation of the Noah in the OT, and the church in the NT. Just as Noah and his family were saved by water; so Peter affirms that baptism (in water) saves us!*

*“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”*  
(1 Peter 3:18–22)

***Peter is quick to point out that it’s not the mere act of washing, but that baptism saves the believer through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our faith in the resurrected Lord.***

**The Hebrew writer appealed to the flood to show how God rewards an obedient faith.**

*The Hebrew writer sought to help these Christians who were growing weary by teaching them that they must live by a faith like that of those who lived before them. That faith required that they trust God’s promises concerning the unseen, and based upon them, act in obedience to His will, enduring whatever hardship might come. The examples of this chapter illustrate beautifully those features of true faith. Among them is the example of Noah and flood.*

*“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”* (Hebrews 11:7)

***Even though Noah had never seen a flood like that the Lord promised, he was moved by reverent fear to do as the Lord had commanded him. His obedience, when contrasted to the world about him, condemned the world and consequently he became an heir of righteousness which is by faith.***

**Finally all of these writers affirm the historicity of the Genesis account.**

*The fact that Jesus, the apostle Peter, and the Hebrew writer all appealed to this event is solid evidence that the universal flood was no mere myth but an actual event. They regarded it as a factual account of what had occurred many centuries before and had been recorded by Moses for the instruction of God’s people. The references to the flood are not mere literary references; they are historical references!*

***Today many people will question whether this event really happened or will seek to make it a local flood of much less consequence. Even some modern theologians will align themselves with unbelieving atheists who have a desire to reject not only the flood but the God of the flood!***

**Conclusion: Perhaps you've know the story of flood since childhood; but it is no childhood story. It serves to teach us sobering and encouraging lessons about how God deals with His creation. Let us learn the lessons these NT writers gave based on "things written in earlier times."**