

Come Inside It's Going to Rain

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark.

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Watch therefore; for you know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Matthew 24:35-42

A Favorite Bible Story

The story of Noah and the ark and the great flood is certainly one of the best known of all the Bible stories. It is a children's

favorite. I am sure that probably everyone in this audience could tell the story by memory. I must confess that it is my favorite Bible story in the Old Testament.

A Funny Story

I hope I am not like the old preacher that I heard about who just loved to preach about Noah, the ark, and the great flood. It was his favorite Bible story and he loved to preach about it so much that he fell into a rut and preached on it every Sunday morning. He just couldn't get away from preaching about Noah and the congregation was getting tired of it. But it didn't get better, it only got worse. He also started preaching on it every Sunday night as well as every Sunday morning. The congregation murmured a lot and there were complaints. It didn't get any better, it only got worse, he began teaching about it on Wednesday night at Bible Study and Prayer Meeting. It finally got so bad that he even brought it in to his funeral services.

Well along about this time, there was a big wedding coming up in the community. The mayor's daughter and a prominent young attorney were getting married and they had asked the old preacher to do the honors. He agreed. Two mischievous boys in the church were discussing it and one said to the other, "I bet he even brings Noah into that wedding. It's time someone put a stop to it." These two boys went down to the church house and they found the old preacher's Bible on the pulpit. So they searched through the Bible until they found the story of Noah and the ark there in the book of Genesis, and they took a pair of scissors and cut out one of the pages. Then they snipped up some of the verses and pasted them on top of other verses, even glued a couple of pages together and then closed the Bible and left it there on the pulpit. The old minister was unaware that anyone had tampered with his Bible. So when the big day ar-

rived, "everyone" that was "anyone" showed up. It was the biggest society event of the season. The old preacher, figuring that all the important people of the town would be there for the occasion, had really prepared for the occasion because he wanted to impress the people with what a good preacher he was. He had memorized the wedding ceremony and he stood in front of that august crowd and started repeating it by memory just like it was an oration. But right in the middle of it something reminded him and he reached for his Bible on the pulpit. When he did the two boys nudged each other and said, "Here it comes, here it comes." Sure enough they guessed right because he opened his Bible to Genesis. He said, "You know this wedding reminds me of my favorite Bible story." So he began to read, "And when Noah was 140 years old he took unto himself a wife, 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits in width, and 30 cubits in depth. Be smeared within, without, and with pitch."

And suddenly he paused in the midst of laughter. He realized what he had said and he reread the passage and got red in the face and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen something is wrong; I have been preaching the Lord's word for more than 50 years and this is my favorite Bible study, but I didn't even know this part of it was in the Bible. Nevertheless, it still proves my point; a woman is an unusual character."

The Sermon

I am not going to retell the story, I'm simply going to make some comparisons. I want you to notice that just as Noah built the ark, so Christ built the Church. God gave the plan to Noah for the building of the ark and Christ has given the plan for the building of the Church.

I. So in the first place, I want you to observe with me that Noah built just one ark. He did not build an ark on top of every hill, and he did not go around preaching to the people saying,

“One ark is just as good as another; take your choice.” God’s plan was that Noah would build one ark for the saving of the whole world.

What does it remind you of? It reminds me of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who came into the world to build one church. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, “UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH.” And this is the only church that Jesus ever built, His own church. So we are not concerned about all the denominations that exist in this world of today built by men. We are concerned about the church Jesus built.

Un-Denominational Christianity

This congregation is one of several thousand congregations throughout this world that seeks to exemplify and promote an undenominational, Christian faith. Denominationalism is a system that tries to divide believers into different groups and tries to make them Christians of a certain brand or type. Denominationalism gives human names more prominence than the name of Christ and denominationalism introduces practices like sprinkling and infant baptism, which have no warrant in New Testament teachings and so denominationalism causes the witness of the church to be frustrated by divisions not of the will of Christ.

We also hear a lot about interdenominationalism. Interdenominationalism seeks to get competing denominations to cooperate in community and social projects and tends to reduce the symptoms of denominational infection without curing the disease, which is denominationalism itself. We believe the church can be just what Christ intended it to be by conforming in essentials to the requirements for the church laid down in the New Testament.

To what denomination did the 3,000 baptized on the day of Pentecost belong? You know as well as I know, they did not

belong to any denomination. They just belonged to Christ and His church. To what denomination did the Ethiopian baptized there in Acts 8 belong? You know as well as I that he didn't belong to any denomination, he simply belonged to Christ and to His church. So, the Church of Christ or Christian Church is undenominational because we are working for the unity of all believers of Christ. We believe the only way this unity can be achieved is to restore Christ's Church in its teaching, its practices, and its simplicity. We plead with all believers in Christ to help in this glorious work of restoration.

Now it is possible that some of you are saying, "Well, I see your point. You think you are the only one that is right and you think your church is the only one that is right and that everyone ought to join your denomination." Well, now if that's what you think I am driving at, you missed the point. I do not have the church, I do not belong to any denomination, and therefore I am not pleading with anyone to join my church or denomination, because I do not have any. I am simply pleading that we will all follow Jesus and belong to His church. The best I can understand the plea of the Church of Christ; this IS the plea: that we will simply belong to Christ and be members of His church without any denominational affiliation. So Noah built one ark; Christ built one church.

II. Noah built this ark out of one material. God said make me an ark out of Gopher wood. There were many other kinds of wood available. No doubt there were plenty of sidewalk superintendents, and as Noah built the ark, I'm sure they came along with their suggestions, "Why not build it out of pine wood? Why not use oak wood? Why not build with this type of material?" But Noah rejected all of these suggestions saying, "I must do what God commanded." Noah realized that even one plank of some other kind of material would cause the ark to sink when the flood came. The orders of God must be obeyed.

What does it remind you of? It reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ who built His one church out of one material. The

one material that makes up the Church of Christ is what? Brick? Block? Stone? Wood? NO! The Church of Christ is not a building. The Church of Christ is the body of Jesus according to the New Testament. The scriptures say that we are members of His body. So the church is made up of people. People like you and me. People who are willing to repent of their past sins. People who are willing to surrender themselves in full obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ are the material that make up the church that Jesus built.

III. Noah built one ark, out of one material, for one purpose. What was that purpose? Was it to be used as a pleasure yacht? Or perhaps a speed boat? Maybe a fishing boat? No! The purpose of the ark was far more serious; it was to be used as a lifeboat. Noah's ark was to be used to save people from the terrible flood that was going to cover the entire earth.

It reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ who built His one church out of one material for one purpose. What is the purpose of Christ's Church? Well some seem to think the purpose is to get together and have a Pot Luck supper once a month. Nobody likes to eat more than I do, but that is not the purpose of Christ's Church. It's not to bring us together to eat. Others seem to think the purpose of the church is to get together with your friends and to shake hands and exchange the latest news. There's nothing any nicer than to get together with your friends and to shake hands and hear the latest news, but that is not the purpose of the church. The purpose of the church that Jesus built is that the church is to serve like a lifeboat. It is the purpose of Christ's Church to carry us safely from this earth to Heaven that we might escape the fires of Hell.

A "Crazy" Man

In my mind's eye, I can see Noah as he must have appeared sort of on the "nuts" side to the people of his day. Here he was, high up in the hills, building a great big ship; twenty miles from the nearest creek that wouldn't even float a canoe and he was

preaching to the people. Everyone who came around heard the same sermon, "Come inside, it's going to rain!" Noah preached. The people laughed, they said he was a "religious nut, a crazy man, a fanatic."

I am sure Noah's best friends came to him and said, "Look Noah, they are going to come and lock you up in the mental institution if you don't change your tune. Now if you really believe this, why don't you build a raft and hide it in the bushes somewhere. Then when all this water comes that you are talking about, why you can crawl on your raft and float away to safety and the rest of us poor devils will drown, but in the mean time you won't be making such an idiot out of yourself preaching this silly stuff about all this water that you say that's going to come."

He Obeyed God

Noah said, "I'm sorry, I appreciate your advice, but God has spoken. God has told me that it is going to rain. God has instructed me to build this ark. I must do what God has commanded." So the Bible says there in Genesis 6, "Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he." And it is the same way today, those of us who believe with all of our hearts that the Bible really is God's word, are laughed at. Those of us who really believe in the church that Jesus died to establish, are ridiculed. Those of us who believe that there really is a Heaven and that there really is a Hell, are called religious fanatics. We are fools in the eyes of the world. I don't know if that disturbs you or not. It doesn't disturb me. I intend to go right on believing what the old book teaches.

The Majority? Or Minority?

Look what happened in Noah's day. Everybody who

laughed at Noah and ridiculed him, perished in the flood. I tell you it is good to be on the winning team. It may appear right now that we are not on the winning team, because the majority of the people ridicule and say that the Bible is nothing but a fairy tale. The devil certainly has the majority of the people, no question about it. But that doesn't discourage me because God's people have always been in the minority. It was true in Noah's day; there were only eight who believed God. That was Noah, his wife, their sons, and their wives. Everyone else in the world rejected God's word. They were in the majority and they drowned. But God's minority was on the winning side. I am glad to know that we can be on the winning side. The Church of Jesus Christ is going to be victorious and all that laugh at God's word and ridicule will certainly perish when the Day of Judgment comes.

IV. Noah built one ark, out of one material, for one purpose, with one window. Doesn't it seem strange that as large of a ship as the ark was and yet there was only the one window, but apparently everyone had enough light. When we read the scriptures we find that the window went all the way around the top of the ark, so that everyone could see. Not that the window was the light, the light came from the sun. The window just let the light in.

Where the Bible Speaks!

What does this remind you of? It reminds me of Jesus who built one church, out of one material, for one purpose, with one window. The window in the Church of Christ is the Bible. Now notice that the Bible is not the light, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," but the Bible is the window. When we open the window and read it then Jesus Christ, the True Light, can shine in and light our pathway to Heaven.

V. Noah built one ark, out of one material, for one pur-

pose, with one window, and one door. There was only one way to get into the ark. There was no back door, no side door, no secret door, it reminds me of the Lord Jesus who built one church, out of one material, for one purpose, with one window, and one door.

Jesus the Door

Yes, there is just one way to come into Christ's Church. What is the one door, the one way to come into the Church? Well, Jesus settled that forever when He said in John 10:9, "I am the Door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Christ Jesus, the Founder of His church, the Head of His church, the Foundation of His church, and He is also the Door that leads into His church.

4 Steps Lead Into the Door

Many times there are steps that lead up to a door. So there are steps that lead up to Christ, the Door of the church. *The first step* that leads up to Christ, the Door, is the step of *faith*. The Bible teaches us that we cannot be saved without faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If we are willing to take that first step and put our faith in God, then we are ready for the second step that leads up to the door which is Christ.

The second step is repentance. Jesus says in Luke 13:3, "I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." If we will put faith in God and repent of all of our sins then we are ready for the third step that leads to Christ, the Door of the church.

The third step is public confession of His name. In Matthew 10:32 Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before

man, him I will confess also before My Father, which is in Heaven." If we will believe, repent of our sins, and confess the Lord Jesus then we are ready for the fourth step.

The fourth step is Christian baptism. I want you to notice what the Bible says about Christian baptism, in Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." So there is only one way to enter the door of the church, of course, the door of Christ. In John 10:9, Jesus says, "I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." The only way to enter the door is by Christian baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." That's why Jesus says in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." So if we'll put our faith in Him and repent of our sins and confess His name and be buried with Him in Christian baptism then we have entered Christ the door and are members of His church.

God Shut the Door!

I want you to notice it took 120 years to build the ark. All that time Noah preached God's word and invited the people "to come inside before it rained." Then at the end of that period of time, God shut the door. God had a time limit, when his time limit expired, the door was shut and it was too late for anybody else to be saved. God did not allow Noah to shut the door because that would have made Noah the judge. Maybe he would've closed the door too soon or maybe he would have left the door open too long. God Himself was the final Judge.

The End of the World!

There is coming a day when God's time limit will once again expire. Yes, God does have a time limit. Right now we are living in the days of God's grace; when the door of the church is open, when all men everywhere are invited to come into the church

and be saved. But the door will be shut. When will that happen? That's the very question the disciples were asking Jesus in our text Matthew 24:35-42: When is the end going to come? When will God shut the door? To answer their question Jesus said, "No man knoweth the day nor the hour; only God knows." It could be tonight. Yes, this might be the last sermon. We might be approaching the last invitation. This could be God's last call to you. So I want to ask, on which side of the door are you, right now? It could make all the difference.

Look at the difference it made in Noah's day. I can picture him now, standing there before the great crowd, preaching his final message. The animals had begun to gather and they were going on-board two by two, what a phenomenon it was! How the crowds murmured, "What does this mean?" As the elephants, the giraffes, hippopotamus, rhinoceros, the dogs, the cats, all the different animals were going on-board two by two. No doubt many of the curious were getting afraid and they said, "Do you suppose that this is really true?" Others laughed and said, "Oh, don't be silly. This man Noah is crazy as a fool." About that time Noah stood up and said, "Hear me, my friends, I'm going to tell you again God has spoken to me. The end is coming. God has told me that waters are going to cover the whole earth. I have built this ark that we might be saved from the flood. Oh, please won't you come inside before it rains." All of the people laughed.

One of the reasons that they found it so hard to believe was because it never had rained up to that time in the history of the world. The earth had always been watered by mist. They didn't know what rain was, they'd never seen rain before; so since it had never happened, why should they believe it was going to happen now?

Where Is Jesus?

Doesn't that seem familiar to our time, when people say,

“Well, where is He? For almost 2000 years people have been saying, ‘Jesus is coming again, Jesus is coming again.’ Where is He? We don’t see Him. What evidence do we have that He is coming? He hasn’t come; we don’t believe He will come.”

Yes, Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be when the Son of Man shall come.” People will not expect His coming. Jesus taught us, “So it will be sudden when we will be least prepared.” Jesus said, “BE READY!” Well, Noah preached the sermon and the people would not believe and would not obey. So, his family went on-board and God shut the door.

Not a Drop of Water Fell!

Most folks think it started raining immediately, but the Bible says it didn’t rain a drop for seven days. Can you imagine what a testing time that must have been for Noah and his family? I can hear one old atheist shouting now, “Hey Noah, how does it smell in there with all those animals? Shooooo! Nice, fresh air out here, Noah. You’d better come on out.” I can hear another old atheist shouting, “Hey Noah, where’s all that rain you talked about? Not a cloud in the sky. The sun is shining.” The crowd roared with laughter. I can hear another old atheist shouting, “Hey Noah, what are you going to do when the food runs out and the animals get hungry? Those lions will make mincemeat out of you, Noah.” The crowd laughed.

Then the Water Fell!

Yes, for seven days they ridiculed and laughed, but then the sky grew black, the lightning flashed and the thunder roared and the water poured down. When it was too late, the crowd ran to the ark crying and pleading, “Open the door, Noah. Give us

one more chance." I'm sure many of them knocked on the side of the ark in vain saying, "Noah, we believe you now. Please, Noah, please don't let us drown in this flood. Please, just open the door and we'll come inside." But it was too late, the last sermon had been preached, the door was shut, and they all drowned.

A Heart Breaking Story

A few years back, I was travelling for the North American Christian Convention holding rallies. I held a rally out at Seattle, Washington and the next night I was supposed to be in San Francisco. So I was flying the next morning on the airplane down to San Francisco and we passed over the Columbia River. When we flew over the Columbia River, the pilot called our attention to where we were. So I quickly got up out of my seat and looked out the window and spotted that little island down there at the mouth of the Columbia, where it divides and flows into the Pacific Ocean. I remembered a terrible tragedy that had taken place on that island a few years previously.

A wealthy, young, business man purchased that island and moved there during the spring of the year with his young wife and their baby. He had been so successful in business but had developed a bad case of ulcers because of the pressures of his business. He, his wife, and the baby moved on the island in the spring of the year so he could get away from it all and be free from all worry and just rest and regain his health. They didn't even have a telephone on the island. They didn't even have a boat. There was just a flimsy, little, foot bridge that connected their island to the mainland.

That year there were floods along the Columbia River. As the river authorities always do, they moved up and down the low lands warning everybody to move out because the floods were coming. When they came to the mouth of the river, they warned this young man and his wife like they had with everyone

else. He was a good talker, he convinced them that they would leave, but as soon as they left he laughed at them and he said to his wife, "They aren't going to frighten us off, we are going to stay right here because there is no danger." Foolishly his wife said, "Whatever you think, Honey." They ignored the warning and stayed on.

A couple of days later, the river authorities came with the final warning and they were shocked to discover this family still on the island. So they were angry and they warned them under no uncertain terms that the flood was coming and that they must leave immediately. They even threatened to bodily evacuate them. But again, the young man really talked his way out of it and assured them that they would certainly leave within the hour and that they should not worry about them and go on to warn others. So with his absolute promise that they would leave, the authorities moved on. No sooner did they leave than he laughed at them and said, "Do you think I would ever have purchased this island if there was any danger of a flood coming up over our cabin? I checked into the history of this river, I know what I'm talking about and we're not leaving." Again his wife said, "Whatever you say, Honey." They went to bed that night thinking they were safe, not realizing the terrible danger.

It was about midnight when a great wall of water rolled down the Columbia River and the young man was awakened by the angry rushing sound of those flood waters. He jumped out of bed, startled, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he shook his wife and said, "Get up quick! Those fellows weren't joking, we've got to get out of here right now!" He said, "I'll get the baby, you get the other stuff. Let's go!" He rushed over to the baby's crib and he scooped his arms underneath and he began to carry the bundle as he waded through the darkened, swirling, flood waters towards the little foot bridge that connected their island to the mainland.

Even as he stepped up on that bridge, the water was beginning to lap up over and he realized that an old tree trunk, log, or

board could hit that bridge at any moment and it would pop like a match stick and they would be swept out in the Pacific and drown. So he prayed earnestly and sincerely, "Oh God, help me to get across this bridge before it breaks." Fortunately he reached the other side safely, but when he looked back his wife was nowhere in sight. He began to scream at the top of his lungs, calling his wife's name and urging her to hurry. She was back at the cabin picking up things. As someone will often do in an hour of crisis, she was thinking of losing their worldly possessions. She was thinking, "I can't give this up. I can't lose this." Here she was bundling up things while her very life was in danger. But she heard the urgent cries of her husband and so she put the stuff she collected in a bundle and threw it over her shoulder and started wading through the flood waters towards the bridge. When he finally saw her on the other side he began to pray for his wife, "Oh dear God, please help her get across safely." She did, but no sooner had she reached Oregon soil until she dropped the bundle and something hit that bridge and it just popped like it had been a toothpick. The pieces were swept out into the ocean and they were cut off. It was that narrow an escape.

They both breathed a sigh of relief. She said, "You are going to have to carry this bundle it's too heavy. Let me have the baby." She reached out and touched her husband. The moment she touched his arm, she screamed, "Where is the baby?" He said, "What is the matter with you?" Quickly she undid the covers and here he stood with an arm full of blankets and there was no baby. In the haste to escape maybe he had scooped his arms down into the crib and just picked up the blankets and accidentally left the baby or maybe somehow as he waded through the flood waters that baby had slipped from his arms and he didn't even know it. They never recovered the body and they will never know until their dying day just what did happen to their baby. They will always blame themselves because they ignored the warning and they waited until it was too late to save

the child.

(Ard Hoven gave me this illustration.)

The Door Is Still Open

With all the love that there is in my heart I have tried tonight, once again to sound the warning. Judgment Day is coming, the last sermon will be preached, the last invitation will be given and this might be it! If you listen you may hear the sound of the hammer and the nails and soon the trumpet may sound and the church, the ark of the 20th century, may set sail. On which side of the door are you right now?

Please accept Jesus as your Savior, obey Him in baptism, enter Christ the door before it is too late!

This is the *best loved*, and *most often* preached sermon of Evangelist Reggie Thomas. He has preached this sermon in 53 nations and literally thousands have obeyed the Gospel after hearing this message.