

## Noah

There are many parts of the Bible that might help us in these strange times. Jesus instruction “no to worry. consider the lilies of the field” springs to mind, there are so many others.

But rather than the Bible showing us something new, sometimes life’s events throw a new light on a well known story.

I looked around for some story in the bible that was of a global disaster, or people being shut in - and the story of Noah popped up.

Now I love Genesis 1 - 11, and there are amazing levels of meaning and such depths in those chapters. Some of those tales I would count as myths or legends, the garden of eden is telling us about the nature of humanity and god, not about actual events, in my view (of course they could have happened, I just don’t think they did like that - or I should say, the things that they teach us don’t have to have happened in order to be true or useful).

But the story of the Flood has a lot of evidence to back it up. Firstly there are the other stories written at the time - the Ancient Near Eastern Texts - like the Gilgamesh or Ennuma Elish. Written pre 1000 BCE, all talk of a great flood. They say worldwide, but they mean, their known world. And of a human, building a box like craft, and being saved. So its not just in the bible. Then there is the geographical evidence of silt around the Mediterranean basin, showing a giant flood in the area. Finally there is the archeology of a box like structure, fitting the dimensions of the ark, on the side of Mount Ararat in Turkey. The wood has long rotted, but the shape is remarkable.

Some people take all this as proof of the Bible, some argue against all these in the hope of disproving the Bible. I don't want to join in that game. Nor do I want to think about the other aspects of Noah’s story - why choose him? What does it say about God? etc. What I do want to think about, is what was it like for Noah?

You see I’ve never thought about it before, but being locked in, for God knows how long, makes me realise what it was like for him. Here was Noah and his 3 sons and their wives. Did the people around not want to join them on the boat, or was it painful to see what happened to them, or did they say - I’ll be fine up this tree? When they were shut in, were they relieved, or terrified? As day passed day, did they think - when will this end? how will it end? have we got enough food? Were some of them bored and trying to find things to do, whilst others were madly busy trying to care for the boat or the animals? Did the family have arguments and not have anywhere to run to? They ddi not know how long it would last.

So they were like us, but worse. They were surrounded by water, they did not have food delivered or networks of friends and neighbours on the phone. They just had to wait, and trust - they had no choice. Trust that the God who asked them to build the ark would look after them. That there would be a plan, a rescue, that it would end ok.

So we need to give thanks that God gave us the technology and science to see this virus coming and do something about it - to build a boat and get in. That we are supplied with food and friends during this time. And although we don’t know how long it will last, we know that God is with us in this, and mourns those who die from this just as much as he mourned the destruction of the flood. And we know that the flood ended with the rainbow - the promise that God is with us, even in the rain and storms. This too will pass, and God will still be with us.