

Sermon - Spiritual Decision Making in 2023, Part 1 & Part 2

Gen 8 – Noah leaving the ark.....an example in spiritual decision making.

Preached at CBC 1/1/23 and 1/8/23

Bible says he was 600 when he got in the ark (Gen 7:6) and in Gen 8:13 he was 601. It had been a rough year for Noah. Lost some folk that were around him, and went through a rough season where there were a lot of rainy days. God never said you won't have some mighty bad times and rough seas to travel, being saved don't mean you'll have smooth sailing every day, doesn't mean you won't go through some things, but it does mean in the end, He'll even bring you through your bad season to a better season. He's sweet I know.

Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that *were* with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. ²The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. ³And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. ⁴Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

Verse 1 - Going through for a whole year but God didn't forget him. Important to know that God will remember to bring you through so don't worry. Sometimes when you are not where you want to be and it may seem that God is missing, He could be preparing the way for you to step into something better.

- Not everybody he knew last year when he was 600, made it through into 601. Troubled water can wash away some stuff in our lives. Noah lost some stuff in that last year, but it didn't keep him from God's best; plan was still in effect; he wasn't disqualified for a greater blessing...and he's still moving and expecting a bright new year. Your change is here.
- But being in the ark is the place to be when trouble comes (count it all joy when you go through various trial, when all sorts of trouble ...I will praise you in the storm).
 - What brought me through last year, what helped me to survive and kept me afloat last year, God says you will be stepping out of that and stepping into something better this year.
- Some things may need to be washed away before you can move into something better.

Verse 3 -4: Waters started to decrease instead of increase. Before the ark landed, the trouble that was surrounding him that he faced and had to deal with before started to decline after 150 days.

- Didn't happen overnight, didn't happen in a day, but gradually over time things started to get settled.

- Rested on the day which later would be around the same time Israel crosses the Red Sea, which means around the same day Jesus rises from the grave. Which means when the ark rested, he was about to leave transition and enter revival.....we don't have far to go, don't have much longer to wait...this rocky journey is about to smooth out.
- Not saying Mr. Christian, Ms. Christian that you won't have some mighty bad times and rough seas to travel, being saved don't mean you'll have smooth sailing every day, doesn't mean you won't go through some things, but it does mean in the end there's an expiration date on your season of troubled waters. God still has power over your situation.

I want to talk about the Ark

The Ark was God's plan and provision for Noah. The Ark was that vehicle and season God used to bring Noah through from one season to a better start and a new season.

The Ark was designed by God. The Ark worked, it prepared, preserved, and got Noah through. It was a transition vehicle. Transition is not always pleasant. I'm sure after a year, Noah was ready to leave the Ark. Cramped, smelly, unpleasant, but still designed to bring him through.

Has anyone ever experienced an Ark experience or season of transition?

We just did with the COVID lock down. A tough time, but it helped to save lives. Unpleasant, no longer want to be cooped up, but have to be careful not to emerge too soon. You have to know when it is safe to come out. Now after COVID things are different and there is a new normal.

Before I explain how to make spiritual decisions in 2023, you have to have an appreciation for your Ark. You also have to identify whether you are in transition or whether this is your promised land or best season.

The advice I gave my daughter and other young people; is this an ark or God's best.

My experience in the Ark. The good thing about the ark season, there is an expiration date. It is a temporary season. It is designed to bring you into something better.

We don't see anything about Noah complaining about the Ark; I've stopped complaining about my Arks because I see now it was all part of the plan to make me better and get me to here.

Part 2

⁶So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. ⁷Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. ⁸He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground. ⁹But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. ¹⁰And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. ¹¹Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf *was* in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth. ¹²So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.

Verse 7 - Sends out a raven. Before he jumps out there, he is going to find out some intelligence about the situation. You need to get some Intel before you make a decision. Don't make decisions because it feels good, seems right, looks okay, or somebody else told you to, or because you just tired of being in your ark....better get some intelligence before you make a decision.

- Stop making decisions based upon how you feel.
- Anybody ever make some bad decisions that felt good, looked good, sounded good, and you jumped out there and it might have been good for a little bit....but you suddenly found yourself in a big mess. Before you bust a move....make sure you wait and ask God.
- Noah is in a tight spot, and he's ready for something better, ready for a break through, ready to bust out of his current situation and start over, start fresh. Trying to help you know how to start out your new year right.

Send out a raven. Ravens are one of the most intelligent creatures in the animal kingdom. They are scavengers meaning they eat dead flesh. It is a carnal bird.

- Raven flies around, goes out but never coming back with news that would satisfy Noah. Didn't bring back any comfort or satisfaction for real.
- Raven representing darkness and human wisdom and intellect. Human wisdom and knowledge alone, worldly knowledge alone, what your friends and experts say alone.....will not give you all the information you need to make a major decision. It will never satisfy you fully. Raven lives off dead stuff...I need something fresh.
- You can have all the degrees you want...that doesn't mean you gonna make right decisions in life. Smart people still get divorced, street smart people still go to jail, when making major decisions you need more than just worldly knowledge and what you think.
- Oh, just because you are saved...doesn't mean you will make Godly and spiritual decisions. Noah was just saved from the flood, but that didn't guarantee that his next decisions would be led by the Spirit. Saved people still get divorced, Christians still go to jail, and believers can still

say mean things and decide to do mean things even after God has just delivered them. Some of the dumbest decisions I've made in life were after I got saved.

- If just sending out the raven was enough, then he wouldn't have had to send out the dove. Your raven will never satisfy you enough or give you enough information in order to make the right decisions in life.

Verse 8 -12: Just using the raven didn't work for Noah so he sends out a dove. Behold, mean to look hard at something, need to seriously consider what's happening here. When you act upon the information given to you by the dove, you'll make the right call every time.

- Dove is symbolic of the Holy Ghost. Send it out the first time, but the dove couldn't find a good place to land.

Verse 9, found no rest in the place so it returned to the Ark and Noah reached out and pulled her in. Unlike the raven, the dove comes back even though she didn't have good news. Even though the news wasn't what Noah wanted....the dove still came back to comfort him. Jesus said the Holy Ghost is a comforter.

- Oh, you missed it. God may give you an answer that you don't want to hear, you might not like it, but you need to pull it in because it's from God. Too many times we don't like God's timing. We want it right now, but God says wait. It ain't time yet, you ain't ready to handle what's out there yet. Instead of complaining about it, you should be rejoicing because at least the dove returned with an answer.
- Waited until next Sunday, sent the dove out again, and the dove came back with an olive leaf. The first week might not have been your week...but your week is coming. A sign of peace, a sign of new growth, a sign that what was dead was now alive again. Something about this story reminds me of my savior. New hope....revival, it was starting to look like a good year. From transition to revival.
- Waited another week, sent the dove out again, but this time, the dove doesn't come back because the dove found a peaceful place where there was rest for the soul. It took a little while, but he got the answer he was looking for.

¹³ And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month*, the first *day* of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. ¹⁴ And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried.

¹⁵ Then God spoke to Noah, saying, ¹⁶ "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that *is* with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." ¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons'

wives with him. ¹⁹ Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.

Verse 13 – in the first month, the first day of the month, Noah removed the covering from the ark because it was almost time to bust loose.

- The face of the ground was dry. Oh, you missed it again. If Noah had gotten out of the ark based upon raven or fleshy knowledge alone, it could have been a bad move; a disaster.
- If he had decided to leave the ark before the dove returned with a sign of peace, it would have been a bad move, tough going, muddy, sloppy, messy situation, gonna have to get dirty, not going to be as easy if you had just waited for the dove.

I don't have a dove, but Jesus did leave us with the Holy Ghost. Every decision we make in 2023 should be led and guided by the Holy Ghost. Not that raven knowledge is bad...you need that too...but you can't act based upon just that one bird. Don't make a major move without the Holy Ghost.

You need a spiritual GPS, so when you start to go off in the flesh, when you start to rely on your own understanding, and facts, and feelings, and your emotions....you need a spiritual GPS to help you recalculate your route so you can make the proper correction to get back on track....or else you'll go off.

- Even Christians can go off.
- True sign that the decision made and the actions taken are spiritual...lines up with the Word, and produces the fruit of the Spirit which is love, and you have peace. No peace.....don't move.
- In 2023, understand that where you are today, God intends it to be temporary; a breakthrough is designed for you and expected and planned for your future, just don't move too fast. Rely on God. Truth be told, every decision I've made has not always been led by the Holy Spirit, not every decision has been made for the glory of God. Some decisions I made were because I was tired of the ark, impatient for something better, based upon how I felt, or based upon worldly wisdom....i.e., what I knew, what my friends told me, etc.

I have a responsibility as a preacher and a spiritual leader in this place, to encourage and teach you how to make spiritual decisions.

Don't jump out there too soon.

- If he had decided to leave the ark when he sent the dove out the first time, it would have been a bad move, tough going, muddy, sloppy, messy situation, gonna have to get dirty, not going to be as easy if you had just waited for the dove, might have jumped out there and the water might have been over his head.
 - Somebody know something about getting in over your head and drowning in stuff, drowning in debt, sorrow, tears.



- Be careful making hasty decisions in 2023. The devil will always present to you some quick options to get you to make a bad decision, that will always turn out bad and put you in a big mess. Anybody ever make some bad decisions that felt good, looked good, sounded good, and you jumped out there and it might have been good for a little bit....but you suddenly found yourself in a big mess. Before you bust a move....make sure you wait and ask God.

It came to pass. There's an expiration date on your season of troubled waters. God still has power over your situation. Commanded the wind and waves.

- The blessings of the L-rd maketh one rich, and addeth no sorrow. His best was in front of him. Sometimes you have to go through to get to.