

New Year - with Noah...

Every New Year, there are celebrations and predictions. People make wishes, they have hopes and fears. Some people turn to alcohol, we let off fireworks, sing Auld Lang Syne (OK, so try to sing it), we think of a new year as a new start. For some, the prospect of a new year brings hope, for some it's not something to look forward to.

The Bible

Genesis 13.8-22 - By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry. Then God said to Noah, "Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you - the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground - so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it." So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds - everything that moves on the earth - came out of the ark, one kind after another. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."

So Noah's been in the ark for months but gradually the earth is drying out and re-forming, having had even more rain than a British Summer... Life has come back to the whole planet from out of the watery covering. Now God speaks to Noah and says, "Come out of the ark..."

Point - We move with God, when he says. When Paul was speaking to people in the Greek city of Athens he said that, "In God we live and move and have our being." Through the Bible, we see that God leads people but we must listen to His voice. Sometimes he tells us to do something; other times as we move he leads us. But it's always God's voice that we must listen to and obey. Noah didn't come out of the ark until God told him too. And then he did what God said.

So this was a new day for Noah. Along with his family, he released all the animals from the ark - bringing all of them out. Noah had obeyed God in building the ark. He had done things just right. How do we know that? Well, the ark didn't sink, so that's a pretty good clue! But when Noah got outside the ark he used his initiative and he offered a sacrifice - a thanks to God. God saw this and was pleased.

Point - When I bought a new laptop, I remember dedicating it to God. Sounds a bit crazy but I said, "God, this is yours, for your work. Use it for your glory." I pray the same over whatever I have. I think Noah's a great example as being one of the first people to do this so I'm just taking a lesson from the Bible! Everything we have is from God. We need to be thankful. Time after time in the Bible it tells us to thank God, praise God, worship God, thank him for his answers to prayer. The word 'grace' (that we sometimes use when praying over food) is the same as the word 'thanks'. Thanks is one of the fruit that we show as a Christian.

God responded to Noah's thanks by saying never again would he destroy all living creatures as happened with the flood. Beyond this, we read that God is in complete control of the seasons, the harvest, the day and night. None of these will stop until the day Jesus returns and makes all things new. (This theme is taken up and supported by Paul in Acts 17.24-28)

Louie Giglio Stars and Whales Talk - (08:49 mins)

The YouTube Link - <https://youtu.be/helxFeG-0n0>

Alternatively a Vimeo link - <https://vimeo.com/140746053>

New Beginnings

Two of the three most amazing new beginnings were ones that God created...

"In the beginning..." God created the world, in Genesis 1. This is about how God created the world, everything in it and breathed the Spirit of God into man and woman, making them unique and in his very own image.

2 Corinthians 5.7 also tells us this - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" And here was the second amazing new beginning and the biggest miracle. The one where we believe in Christ and our inside is completely changed and is made into a 'new creation'.

Noah experienced a new beginning in a new world, a world re-created by God. He was the original pioneer. We don't know what happened to the ark, but it had served its purpose. It had brought Noah and his family from the old into the new..

The third new beginning is yet to come. The Bible tells us that one day God will make all things new - the heavens and the earth will be made new. If you think creation and the universe is amazing now, you'll be blown away by the new ones - as the Louie Giglio video shows!!

Interactive Everest

Just to get us all thinking... [Check here for an interactive view of Everest...](#) (requires Adobe Flash. Link updated/checked Dec 2017)

Now, imagine, a worldwide flood meant that Everest was underneath the flood!

New Day

Genesis 9.1, 8-17 - Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth... As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it." Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you - the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you - every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.

God told Noah to be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. God meant that physically, but he also calls us to do that spiritually.

So here's a couple of tricky questions for you... What does an apple tree produce? Er, apples, yes. And a pear tree? Pears. Yes, I can see you're getting the hang on this...

So as Christians, God has called us to 'bear fruit'. Your fruit won't be used in a fruit bowl or in a fruit punch but it will have an even bigger impact. You see, an apple tree produces apples because that's what it does. A pear tree is the same. As Christians, we are to produce fruit that is Godly, God-like, God-glorifying... We find a list of some of this 'fruit' that comes from the Holy Spirit in us - from Galatians 5.22-23,

"God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled."

Other 'fruit' includes helping people, serving people and of course allowing God to use us to see lives transformed and people brought from out of the old into the new life that God wants all of us to experience - the new life that comes in and from Jesus.

I love the fact that God made a promise and then sealed the promise with something very real and quite extraordinary - a rainbow. If you've never seen a rainbow as being amazing, I'd encourage you to think again because it isn't just a physical 'happening', it's a God-thing that contains a God-promise. It's a perfect mix and blend of 7 colours (seven is the Biblical number of perfection). It always comes when sun is mixed with rain, just as God's light in our lives, mixed with the Holy Spirit in us produces a vivid rainbow of varied colours that makes up the church.

Arise and Shine

Let's be just like Isaiah 60.1-3 and make it a prayer over our lives:

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Amen! Let's shine like stars for the one true King, each with our own style, colour and flavour!