

This evening I thought I would start my message off with a question. What do a mythological Giant frog named Tidilick and Noah, the builder of a giant boat have in common? Well, for starters, both got wet, according to ancient tales featuring cataclysmic floods. And while one is a human being who built an enormous boat, the other is simply an enormous amphibian. But perhaps we can learn something about our faith, by comparing and contrasting two characters we read about in two different famous stories.

Hopefully, most of you, if not all of you joining me tonight, know something about Noah. I would, however, be highly impressed and fairly shocked if you have heard about Tidlick. After all, unless you are from the continent of Australia, or you enjoy cataclysmic literature, you probably aren't aware of the aboriginal myth about a Giant frog who is said to have drained every drop of water in the Outback. Needless to say, his friends, the kangaroos, grew thirsty, as you might expect they would, but they didn't have any clue as to what they should do.

Finally, one smart kangaroo thought to tickle Tidilick. When the frog laughed, his water broke, as it were, creating an enormous flood that washed everyone out of their homes. It was a wet, wild day. True, it's just a wild story, or entertaining tale, and it never really happened. A giant frog? Naah. But a giant flood? Absolutely.

The Outback, as you probably already know, is a desert. It is Dry. Dusty. Flat, features a big horizon and there is nothing much there. But, apparently it wasn't always that way. Long ago it contained water, and plenty of it. And apparently a terrific flood actually once flowed out there in the Outback over 5,000 years ago.

Dr. Mary Bourke, a geomorphologist for the Smithsonian Institute, who is also known in her professional circles as "Mary, the Mother of Floods," found proof of the flood while trying to understand and predict floods all around the

world. She finds that the biggest clues, about the biggest floods, come from the least likely places of all - deserts, like the Outback.

While working in the Australian Outback among the Aborigines, Bourke heard the myth of a giant frog called "Tidilick."

Although the white settlers had long dismissed Tidilick as a campfire story for children, Bourke drew meaning from the native recounting of the giant frog who long ago drank up all the water in the desert. And by digging deep holes in deserts to examine sediment layers, Bourke discovered an undamaged record of floods dating back over 5,000 years.

Of course, it isn't all that surprising to hear that there are ancient tales of floods in nearly every culture. And now, sometimes, like in the Outback, there is proof, too. If you don't believe me try googling Biblical flood research, and you will find all kinds of information that you can study. It's worth considering though that Bourke's research gives rise to the question: "What sort of modern person would think to look to ancient biblical stories, while using contemporary science, to propose that a mythic flood actually occurred?"

People whose minds are as large as the floods they seek to understand. They are the ones who see what others don't see. They look where others don't look. They think thoughts others don't dare to ponder. They are people who take risks, who think, and plan, then act. They are persistent, counterintuitive, revolutionary people. Their successful work speaks for itself.

Let's rewind things now, back to the book of Genesis chapter 6. There are two principal characters in this drama supported by a cast of extras (after all, herding those cats into the ark wasn't easy). So what sort of ancient man builds a boat at the command of a God he cannot see? And what sort of God asks him to do it?

First, Noah, like scientists who study floods and topography data, was a man who saw what others didn't see; heard what they didn't hear; looked where others didn't look. He thought things others didn't dare to ponder. He took risks and planned and acted, no matter what anyone thought or said. Which may cause us to wonder, did it matter to Dr. Bourke that no one ever looked for evidence of a flood in a desert before? No. Did it matter to Noah that no one else dared build an ark where there seemed to be little need for one? No.

So.... let's get up close and personal with a Bible character who has become quite famous from Sunday school lessons, church nursery children's toys, and Vacation Bible school decorations. What sort of man was Noah anyhow? The words "faithful" and "God centered" come to mind. Of course, eccentric and patient, also seem to be a rather fitting description of him as well.

After all, the man built a boat, the first of its kind, on dry land, in anticipation of a natural phenomenon that had never occurred before. Moreover, as Noah was building it, I'm sure he had to deal with the reality that he would be cooped up in cramped quarters with his wife and family, not to speak of a boat load of animals, for 40 days and 40 nights, although let the record show that the first thing Noah said when he got off the boat was, "I need a drink!"

Needless to say, the Bible records that he was a faithful man, so much so that he's listed in the Bible's Who's Who of Faith Heroes in the book of Hebrews chapter 11, because he trusted God, poured out his time, effort, and resources into a project that may even look a bit crazy and insane to carpenters and faith filled fixer uppers like Chip and Joana Gaines. Which may lead us to wonder, did Noah ever have doubts? Probably. Did he sometimes question himself? Most Likely. Wouldn't you? But his faith, acting like a lamp in the darkness of his unbelief, gave him enough light to carry on.

Noah was a risk-taker, a man who wagered his reputation, his wealth, and all that he had on an idea - the idea that it is healthier to listen to what God says, than to not listen. Noah's character was strong enough to endure ridicule, insults, name-calling, and derision. He must have had a high tolerance for public embarrassment.

Noah was also a righteous man, living in an unrighteous time, yet he was able to make good choices, instead of succumbing to the wicked ideas of his day. In fact, you might even say that he is a good choice for a role model, to help understand, that it can often be quite hard to be righteous and countercultural in this world we live in. In fact, you might even say that it is as difficult now, as it was then, to choose God, and to stick with God, no matter what.

Thankfully as we think about what it means to have faith in the Lord, we have the very persistent Noah as a great example. Although, Mrs. Noah might have called him stubborn, rather than persistent. After all, how much work does it take to build a huge ark without power tools or a lumber mill when you are 600 years young? How many years, how much effort, how much wealth, did it take to build that thing in his back yard? It is obvious Noah was persistent. He didn't give up. He stuck to it. He never quit!

Finally, he was a man who "walked with God." He knew the companionship and fellowship of God, and when you have that in your life, you can put up with just about anything else. And as for God....What sort of God commissions the building of a boat in anticipation of a flood that will destroy the human race, save Noah and his family?

A righteous and just God. One who hates sin and unrighteousness. A merciful God. One who extends mercy for those who live by faith. A faithful God. One who stands by his promises.
A personal God. One who seeks the fellowship and companionship of his people.

When it was all over, when the sky had cleared, and the seas had calmed, then came God's promise to us all - that there'll be no regurgitating flood waters to drown the earth ever again. No giant frog to cause a barren desert or drought. Instead, God put his promise in the sky for all to see, for all to remember His promise, and to remember Noah and the character traits it takes to be a woman or man of faith. After all, wouldn't you agree that seeking to possess a Giant Faith in this world matters, a great deal more than giant frogs. Amen.