



The Incredible Journey



STANDING IN THE CIRCLE

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STANDING IN THE CIRCLE

Have you ever been caught in a predicament where you know you're right about something, but nobody believes you? Then to make matters worse, someone pulls out evidence that seems to prove you've never been more wrong in your life? I'll show you how that's always been the case with God's people, and how God plans to put a stop to it.

The subject of astronomy has always fascinated me, and when I was a kid, I would read everything I could find, particularly if

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I could learn something new. One day, I discovered a book that said the planet Jupiter didn't have twelve moons as we had always believed, but fourteen. Today, we know there are actually more than 60 moons circling our biggest planet, but the wisdom at the time said there were just twelve. When we studied the solar system in class, the teacher wrote "twelve moons" on the chalk board. I felt very excited and raised my hand. "Teacher," I said, "did you know that they've actually found two more moons, and so the number is really fourteen?"

Somehow, I figured she would be as excited as I was, but to my absolute amazement, she shot me down. She said, "you're wrong. There are only twelve moons circling Jupiter."

And of course, I protested. "Teacher, I just read the other day that they found two

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more!” But you know, I could tell by the look on her face that she wasn’t going to let some kid tell her the textbook was wrong. So, in the minds of all my classmates, the issue was settled forever. Jupiter had twelve moons.

Then, just a few months later, a well-known local astronomer was guest speaker at our school. He took us on a visual tour of the solar system, illustrating his talk with beautiful colour slides of every planet. His presentation was absolutely spellbinding. To this day, I think my favourite part was the section on the planet Jupiter. When the giant planet appeared on the screen, he turned to our assembly and said, “This is Jupiter, and we’ve just discovered two new moons, bringing the total to *fourteen*.”

Well, the room was actually too dark to see my teacher blush, but you could just feel it. And at that same moment, a smile spread

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across my face, because I felt completely vindicated. And dozens of bewildered fourth-graders turned around in that dark gymnasium as if to say, “You mean Gary got it right?”

Think about your own experience. Have you ever found yourself trying to defend something that nobody believed? When you try to make your case, you discover – even though you know you’re right – that the evidence seems to be absolutely stacked against you? If that’s been your experience, you’ve got a small idea of what God’s people are going to face as we come up against the final moments of earth’s history.

Consider the life of Noah, who was asked by God to warn the world of coming judgment. What’s interesting about Noah is that today, his very existence seems to be in question, and those who still believe the story to be

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true find themselves in the awkward position of defending something that almost nobody in the secular community believes. Never mind the fact that almost every culture on earth remembers a universal flood, and never mind the fact that the actual geological record almost screams “universal catastrophe”; you’re still going to find that your audience is more than a little skeptical. The story we’re going to study is actually an example of the phenomenon I want to illustrate.

Of course, the underlying motive in denying the flood story is to deny the story of creation. If you can deny the story of creation, you can deny the existence of God. If you can deny the existence of God, you can deny the Second Coming of Christ, and people can live their lives any way they want to without having to be afraid that they’re going to have to answer for it one day. In fact,

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this link between the flood and the return of Christ is so important that Peter actually mentions it when he's talking about last-day skepticism:

...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation' (2 Peter 3:3,4).

Let's pause to consider the full impact of what Peter is saying. His subject is peoples' attitudes in the last days, and the problem he predicts is that people will want an excuse to do whatever they want. But in the back of their minds, and in the pits of their stomachs, there will be an uneasy feeling that one day they will have to account for their actions. So they must choose between acting on the conviction of their conscienc-

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es and turning their hearts back to God, or convincing themselves that it's just not going to happen. How do they do that? Read carefully what Peter says next:

For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:5-7).

That's a remarkably important passage of scripture. It says that people are going to deliberately forget where they came from so they can deliberately ignore where they're going. Centuries before the debate between Darwinian evolution and creation began, Peter predicted it would happen. And with

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a quick flick of the wrist, he removes the veil of deception to show us what's really going on. This isn't just a matter of origins, he says, it's also a matter of destiny. The story of the flood is a clear warning to the last generation; but if people stop believing it, they're going to miss the boat (and there's no pun intended!).

Now that makes this whole matter worth careful consideration, especially when you add the fact that Jesus stated plainly in Matthew chapter 24 that the final generation living on planet earth is going to make the same mistakes the people of Noah's day were making. This raises two important questions.

1. WHAT WAS THE MISTAKE NOAH'S GENERATION MADE?

You'll find the answer in a couple of differ-

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ent places in the Bible, including Genesis chapter 6, and Matthew chapter 24. In Genesis, we discover that the world had become desperately wicked, or as God puts it,

...that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5).

Then in Matthew chapter 24, Jesus points out that in addition to being wicked, the people were actually so far gone in their rebellion that they couldn't tell how bad the situation was:

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came, and took them all away, so also will the coming of the

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Son of Man be (Matthew 24:37-39).

The amazing thing about Noah's generation, according to Jesus, is that even though they were amply warned, they were still caught by surprise when the floodwaters actually came. And how do I know they were amply warned? It's simple. The Bible indicates that Noah preached for as long as 120 years before the rain actually fell, and even his great-grandfather Enoch predicted that something was coming, when he named Noah's grandfather Methuselah – because “Methuselah” means “when he dies, it will come.”

So, it's not as if the people of Noah's day didn't have a chance. It's more a case that they knew it was coming but refused to believe it. Exactly the same thing is happening today. Nobody can say that the western world hasn't heard of the Second Coming

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of Christ, because even late-night comedy shows and cynical talk-show hosts are busy making fun of it.

Instead of taking advantage of God's mercy, we turn a blind eye to our real condition. We pretend the world will go on forever. We dismiss as environmental concern the uneasy feeling that the world will end. We rationalise as alternate viewpoints and lifestyles what other generations would have called wicked behaviour. If there was ever a generation crying "peace and safety" just before the destruction hits, it's a good chance it might be us.

2. WHAT SET NOAH APART FROM THE OTHER PEOPLE OF HIS TIME?

The answer to that question is found in Hebrews chapter 11, where God gives us a list of people who warmed His heart.

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By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith (Hebrews 11:7).

According to the Bible, there are several things that set Noah apart from his neighbours. First of all, he was a man whose heart was soft enough to actually hear the voice of God. The sin in his heart was not cherished and nurtured to the point where he had drowned out the pleading voice of the Holy Spirit. But more than that, when Noah heard the voice of God, he acted on it.

A lot of people hear God speaking to them every single day, and they know they're supposed to do something about it. But it's a rare person – in a wicked world – who actually has the courage to step out in faith. We

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just read that Noah was “moved with godly fear” when he built the ark. That means he took the warning seriously, and he leapt into action.

If you think about it, that action took a great deal of faith, because the job God gave Noah was absolutely colossal. The likelihood that anybody, in Noah’s neighbourhood would understand was miniscule. In all the history of the world, there had never really been a major catastrophe or natural disaster, and the people were going to struggle to visualise the kind of flood that Noah was talking about. And to build such a big boat (the Bible tells us it was 135 metres long) seemed like a crazy thing to do in the middle of dry land.

Then, to top it off, Noah kept preaching the same message over and over, for as many as 120 years, and nothing happened. Life just

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went on as it always had, and Noah became something of a laughing stock. He was that fanatical guy with the great big boat in the middle of a field, the out-of-touch preacher who still believed all that crazy stuff about prophecy and the end of the world.

You've got to hand it to Noah for sticking it out all those years while his neighbours made fun of him, because you know in your heart it wouldn't be an easy thing to do. Yet, the Bible warns us to get ready, because the same thing is going to happen to us. In fact, I believe it may be happening already.

Even in some Christian circles, it's becoming more and more difficult to find people who still believe what the Bible actually says. It's not that they have mountains of evidence that prove the theory of evolution, or that they've found some other source of spiritual information that has proven more reliable.

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It's more a matter of finding an excuse to remove life's moral boundaries, in exactly the way that Peter predicted.

But the problem is going to get a whole lot worse than that. Not only will genuine Christians have to live with the ridicule of those who no longer believe; but the Bible also indicates that all the evidence is going to point in favour of the critics. Read this amazing passage, found from the book of Revelation:

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. I saw one of his heads

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as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' (Revelation 13:1-4).

There you have it. In the last days of human history, the majority is going to be wrong. They're going to fall prey to a false system of worship that is sponsored by the dragon himself. And it's not going to be a small movement, because the Bible says that "all the world wonders after the beast."

So, what happens to God's people? In the verse that comes just before the passage we just read, they're described as a remnant, that is, a smaller group that is persecuted by the dragon. We're told they have some very specific characteristics that set them apart

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from other people.

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17).

The Bible teaches that in the last days, God's people are going to stand by faith. Even though the whole world turns to lawlessness and rebellion, even though the imaginations of peoples' hearts are wicked all the time, as they were in Noah's day, these special people are committed to the commandments of God. And more than that, they actually possess the testimony of Jesus Christ. They have a message for the world.

Don't forget that Noah didn't just build boats. He was also a preacher of righteousness, a man with an important message for

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his time. And just as in Noah's day, God's last-day people, whose hearts belong entirely to God, have a message for their time. You will find it just a few verses later in Revelation chapter 14. Consider carefully how the Bible describes these last-day people of God and the message they share with the world:

And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God. Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth -- to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water' (Revelation 14:5-7).

Just as it did in the time of Noah, our world is becoming more and more wicked with

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each passing day. But God doesn't simply destroy the world without a warning, because that's not how a God of love operates. Before He makes a move, He sends out a global invitation to return to the God of Creation. He raises up a prophetic movement that knows exactly what's going to happen. And through that prophetic movement, He warns the world, and calls everyone to step inside the ark.

The parallels are absolutely amazing, and one could dissect this story for hours and compare it to the passages of the Bible that deal with last-day events. But I want to underline one simple detail in the story of Noah that many people miss when they read it:

So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood...And it came to pass after seven

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days that the waters of the flood were on the earth (Genesis 7:7,10).

It didn't rain immediately Noah went into the ark. Even though God ordered him inside, and the door of the ark was sealed, it didn't start raining for a week. Now try to imagine what that was like. For 120 years, you preached that the flood was coming. Then, for a moment, all the evidence pointed your way. The animals came out of the woods on cue and the Lord Himself closed the door of the ark. It was finally time for the prophecy to be fulfilled. Then nothing happened. Seven days of sitting in the ark with a collection of smelly animals, while the laughter outside got louder with each passing day.

I'm convinced that God put that detail in the story for our benefit, because God's people are about to face a moment where all of the

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evidence seems to point in the wrong direction. For a while, we have a lot to point to: clear signs that we're on the right track. And then it all dries up for a short period of time, and our faith is tested to the limit.

Take a look at this passage, found again in Revelation chapter 13:

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Revelation 13:11-13).

As the final crisis comes to its peak, there is more visible support for the *wrong* side than the right side. A second beast shows up to

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support the first one, and he has the ability to bring fire down from heaven. In the Old Testament, in the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, the fire fell on God's altar. But now God warns us that the fire is going to fall in the wrong place in the final moments. Our eyes are going to deceive us. The visible evidence is going to suggest that we've been barking up the wrong tree.

But to surrender in those last moments would be a terrible mistake. Because just when things couldn't possibly get worse, just when the devil pulls out all the stops and does his best to destroy God's people, that's when Jesus will raise His nail-scarred hand and say, "Enough!" At that moment, He leads the armies of heaven back to this earth, and He vindicates His people:

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a

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white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations... (Revelation 19:11-15).

What is the sword that comes out of Jesus' mouth? According to Hebrews 4 and Ephesians 6, it's the Word of God. And in the final moments, that's what's going to be most important. It won't matter what public opinion was. It won't matter what your friends or co-workers said. It will only matter what *God* says.

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I know it can be tough to live a genuine Christian life in this world, especially when even well-meaning Christians seem to be losing their grip on the simple authority of God's Word. That's only going to get worse. But the promise of God is this: if you stick with it, if you stand with Him, you're going to see the day where your faith will be vindicated. It might take seven days, but on the eighth day, the rain is going to come.

In the meantime, God tells you to build your ark, to make plans to get on board, and then to invite as many as you can to take advantage of the Cross of Christ before the final moment comes.

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In this booklet, you'll see how that's always been the case with God's people, and how God plans to put a stop to it in the final moments of earth's history.



Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for **The Incredible Journey** ministry. He has spoken and produced numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

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