

The Precedent for the Unprecedented

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. **—Hebrews 11:7**

Discontinuity. That is what threatens us—when there is no precedent that we can put our finger on. The precedent for the unprecedented, however, is biblical. It is the theme running right through Hebrews 11, the faith chapter of the Bible. Not a single person mentioned there had the luxury of repeating yesterday's anointing. Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:24). Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9). There was the continuity.

So, we are told, "By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death" (Heb. 11:5). Noah therefore did what Enoch did—he walked with God. The continuity of a comfort zone may have made Noah feel that what happened with Enoch would happen to him. But no. It wasn't easy for Noah. But he set the precedent for God's glorious but painful discontinuity: "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family." It had never happened before, and it never happened again.

Not knowing where we are going, yet knowing we are following God, can be most painful indeed. God has a way of giving us sufficient revelation for ourselves but not enough that it convinces others. The stigma is knowing you have heard from God but having to do what no one else may be required to do.

There is equally nothing so comforting as seeing that that is what happened in the Bible. And yet we have what the early church didn't have—the New Testament to keep us on the straight and narrow. If there is any word of knowledge or

prophetic insight that conflicts with Scripture, we stay with Scripture and reject the word of knowledge—no matter who gave it. The Scripture does not replace the miraculous; Scripture corrects abuses when people hear “words” that couldn’t have come from God because they don’t cohere with biblical theology.

But the anointing will often offend. That is not surprising, for it stretches us. It brings together both the continuity and the discontinuity of God’s dealings with us—the God of the past and the Lord who acts in the “now.” Such majesty and mystery are rarely within our comfort zone.

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