LOSING ALL

Serving in an underdeveloped region, an Adventist missionary couple were saving up to purchase a living room shelf set. After praying about it, however, they found an amazingly beautiful living room shelf on sale at a luxury furniture store. The price miraculously matched what they already had in savings, so they decided to purchase it.

A few months later they received a call to work as missionaries in an even poorer area. If they accepted this call, they would need to sell everything, including their new purchase—but at a ridiculously low price! The missionary couple knew it sounded childish, but they considered declining the call because of that new set. The couple eventually recognized that by putting their heart in the gift, they were disregarding the Giver, His plans for their life, for the salvation of others, and His ability to provide for them again. The gift became greater than the Giver!

It may be challenging when we realize that following Jesus and working for Him means to surrender all to Him. What is sure is that all of us, sooner or later, will leave all our possessions behind anyway, either by death or by translation at Jesus’ second coming.

During this week we will see how a patriarchal family surrendered all their resources by investing them in God’s plan of salvation. They received their investments back multifold when the crisis was over. Noah and his family became a reference for those who will also lose all during the final global crisis but promised to receive a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17, NKJV).
Write out 2 Peter 3:3–13 from the translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out 2 Peter 3:10, 11. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map it.
ACCEPTING WHAT IS INEVITABLE

It’s not easy to adapt to new realities generated by crises, especially when loss is inevitable. But any attachments to the former conditions that aren’t possible will produce higher stress, impaired ability to think, and potential additional losses on top of those directly related to the crisis. It is only by trusting in God’s leading and letting the former realities go that we can rapidly adjust to changes and alleviate stress.

Times were difficult when Noah was born to Lamech (the ninth generation after Adam). The crisis at that time was not transitory, but permanent, and became increasingly worse. There was no safety, as violence and sin became rampant. Rights of property and marriage were not respected. If those stronger than you coveted your property or your spouse, you were fortunate if they left you alive after taking what they wanted. This was the last generation before the Flood, and all, even Noah, were oblivious to the fact that a far bigger crisis was coming.

Noah decided to live by faith and to thrive by trusting in God and His plans. Above his concerns for safety was the desire to lead his family away from the corrupting influence of the world. Because he walked with God, the Bible describes him as “perfect in his generations” (Gen. 6:9).

Considering this instability, everything seemed normal until Noah received a shocking revelation from God. The hour of His judgment had come, and as a result, there would be a near global loss! Everything would be lost; everyone would die!

Noah quickly understood that the death of all flesh (potentially including members of his extended family) would cause painful and permanent social isolation, with absolutely no hope to “return to normalcy.” Just imagine how stressful it would be to spend the rest of your life with no one to visit with. As everything was to be destroyed, Noah started building his estate again from scratch. What principles would guide the management of personal finances in such a time like this?

While many get stuck in life when things are impossible, Noah and his family moved by faith to a new kind of mindset. They accepted what was inevitable and, without any complaint, started to plan according to the new reality, trying to influence others also to do it.

After giving him the detailed instructions on how to (literally) navigate through the crisis, God proposed a covenant with Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives. Salvation would be possible only if, by faith in God’s revelation, Noah (and anyone else) would meticulously follow the directions. One can rely on supernatural protection during crises when strictly following by faith God’s specific revelation for the times in which one lives. “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91:1).
A WISE INVESTOR

God’s master plan of salvation is a universal truth, meaning it can be accepted by any human being, living at any age, while the door of grace is open. There are developments of the plan of salvation, devised by God to meet the needs of people living in specific periods of history. Called “present truth,” these developments become a test to people living in that specific period, and not to people from other periods.

In Noah’s time the “present truth” was God’s impending judgment through water. His strange offer of salvation was through a never-before-seen and not-yet-built means of transportation. The acceptance or rejection of that “present truth” was a life-or-death matter, leading to salvation or perdition.

While preaching the “present truth,” Noah was investing and working. To save his family, he built a monumental floating vehicle at his expense, as there was no organization to subsidize it. The task was so huge that he at one point may have doubted having the means to finish it. Similar to today’s believers, the privilege of knowing the conclusion helped make the right decisions.

Knowing that radical crises require radical measures, Noah understood that this was the time to invest more than tithes and offerings! It was neither a donation nor a matter of generosity, but of intelligence informed by faith in God’s revelation! After all, there was no other option for the survival and salvation of the whole family.

When our preaching is followed by our investments, we mean what we are preaching. By starting to build the ship and investing all he had in it, Noah testified to the world how deep his convictions were about the “present truth.” When crowds were attracted to the scene, a wide gate was opened for him to invite people to repent and to prepare for the crisis. This confirms that the acceptance and practice of “present truth” becomes our best evangelistic method.

Some who accepted Noah’s message and joined his work, like Methuselah, died before the Flood. Everyone else, even some nominal believers in God, ridiculed Noah, regarding him as a naive, radical fanatic. They wrongly believed that God’s loving character would never allow Him to destroy those who rebel against His law. Nevertheless, worldwide repentance and reformation, in response to the prophetic voice, could have changed the fate of that wicked generation, as with Jonah and the Ninevites centuries later.

At the end of his work, Noah had become depleted of material goods and God called him to enter the ark. When the door shut the first time, he owned nothing except the ark. But when the door was opened again, there was no wealthier creature in the world. All the world (literally) belonged to him and his children! As said Jesus: “There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters... or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time... with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29, 30).
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Genesis 7
Colossians 3:1–3
Hebrews 11:7
Acts 10:34, 35
Philippians 3:12–16
1 John 1:9
Psalm 34:7–10

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with 2 Peter 3:3–13?

**THE PERFECT OFFERING**

If God is not a respecter of persons, why was Noah chosen among all other people of his time? Genesis 6 indicates that he “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” because he was “perfect in his generations,” and it was so because he “walked with God” (vv. 8, 9). In Genesis 7:1 we are also told that Noah was righteous before God in His generation.

Perfection in God’s eyes, instead of a performance-related goal to be reached, is the very way you regularly walk with Him who is perfect. Understanding that perfection is attained by getting closer and closer to Him, Noah focused on developing habits of walking with God, distancing himself from the corruption that is found in the world.

But the closer Noah got with the Lord, the deeper his sense of God’s holiness and of his own personal sinfulness became. By being a part of the human race, sin couldn’t be eradicated by a firm decision, but it would demand the sinner’s death. Since the time of Adam a Substitute was promised, represented by a sacrificed animal, that would die in the sinner’s place.

Therefore, a righteous person is not someone that does not make any mistakes. Instead, it is someone who is enlightened by God’s law, recognizes his/her own mistakes, regularly confesses them to Jesus, believes in the death of Christ on her/his behalf, and develops habits of regular communion with Him. The good news is that all that confess their sins will be forgiven and be considered righteous (1 John 1:9)!

There would be no harmony with God unless we accept Christ’s death to remove our sins—He is the perfect offering. It is harmony with God that opens the way to His covenantal blessings, as He cannot prosper sinners. All the blessings we receive, such as protection and material prosperity, are possible only because harmony with God was made possible through the death of Christ. In Noah’s time, this was represented by the animal offering.

After the waters subsided and the door was opened, what was the first thing Noah did after leaving the ark? Even before building his own house, he built an altar. Risking his limited stock of food, he presented an animal offering, thanking God for the protection. That offering also expressed the acceptance of Jesus’ substitutionary death that cleanses sinners and makes all covenantal blessings possible! That offering affected all subsequent generations. Only after accepting it, God promised never to destroy the earth again by the means of a flood and signed that promise with the rainbow.

The “God first” principle will lead all true followers of Jesus to make rendering offerings to sustain His cause their first concern. Like Noah, they do not fear material loss. Instead, they trust that Jesus’ death on their behalf—the perfect offering—opened the way for them to be miraculously provided with all things necessary for life!
APPROPRIATING PROPERTIES PROPERLY

While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity... He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed, he invested in the ark. (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890], 95.)

Would you make your property secure? Place it in the hand that bears the nailprint of the crucifixion. Retain it in your possession, and it will be to your eternal loss. Give it to God, and from that moment it bears His inscription. It is sealed with His immutability. Would you enjoy your substance? Then use it for the blessing of the suffering. (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909], 50, 51.)

Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar, and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble, and have no clogs to weigh them down.

I saw that if any held on to their property, and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able. I heard some mourn like this: “The cause was languishing, God’s people were starving for the truth, and we made no effort to supply the lack; now our property is useless. O that we had let it go, and laid up treasure in heaven!”...

I also saw that God had not required all of His people to dispose of their property at the same time, but if they desired to be taught, He would teach them, in a time of need, when to sell and how much to sell. Some have been required to dispose of their property in times past to sustain the advent cause, while others have been permitted to keep theirs until a time of need. Then, as the cause needs it, their duty is to sell. (Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940], 59, 60.)

In the last extremity, before this work shall close, thousands will be cheerfully laid upon the altar. Men and women will feel it a blessed privilege to share in the work of preparing souls to stand in the great day of God, and they will give hundreds as readily as dollars are given now. (E. G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 40.)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What conditions made the time before the Flood so similar to the time that precedes Jesus’ second coming?

In what other biblical accounts was the acceptance and practice of the “present truth” at the same time as the evangelistic method?

How can God’s character, whose foundation is love, be compatible with His destroying those who reject Him?

Is it possible to trust in the message of those who do not invest anything of their resources (or who invest too little) in support of what they are preaching?

Why did Noah present a costly offering as the first thing after leaving the ark? What was his purpose? What missionary project was that offering supporting?

Does God’s present truth now require that we surrender all to support His final work, or was that a part of present truth only in Noah’s era? Why?

Noah: The Grateful Giver