

IN

When I woke up, I immediately had a sense in my spirit of ‘in’. It is hard to put into words but it was like a gentle shaft straight into me, bypassing my mind. **In** God, **in** His favour, **in** His care, **in** His blessing—all these ideas came afterwards in an attempt to explain this ‘in-ness’. (You won’t find that word in any dictionary!)

The word ‘in’ is incredibly important. Cruden’s Bible Concordance actually lists four references to this little word ‘in’. Three of them refer to John 14, verses 10, 11 and 20 where Jesus said:

*Don’t you believe that I am **in** the Father and that the Father is **in** me. The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather it is the Father, living **in** me, who is doing his work.*

*Believe me when I say that I am **in** the Father and the Father is **in** me... .*

*On that day you will realise that I am **in** my Father and you are **in** me and I am **in** you.*

Not just ‘with’ but ‘**in**’.

The fourth reference in Cruden’s Concordance is to Genesis 7:16, after Noah had built the ark and went on board with all his family and the animals:

*Then the Lord shut him **in**.*

God shut him **in**. He did not shut him out. He shut him **in** to life, **in** to His plans, **in** to His promises, **in** to His purposes and **in** to His presence. He included Noah **in**. The Lord shut him in so that he could not get out. Why? Because death and destruction met anybody and anything outside the protection of God’s ark. During the flood, the angel of death was abroad. God did the same thing to protect the Hebrews when the angel of death killed every first-born in Egypt. He told the Hebrews to stay **inside** their own houses, marked by the blood of a lamb. No Hebrew could leave their house until morning. To remind them of this, when Israelites celebrated this deliverance in the Passover, the regulations stipulated that “everything must be eaten **inside** one house”.

However, Noah was not just shut in for one night. He was stuck in the ark for over a year, without being able to see out. Can you imagine not being able to see outside for a year? Yet even this was for Noah’s protection and benefit not for punishment.

40 days of torrential floods of rain.
150 days of flooding that covered the whole earth.
7½ months until the mountain-tops appeared.
10½ months until all the water had gone.
12 months 10 days until the ground was completely dry.

Then God said to Noah “Come out... ” (Genesis 8:15).

Even though it may have seemed to Noah that the flood had gone and it would be safe to come out, he waited until the Lord said, “Come out”. Maybe Noah had to wait because the Lord who shut him in had to unseal the door to let him out. The door certainly had had to be sealed to keep water out of the ark. This story is no cosy Sunday School tale. Have you ever considered what the land looked like immediately after the flood? Have you ever thought why God prevented Noah from seeing out of the ark? Carnage. The ground would have been littered with bodies, human and animal, like the after-effects of a global tsunami—too awful for human eyes to see. I believe that, following the flood, God did a miraculous clean-up operation so that the land was fit for Noah to dwell in and be fruitful. Sometimes there are things too awesome or too awful for us to experience and God shields us from them.

Every major time of Biblical testing and preparation has been without the luxury of knowing when the time of trial would finish. Abraham and Sarah had no idea when Sarah would conceive; Joseph had no word to fix the length of his prison sentence; and Noah was not told that the 40 day rain storm would be followed by a wait of 11 months for the land to be ready for him.

Can you imagine it in the ark?

“ Hey! It’s not raining! It’s stopped! We’ll soon be out of this ark! Think of it: fresh air and solid ground! Whoopie! No more elephant turds! ...” “Well, the water must start to go down soon. Surely, there’ll be some ground soon. Won’t there? Supposing the water never goes down. What if the ark gets stuck on top of a mountain and we are trapped on an island?”

In one of David’s Psalms he prayed, “How long, O Lord?” “How long, O Lord” doesn’t seem to be a prayer that gets answered very often. This is when either our trust in God develops or discouragement and fear strengthen their hold. We have to choose.

The only difference between Noah’s time in the ark and the punishment of a prison sentence is the plan and purpose of God. The Lord Himself shut Noah **in**. God meant it for good.

The most important characteristics of the ark were that it floated and it was totally weatherproof. It had to survive the heaviest deluges known to man—continuous, relentless, unremitting rain that would penetrate even the tiniest crack. The ark was like armour, shielding Noah and his family.

When the door closed and the Lord shut him in, Noah could not see out because the design given by God only allowed air and light in through 45cm slots directly under the shelter of the eaves of the roof, where the rain would not penetrate. He had to rely solely on the evidence of the dove. It was only when the dove returned with the olive leaf that '*Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth*' (v11). Noah had to remove the covering of the ark before '*he saw that the surface of the ground was dry*' (v13). Even then he had to wait almost two months before the ground was fit to walk on. From 15 metres high up in the ark Noah could not judge this accurately for himself. '*Then God said to Noah “Come out ...”*' (v16).

Five points about Noah's time in the ark:

1. God shut him **in**; he did not shut him out. Despite the darkness, the smells, the boring routine, the loss of freedom, the not knowing what was happening in the world outside (all the hallmarks of prison life), God had shut Noah in to protect him, to spare his life, and to set him apart for God's future plans and purposes.
2. God himself shut him in. Noah willingly chose to enter the ark in faith. Once he had made that choice, however, God shut him in. There was no going back. It is good to know that sometimes God himself stands between us and our efforts to get out of a situation or to escape from a process before it reaches fruition.
3. Because God himself had given the specification for the design of the ark, nothing could harm Noah and his family as long as they were inside the ark. The ark was the covering of God, armour, the strong fortress built in faith, constructed in obedience to God's instructions, sealed by the covenant word of God. He was completely safe. We too, when we have faith in Jesus Christ, are secure in God and in his purposes because our lives are hidden with Christ in God, regardless of what our circumstances may shout at us.
4. God provided everything necessary for life during that long, long wait.
5. Noah could not rely on his own senses or intelligence to make decisions. He was kept in the dark for his own benefit until the dove brought revelation and until God said "Come". We too need to listen with our spirit to the Spirit of God and not lean on our own understanding.
6. What do you do when you are shut in and can't go out? You do what you *can* do and don't fret about the things you can't.
 - a. You continue to worship God and trust Him.
 - b. You continue to care for those you have responsibility for, people and animals in Noah's case.
 - c. You continue to do the mundane cheerfully and to the best of your ability.
 - d. You wait! You wait in expectation.

Accepting that place **in** God's plans and purposes means waiting for him to say, "Come out". '*Then Noah built an altar to the Lord ... [and] the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma.*' (v 20-21). How we wait, the attitudes we display—thankful and expectant or grumbling and doubtful—determines the fragrance of our sacrifice to him.

Jesus said to his disciples, "On that day you will realise that I am **in** my Father and you are **in** me and I am **in** you," John 14:20. What was that day? Jesus gives the answer in verses 16-17: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you for ever—the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; but you know him for He dwells with you and will be **in** you." NKJV

So, the Holy Spirit of God reveals to us the knowledge of our **in**-ness!