

The Ark That Noah Built

For over 100 years Noah had been preparing the ark and giving warning of an impending flood. In Genesis 6:14, God told Noah, "*Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*" But there were no visible signs of a coming catastrophe and Noah was probably regarded as rather peculiar, and anyone who could invent a new joke at his expense was well on their way to notoriety. You can also imagine the paper carrying a statement from the weather bureau assuring the people that there was not a drop of water in sight, while the comic section pictured Noah on top of the ark, pouring water over the edge to make the animals think it was raining.

One of the most famous stories of all time is that of Noah's Ark. It has been a favorite of Bible students and preachers for many thousands of years. I am sure that in Noah's day there were probably many scoffers and unbelievers. But did you realize that most people today think the story of the ark is nothing more than a legend or a fable?

Many of those people who feel that this was an impossible story are led to their doubts through pictures that present the ark as being about the size of a big barn. I am sure that all of you have seen cartoons that show the ark floating along with all of the animal's heads poking out of the top. What I want to examine in this article is to show the reasonableness of the ark as described in the biblical account.

In Genesis 6:14, God told Noah to build the ark out of gopher wood. You must remember that it would be over one hundred years from the time Noah first began until the ark would float. Therefore, the choice of materials were of the utmost importance. Gopher wood is similar to cypress wood which is found in the Southeast. This wood is very resilient to water and will not readily decay. Most botanical authorities think gopher wood was the evergreen cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens*, a very durable species found throughout ancient Palestine (ISBE).

God used the cubit measurement to instruct Noah about the size of the ark. There were different sizes of cubits, ranging from eighteen to twenty-five inches. Since our purpose is to show that there was enough room for all of the animals and Noah's family, we will use the smaller measurement. At eighteen inches per cubit, the ark would be 450 long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. The farmers can appreciate how much actual ground that would cover. Remember that the ark was not shaped like a ship, but was shaped

as a rectangle, like a three-story barge. It was never built to sail, only to float.

Genesis 6:16 says, "*A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.*" God commanded Noah to put a window or open space finished to a cubit from the top. Does that mean that all of those animals are to secure light and ventilation through a small opening in the roof only eighteen inches square? This would certainly be impossible. Only one dimension of this window is given. It is to be eighteen inches and is to be placed above. That is, an open space, eighteen inches wide, is to run the entire distance around the ark at the top of each story, thus giving perfect light and ventilation to the many hundreds of animals inside.

It has been estimated that there are 290 species of land animals larger than a sheep. This would include such animals as lions, bears and cows. There are 757 different species of land animals between a sheep and a rat; such animals as the cat, rabbit and the dog. There are 1,359 different species that are smaller than a rat. Also, there are approximately 10,000 species of birds; 2,230 of reptiles and 100,000 insects.

Noah was commanded to take two of every species of the unclean animals and seven of the clean species into the ark (there are only ten species mentioned as clean in Deuteronomy 14:4). It is easy to see that Noah has a great number of living creatures for which to provide. Morris and Whitcomb, in their book, *The Genesis Flood*, state that no more than 35,000 individual animals needed to go on the ark. Furthermore, it is not necessary to assume that Noah had to take the largest of the species. There was no need for him to take two adult elephants weighing two tons each when younger animals would eat less, take less room, be easier cared for and be better fitted for breeding purposes.

We have seen that there are many more of the smaller animals than there are of the larger. The average size of all the animals is about that of a house cat. The government regulations for a chicken house are three square feet for each hen. I will give each average sized animal five square feet since I want to be absolutely sure that they will have plenty of room to move about freely.

I do not know how Noah arranged the ark, but let us say that he put the animals in the first floor, the food in the second floor and the four families occupied the third floor. There was 33,750 square feet in the lower deck, making ample room for every animal to have over one and a half times the

floor space as present day government regulations and still have several thousand square feet for the birds, reptiles and insects.

In Genesis 6:14, God told Noah to make the ark with rooms. The lower deck was probably divided into stalls for the cows, horses and buffaloes; cages for the lions, bears and tigers; apartments where he could keep animals such as the sheep, deer, etc.; he made hives for the bees and coops for the chickens; and a large room with pools for the turtles, frogs and reptiles to live in their natural environment.

God told Noah in Genesis 6:21, "*And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.*" There was over 500,000 cubic feet of space in the second story that could be packed with food. Noah could have easily partitioned the second story into great rooms where tons of dried fruit such as raisins, prunes, etc. were stored; other rooms were stored with beans, dried corn and peas; there could have been great bins of grain such as wheat, oats and barley, while other rooms could have stored tons of hay and food for Noah and his family. Also, the great variety of animals could have easily provided several kinds of milk, cheese and eggs.

Some still have difficulty believing that Noah and his family could have had sufficient room to live with all the animals and food. If one considers the average American house to be approximately 2,000 square feet, the 33,750 square feet of floor space on the upper deck could have accommodated almost seventeen houses. I am sure that most of you will agree that the amount of floor space was adequate to house Noah's family.

Noah must have been a very busy man in order to complete the ark in 120 years. Again, I am not sure how Noah went about the construction but let us give him forty years to cut down the trees, square the timbers and erect the frame work. And we will give him another forty years to cut the boards, lay the floor and put on the siding. In the next twenty years he could split out the shingles and place them on the roof, boil down the pitch and apply it inside and outside the ark. One hundred years have passed and the ark is ready to float.

But there are still twenty more busy years until the flood. We will give Noah ten years to build all the rooms within the ark. These were the rooms and stalls for the families, animals and food. The remaining ten years were left for the preparation of food. Thousands of pounds of food would be needed for a voyage that would last for over 370 days.

Let me reiterate that I am not trying to prove absolutely what Noah actually did or the animals that were taken, but in our day of great unbelief, it is simply my purpose to show that the account of Noah's ark was really possible. The further we progress from any given event, the more probable it is to disbelieve. Noah's ark is not a story that must be reduced to an impossibility or a mere fable. Noah had ample time and space to construct a vessel to hold all the animals God commanded him to carry. Hebrews 11:7 records the faith that Noah had in order to go through all his work in things not yet seen. I pray we will not nullify the faith of Noah because we will not recognize when the world distorts the word of God.

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