

Noah's Ark

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

II Peter 3:5-7

“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

I Peter 3:20-21

What is an ark? An ark is a chest, box, coffer, closed basket, or similar receptacle. The ark was not a boat or ship; the ark was a waterproof box that would float very well. It had no mast, sails, oars, bow, stern, motor, or rudder. Moses' mother put him in an ark made of bulrushes (Ex 2:3,5), Moses built an ark for the worship of God (Ex 25:10), and John saw an ark in heaven containing God's testament (Rev 11:19). And in none of these cases are we talking about a boat, ship, canoe, kayak, or other thing.

When was it built? The flood occurred 1656 years after creation in 2390 B.C., determined easily by the precise chronology given in Genesis 5 and Noah's age at the time of the flood (Gen 7:6).

How long did it take? We cannot prove exactly how long it took. But the ark was built sometime during the 120 years of God's longsuffering prior to the flood (Genesis 6:3 cp I Peter 3:20).

Where was it built? We cannot prove where it was built. It was likely built in what we have historically called Mesopotamia, the area between and around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The Garden of Eden was in this area (Gen 2:14), and Noah's descendants were there again (Gen 11:27-32).

How big was it? Assuming a cubit to be eighteen inches (the distance from an average man's elbow to the tip of his middle finger), the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high (Gen 6:15-16). This gives a total space of 1,518,750 cubic feet. This is the space of 127 average houses (1500 square feet). Each floor had an area of 33,750 square feet, which gave a total area of 101,250 square feet. You could build over 22 basketball courts in this area.

What did the ark look like? It looked like a shoe box (Gen 6:15). It had a window and a covering running one cubit above the ark; it had a door in the side ; and it had three stories (Gen 6:16). It also had many rooms in it (Gen 6:14).

What was the ark made out of? It was made from “gopher wood,” which is wood from the pine family of trees, including the cypress tree.

How did Noah know the ark was safe? Because he built it according to God's commandments, and God never makes any mistakes.

How many animals were brought? Two (a male and female) of all the unclean animals, fourteen (seven males and seven females) of all the clean animals, and fourteen (seven males and seven females) of all the birds were to be brought into the ark (Gen 7:2-3,15-16). [Observe that “sevens” is plural, “two” is singular, and there must be a “male and his female.”] The clean animals and birds would be used both for sacrifice and food after the flood (Gen 4:4; 8:20; 9:3; 10:9).

Could they all fit in the ark? All the animals, reptiles, insects, and birds could fit on one floor of the ark, with the other two floors used for storing food. If God brought the animals to Noah, then surely He could cause them to be content with close quarters. Today we raise many animals for slaughter in cages and pens where they cannot even move or lie down.

How did Noah get the animals together? God brought them to Noah to place in the ark (Gen 6:19-20). Observe carefully that God told Noah that “two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.” God can easily shut lions’ mouths, open the mouth of a dumb ass, or make vipers harmless.

What did Noah’s family and the animals eat? God had commanded Noah to bring food for everyone and every animal (Gen 6:21). Remember that at this time man and all animals were herbivores (Gen 1:29-30), or the carnivores would have eaten all the herbivores!

How bad was the flood? It covered the mountains by 22 1/2 feet (Gen 7:19-20). If Everest was 29,028 feet high as it is now, then the flood covered the earth with almost six miles of water. If Ararat was 16,942 feet high as it is now, then the flood was about 2 1/3 miles higher than Ararat.

What drowned in the flood? All birds, animals, insects, and men died. There was nothing left that had the breath of life in its nostrils. Every living substance that lives on the ground was destroyed (Gen 6:17; 7:21-23). Children, ponies, kittens, grandparents, baby birds, snakes, mothers, dogs, and turtles all died.

Where did the water come from? The LORD God broke up the fountains of the oceans and opened the windows of heaven, and it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Gen 7:11-12). And the canopy of water that surrounded the earth was used (Gen 1:6-10). The miraculous is all around this event, so any calculations about the quantity of water and its evaporation are speculative.

Where did the ark finally stop? The ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, which specific mountain is 16,942 feet in height, in eastern Turkey (Gen 8:4). This is a considerable gain in altitude from the sea-level plains of Babylon, where the ark was possibly built.

Where did all the water go? God made a wind to pass over the earth, stopped the fountains of the oceans and the windows of heaven, restrained any further rain, and the waters went down rapidly (Gen 8:1-3). Remember, God’s wind opened up the Red Sea and brought quail three feet deep for 1600 square miles.

Where is the ark today? There are many claims that it is frozen in ice near the top of Mt. Ararat in eastern Turkey, but there are just as many denials of these claims. We have no proof of its existence, and we do not need any such proof; for our faith in the Word of God is greater than natural sight.

What is a rainbow? It is the colored bow we see in the sky when it rains. The rain causes the sun’s rays to be refracted into a colored bow. But it is truly the creation of God for our comfort and praise.

What does the rainbow mean? It means that God will never again destroy the earth with a flood of water (Gen 9:8-17).

Were there rainbows before the flood? No, because God did not set His bow in the clouds until after the flood (Gen 9:11-16), and the canopy of water around the earth would not have allowed rainbows as we now know them (Gen 1:6-10).

Why did God send the flood? Because the earth was very wicked with men only thinking about sin constantly from the time of their youth (Gen 6:5); because the earth was filled with violence (6:11); and because the earth had corrupted God's way upon the earth (6:12). And the saints of God were not living holy lives, but they had chosen to marry women of the world (4:26; 6:1-4). Today the earth is wicked, violent, and corrupt again with many compromising Christians; and we may be faithful and just in our generations like Noah (Eccl 7:29; II Tim 3:1-13).

Why was Noah saved? Because God chose to have mercy on him (Rom 9:15-16). And this is the only reason any of us will be saved from the judgment that is coming.

How was Noah saved? By the grace of God (Gen 6:8). Grace is demerited favor, or God's own will to be kind to Noah, who did not deserve to be saved, for he was as much of a sinner as any man. Our salvation is by the grace of God also, for He has chosen to save us by His own purpose and grace in Christ Jesus (Rom 11:5-6; Eph 1:3-6; II Tim 1:9).

Is there any other reason? Yes, because Noah was faithful to obey God in his generations and not sin so wickedly as the rest of the world (Gen 6:9; 7:1). Yet, this obedience was by God's grace.

Did Noah warn others? Yes, Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and he warned the people of God's coming judgment by the Spirit of Christ (II Peter 2:5; I Peter 3:18-20).

Why did Noah build the ark? Because God told him to do it (Gen 6:22; Heb 11:7). We can be like Noah by obeying God in our wicked generation.

Why was Noah's family saved? Because God had mercy on the family for Noah's sake (Gen 6:9; 7:1; Ezek 14:14,20).

What made Noah a great man? God saved him by grace (Gen 6:8), and He obeyed God by faith (Heb 11:7). He is considered one of the great men in the earth, for God preserved his family for his faithful righteousness (Gen 6:9; 7:1; Ezek 14:14,20).

How is the ark a picture? It is a picture of our salvation in Jesus Christ, for God has placed us in Jesus Christ before the world began and closed the door to salvation (Gen 7:16 cp Eph 1:3-6 cp I Pet 3:20 cp Rev 1:18; 3:7).

What else is a picture like the ark? Baptism is a picture just like the ark. The ark is a picture of salvation in Jesus Christ, and baptism shows a picture of His burial and resurrection for our sins (I Peter 3:20-21).

Will God destroy the earth again? God will not destroy all flesh on the earth with a flood again (Gen 9:8-17), but He is coming back to burn this earth up (II Thess 1:5-10; II Peter 3:5-14).

What else does the rainbow signify? The covenant of God of kindness and peace to His elect people cannot be overthrown any more easily than the covenant of Noah (Isaiah 54:9-10).

Will you be like Noah? If you are not baptized, then you need to obey God in baptism (I Pet 3:20-21). If you are baptized, then you need to see the wickedness of this present generation and the perilous times of these last days and live a holy life of godliness (II Tim 3:1-13; Tit 2:11-14).