

What About Noah's Ark?

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INTRODUCTION

God created the great universe in six literal days and rested on the seventh. He created all things in a systematic and logical sequence. In those six days He brought into existence all plant life and animal life, then created man in His image (Genesis 1:26-27; Exodus 20:9-11). He placed man eastward in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8) and gave him dominion over His creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Man was made a free moral agent, to choose or to reject good and evil. The serpent came into the midst of God's paradise and tempted Adam and Eve who chose to accept evil rather than good. When sin entered the world, God promised to reconcile man back to Himself through Christ (Genesis 3:15). Sin became the great problem facing all of mankind. In time men became exceedingly wicked. Genesis 6:5 describes their condition; "...wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." God said; "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7).

There was; however, an exception to the deplorable condition of mankind. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord. Having warned Noah of the coming destruction of all life on the earth, He instructed Noah to build an ark. He gave precise instructions as to the construction of the ark. Noah was saved because of God's grace (Genesis 6:80), because of his faith in God (Hebrews 11:7), which involved the carrying out of God's commandments (Genesis 6:14-22). Those saved from the flood were not saved by "grace alone" nor by "faith alone." Noah was required to be obedient to all that God, by grace, had instructed. Noah's ark was the means by which an obedient family was saved from the destruction of a wicked generation.

THE DESIGN OF THE ARK

God gave very specific instructions concerning the building of the ark. In Genesis 6:14-16 we read; "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 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." Many have speculated as to why these particular instructions were given. Why did God choose these dimensions and materials? A plain answer would be to simply say, "God said so!" However,

we are told the ark was made in the most sea worthy design possible. The dimensions of the ark have a ratio of six to one. The ark was six times longer than it was wide. This is known to be the suitable proportions for ship building, even in modern times. Model stability tests have shown that this design can withstand waves up to 200 feet high and that the ark could have rotated over and righted itself if engulfed in the waves.

Using 18 inches to represent a cubic, the volume of the ark would have been 450 feet long by 75 feet wide by 45 feet high. This equals 1,518,750 cubic feet and is comparable to 569 modern railroad boxcars. The gross tonnage of the ark was about 13,960 tons, which would place it well within the category of ocean going vessels today. The displacement tonnage of the ark (defined as the weight of sea water displaced by the structure when submerged to its design draught, assumed at 15 cubits), is equal to 19,940 tons (Scott 22).

The ark was designed by an all knowing God, who used the hands of Noah to accomplish His will. The design clearly did not originate from the mind of man because Noah would not have known what size was best suited for the task ahead. He would not have known the engineering specifications for such an undertaking. Truly the ark was planned and designed by the greatest engineer and designer of all. God set into motion those things which would accomplish His will which was the saving of a faithful man and his family.

HAS IT BEEN FOUND?

There have been Russian pilots, herdsman, soldiers, and explorers who have reported seeing the ark over the past 150 years or so. The vast majority of these sightings have come from an area around Ararat, which is 17,011 feet above sea level. The area is located in eastern Turkey, close to Iran and Armenia. The Bible does not give a specific location, only a general statement relative to the final resting place (Genesis 8:4).

The majority of the so-called sightings are based upon eyewitness reports. One such sighting came from a George Jammal, a Palestinian who was living in California. In a letter written to the Institute of Creation Research, and in some taped interviews, Jammal said he had found the ark in 1984. He claimed to be in possession of a piece of the ark's wood. His testimony was used in a documentary produced in 1992 by Sun Pictures. The two hour show aired on CBS in February 1993. It was titled *The Incredible Discovery of Noah's Ark*. The show was a sensational exploitation of Jammal's fabricated story. It was discovered he had made up the story and there was no truth to the claim (Morris 2-3).

Another controversial claim received wide attention in the early 1990s. A claim was made that the ark had indeed been found approximately 15 miles south of Greater Ararat. The story actually had its beginning in 1959 when a Turkish pilot reported a large boat-shaped object and made aerial photos of the area. *Life* magazine published this material in 1960 and an expedition set out that same year. However, the boat-shaped object was never found (Shea 6-14, 35).

Perhaps the most famous of the "searchers" is self-styled biblical archeologist Ron Wyatt of

Nashville, Tennessee. Since his first visit in 1977, he has persuaded various explorers to seek out the ark built by Noah. Some of these expeditions were led by men who believed in the Great Flood. Their results, plus various surveys taken by Turkish geologists, have shown convincingly that the boat-shaped object is only a natural formation of the earth. Claims that have been made concerning the finding of wooden and metal artifacts from this ark have all proven to be false.

The ark has not been found. God brought the ark to rest upon the place He so desired and it may never be known by men. If it were to be found, some would make it the object of their worship as has been done with the so-called "shroud of Turin" or the "holy grail." The children of Israel often used what God had given them as objects of worship. In 2 Kings 18:4 we read of Hezekiah destroying the brazen serpent. The children of Israel had made an object of worship out of the serpent, which had kept the people from death. This is the first and last time we are reminded of this object since the time it was set up in the wilderness. It had done a wonderful work in its day. It was a symbol of great deliverance and was a type of the salvation promised in Christ. We must not deny the significance and reverence of such an important object. Yet in the time of Hezekiah, it had become an object of profaned worship. The people burned incense to it and gave it a reverence which was not due it. In verse 4 it is named Nehushtan, meaning a piece of brass. It had a place in the deliverance of Israel, but it was never intended to be an object of adoration. Many things have thus been turned into items of worship. Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, has been deified in the eyes of some religions. We are reminded of Knox's reply when a prisoner in the galleys and the image of the virgin was presented to him to kiss. "Mother? Mother of God?" he said. "This is no mother of God; this is *a painted brodd*" (a piece of painted wood) and flung the thing into the river (Exell 377).

Some have said that if the ark were found the world's belief in God would be maximized. It may be that some would find it easier to regard the Bible as true if they could see the ark. However, we should believe the Bible to be true and that all of the events recorded therein are true as well. For you see I have not seen God with my eyes, yet I believe with all of my heart that He is real and He has revealed Himself through His word, the Bible. Seeing the wood of the ark would not make ones faith stronger. No, it may be that by God's providence the ark is better off left lost from the schemers of today. It may be much like the place where Moses was buried (Deuteronomy 34:6). Many people have made Bible locations holy and objects of worship. It very well could be that we need to accept by faith the ark existed and learn the lessons to be gained from the grace of God which made salvation possible for the eight obedient souls.

THE ARK IS A MATTER OF FAITH

There have been many attempts to dream up different versions of what happened concerning the universal flood and the ark, which was built to preserve life. We do not have visual evidence of the "great boat" constructed by Noah. Therefore, we must accept or reject the Biblical account of the flood and the vessel used to carry Noah, his family and the animals to the resting place on Ararat.

We are reminded of what is said in Hebrews 11:6; "...without faith it is impossible to please him..."

Faith is derived from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17) and putting into practice that which is commanded by God's instructions (James 2:14-26). Noah was "warned of things not seen as yet," thus being warned he "moved with fear," and prepared an ark. Noah did not know the powers of a flood, nor the particulars of an ark. Yet because of his righteousness he followed God's directions in complete detail (Genesis 6:22). God provided by revelation the needed information to Noah, who in turn took appropriate action. Noah was warned about the flood God intended to bring upon the earth. The warning came some 120 years before the flood was sent. This would give ample time for the ark to be built and for the warning to be given to all others. The faith of Noah is seen in the godly fear he experienced as he received the revelation and ultimately the carrying out of those commandments. The absolute emptiness and absurdity of the "faith alone" doctrine is demonstrated in the response made by Noah. If he claimed to believe, and took no action toward building the ark, he would have been drowned along with the rest of the disobedient world. Faith operates on the principle of action. If faith exists, it acts accordingly.

When the rest of the world was disobedient, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). Without grace Noah could not have been saved from the destruction of the flood. He found grace because his life was in accordance with God's word.

There are instructions and lessons based upon the fact that there was indeed an ark used by Noah to save his family. In 1 Peter 3:20-21 we read, "...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..." The likeness between Noah's salvation and ours is observed in the following ways. (1) The water bore up the ark. (2) The water delivered them from the old world. (4) The water was God's demarcation line between the saved and the wicked. Today, it is baptism in water to the taught, believing, penitent persons who have confessed their faith in Christ as God's Son. Immersion in water is the culminating and climactic act that delivers them from the old world of sin (Taylor, 37). To those who claim that there was no universal flood and no ark, we must ask, Why would such a strong argument for obedience to the gospel be made based upon the building of the life saving vessel be made? The answer is clear. The building of the ark demonstrates the faith of Noah (Hebrews 11:7) and the longsuffering nature of God (2 Peter 3:9). Noah prepared the ark to the saving of his household.

CONCLUSION

There have been many and various assumptions upon which conclusions are made concerning the ark which Noah prepared in Genesis 6. Speculations of all kinds have been made concerning the authenticity of this craft upon which Noah and his family were carried away from impending destruction. It was in this ark and its builder that God placed His confidence and the future of mankind. By this ark Noah and his family were carried to safety (Hebrews 11:7). The ark is no myth. It is not an imaginary thing dreamed up in the mind of a man. It is an object used to demonstrate the "longsuffering" of God. It is a clear and undeniable event in which God illustrated the true meaning of faith; "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house..." (Hebrews 11:7). This great event affirms that our faith, coupled with our works and in accordance with God's commandments, will bring

the rewarded promises from God. The ark may never be found, but salvation is still to be found in an active faith.

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