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NOAH'S ARK: WAS IT BIG ENOUGH?

Sin was so rampant that "*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*." But "*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord*," Genesis 6:5-8, and man was spared. God has a hatred for sin that man must consider. Upon hearing this great account, however, some begin to wonder, and they ask questions, like: "How could Noah build a vessel large enough to save all the animals and man, too?" I am not embarrassed to answer, "If the Bible says he did it, then he did it," but I learned early that people need evidence and will not fall for glib answers. The Bible justifies such an attitude: "*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*," 1 Peter 3:15. Such words as *answer* and *reason* imply a need to seek and demand sufficient evidence to substantiate our convictions. This should result in a willingness on our part to provide such evidence to others who are also looking. It is not wrong to seek the evidence; in fact it is foolish to do otherwise.

HOW BIG WAS NOAH'S ARK?

Genesis 6:15 says, "*The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits*." The length of the cubit is historically thought to be between 17-22 inches. Using the average length of 18 inches, Noah built an ark according to God's specific instructions, 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Not until the 19th century did ships even approach that size. With the specified configuration of three stories/decks in the ark, the amount of cubic feet was over 1,500,000, and the floor space exceeded 95,000 square feet.

To make these numbers more vivid, the ark had sufficient space to house the cargo of over 500 railway cars, and floor space that was equivalent to 20 regulation size basketball courts. This vessel was literally as "big as a battleship." Bigger, in fact, than several World War II class battleships. The ark's gross tonnage displacement exceeded 14,000 tons. It is worthy of notice that the ark's proportionate dimensions (length to width to height) are still utilized by master ship builders even today.

Why build a vessel so large? Because God wanted human life and other air-breathing creatures to be preserved on earth. It took Noah 120 years to build the ark while preaching to a generation that, except for his own family, rejected all his efforts.

HOW MUCH SPACE WAS NEEDED?

Realizing the enormous size of the ark, it is now appropriate to consider whether even that was big enough to provide shelter for the creatures and the humans that were to be in the ark for over a year (see Genesis 7:6f and 8:13f). The Bible's critics enjoy drawing pictures of the ark with the long-necked dinosaurs and giraffes all hanging out of the window. The question is, was there enough space for all the animals? And the humans? And sufficient food for all? And, how did Noah protect the animals from their natural predators?

First, the animals could have gone through a period of hibernation in which food intake was limited. Plus, with the ark divided into three decks, then subdivided into "rooms" or cages (see Genesis 6:14-16) within that space, the danger of death from a predator was lessened.

Second, we must remember that "*kind*" in Hebrew is not the same as the term "*species*" used by modern biologists. Therefore, it was not necessary to bring every modern breed of dogs into the ark in order to fulfill God's decree. Neither did he need to go on a "safari" to collect the animals, Genesis 6:20. Of course, marine creatures did not need to be taken on the ark, thereby eliminating about 60% of all living creatures. Still, that leaves a lot of animals, birds and the like to care for over a year's time. Whitcomb and Morris say the space required for the various "*kinds*" was equivalent to only 167 railway cars. Do you recall that the ark had enough space for over 500 railway cars? It sounds like they had *plenty* of space for the animals as well as the humans!

Having cited the number of species currently in existence, Dr. Howard Osgood writes, "If 400 cubic foot cages were allowed for each *kind* of mammal, and 27 cubic foot cages for each family of birds, and 200 cubic foot cages provided for the amphibians, that would use up only 354,444 cubic feet. That left one million cubic feet for food storage and more than 20,000 square feet with an 8 foot ceiling for the eight humans aboard. That doesn't sound too crowded." I think he may have something there!

Note God's words in Genesis 7:1: "*Come thou and all thy house into the ark*," indicating God's promise to be present *with* Noah. He did not have to face this difficult task alone.

THE FLOOD: UNIVERSAL OR LOCAL?

It seems strange for someone who believes the Bible to ask whether the flood was just a local one or covered the whole earth. Especially in light of the fact that the Bible is so clear about this: *“The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered...and the mountains were covered... all flesh died that moved upon the earth...All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died...every living substance was destroyed....*" Genesis 7:19-24.

How long since you pondered your life in God's eyes? So abhorrent is sin that He hates it with a passion! A passion seen in His determination to destroy that world given over to sin. Our modern world had better think about this before it is too late.

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