NOAH'S ARK: FACT OR FANTASY?

Is the Biblical account accurate or merely a fable?

Notable experts in the fields of oceanography, geology and Bible history claim that a worldwide flood that wiped out all flesh on the earth never happened; that Noah's ark never existed; that this was nothing more than some exaggerated tale handed down from one generation to the next; that there are no verifiable facts to support it even happened.

But with the help of today's modern technology, more and more geological evidence has been unearthed which has prompted scientists to re-evaluate the possibility that a catastrophic, worldwide flood actually occurred and that Noah did build an ark.

Is the Biblical account of Noah's ark true or not? We know the Bible is inspired by God. Its pages contain God's indisputable words in print.

In the book of Genesis, God commanded Noah to build an ark so that he and his family would survive the great flood that was about to inundate the whole earth (Gen. 6:13-14).

God commands Noah to build an ark

God provided Noah with detailed instructions on how to build the ark as well as the materials to be used. He was to build an ark that would measure 300 cubits in length, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high (Gen. 6:15-16).

To determine the exact size of the ark, we must determine the size of the cubit. The Babylonians had what they called a royal cubit which was about 20 inches long. The Egyptians had a

longer cubit of about 21 inches, as well as a shorter version of 17 inches.

According to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, the common Hebrews cubit was, "the length of the arm from the point of the elbow to the end of the middle finger, about 18 inches." Adopting the Hebrew cubit measurement of 18 inches, the ark would have been 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high! A construction project of this magnitude, without the availability of today's resources, was enormous. It took Noah 120 years to finish the ark. He undoubtedly got help from the local labor force, and he got it done!

The incredible size of the ark

Oftentimes, the ark is pictured as a cartoonish, laughable caricature, a figment of some writer's fertile imagination. Nothing could be further from the truth! Most have failed to grasp the tremendous size of the ark; but when we do the math, the sheer size of this vessel stands as a testimony to the greatness and the power of Almighty God as well as to the faith, trust and confidence Noah had to get it done.

If we figure 10 feet to a story, then the ark would be about as tall as a 5-story building. An NFL football field is 300 feet long—so the ark was one and a half times the length of an NFL football field! If you stood the Ark on its end, it would rise 450 feet in the air—surpassing the Statue of Liberty from its pedestal base to the tip of its torch by almost 150 feet!

The total floor space of the ark's 3 decks, would be over 100,000 square feet, equivalent to 20 standard college basketball courts! The gross tonnage of the ark was over 15,000 tons and would have had a total volume of 1,518,000 cubic feet of storage space which would be equivalent to the carrying capacity of 569 standard stock cars used by today's railroad trains.

Since it didn't have an engine room or fuel tanks, the entire capacity of the ark could be used for storage and living space. Many picture the Ark as a small vessel, without realizing how huge it actually was. It was probably the largest vessel of its type built until the late 1800's when metal ships were first constructed.

Could the ark carry all the animals?

Another most often-asked question is how many and what type of animals would the ark have to carry? An expert in animal identification and classification claims that there are one million species of animals.

Other experts believe there are millions and millions of animal species. Because of the sheer number of animal species, Bible critics suggest that the ark—even with those dimensions—would not be able to accommodate them all. Is this true?

God gave Noah very precise instructions regarding the animals that were to be brought into the ark. Seven pairs, male and female, of birds and animals which God declared were suitable for man to eat, were brought in. Only one pair, male and female, of the unclean animals entered into the ark.

Are species and kinds one and the same thing? What does God mean by *kind?* When the Bible speaks of a *kind,* it is not speaking of what a scientist calls a *species.* The Biblical word *kind* refers generally to an organism that reproduces others like itself.

The scientific term *species* is a much narrower concept; therefore many species can be included in a Biblical kind. The canine family, for example includes dog-like animals such as the coyote, dog, wolf, jackal, etc. The ark did not have to contain the hundreds of species of canines that make up this group. A single

pair of the canine kind would then produce all the animals that make up the canine or dog kind we have today.

The number of Genesis kinds were so few that Adam was able to easily give them each a name that day (Gen. 2:19-20). But would the ark have sufficient room to carry all those animals? Only land-based animals were taken into the ark, so Noah didn't have to be concerned with sea mammals like dolphins and whales or with sea reptiles like crocodiles and alligators. Shrimps, crabs, lobsters, and many other crustaceans would survive the flood.

Many biologists claim that the average size of most land creatures is the size of a sheep. A typical railroad stock car has a capacity of 2,670 cubic feet which can accommodate about 240 sheep. That means each sheep would require 11.125 cubic feet. The estimated 16,000 animals would then occupy a total of 178,000 cubic feet or just under 12% of the ark's capacity. Even if we go with the higher estimates of animals in the ark, scientific evidence shows that all the animals could fit on one of the ark's three decks. That left another deck to store food, supplies and baggage; and one deck to comfortably house Noah and his family.

The ark was remarkably stable

Still others have questioned the stability of the ark. Would a vessel with those dimensions and with the animals on board actually float? Four graduate students at the University of Leicester in the UK, applying basic principles of physics, did their research and published their findings in the University's *Journal of Physics Special Topics.*

"You don't think of the Bible necessarily as a scientifically accurate source of information, so I guess we were quite surprised when we discovered it would work," said Thomas

Morris, one of the students who worked on the project, in a statement (Helen Thompson, “Could Noah’s Ark Float? In Theory, Yes” *smithsonianmag.com).*

There should be no question whatsoever about the stability of the ark because God Himself designed it! And naval architects and engineers have confirmed its capability.

At the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, a scale model of the ark was tested in a tank simulating the worst sea conditions—including waves as high as 98 feet whipped up by 240 mile-per-hour winds, 3 times hurricane force. The ark proved to be remarkably stable.

Dr. Werner Gitt, employing basic mathematics and physics, concluded “that the dimensions of Noah’s Ark were optimal for the most important factors in ark construction: first stability, and then, efficient use of building material.” (Mark Stephens, “Noah’s Ark. Really? she asked. Yes, Really, I replied” *tasc-creationscience.org).* The ark was built on a 6 is to 1 ratio (300 cubits long; 50 cubits wide) which experts say is the most stable ratio of any vessel.

Naval architects have concluded that the ark could easily have survived even the largest, most powerful ocean waves which would be unable to capsize or overturn it. It was not a tiny vessel. Rather it was a large, very stable ship, totally capable of holding the animals God instructed Noah to take on board with him.

Upon examination of the evidence presented, the Biblical account of Noah’s ark is indeed fact and not fiction. And the actual true scientific facts prove that Noah’s ark did indeed exist. God designed it. Noah built it. Case closed!