

Too Many Days in a Floating Zoo

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Everybody knows the story of Noah and the Ark, right? Don't be so sure. If all you know is that it rained for 40 days and nights, then you don't know the half of it! The story of Noah comes from Genesis 6-9—that's right, four whole chapters—but we'll focus on chapters 7 and 8.

It was a bad time to be a human,
because humans were doing bad things—
things so bad that God decided He'd had enough.
In fact, He decided He'd just wipe the earth clean and start over—
animals, people, everything. GONE!

But God decided not to start over from scratch...
and it was all because of Noah.
Noah and his family tried to please God,
even when nobody else did,
so God wasn't about to destroy them.
Instead, He gave them plans for a lifeboat,
the biggest lifeboat anybody had ever seen!
It was almost as long and wide as a football field
and as tall as a four-story building,
with three decks inside, a big door outside,
and a long window just below the roof.
It HAD to be big so it could hold all the animals Noah would save.

And boy, there were A LOT of animals to save!
Noah needed to save them in pairs, one male and one female.
God said some animals were good to eat,
so Noah took seven pairs of those.
And God said some animals were not good to eat,
so Noah took only one pair of those.
Then there were the flying animals,
birds and bats and all kinds of bugs,
and Noah took seven pairs of those.
And last of all, there was Noah and his wife
and his three sons and their wives.

And one week after they all boarded the Ark,
water started covering the earth...
but it didn't just rain. Oh no!
A lot of rain fell from the sky, it's true, and it was a hard heavy rain.
But water also came up from underground—
great fountains of water bursting forth from underfoot
and gushing like oil wells, squirting up out of the ground.

And the water rained and gushed for forty days and forty nights.
It covered everything and killed everything that lived on dry ground.
But the Ark floated on the rising Flood waters, higher and higher,
until it was floating above the highest hills and mountains.

And then the heavy rain stopped raining.
And the gushing water stopped gushing.
And the Flood waters slowly started to recede...
but the Ark still floated on top of it all.

Finally, 150 days after the Flood started—
FIVE WHOLE MONTHS after Noah and his family
and their zoo went into the Ark—
they felt the Ark land on top of a mountain they called Ararat.

But they were still stuck in the Ark because
only the top of Ararat was sticking out of the water!
So they stayed in the Ark and waited.

Two-and-a-half months later
they began to see other mountain peaks poking out of the water
but they couldn't get to them...
so they waited some more.

After forty more days Noah set a raven loose to hunt for land
but it didn't come back. It just flew around,
feeding on the dead animals floating in the water.
So Noah sent out a dove.
It found no land so it flew back to the Ark.

A week later, he sent it out again.
It brought back an olive leaf, so he knew the water was almost gone.
Then he waited another week and sent it out again.
This time it didn't come back...
but God didn't tell him it was okay to leave the Ark yet.

It had been ten-and-a-half months since the Flood began
but Noah had to wait in the Ark for *two more months*.
Finally God told him it was dry enough to leave the Ark.
They let all the animals out, and God blessed them
so they would fill the earth with life once again.
And after Noah and his family also left the Ark,
Noah built an altar to God
and made a sacrifice of thanks to Him for saving them.

All-in-all, that forty-day Flood kept them locked in the Ark for over a year!

More times than we like to admit,
that's how God's promises work.

We think we know how long they should take
but we have no idea how much God needs to do
to make things just right for us.

We have to learn to trust that His love for us
will make it all come out right in the end,
no matter how long it takes.

But fortunately, while we wait,
we can at least thank God that we aren't living in a floating zoo.

That's why God gave us rainbows!