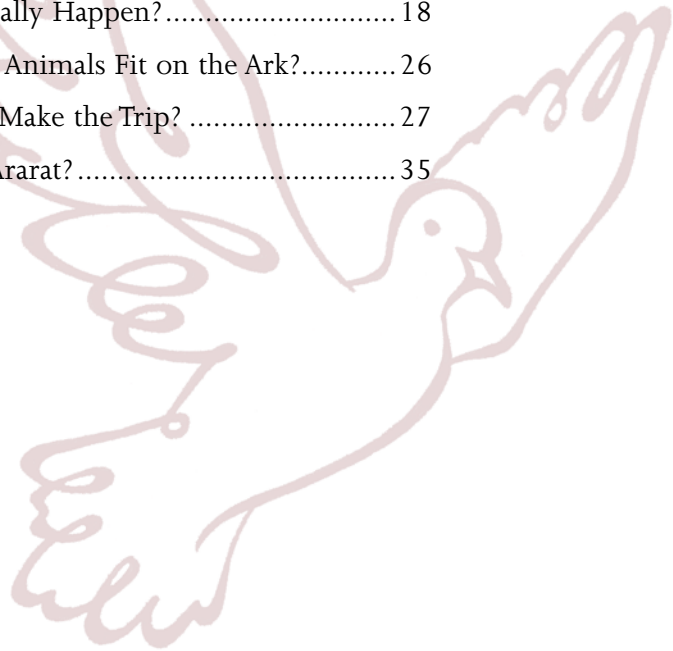


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GOD'S PROMISE

What do we know about Noah? Outside of the Bible, we have no information about Noah or his family. The book of Genesis records the story of Noah and the flood (Genesis 5:28–9:29). The book of Hebrews summarizes the life of Noah with these words: “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (Hebrews 11:7). This portrayal of Noah comes from the Scriptures—the only reliable source for the truth.

The story begins with God’s words, recorded for us in the Scriptures. Then it presents Noah as we might imagine his life at the time. It fills in the spaces and suggests a possible picture of the past. The reality may have been much different. The reader should consider this as a portrait. Just as the artist works with lines and color to project a three-dimensional subject in two dimensions, this writer’s description provides additional background and depth to the story.

God preserved the story of Noah and the flood down through the centuries. When he called Moses to write the first books of the Scriptures, he inspired him to write the truth. Moses, no doubt, used the oral and written records of his day, just as Luke used eyewitness accounts to write his gospel (Luke 1:1–4). We trust that God controlled Moses’ writing so that his record of Noah and the flood was factually accurate and true, just as he wrote it. All Scripture has this same quality. Because God inspired the writers, what they wrote is the Word of God—true, reliable, and authoritative.

GOD'S PROMISE

This book makes no such claim. It only serves as an introduction into God's great book, the Bible. And it invites you to explore all the wonders God has recorded in the Scriptures.



Noah stretched both hands straight up to the sky and thanked God. For the first time in over a year, he stood on dry ground. Not far away, the ark rested on the same dry, solid ground, cocked and leaning slightly to one side like a freighter beached after a storm. The stranded ark had been Noah's home for a year as it bobbed up and down on the water. But the flood was over. And Noah was grateful.

Noah did not stand alone. His wife, his three sons, and their wives also stretched forth their hands toward heaven to thank God. The eight of them had survived. God had kept them safe in the ark during the terrible judgment outside.

Noah and his family had come out of the ark because God had invited them to step out and inherit the new world he had prepared for them. Besides, there was work to be done. The Lord had told Noah to release all the animals in the ark. At least two of every kind of animal had also been spared from the flood. God had himself gathered them for safekeeping in the ark. Then he had shut them safely inside, just before the flood began. Together with Noah and his family, all the animals had ridden out the flood in the safety of what had become a sizeable floating zoo. Now the animals filed out of the ark like a long, joyful parade.

If the animals could speak or sing, they might have joined Noah in praise and thanks to God for their deliverance. But instead, the animals praised God by exploring their new world. The trees were green and luscious. The grasses fresh. The breezes, sweet and gentle. Elephants, zebras, lions, llamas,

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY THANK GOD

and kangaroos—or their ancestors—first took small, cautious steps on the dry ground and then sniffed the clean air. They sensed no danger. Then they hopped, walked, ran, and loped away from the ark to claim their territory. In a short time, the animals left the ark behind and disappeared into their new habitat. The eagles, ravens, doves, and sparrows moved away from the ark too, spreading their wings at first to test the air, then flying into the sky to find new perches in the trees.

Noah and his family paused for prayer before they left the mountaintop. Noah gathered stones to build an altar to the Lord. Then he drew his family close to the altar. Their gratitude moved them to worship God with prayers of thanks.

From the abundance of the best animals in the ark, they offered God burnt offerings. The smoke from these offerings stretched beyond the outstretched hands of Noah, riding the wind high into the sky and into the heart of God.

God had watched over Noah and the members of his family, along with the animals, during the terrible days of rain and storm. In the middle of his anger and judgment, God had remembered them floating on the floodwaters. Now God saw Noah and his family at that altar, offering thanks for their deliverance. God was pleased with the grateful attitude in the hearts of these eight survivors. If one could see the face of the Lord, the thankful worship of Noah and his family turned the corners of God's wrath into a smile.

After their thanks to God, Noah and his family were ready to start a new life. A new world awaited—new beginnings, new challenges, new opportunities. God was ready to

start over again too. He told Noah, “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease” (Genesis 8:21,22). With God’s promise a new chapter in the history of the world had begun. Later he would repeat his great promise of a Savior. But this was a beginning.