

Building the Ark

READING
Genesis 6-11
1 Peter 3

the days of man will be 120 years

I remember once when I was a kid my little brother came home from Sunday School, and in all seriousness asked our mother at the dining table, “What was it like on the Ark Mum?”

I think, like him, there are a couple of little things about the days of Noah which the church has gotten wrong. Not that they’re devastating or impact our salvation, but let’s always aim for the truth and avoid confusion.

I’ve heard many times that it took Noah a hundred years to build the ark. I even thought it was correct for a while.

It all comes from one verse in Genesis 6... “the days of man will be 120 years”.

Later in the chapter God tells Noah to build the ark.

So the idea is that God was saying I’ll destroy everything in 120 years. So get busy.

Another possibility is that it means that from then on humans will only live 120 years instead of the hundreds of years people lived before the flood?

Some dispute that, because after the flood some people lived longer than that. But since then, it has been pretty close to our upper limit. Even if a few did exceed it.

Another explanation is that Genesis 6 is not necessarily a chapter which all occurred on a single day.

It was some person thousands of years later who broke it into chapters.

Maybe Genesis 6:1-8 was a single day. And the 120 years is literal.

But Genesis 6:9-22 is the first part of the history of the generations of Noah, as it says in verse 9.

So what **does** it mean?

It’s definitely not “Build an ark, you’ve got 120 years to finish it because in 120 years I’m going to wipe them out”.

Let me show you why not.

Noah had three sons.

The last verse of Genesis 5 tells us he had them after he was 500 years old.

They weren’t triplets.

Genesis 7:6 tells us that Noah was 600 when the flood came.

Genesis 11:10 says that Shem was born 98 years before the flood. So Shem was born when Noah was 502.

Genesis 10:21 says that Shem was the older brother of Japheth.

Genesis 9:24 says that Ham was the youngest.

So Shem was born when Noah was 502, Japheth when he was 504, and Ham sometime after that.

Now that was all only vaguely interesting, but I had a reason for going through it.

In Genesis 6 God says “Man’s days will be 120 years” and then he tells Noah that he’s going to destroy everyone, and that Noah should make the ark. And then tells him that he, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives should enter the ark, and he will save them from the destruction.

But if the 120 years means God told Noah 120 years before the flood, (when Noah was 480), and then he spent the next 120 years building the ark, then why did Yahweh include his sons and their wives in the instruction. They weren’t even born until more than 20 years after that, let alone married.

So it must mean something else.

Not sure what, but it cannot be that.

We don’t really have much information on when people got married back then. Just on how long they usually lived.

But some time before they were all in their 90’s, (when the flood came), Shem, Ham, and Japheth all married wives. But none of them had children.

Genesis 11:10 again says that Shem only became a father two years after the flood. When he was 100 years old.

Noah himself only became a father when he was 500!

So they may have only been married a few years. Maybe longer, we just don’t know.

But if they married when they were in their 50’s. And then Yahweh called Noah to build the ark after that.

And Noah and his sons may have spent 50 years building the ark.

It would have been a massive job, but possibly they only spent 4-5 years.

And 1 Peter 3 tells us God waited patiently while it was being built.

(Also btw, that there were only 8 of them in the ark. so we know they had no children before then).

But definitely they did not spend 100 years building the ark.

Call me crazy, (I may be), but since 1 Peter 3 links the ark with our salvation and baptism into eternal life, I wouldn’t be surprised if Noah spent about 30 years building the ark, just as Yeshua spent 30 years from his birth, preparing for his death which saved us. (Wild theory, but no proof at all).

This is an interesting link on [Answers in Genesis](#) about how long it took to build the ark.

I hope that was interesting for you. I hope you enjoyed looking a little deeper into a small part of the Bible in search for the truth.

I hope you found it.