

# Jimmy Goes to Sunday School

By Ward Ricker

## Episode 2 – The Flood

“I don’t know why I let you talk me into coming back to Sunday School again,” said Jimmy to his pal, Aaron. “I don’t think the teacher liked me very well last time. She seemed to get upset with me every time I asked a question.”

“Well, just try not to ask too many questions this time,” Aaron responded. “Everything will go fine, and we’ll have a good time. More importantly, we’ll learn about god.”

“Oh yes, about god,” Jimmy said, rolling his eyes.

Aaron didn’t notice, and they entered the church and, once again, walked down to Mrs. Peabody’s Sunday School class.

“Oh, you came back,” Mrs. Peabody said as he walked in her door.

Jimmy thought the slight smile was not enough to cover the feeling of desperation that he sensed from her.

“Okay, everyone. Today we are going to learn the story of Noah’s ark,” Mrs. Peabody announced.

Jimmy looked around, and the same two girls were in the back corner, but the other young boy, Larry, was missing from the back row.

Mrs. Peabody continued, “So, you remember last week that god created the earth and the sky and everything in them, including humankind, who sinned against him so that he had to kick them out of the garden.”

Jimmy was going to ask why god had to kick them out. Why would god have to do anything? He was god, wasn’t he, after all? But he heeded his friends words and tried not to be overly inquisitive.

“After getting kicked out,” Mrs. Peabody continued, “Adam and Eve had children, and their children had more children and so on until there were quite a few people in the world. The problem was, though, that they kept on sinning, and every generation got worse and worse, until the whole world was full of evildoers. This made god very unhappy, and he was sorry that he had created mankind.”

Jimmy thought that it was strange that god would be sorry for what he had done. He also wondered what this thing called “sin” was all about, but, again, he didn’t want to ask too many questions.

“Finally, god decided that he was going to do away with mankind. Men were so sinful and evil that he just couldn’t tolerate it anymore, so he decided he would send a big flood and wash all of them away.”

Jimmy didn’t understand how a god could be so upset by what humans were doing. They couldn’t do anything to hurt him, an all-powerful god, could they? More importantly, how could god be so hateful as to want to kill everyone. That was the worst crime of all—murder! Certainly, they weren’t doing anything as bad as what god had planned for them. But Jimmy had decided to try to avoid asking too many questions, so he remained quiet and listened.

“However, when god looked around,” Mrs. Peabody continued, “he found that there was one man who was doing just as god liked, and wasn’t sinning, so god decided he would save this man, named Noah, and his family.”

Well, Jimmy had to at least know what this sinning thing was all about, so he asked, “What is sinning?”

“Oh, Jimmy, sinning means doing bad things, evil things that god doesn’t like.”

“Bad things?” Jimmy asked. “Like stealing and lying?”

“Yes, Jimmy, like stealing and lying.”

“And like fighting and killing?”

“Yes, Jimmy. Exactly, like fighting and killing.”

“Like god was about to do?”

Jimmy thought he could see that unhappy look on the teacher’s face like last week when he was asking too many questions.

“Well, Jimmy. It’s different with god.”

“You mean god doesn’t have to do what is right? It’s not sinning when he does wrong?”

“No, Jimmy, you don’t understand. God can’t sin. God is the one who tells us what is right and wrong. He decides what is right and wrong. Since he decides what is right and wrong, he can’t sin, you see. Does that make sense?”

“So killing people isn’t a sin, then?”

“Well, yes, of course killing people is a sin?”

“But you said god was going to drown them all? So if killing people is a sin according to god, then how come it isn’t a sin for god to drown people?”

Jimmy could see that Mrs. Peabody was getting upset as she answered, “Because he is god, Jimmy. We can’t understand why god does what he does. We are just human beings, unable to understand god’s mind, so we can’t judge god. We just have to do what he says and not sin.”

Jimmy didn’t think that was much of an explanation, but he didn’t like Mrs. Peabody getting upset, so he just said, “Okay.”

Mrs. Peabody continued. “Now where was I? ... Oh, yes. God found Noah was behaving righteously, that is, without sinning, so he decided he would save him from the flood. So he told Noah to build a big boat, called an ark, that could hold him and his family. He was also to make it big enough to hold a couple of every animal on earth to save them from the flood so that they could repopulate the earth with their kind. So he told Noah, ‘Build an ark 300 cubits long, by 50 cubits wide, by 30 cubits deep to hold you and a pair of all the animals. Then I will send a flood to wash away everyone and everything else, and only you and those in the ark will survive’.”

Jimmy still didn’t understand how god could kill off the whole world without calling it “sinning”, but he at least had to know one thing. “What is a cubit?”

“Well, thank you, Jimmy. Now that is a question I can answer. A cubit was the length from a person’s elbow to the tip of their fingers. Of course, that is slightly different for different people, but, in general, it was around 16 inches long.”

“Sixteen inches?” Jimmy asked.

“Yes. Do you know how long that is?” she asked.

Jimmy held out his hands. “Well, a foot has 12 inches, so I guess 16 inches would be about this long.”

Mrs. Peabody looked at his spread hands and said, “Yes, that’s about right, Jimmy.”

“So the boat was 300 of those long?”

“Yes, Jimmy. It was a very big boat.”

“Big enough to fit zebras and giraffes and elephants?” Jimmy asked.

“Yes, of course,” Mrs. Peabody replied.

“Big enough to fit hippopotamuses and rhinoceroses?” Jimmy asked.

“Yes, big enough to fit those, too,” Mrs. Peabody answered.

“And gorillas and bears and moose?” Jimmy continued.

“And gorillas and bears and moose,” Mrs. Peabody smiled back.

“And mammoths and mastodons?” Jimmy continued to probe.

“Yes, those, too,” Mrs. Peabody responded, with less of a smile.

“And polar bears and penguins?” Jimmy continued.

“Yes, polar bears and penguins, too,” Mrs. Peabody assured him, without bringing up how Noah would arrange to go get those animals to bring to the ark.

“And T. rexes and Triceratops and all the other dinosaurs?” Jimmy continued.

“Jimmy, look, my dear child,” she said, without looking very dear, “I know it seems like a lot, but god made room for all those animals on the ark that Noah built.”

“All the thousands and thousands of different animals that live today, as well as all those dinosaurs and other animals that used to live back then?”

“Yes, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody almost yelled. “God made room for *all* of them!”

“Wow! That really was a big boat!” Jimmy exclaimed.

“Yes, it was a really big boat!” Mrs. Peabody exclaimed also, but somehow Jimmy had a hard time believing this. Seeing that Mrs. Peabody was not very happy with him, though, he stopped and let her continue with her story.

“So after Noah finished building the ark as god had instructed him, he gathered all those animals and led them in pairs into it,” Mrs. Peabody continued.

Jimmy was going to ask her how long it took to load them all into the ark, but he didn’t want to upset her anymore.

“After he got them all inside,” Mrs. Peabody continued, “god closed the door of the ark, and then it started raining. It rained all day and all night, and all the next day and all the next night, and the next and the next, and kept on raining without letting up for 40 days and 40 nights, until the flood waters rose up so high they covered all the mountains.”

“Wow!” Jimmy let out a whistle. “All of them? Even Mount Everest?” he asked.

“Yes, even Mount Everest, Jimmy!” Mrs. Peabody barked.

“Wow!” Jimmy exclaimed again. “How hard was it raining to raise the water all the way up from the top of the oceans to the top of the mountains?”

“I don’t know exactly, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody responded, “but it was raining pretty hard.”

“Yeah!” Jimmy responded. “How high is Mount Everest?”

“I’m not sure, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody responded, “but I need to continue with the story.”

“Well, I’d really like to know. That must have been really hard rain. My daddy can calculate that. I’ll ask him when I get home.”

“You do that, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody said and then turned to the class, “So everyone and everything in the whole world drowned because they were so sinful. Everyone except Noah, his three sons and all their wives who were in the ark with all the animals.”

Jimmy was having a hard time accepting that god would just murder everyone on earth because they were sinning, so he asked her, “So he drowned every woman and child on the whole earth?”

“Well, not the women who were in the ark, Jimmy,” Mrs. Peabody replied.

“Every little bitty baby in the whole world?” Jimmy asked.

Mrs. Peabody looked very upset, but responded. “Well, Jimmy, yes, everyone on the earth who wasn’t inside the ark.”

“Wow! They must have been really sinful babies!” Jimmy exclaimed. He could tell now, by the look on Mrs. Peabody’s face that he had asked just too many questions.”

“I’m sorry,” he said repentantly. “I didn’t mean to upset you. I just find these things hard to understand. Please continue the story.”

After glowering at him for a moment longer, Mrs. Peabody addressed the class again. “So then it stopped raining after 40 days and nights, but the waters continued to cover the earth for another 150 days. That’s almost half a year.”

“I hope they packed plenty of food!” Jimmy said.

“Yes, I’m sure they did,” Mrs. Peabody assured him.

He was going to ask if they had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, since that was his favorite, and whether Noah found a place to store them out of reach of the tigers and the dinosaurs, but he remembered he was trying to not ask too many questions.

“Then, after 150 days, the waters started subsiding,” Mrs. Peabody continued, “and the ark came to rest in some mountains called the Mountains of Ararat. Noah and his family came out of the ark and let the animals go, too, to repopulate the earth.”

Jimmy wanted to ask where all the water went to, but decided that that was another question he should keep to himself.

“After the flood was over,” Mrs. Peabody finished her story, “god made a promise to Noah. He told him that he would never again send another flood that would destroy the whole earth. To show him that he really meant it, he told Noah to look up at the clouds. When he did so, Noah saw a beautiful rainbow. ‘From now on,’ god said, ‘whenever I bring rain I will put my rainbow in the cloud so that I will always remember my promise to you not to bring another great flood on the earth.’”

Jimmy was going to ask if god needed the rainbow because he was getting old and forgetful, but decided against it.

With a few minutes left over, Mrs. Peabody asked the class, “So how many of you want to be like Noah and live a righteous life for god?”

“I do,” Aaron called out.

Mrs. Peabody looked at the girls in the back. “Yes, we do to,” one of them said with less enthusiasm.

Mrs. Peabody then looked at Jimmy. “So do you want to live righteous for god like Noah did?”

Jimmy thought for a moment, and then responded. “Well, I don’t know about Noah, he sounded kind of boring, but god was exciting. I’ll try to live like god did.”