

Noah's Ark Discovered Again?

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The discovery of Noah's Ark was announced last Sunday (4/24/10) by a Chinese organization from Hong Kong (Noah's Ark Ministries, International). The problem with this is that it seems like the "discovery" of Noah's Ark is getting to be almost an annual event. What in the world is going on? We think it's a question that is easy to analyze. Genesis 1-11 is the most attacked portion of Scripture for its historicity. Finding an antediluvian artifact like Noah's Ark could be the greatest archaeological discovery ever. It evokes many wannabe Indiana Joneses to search for Noah's Ark. We see no problem with this quest, and would welcome such a discovery. *The problem is not in the finding of the Ark; but in its substantiation.* Amateur archaeologists can and do find things that turn out to be fantastic discoveries. Witness the treasure hunter, Terry Herbert, in Staffordshire, England who recently found a huge cache of Saxon gold artifacts that was reported in *National Geographic*. However, to properly document a discovery, the proper scientific protocol must be followed. Scientists are trained to gather and analyze evidence. They then publish their research so that other scientists can test their results. These "Indiana Joneses" invariably do not do this. They put the cart before the horse by announcing the discovery first and declare exactly what it is in a spectacular news conference rather than publishing their results in a scientific journal. The news media, on the other hand, is all too willing to do what gets good ratings, and at the same time it usually puts evangelical Christians in a bad light.

This Hong Kong group claims they are 99.9 % sure that the wood they found belongs to the Ark of Noah. Initially, as writers and researchers who have spent a few thousand hours researching this subject as well, we have the following questions:

1. It is claimed that this discovery was found in an ice and rock cave on Agri Dagh, also known as Mt. Ararat. It is a known fact among geologists that nearly all of the icecap on this mountain consists of moving ice, that is, glacier. A glacier is a river of ice which flows down the mountain. Any wooden structure inside this ice would be ground to bits from the glacial action. In their news releases they have reported this site to be at 13,000 feet and in another report at around 14,000. With these altitudes it would have to be on the ice cap or at the very edge.
2. Most geologists believe this mountain was formed in relatively recent times, i.e., after the Flood. It is a complex volcano with no clearly discernible layers of sedimentation that would have been laid down by flood waters. There is, however, abundant historical evidence that the Ark landed on another mountain 200 miles south of Mt. Ararat called Cudi Dagh. For this evidence see our report: www.rapidresponsereport.com
3. The group claims they have had the wood carbon dated by a lab in Iran with the results being almost 5000 years old (with the Flood occurring about

3000 B.C.). Why did they have the wood tested in Iran, we ask? Will other scientists have access to the lab results? Are there any good labs in Iran that can do this kind of testing? Or, was the wood tested in Iran because the lab results might be harder to trace by other scientists? Why wasn't a lab in the United States or the United Kingdom used? Just asking!

4. Is this wood coated with pitch (bitumen)? The Bible says God instructed Noah to treat the wood with pitch, either asphalt or pine pitch (Gen. 6:14). At least some of this wood should test positive for this coating. Also, has a botanist examined the wood to determine what kind of wood it is?
5. When archaeologists make a discovery they must be able to prove exactly where they took their specimen out of the ground. How do we know this video showing the rooms was filmed where they said it was?
6. What about motives? Only God knows their true motives, but it sure makes one nervous when these groups looking for the Ark are planning a documentary video. One of the members of this Chinese group is a filmmaker. About once a year a new docudrama about Noah's Ark appears on one of the cable channels. They would not keep doing this if they didn't make money.
7. What are the plans to publish this material in scientific peer-reviewed archaeological and geological publication? This should be done before the popular book and video are released.

In addition to the above questions, we have reason to question the integrity of this discovery for the following reasons:

1. This group had a local guide who is known for his deceit and fraud. It is this guide who initially informed the Chinese group that he knew the location of the Ark in 2008. However, since then he has led them to more than one location. The first location was a cave at a low altitude, a small cave with a tree growing in front! Apparently the current cave is at the 13,000 or 14,000 foot level on the icecap.
2. The specimens taken from this first cave (at the lower altitude) were claimed to be petrified wood from the Ark. In actuality, they were nothing but volcanic tuffa.
3. In one of the photos of the rooms straw is seen on the floor and even a spider web in one of the corners. Really! Do spiders live at 13,000 or 14,000 feet? Can they survive the freezing temperatures?
4. There is a real problem with evangelists (which is what they claim to be) who use this kind of discovery to prove the Bible, and hence convince non-

believers of its authority, when in fact the truthfulness of the discovery has never been established. I [Bill Crouse] know firsthand of one “Indiana Jones” who spoke eloquently and emotionally about his adventures, and when he gave an invitation at the end of his presentation, many in the audience stood up to commit their lives to Christ. When the speaker was confronted about the truthfulness of some of the stories he told that night, he replied: “But look how many stood up to receive Christ.” This becomes very problematic when at some point the convert learns the real truth. They often become very embittered about all things Christian, and understandably so.

5. There seems to be more than the usual gullibility here in that the Hong Kong group was warned about this local Kurdish guide who has led others astray. We say usual gullibility, because it seems to be a characteristic of other ark-hunters as well, in that they tend to believe all the local lore. While many ark-hunters mean well, it seems that they want to believe every report seemingly at all costs; putting everything through a rational grid often is avoided as being too skeptical.

At this point we are skeptical of the claims but would rejoice in the end if they proved to be true. If this someday is the case we will be the first to apologize for our doubts. We would strongly urge the Hong Kong group to follow proper scholarly procedures and publish this material in scientific, peer-reviewed archaeological and geological publications so that the scholarly community can examine the material first hand and critique it in order to offer helpful, and constructive, criticism. For the person in the pew, we caution you to not get too excited about something that is at best, unsubstantiated; and at worst, a fraud perpetrated by the Kurdish guide!

(The authors are both members of the Near East Archaeological Society and the Evangelical Theological Society.)

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