

## THE ARK, ITS COURSE AND DESTINATION

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*Commonly, the account in Genesis has been interpreted to mean that, at the end of the flood, the ark grounded on Mount Ararat and remained there. Here a different interpretation is proposed: that eventually the ark returned to a lower altitude, more suitable for Noah and his family to begin life again there. Such a destination seems more in keeping with God's providential care of the ark during its voyage.*

*In the light of this suggestion, several other suggestions and interpretations are proposed.*

### Introduction

A very excellent outline of an example of divine control of history on this earth was given recently by Kofahl, in which he had occasion to cover the period of the flood, and to discuss the canopy as a source of flood waters.<sup>1</sup>

It is one purpose of this paper to repeat the importance of divine control during the period of the flood. Such control was very necessary for the protection of the ark and its passengers. I can do no better than to repeat Kofahl's words:

"There were numerous supernatural aspects of the deluge, notably the divine announcement and purpose, divinely given plans for the ark, the perfect timing and coordination of the various geological and atmospheric events, the voluntary gathering of the animals, the maintenance of these animals for a year on the ark, and the preservation of the ark and eight souls during a year of global violence unequalled in the history of the world since Creation."<sup>1</sup>

One of the problems which may puzzle a person who is trying to analyze the motion of the ark over the world ocean is the statement in the Bible that the ark rested—upon the mountains of Ararat. (Genesis 8:4).

The interpretation has been for many centuries, and still commonly is, that the ark grounded on a mountain, or mountain range. The mountain is often taken to be the one now commonly called Ararat (actually, there are two peaks, about 17,260 and 13,000 feet high respectively), in Turkey, about half way between the Black and Caspian Seas.<sup>2</sup>

However, such an interpretation does not seem to fit in well with what has been said about divine control. The ark would have been in a very precarious position, and the situation would have been difficult and uncomfortable for the human passengers. They would have had to move all the domestic animals, their food, all farm equipment, tools, etc., down the mountain to the place where Noah was to take up farming. (Genesis 9:20.) But such a thing would have been unnecessary; God could use the same power which had raised the ark from its building-place, presumably at only a moderate elevation, to return it to a moderate elevation.

Furthermore, to assume that the ark was permitted to ground itself on top of a mountain would seem more to be expected of god as envisaged by the deists, who commonly limit divine activity to creation in the past. The deists' remote and indifferent god is hardly one who would have tender care for men. But we should accept

Jesus' teaching of God's creating and sustaining activity: "My Father is working still and I am working." (John 5:17.)<sup>3</sup>

### The Course of the Ark

Genesis 7:11 tells us that in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the flood began. We find the ark ready, its cargo and all its passengers on board, waiting on dry land. The ark was apparently built as the ancient Greeks built ships: in a cradle which must have been a huge construction; for the barge itself was big.<sup>4</sup> The place of construction must have been the size of a modern football field. When a modern ship is being built, after the hull is finished, it is launched into the water, the hull is then pulled up alongside a dock and there the ship is completed. This is different from the method used to complete the ark. When the flood waters touched the big keel of this barge, it had to be ready to move. There was no shake-down cruise for the ark, a trial run given to all modern ships before acceptance.

We are told that the waters increased (Genesis 7:17) and the ark was lifted up above the earth. This reminds anyone who has ever gone through a canal of what happens in the locks: the rising water lifts the vessel to a higher level. We shall return later to this thought about locks in a canal.

Genesis 7:18 then tells us the ark went upon the face of the waters, actually floated out on a world ocean, on its journey to its port of disembarkation, on a new world.

For one hundred and fifty days we have no contact with the ark; nothing is recorded in the Bible, but we do know that she was floating on a world ocean, on which there were no lighthouses, beacons, no charted courses in latitude and longitude available. Such things would have been useless to Noah even if he was a navigator, because the barge had no rudder or propulsion. One visual characteristic of the surface of a world ocean that might have told Noah something was the ocean currents, circulating around the planet in the direction of its rotation. This is being done today by the mighty Antarctic circumpolar current in the Southern Hemisphere. There is no continent to stand in its way. It flows completely around the Antarctic Continent.<sup>5</sup>

We know that much happened during the first forty days of the one hundred and fifty day period. During this period I believe the ark was moved by divine control to a place of safety, i.e., one where the water was relatively quiet.

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During this period tectonic activity took place. Upheavals in the earth's crust that released juvenile waters also created tsunamis. These are produced, happily seldom, in the oceans today. The newspaper headline writers like to call them tidal waves, which they are not.<sup>6</sup> During the forty days many could have been produced by earthquakes, volcanic activity, etc., in such a way that the mass of waters released could have been moving in different directions resulting in terrific collisions whenever they met. Also, great downpours of water from heaven are recorded in Genesis 7:11. Besides this was the gas, dust, fire and water poured forth by volcanoes developing beneath the surface of the waters. Incidentally, Mt. Ararat could have been one of them.<sup>7</sup> I believe these conditions did not exist all over the earth; and, as I mentioned above, the ark must have been well protected, in some relatively tranquil place.

During the period following the forty days of the one hundred fifty day period, the forces of destruction were now being gradually reversed to become forces of suppression (Genesis 8:1) and in this paragraph we have a direct statement, "God remembered Noah," and there followed:

Genesis 8:1—God made a wind to pass over the earth to calm the waters.

Genesis 8:2—The juvenile waters from the fountains of the deep were cut off. The tsunamis produced by the tectonic upheavals also ceased.

Genesis 8:2—The windows of Heaven were stopped. (The torrential rains stopped.)

These actions were taken by divine control to calm the surface of the world ocean.

Genesis 8:3 and 8:5 tell us that the waters returned from off the surface of the earth, an indication that the earth was changing from a planet covered with water to a planet with oceans separated by continents, a condition we have today.<sup>8</sup>

Genesis 8:3 tells us that the calming effect on the waters was effective. The ocean basins were being formed very slowly to drain the flood waters to provide land suitable for human habitation.

It is my belief that the lowering of the sea level was done very slowly under divine control, because the draining of the waters into the ocean basins could have had a more serious effect on the planet's surface than did the flooding of the earth. Also, the safety of the ark had to be considered; it must not be swept out to sea.

The slow receding level of the sea, which may have taken centuries to reach its present level, would have provided some control over the expansion of the human race over the earth. Some delay was likely necessary to allow the surface to become suitable for cultivation, and to let plants and forests get a head start.

I believe that it is safe to say that the memory of the flood left the post-diluvian people with an actual dread of the sea, and caused them to watch the encroachment of high tides on the beaches with a great deal of anxiety. Such an attitude could have lasted for many generations.

It may be worth remarking, in that connection, that there is some evidence that centuries later, when the

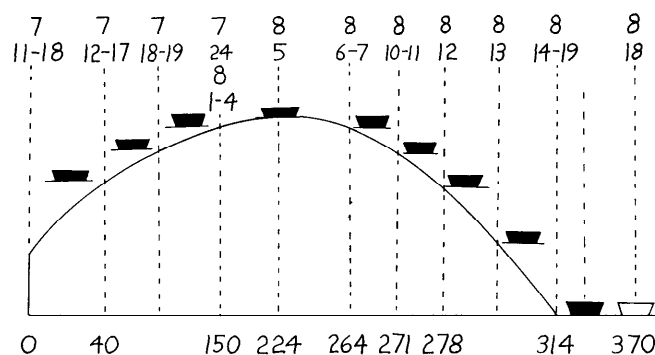
megalithic structures in western Europe were built, their purposes may have included the prediction of tides.<sup>9</sup>

### The Actual Landing

On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, according to the record, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. This has commonly been taken to mean that it grounded. However, such an interpretation seems unnecessary.

I suggest that the ark stopped moving about over the mountains, which were still under water. A modern sailor might say that the ark was hove to and waiting for orders. This point is specifically mentioned in the record as the point of transition from the voyage upon the unbounded ocean to a voyage of another kind.

On the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains were seen. It seems strange that it would have taken two and one half months for that much to happen if the ark were already grounded; and commentators have sometimes proposed rather strange explanations. I suggest that the ark continued to float as the



This is intended to show how the depth of water (vertical coordinate) increased and decreased with time (horizontal) during the flood; but it is not necessarily to scale. The numbers at the top are references to Genesis, by chapter and verse. The numbers along the bottom indicate the days elapsed. I have assumed a conventional calendar, of months of thirty days each. However, see the interesting suggestion in *The New Bible Commentary*, second edition, 1954-1960. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan. Pages 84 and 85.

About the depth, Haber, reference 8, points out that there is enough water in the oceans to cover the surface of the earth, were it smooth, to a depth of about 7,500 feet.

About the days indicated along the bottom, the following remarks may be added:

0-40. There was likely great tectonic activity at this time.

150. This marks the end of the period of increasing ocean. God remembered Noah, and—(a) Caused a wind to calm the water, (b) The tectonic forces were reduced, (c) The rain was reduced (Genesis 8:3).

Then the ark rested upon the waters which were upon the mountains of the Kingdom of Ararat.

224. The tops of the mountains were seen (Genesis 8:5). The waters decreased.

264. Noah opened the window and sent forth a raven and a dove. The dove returned. The waters abated.

271. This time the dove, when sent forth, returned with an olive leaf.

278. This time the dove did not return.

314. He removed the covering. The ground was dry.

370. God spoke to Noah. Go forth, Thy wife, sons, and their wives.

water went down, and now it was found to be inside a circle of mountains. God may have placed the ark thus to protect it from the violent motion of the water which was still going on outside.

The water continued to subside, and, of course, the ark was lowered with it. Then, I suggest, the ark went out of its lagoon, through a passage, into another, rather lower, landlocked basin. And so on for several stages. As already suggested, the process was much like a passage through a canal with locks.

In the way described, the ark was lowered from a considerable altitude to a place likely only a little above the sea level of the time. Thus Noah, his family, and the animals, could disembark in a place where the soil, supply of water, and other considerations, were suitable to them to begin their new life. In this, as in everything, God remembered the ark and its passengers, both man and beast.

Genesis 8:13-18 tells us that in the first month, first day of the month, Noah removed the covering. He saw the face of the ground was dry. The ark had settled down on the soft mud of a valley. God had thus provided Noah with a home on a destroyed planet.

Again God showed that He remembered Noah and the ark. Genesis 8:14 to 18 tells us that God spoke unto Noah saying, "Go forth out of the ark, thou, and thy wife, thy sons and their wives with thee." Only God could have opened the great door on the side of the ark, because it had been sealed before the ark was lifted up.

Now Noah was to be a farmer, and if so, he required a location with good soil, fresh water (the ocean water must have been contaminated), sunshine and a temperature suitable to raise farm products for his family and the animals before the supply he carried in the ark was depleted. And here, too, I believe God remembered Noah.

This was the start of the post-flood era of the planet's history.

### The Destination of the Ark

Somewhere in the mountains of the Kingdom of Ararat in one of the valleys will be found evidence of the landing of the ark and the first settlement of man on the post-flood world.

How will we identify this location? I do not believe there will be anything left of the ark, except possibly the great keel. Even that may have disintegrated, unless sections became petrified. However, there is the possibility that stone ballast was used, in which case one could look for a 300 foot line of broken stone. There should also be artifacts in this deposit of stone. It is possible

that the stone used for ballast also could give some very useful information.

Then there is the altar on which Noah made his important sacrifices. The ancients were instructed by God to make their altars out of stone which had not been touched by the tools of men (Exodus 20:22-26).

A memorial could also have been erected by Noah, although there is no record of it in the Bible.

The memorials would have been built the same way the altars were, but no burnt offerings would have been made on them. (Jos. 22:26-29.)

It is possible that other remains of this ancient settlement might exist in the form of stone foundations, artifacts of metal, and pottery brought by Noah from the antediluvian world. Noah and his direct descendants likely had to make tools of stone, and they then became the first men of the so-called stone age, for both the arts of metallurgy and the location of the mines were likely lost for a time.

If Noah's descendants had the characteristics of men of history, it is possible that for several generations an attempt was made to commemorate the location of the first settlement including the ark, and to honor Noah.

It is a well known historical fact, however, that succeeding generations can be forgetful of history and be ruthless in destroying the work of past generations to save themselves the labor of obtaining materials to build their own homes. I believe if we are to find evidence of Noah's presence, it will only be by the will of God, Who may have taken steps to conceal these important memorials to be recalled to man only at a time set by God Himself.

### References

- <sup>1</sup>Kofahl, Robert E., 1977. Could the flood waters have come from a canopy or extraterrestrial source? *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 13(4):202-206.
  - <sup>2</sup>1936. Standard Bible dictionary. Funk and Wagnalls Company. Page 62, under "Ararat".
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  - <sup>4</sup>Giannone, Ralph, 1975. A comparison of the ark with modern ships. *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 12(1):53.
  - <sup>5</sup>Munk, Walter H., 1958. The circulation of the oceans. (In) The planet Earth, a *Scientific American* book. P. 104.
  - <sup>6</sup>Glaney, Edward P., 1968. The tides. Doubleday and Co., Garden City, New York. P. 60.
  - <sup>7</sup>Honeyman, James R., 1976. Sinking continents. *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 13(1):58-62.
  - <sup>8</sup>Haber, Heinz, 1969. Our blue planet. Charles Scribner Sons, New York. P. 24.
  - <sup>9</sup>Thom, A., 1971. Megalithic lunar observatories. The Clarendon Press, Oxford. Pp. 10-11 and 23.
- All Biblical references are taken from the authorized King James version.