

Noah's Ark Hoax Claim Doesn't Deter Believers

By Lauren Green - FOXNews.com
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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: Earlier this week, I was excited to think that the claim Noah's Ark had been discovered was the truth. Fox News was one of the many reputable news organizations that ran articles about the alleged discovery. Now, there is growing concern that the claimed discovery is a hoax. I am joining the skeptical camp because Randal Price is skeptical [someone who I respect for his archeological and biblical integrity]. It might take awhile before we can know for sure. Until then, I encourage Christians to be very cautious about the Noah's Ark discovery claim.

Earlier this week a group of Chinese Christians held a news conference to announce they were 99.9 percent sure they had found Noah's Ark — the boat the Bible says was built by God's most righteous man before a "sinful" human race drowned in the Great Flood.

Maybe the find on Mount Ararat in Turkey really is Noah's Ark. More likely, it isn't. But if it isn't, that won't stop Ark enthusiasts from believing it is out there somewhere.

Immediately in the wake of the news flash, experts weighed in to shoot it down. "The wood in the photos is not old enough" ... "There are no location pictures to verify the site" ... "No independent experts have looked at the data" ... "There's never been evidence of a great flood."

And the people voicing the loudest caution are biblical archeologists who believe the ark is real and that it can be found. Dr. Randall Price, head of Judaic Studies at Liberty University, had been a cohort of the Noah's Ark International team until two years ago. He pulled out of the project, sensing they were being taken advantage of by Kurdish guides, who've turned Ark searching into a cottage industry.

"I think we can't rule out the possibility that this is a hoax, because a lot of the things that happen in that region of the world, and especially with the Kurdish guides that are involved, are designed to try to extract money from gullible people," Price said. But he added: "I'm reserving my opinion at this point until I see how things are developing."

Dr. John Morris, lead archeologist at the Institute for Creation Research, says "I'm leaning towards that the Chinese people have been deceived." Morris has led 13 expeditions to Mount Ararat looking for the ark. He knows the area well and says of the recent find, "At best, it is an elaborate deception."

Morris and Price were contacted by the Chinese team to take part in the press event, but they declined based on how little evidence they saw.

Professor Porcher Taylor at the University of Richmond says he, too, believes it is not Noah's Ark, because "they're digging in the wrong place on Mt. Ararat."

Taylor says satellite imaging of the region about a half mile away from where the Chinese group says they found the ark shows what has been called “the Ararat anomaly,” an area that has intrigued the U.S. intelligence community for years. “If the remains of Noah’s Ark are on Mt. Ararat,” Taylor says, “the only logical place would be at the Ararat anomaly site, and not at the site in these sensational claims made by this group.”

A fundamental question separating scientific inquiry into Noah’s Ark is: Is the account of the great flood in the Bible true, or is it a mythical legend?

Dr. Paul Zimansky, professor of archeology and ancient history at State University of New York at Stony Brook, says, “I think it has all the earmarks of a story, but in any case it isn’t anything we can investigate as an archaeologist.” A catastrophic flood on Earth is spoken of in many ancient cultures: in Sumerian, Babylonian, Greek, Hindu, Gallic, Scandinavian and Chinese legends. Some even predate the Old Testament. The odd thing, Zimansky says, is that even though there are written accounts of the flood in all these cultures, archaeologists have yet to find evidence of it. If you take the Bible literally, Zimansky says, “this ark is going to be deposited in an archaeological context which would be a flood stratum. And it’s not going to be a little flood stratum. It’s going to cover the entire Earth. Well, no such flood stratum exists.”

And that’s where Morris disagrees with archaeologists like Zimansky. “It all depends on your presupposition,” says Morris. “I think they’re looking at it through the wrong glasses.” Morris says a great flood would shape the landscape of the entire planet — carving out crevices like the Grand Canyon, even separating huge masses of land like the African and South American continents. “Everything on earth gives evidence of the flood,” Morris says.

That is why he is convinced something is up there on Mt. Ararat. He says there have been hundreds accounts from eyewitnesses saying they saw what looked like a big ship. Some of those accounts, he says, are from pilots who flew over the area during World War II. Considerable amounts of military data and ground-penetrating imaging have reported showing a shape of something manmade on the mountain.

Taylor is also convinced Noah’s Ark is there, because of the Ararat anomaly’s shape and size. “The boat-shaped Ararat anomaly and Noah’s Ark both have a 6-to-1 length-to-width ratio,” he says. The Ark, depending on how you measure a cubit, could be anywhere from 450 to 600 feet long. The anomaly is 1,200 feet. But, Porcher says, scientists have debated for years the length of a cubit, which is thought to be the length of a man’s forearm between the elbow and the tip of his finger. But whose elbow?

The Bible talks of “the Nephilim” (Genesis 6:1-4) being in the world at that time. The Nephilim were giants or a very large race. If a cubit was measured by the length of a very large man’s forearm, Porcher says that would mean “the ark was much larger than previously thought.”

Many experts have concluded from examining the photos that the images are of rock formations that strongly resemble the boat described in Genesis. Whatever it is, it convinces Morris, and countless others, to keep returning to Mt. Ararat, hoping to find what their faith tells them can be found.