

# **GARDEN OF EDEN AND NOAH'S ARK**

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## **Where Was the Garden of Eden Located?**

Over the years, many have claimed the Garden of Eden has been found. Of course the location of each "discovery" is in a different location. The Bible describes the area around the Garden in Genesis 2, even using recognizable place names such as Ethiopia. It mentions a spring in the Garden which parts into four major rivers, including the Euphrates. This has led many, including Bible scholars, to conclude that the Garden of Eden was somewhere in the middle eastern area known today as the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley, with its remains long ago vanishing.

It is also true that this area (the "fertile crescent") was the location of the ancient Tower of Babel and the patriarch Abraham's home in the city of Ur. Without a doubt, the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley plays a unique role in Biblical history, but was it the location of the Garden of Eden? I think not.

First, let's examine the Biblical information. While the Tigris and Euphrates both have their headwaters in the area surrounding Mt. Ararat, they do not flow from a source like the spokes on a wheel, filling the land as mentioned. Nor are the other two rivers present and none go to Ethiopia. Furthermore, the mineral deposits mentioned bear no resemblance to those in this area. In short, the geography and descriptions don't match.

The key is in recognizing that through the Flood of Noah's day, "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (II Peter 3:6). As described in Genesis 6-9, the Flood would have totally restructured the surface of the globe. It would have done what major floods do—erode the land surface in one area and redeposit those sediments elsewhere. Biblically, the Flood covered the planet with processes operating at rates, scales, and intensities far beyond those possible today. No place on Earth could have survived untouched.

These sediments would have been full of organic debris, which over time would either fossilize or metamorphose into oil and gas. The sediments would harden into sedimentary rock, in places bending into mountains or breaking along fault systems.

Today, the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley contains sediments over two miles thick, from which are pumped enormous quantities of oil and gas. The sediments, now rock, are dramatically bent into modern mountains as well as subsurface mountains, and brutally broken by major fault systems. They deeply cover and obscure any possible pre-flood locations. Furthermore, the basement rock, if indeed it was present before the Flood, would have likely undergone erosion also. No present topography or underground surface could possibly bear any resemblance to the pre-flood world. That world is gone!

Noah and his family would have encountered the present-day Tigris and Euphrates Rivers soon after leaving the Ark. As their descendants migrated, they would give familiar names to the new rivers and places.

God placed an angel at the entrance to the Garden to keep pre-flood men from returning. The Flood made even that precaution unnecessary.

## How Could Noah Have Built the Ark All by Himself?

"...the works were finished from the foundation of the world." (Hebrews 4:3)

Some have ridiculed the Flood story by insisting that the job of the Ark's construction was impossibly large. How could Noah have done it? Admittedly, we don't have all the details, but let's make some reasonable assumptions and see if the task is too great.

The Lord predicted that His judgment on the sinful civilization in the days of Noah would come in 120 years (Genesis 6:3). When He told Noah and instructed him to build the Ark (6:14-16) is unclear. But let's assume that Noah had the full 120 years warning.

Noah's three sons began to be born 100 years before the Flood (cf. 5:32 with 7:6) and within a few years were able to help. There may have been others to help as well, for grandfather Methuselah was alive during the entire construction period, dying the year of the Flood. There may have been others in a godly remnant of whom we know nothing. All we know now is that only eight people, Noah and his wife, their three sons, and their wives, constituted the faithful still living when the Flood finally came (7:13; II Peter 2:5). It may also have been that Noah hired construction workers to help. He must have been at least wealthy enough to abandon his livelihood during this period, but again we have no knowledge of these details.

Let's take the worst case scenario. Let's assume that only Noah and his three sons were available to help. Could they have done it all by themselves? To answer this we must first understand the magnitude of the job.

In Scripture we are only told the gross dimensions of the Ark—450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high, assuming a cubit of 18" (6:15). We also know that the Ark had three decks (6:16). Thus the overall volume of the Ark was:

$$450 \times 75 \times 45 = 1.52 \times 10^6 \text{ ft}^3$$

But a structure consists mostly of open space. Most houses are over 95% open, less for large ships. In our worst case scenario, let's assume that 20% of the Ark's volume was worked lumber that the four men had to gather, transport to the construction site, do the necessary shaping and install.

$$1.52 \times 10^6 \times 0.2 = 0.304 \times 10^6 \text{ ft}^3$$

Remember, the Ark didn't have to win any beauty contests, or speed races, it just had to be strong and float. It probably more resembled a rough barn or stable in workmanship. The generations so soon after creation, living in an ideal environment with long life spans, were no doubt intelligent and capable. It hardly matters if the family were experienced in construction for within a year or so they would have been true professionals. An experienced crew of four could have installed, we assume, an average of 15 cubic feet of wood per day. If anything, this estimate seems low, but this is the worst case!

$$15 \text{ ft}^3 \times 6 \text{ days} \times 52 \text{ wks} = 4,680 \text{ ft}^3/\text{year}$$

It's now easy to calculate how long it would have taken.

$$\frac{0.304 \times 10^6 \text{ ft}^3}{4,680 \text{ ft}^3/\text{year}} = 65 \text{ years}$$

Sixty-five years under this worst case scenario! A big job, yes, but Noah was a faithful man, and accomplished the task. As we see, even simple calculations can enhance our faith in God's Word.

## Has Noah's Ark Been Discovered?

When God wrote the Biblical record, He chose not to give all the scientific and historical details. The best we can do is to hold tightly to the specifics it does give, and interpret the scientific facts within that framework. The Christian creationist must be committed to truth, and hold lightly those pet theories and opinions not spelled out in Scripture, striving to fine-tune his understanding through careful scientific research.

Case in point: Recent news reports have noted that a few explorers claim to have identified a "boat-shaped rock formation" in the foothills of Mt. Ararat as the remains of Noah's Ark. Readers who have followed the search for the Ark are aware that most researchers have concluded that the remains, if still in existence at all, are most likely on the nearby glacier-covered volcanic peak where several hundred people over the last 150 years claim to have seen a rectangular, barge-shaped object partially covered by rock, ice, and snow.

But recently, these few individuals have concluded that this rock formation is the Ark. Supporting their claims are very questionable research methods, but it is worth noting that very serious scientific study (including my own field and lab study, and corroborated by Dr. John Baumgardner's core-drilling investigation during the summer of 1988) discovered nothing that does not have a simple geologic explanation. As much as I wish it were the Ark, there is no evidence that it is, and we should not be overly encouraged by these unwarranted claims. Research continues, with at least one expedition planned for this summer on Mt. Ararat.

Actually, we can learn a lot from this episode. Science is not (or should not be, anyway) done in the media. Saying something often enough, and loudly enough, doesn't make it so. Creationists at times forget this fact.

But it seems to me that our evolutionary counterparts purposefully abuse science in this way. How else can the fact that a viewpoint which claims to explain the entire universe, yet which has so little objective scientific evidence to support it, which runs counter to basic scientific law, which is statistically impossible, and which is an affront to logic and intuition, hold such sway in American life? It is no wonder that big-name evolutionists such as Steven Gould, Donald Johanson, Richard Leakey, and Carl Sagan, who command incredibly large lecture fees, refuse to debate creationists on the scientific evidence. They know their bias might be exposed. Only as the evolutionary religion is told in the name of science and received without question can it continue. And that is what evolutionist's bank on!

Christians must hold themselves to a higher standard. Although we have a Book, which we accept on faith, that faith is not a mindless, groundless faith, for it is based on sound evidences given in the context of scientific and historical truth. We do have a mandate to transmit the truths of Scripture to the next generation, but it is also true that the Bible is not specific on every issue. It does not specify the exact location (or even the present existence) of Noah's Ark. We must do our science carefully and honestly, reporting our conclusions properly and cautiously, and correcting them when warranted, all the while identifying our presuppositional bias, even though evolutionists seldom do the same.