

**Philip Williams** 著作 《挪亞洪水的考古證據》  
*The Archaeological Evidence of Noah's Flood and Ark*

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**Discovery on Mount Ararat**

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What a wonderful report in the very year I was to publish this book! My friends wanted to celebrate. But even before we got to the restaurant, news reports began focusing on claims that the announcement was likely based on archeological fraud. My bubble of elation burst like a punctured balloon. The reports of fraud seemed themselves incredible, but if confirmed they would seriously damage interest in Noah's Ark and Flood. I could not allow my work of over twenty years to become associated with a hoax. We spent our evening of "celebration" in anguished reflection on how anyone could fabricate the evidence being reported.

I spent the next day tracing the reports of fraud to their sources. One came from Robert Cornuke, an Ark searcher whom I knew. A few years back, I had been unable to dissuade him from making a highly promoted announcement of the possible discovery of Ark remains on a mountain in Iran. Convinced he had seen Noah's Ark in those rocks, he could only see fraud in any competing evidence. The more widely reported and far more damaging source was from Randall Price. Dr. Price is an end-time theologian and popularizer of biblical archaeology in the interest of biblical prophecy, better known for his interest in another Ark, the same Ark of the Covenant sought by Indiana Jones, which Price supposes to be hidden beneath the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Some years before, I had reviewed his book on biblical archaeology, and was disappointed to find that it was only a survey of what others had written.

The astonishing thing was that he claimed to be the archaeologist on the Hong Kong team that made this discovery. He ended his associations with NAMI based on rumors from a rival mountain guide, whom he refused to name. Price asserted that NAMI's guide had fabricated the site on Mt. Ararat with timbers carried from the Black Sea coast. Though not accusing the members of NAMI of dishonesty, he was condescending of their judgments. He sent his claims of fraud in an email to the supporters of his rival search for Noah's Ark, but someone posted it on a website and it got leaked to the press. Though he had not meant them to be publicized, Price stood by his claims.

Documents that Price himself published on his website made it clear that rather than resigning from his brief association with the team, he had in fact been expelled by NAMI's guide, Mr. Ahmet Ertugrul, also known as Parachute (Parasut, in the local language). I found Parachute's concerns most understandable: Price's insistence on climbing the dangerous mountain in bad weather,<sup>259</sup> and associating himself with a rival guide and climbing party at such a sensitive time in the new discovery. Price

<sup>259</sup> Price's protest about climbing notwithstanding, the guide was not exaggerating the dangers from the precarious location of this discovery. As I write, I am reading reports that a climber may have lost his life attempting to visit precisely this site. Price's insistence on overruling the judgment of an experienced guide

misrepresented his original association, having himself requested to become part of NAMI's team following their original announcement. His mistrust of Parachute contrasts with the respect accorded him by Bruce Feiler in his best-selling *Walking the Bible*. Feiler called Parachute the most impressive person encountered in all his travels. The sincerity and credibility of Parachute's claim to have seen a timber on Mt. Ararat, even if he refused to reveal the location to Feiler, is vouched for by the notable Avner Goren, an Israeli archaeologist with long experience working in the Arab world. No biblical literalist, Goren would not be easily impressed by such a report.

Unfortunately, the media and detractors on the Internet ignored the discoverers' account, preferring to report Price's charges, probably without examining the details of those charges. Otherwise they could not have missed the fact that they were based on an anonymous source. In truth, both the media and public were tiring of unfounded claims about the discovery of Noah's Ark and were looking for any excuse to ignore this report. Perhaps they were becoming so tired as to miss the fact that while the new report was backed by the appropriate archaeological authorities, the detractors were rival Ark searchers, responsible for hyped reports of their own.

When it came to professionalism, NAMI and their Turkish partners contrasted favorably even with the archaeologists at ASOR,<sup>260</sup> one of the most prestigious organizations concerned with biblical archaeology. Sadly, a few archaeologists associated with this venerable organization responded to the report in swashbuckling fashion, as if promoting a new calling to police biblical archaeology. Most surprising was their charge that NAMI had not yet revealed the precise location of the discovery. Could they be unfamiliar with practices for protecting new archaeological discoveries? One ASOR archaeologist acknowledged that NAMI's announcement differed from previous claims by actually producing evidence. Why then his criticism?

Perhaps the most surprising opposition came from prominent leaders in the Young Earth Creationist movement, those who have long believed in and taught a worldwide Flood. Though initially seeming to treat the announcement with an open mind, astute thinkers in the movement could see the discovery as troubling. For instance, radiocarbon tests supporting the biblical date of the Flood could seem to demolish their theories concerning the unreliability of radiocarbon dating for the pre-Flood era. In addition, the identification of this particular peak as Mt. Ararat challenged their geological theory that it was formed in post-Flood times.

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After a few years of research and filming, trust and respect developed between the local villagers and the Hong Kong researchers, who were keenly interested in the villagers' traditions about Noah's Ark and their experience of living near the mountain of Noah. NAMI also developed a close working relationship with Parachute and other members of the Mt. Ararat rescue team. The villagers showed the Hong Kong film team how their ancestors used to climb the mountain. Visits had ceased following the earthquake of 1840 that broke the Ark into three sections, burying them under volcanic rock and ice as pieces of the Ark slid down the side of the mountain. Due to their relationship with the Turkish locals and because they were filming rather than searching for Noah's Ark, NAMI was able to obtain climbing permits that were being denied to American Ark searchers. The villagers shared with NAMI and Parachute, information that would eventually lead them to the wooden remains on Mount Ararat.

The group's first discovery was something that their scientific partners determined to be petrified wood. Reading about this on the NAMI website dampened my enthusiasm because wood from that era is unlikely to be petrified. Though seemingly unconnected with their later discovery of the actual remains, it served to generate

interest in the team's research. NAMI alerted the Turkish authorities, including Mr. E. Muhsin Bulut, Director of Cultural Ministry for Turkey's Agri Province. Information about the discoveries was also sent to Dr. Ahmet Özbek a geologist at Kahramanmaraş Sırtçın İmam University in Turkey; Dr. Özlem Çevik, an archaeologist at Trakya University; Professor Otkay Belli, Director of the Institute of Eurasian Archaeology at the University of Istanbul; and Dr. Selim Pullu of Afyonkarahisar Kocatepe University. The Turkish and Hong Kong teams jointly developed a plan for exploration and investigation.

By the summer of 2008, Parachute's climbing team began uncovering and photographing the astonishing remains. Showing these photos to the NAMI team, Parachute explained the precarious location of the caves and the danger this posed to potential visitors. Because of the danger, the researchers invited Panda Lee, trained as a professional climber by the British Army, to verify Parachute's report. When he climbed the mountain soon after receiving this call, Panda became perhaps the first verifiable foreign visitor in modern times to see the remains of Noah's Ark. After exiting the caves where he observed the remains, Panda sent a brief text to the NAMI organization in Hong Kong: "Mission accomplished!" This led to a joint visit to the site by NAMI and the Turkish members of the expedition. The team made videos of the discovery on their second visit, a portion of which was published in conjunction with the announcement in late April, 2010.

Soon after this announcement, aiming to remain true to their mission as makers and publishers of documentary films about Noah's Ark, the NAMI team visited the United States to record initial reactions to their discovery. I invited the NAMI representatives to my hometown in Charlotte, North Carolina to present their information before a small delegation of biblical archaeologists, university professors, scientists, seminary officials, and interested individuals. This took place on June 7, 2010. Whatever doubts that NAMI had been guided to a recently fabricated site ended as those in attendance saw the video documenting the vast amount of wood, the various rooms, the obvious antiquity of the remains, and their similarity to the biblical description. On that day, it became clear to us that an important discovery had been made. We were no less impressed with the account of the discovery shared by Clara Wei: how she had conducted her research with the local villagers, and how that became the key to the discovery. We noted her refusal to rush to judgment concerning NAMI's discovery.

From this meeting and the resulting interviews came NAMI's invitation to address the National Conference on Christian Apologetics meeting in Charlotte on October 15-16, 2010. It would be their first opportunity to speak to a large audience of leaders in biblical and Christian apologetics. This conference was particularly appropriate



Figure 66  
Panda Lee confirms the discovery



Figure 67  
Beneath tons of glacier ice and volcanic rock

because it has refused to serve as a forum for any of the parties within the Creationist community, trying to get young earth and old earth partisans to discuss their differences in polite and open discussion.

Not everyone involved with the National Apologetics Conference was delighted that NAMI should appear in this venue. Those who protested claimed to be speaking for the interests of biblical archaeology, the Bible, or science. Although a great deal of pseudo-archaeology has been passed off as biblical archaeology, especially pertaining to Noah's Ark, this was perhaps the first time that pseudo-archaeologists have themselves taken the lead in expressing these concerns. In truth, the heat is on this new discovery precisely because it threatens the support if not the very existence of numerous schools of teaching about Genesis and the Bible, of skeptics and believers alike.

Some objected to NAMI's appearance at the conference by claiming that their conclusions were premature, ignoring the fact that NAMI believes a definite decision should await further scientific analysis. I suspect these objectors do not trust ordinary folks to look at the evidence and draw their conclusions before having the opportunity to spin the evidence in their party's light. Most disingenuous were suggestions that NAMI's discovery had no credibility unless supervised by Western scientists and archaeologists, the very organizations who have declared ancient Flood accounts myth, and who disdained to become involved in investigating the discovery themselves.

In fact what is on trial is neither NAMI, who do not claim to be a scientific organization but a ministry led to their discovery by prayer, nor the Turkish archaeologists who are in fact hard-nosed scientists, nor the discovery of this joint team. At stake is the credibility of the Western scientific institutions that have long claimed the mantle of authority for matters of science and history. Those who charge that the radiocarbon dating is suspect because performed in Iranian laboratories echo a new episode in the sad tradition of the ugly American. Turkey has yet to bring on line their planned radiocarbon laboratories, thus their archaeologists employ the services of the closest and most convenient laboratories: those in Iran. Likewise at stake is the credibility of evangelical organizations and leaders who have either distanced themselves from or opposed this discovery, some even suggesting that such a profound challenge to modern disbelief of the Bible is of little consequence for biblical faith! Such obliviousness to the impact of the scientific challenge to the Bible can only be attributed to judgment blinded by complacency and pride.

Despite a stellar panel of speakers, registrations to the National Conference on Christian Apologetics had been falling far below previous years. This was in part due to a planned boycott by the Young Earth Creationists in response to the appearance of a prominent old earth Creationist, defender of a local Flood. Following the last-minute announcement of NAMI's appearance, Young Earth Creationist leaders called off their boycott and registrations soared.

No one seemed more interested than the critics of the new discovery, especially Randall Price, the theologian who accused the NAMI guide of fraud. Price, who now holds a chair at a prominent evangelical university, had sympathizers among the highest level of evangelical leaders and apologetists. Presumably owing to his concern for science, he peppered the conference host with calls, attempting to stop NAMI from presenting their discovery, but their appearance had already been announced. NAMI's Panda Lee and Parachute, the guide he accused of fraud, have invited Price to bring his

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Figure 68  
NAMI's Wing Chung Young (center)

concerns to an open discussion in the United States, reflecting the kind of forum that I advocate in Chapter 39. This would have been an excellent opportunity, but Price preferred that NAMI not be heard.

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Figure 69  
Clara Wei addresses National Conference on Christian Apologetics

On the evening of October 16, the NAMI representatives gave the final address of the 2010 National Apologetics Conference. Many had decided to attend this year's conference precisely for this time, while others who learned of the presentation after arriving at the conference delayed their departure to witness the highly anticipated presentation. The atmosphere was electric as the packed audience waited patiently through a 45-minute technical delay. NAMI explained the circumstance of the discovery, showed a ten-minute video filmed in different compartments of the caves, and addressed possible explanations for what they had found. The conference ended with a standing ovation in honor of the guests from Hong Kong.

Following NAMI's appearance at the National Conference on Christian Apologetics, Randall Price increased his attack on the Mt. Ararat discovery, this time including NAMI and Clara Wei in his charges of fraud. The attack first appeared in the form of a special report, which he posted on his World of the Bible website. This report was supplemented by a video featuring a short plank of charred wood supposed to demonstrate how Ahmet Ertrugrul "built" NAMI's archaeological discovery. The report and video contained a picture of the anonymous informer, a mask covering his face due to what Price claimed were dangers to the informer's safety from Ertrugrul, or Parachute [pictured in yellow jacket on front row, Figure 72]. At the end of his special report, seemingly incidentally(!), Price mentions that he himself had likely located the Ark on Mt. Ararat at "17,800 [sic] elevation."

Price's co-author and "scientist" Don Patton, previously known for championing claims of finding human footprints among the dinosaur tracks along the Paluxy River

near Glen Rose, Texas, is not new to archaeological controversy and charges of fraud. It is perhaps not surprising that of the media, only Pat Robertson's CBN and the online newspaper World Net Daily, both located in the home state of Price's Liberty University, and one radio program on biblical prophecy elected to carry his sensational report. In these interviews, Price claimed that his own life was endangered by the influential and powerful leader of the Mt. Ararat rescue team.

While many had been paying too much attention to Price, some were not paying sufficient attention. I contacted both news organizations as well as the university and seminary where Price served as an adjunct professor. CBN removed the report from their website as the leaders of Price's university began investigating his activities and claims. The immediate results of this investigation and my expressed concern about Price's use of anonymous sources may have been the reason that a purported affidavit from two Turkish brothers, Davut and Ergan, soon appeared on Price's website. According to the Price's posted translation of this letter, the brothers worked for Parachute, helping him build movie sets. The letter explained that they were shocked when they learned that this movie set had been claimed as the remains of Noah's Ark. Unusual for an affidavit, the letter gave neither the last names nor addresses for those who wrote the letter.

Probably no one was more shocked than Randall Price when an angry Davut and Ergan Gimrin, claiming to be the only brothers in Turkey with their first names who were mountainers and licensed guides, suddenly appeared on NAMI's website. Both brothers displayed their Turkish identification cards. They had never seen the letter posted on Price's website until notified by NAMI. They did in fact work with Parachute, but they trusted him as if he were a member of their own family. The brothers showed their signatures and compared them with the obviously forged names appearing in Price's letter. We may assume that Price immediately pulled the letter from his website, leaving a note declaring that the source of the letter was under further investigation. One might suppose that Dr. Price would have thoroughly investigated such serious charges before posting them. After a few weeks, the note disappeared, but the other anonymous charges remained. So long as charges remain anonymous it is impossible for innocent parties to address them, explaining why they violate journalistic, scientific, and especially biblical ethics.

In truth, there had long been reason to know that Price was also unsure of his original charges of fraud. As indicated by his quote of David Hume, he was open to being convinced by further evidence. If Price was uncertain of the charges, he was repeating gossip and in the process injuring the Turkish nationals, Clara Wei, and his brothers and sisters at the Hong Kong-based Christian ministry.

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As attorneys understand, there can be no more credible evidence in favor of a claim than that introduced by an opponent or hostile witness. Unwittingly, Price has confirmed the very moment of discovery and what was immediately reported concerning the find. He likewise documents the professional care practiced by NAMI and Parachute to protect the archaeological integrity of their discovery. He has given us powerful archaeological evidence that what NAMI and Parachute, using information provided by the Turkish natives, have discovered and announced to the world is indeed Noah's Ark.

Though I have demonstrated increasing interest in this new discovery, until this point I have not declared whether I believe these remains to be the very Ark that the Lord God instructed Noah to build some five thousand years ago. My scientific training and experience require me to thoroughly investigate and test things before stating conclusions. That was surely the case before I could accept that there was

in fact no archaeological evidence of Noah's Flood. Before I became convinced that current science had in fact made great mistakes, I had to understand the precise grounds and the objections that have caused scientists and modern scholars to reject the Flood. Before I rejected the Young Earth Creationist account of the Flood, I had to understand their account. I continue to follow the new trends and spins from both schools of modern thought.

As have members of NAMI, I have discussed this new discovery with both secular and biblical archaeologists and scholars, those whom I admire and respect and who are deservedly prominent in their particular fields. Due to the relatively modest coverage in the media and scholarly circles, and because so many who did cover the discovery carried only the hoax charges along with standard rebuttals of the Flood and Noah's Ark, I had first to bring their attention to the seriousness of the new discovery. Unaware of the scientific investigation being conducted by the group of scientists and the involvement of the Turkish cultural authority, a few scholars wisely suggested setting up the proper procedures for investigating the discovery. NAMI and their current scientific team will surely benefit from the addition of archaeologists and scholars, whom they have already sought to recruit: those with relevant expertise in the many and valuable new techniques now available to assist archaeology. All this requires planning, funding, and patience.

At the same time, we must recognize that this discovery is not like that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whose great significance was only gradually appreciated. The team making this discovery has already completed the careful and gradual steps that revealed this massive, ancient artificial structure. NAMI has also conducted a careful analysis of whether this might be some more ordinary structure such as a human settlement, a monastery, a church, some type of animal pen, or military post. Their analysis clearly rules out each of these alternative possibilities.

Consider that the discovery location is more than a mile higher than Peru's Machu Picchu, long noted as a remarkable site for ancient peoples due to its great elevation. Ancient peoples could climb mountainous heights, but lacked the technology and resources to create buildings or settlements at such sites. Most importantly, this discovery is not only located on a high mountain, far above the tree line, but portions lie under ice and volcanic rock on a steeply inclined slope, dangerous even to climbers with modern equipment and training. Were people even able to access these heights, they would not have chosen to construct a building there. Not only is it geologically unstable, but the evidence points to it having long been so. In Chapter 21, I noted archaeological evidence indicating that these mountains and plains have been steadily rising over historical times. Notwithstanding what had to have been easier access in ancient times, no settlements have been found at the higher elevations of this mountain, the highest being signs of slight occupation in a few caves thousands of feet below the discovery. There are no signs of permanent buildings in these caves.

The curved walls of some parts of the structure and the tight construction produce an appearance remarkably like the hull of a ship, but there is no nearby body of unfrozen



Figure 70  
The Ark's decaying remains



Figure 71

water. Neat rows of seven wooden pegs are found near the top of some compartments, as if for tying animals. Most compartments have the look of a barn or animal stable,



Figure 72  
Discoverers of history's greatest archaeological find

and contain rope and straw. An offensive smell, strong in certain compartments, pervades the structure. Something besides straw and wood has also been long preserved upon these frozen heights. As I mentioned, the pottery found inside appears to be a clear prototype for the kind that archaeologists trace to these mountainous slopes, with no known antecedents. So steadying ourselves to maintain our scientifically correct attitude, we ask with pompous pretension: "What on earth can this possibly be?"

Was this discovery not made on the very mountain, probably the only mountain in the world that can match the description in the book of Genesis as the resting place for Noah's Ark? Is there any mountain more identified by tradition as the resting place of Noah's Ark? Was it not found at the same great heights suggested in the biblical account? Do not local traditions report ancient visits to the Ark resting on this very mountain? Have not peoples throughout the world traced their ancestors to the survivors of a world-destroying Flood, and has not this been the only type of worldwide disaster reported by the numerous peoples of the world? Have not many of them noted the preservation of their ancestors on some type of ship? Do not these accounts alone indicate a far more recent dispersion of mankind throughout the earth than currently believed?

The frozen remains of so large a ship so high on this famous mountain will long outlast the skeptics. But how do we explain our hesitation to draw the one simple conclusion that might make sense of this discovery? I have been astonished at the pious response of so many Christians: all this evidence is unimportant because they simply believe the Bible. If the Bible is myth, as so many claim today, it would not be important. In reality, the Bible is about history, about things that really happened. This



response is not unlike those who would believe in Jesus' resurrection, even if his tomb had not been empty. That is not a "faith" worth having. The Bible is significant because it truthfully reports what has happened, what is the case today, and what will someday happen.

Doesn't our reluctance reveal that we secretly hold a too-high opinion of the wisdom of the present world and a too-low opinion of the plain words of the Bible? Upon what basis have we determined the simple words of the Bible to be false, and the current scientific knowledge reliable? Do we even know? Or, is it because we fear man and love the present world more than we fear God and love the refuge he has provided? Do we hide our face from the one who is coming, or do we rush to receive him? If we are embarrassed by his promises and words, will he not be embarrassed by us? Shall we remain part of a world that is soon to be destroyed, or shall we look forward to new beginnings? The decision must soon be made and it shall certainly come from our hearts.