

Baptist scholars view Noah's Ark discovery claims with skepticism

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LEXINGTON, Ky. (ABP) — As the newest reported discovery of Noah's Ark raised doubts even among fellow Ark-hunters, two Baptist seminary professors said Christians should not rest their faith on whether remains of an ancient vessel are ever found high in the mountains of Turkey.

AFP first [reported](#) that a team of Chinese and Turkish evangelical explorers said April 26 that they recovered wooden specimens from a structure on Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey carbon dated as 4,800 years old, around the time biblical literalists believe the Genesis story about a worldwide flood would have occurred.

"It's not 100 percent that it is Noah's Ark, but we think it is 99.9 percent that this is it," said Yeung Wing-cheung, a Hong Kong documentary filmmaker and member of the 15-member team from [Noah's Ark Ministries International](#).

Team member Panda Lee examines mortise-and-tenon construction in the structure, suggesting it was built before the invention of metal nails.

Within hours an [e-mail](#) written by Randall Price, a Liberty University professor who was the archaeologist with the Chinese expedition in the summer of 2008, declared the photos of the supposed discovery a fake. After it went public on websites, Price clarified that while he did not retract

his statements, they were not meant for public dissemination.

"The only public statement he wishes to make at this time is that he believes that the greater the claim the greater the evidence needs to be to support it and urges the Chinese-Turkish team to make their collected samples from the structure available to scientists and scholars for comparative analysis," said a [statement](#) on the website of World of Bible Ministries, of which Price is president. "While he has reservations about the nature and procedure of the Chinese-Turkish expedition and the artifacts related to it, he believes that a decision concerning this matter must wait until independent examinations of the site and the structure can be made and published."

Bob Cornuke of the Bible Archaeology Search and Exploration Institute, who produced a 2008 DVD about his own [search](#) for Noah's Ark in 2005 and 2006 in Iran, [called](#) the Chinese team's discovery a "fraud ... of the highest caliber" in a story on WorldnetDaily.com.

Even Answers in Genesis, which offers several resources presenting what the ministry believes is geological evidence supporting the Bible's account of the Genesis flood, [reacted](#) with caution.



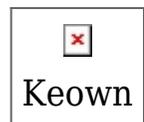
"Every few years we hear of claims that Noah's Ark (or what may remain of it) has been found on the mountains of Ararat in Turkey," read a statement on the ministry website. "Over the decades, we have learned to be cautious about such Ark claims."

"We have no doubt, however, that there once was a massive Ark that served as a vessel of salvation during a global Flood and landed on the mountains of Ararat, as recorded in the book of Genesis," the statement went on to say.

Dalen Jackson, academic dean and professor of biblical studies at Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, said such literal readings of Scripture fail to acknowledge how biblical language often expresses rich meaning in ways other than simply conveying information.

"We may assume that the truth of a story can be measured only by the correspondence of its events with actual historical events," Jackson said. "In fact, the biblical writers, like their contemporaries throughout the ancient world, told stories without reference to modern historical and scientific understandings, stories that conveyed traditions about where they came from and why the world was the way it was. Even so, they recognized the presence of God in the world and that God was good and had created people in order to have a special relationship with them."

Gerald Keown, associate dean and professor of Old Testament interpretation at M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University, said his skepticism over claimed blockbuster archeological finds is not related to the veracity of the Bible stories but the lack of veracity of con artists eager to exploit public naivete.



Keown cited the James Ossuary, a limestone burial box "discovered" in 2002 that supposedly at one time contained the bones of the brother of Jesus, which turned out to be the work of a master forger who embellished ancient artifacts with what appeared to be inscriptions of biblical names, as an example.

"I question the survival of any wooden artifact from ancient times which has been exposed to air," Keown said. "Even materials from the relatively recent past — the 1600s to 1700s — which have been under water and sand are notoriously fragile and disintegrate upon exposure to the air. The desire to make a buck off of people who are willing to be conned has no

expiration date."

Keown said most historical questions that intrigue most Christians will never be "answered" by archeology, but the most important message in the Bible is not historicity but faithfulness.

"I wish more Christians were as interested in how seriously they/we respond to the life challenge of the gospel as they/we are in whether this or that 'really' happened," he said. "The latter tends to get us into heated debates that have no bearing on the true life of faith, but represent our straining gnats and swallowing camels."

Jackson said when stories in the Bible don't fit with the evidence scrutinized by modern historians and scientists, believers should look for the spiritual, theological, and moral teaching of the texts. That, he said, is something the early church fathers recognized long before the scientific age.

"Those who search for Noah's Ark are so intent on proving that the evidence exists to show the correspondence of that biblical story to actual historical events that they always overreach in their conclusions about the pieces of wood they find high in the mountains of Turkey," Jackson said.

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.