

The Mountains of Ararat

In the book of Genesis, we have the account of Noah, his family, the animals and a great flood. However, this is not the only account of a flood, a thousand years earlier there is an account of a flood in the middle east.



13th Century depiction of Noah's ark landing on the "mountains of Ararat"
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There is a similar account to the Old Testament account of the flood these can be found in Babylonian texts one such account is the epic of Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh was the semi-mythic King of Uruk. This was written more than 1000 years before the Genesis account.

Some scholars suggest that:

It's possible, therefore, that despite the difference in time periods, the Flood recorded in the Gilgamesh story and the Flood from the Book of Genesis are fictionalised versions of a real event which took place in the Middle East thousands of years ago, the memory of which was preserved through first oral and then written accounts (a Black Sea Deluge some 7,500 years ago has been proposed as one candidate for the Great Flood).

A Summary and Analysis of the Biblical Story of the Flood and Noah's Ark - By Dr Oliver Tearle (Loughborough University)

The most common way that stories were told was through the storytellers, the custodians of oral history and those who sought to interpret major events. As the language developed these stories were later transcribed on stone and later papyrus, a reed plant, and then parchment, animal skin and finally paper.

The storytellers who retold the story of Noah and the flood constructed a dramatic account and a story that could be absorbing. Today we can read the story of a very old Noah and his family, the animals and details of the Ark, the boat. (Genesis 6 – 8) They also sought to explain why the flood took place, the world had become a wicked place, and the flood was God's response to this wickedness. (Genesis 6:1)

The story of Noah and the flood is part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Flood symbolises God's punishment for the wickedness in the world.

Whilst the Genesis account of the flood may not be factually correct in every detail, it does not mean that a devastating flood occurred. Even a relatively small flood can cost lives and destroy livestock and property. When these stories are retold, they can grow dramatically. It should not be surprising that many cultures flood stories!

Reading the Genesis account of the Flood, it is helpful to look for the meaning behind the story rather ponder too much about how factual the details are, the truth behind the story lies in its meaning.

When the flood subsided, and the ark came to rest in the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4), through the Genesis account we see the start of a new relationship between God and the human race. The water subsides and a rainbow appears.

I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” Genesis 9:13-16
New King James Version



Mount Ararat viewed from the Armenian side of the border in Khor Virap
Héctor Ochoa 'Robot8A' - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0

Where is Ararat?



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Ararat Facts

Note it is the mountains of Ararat, Ararat is a region, Mount Ararat was named by Turkey

From the Middle Ages, Mount Ararat has been associated with the 'mountains of Ararat' in Genesis, although not all would agree to this as the bible does not specially refer to Mount Ararat.

The two peaks, Great Ararat and Little Ararat are about 7 miles (11 km). Great Ararat is about 17,000 feet above sea-level, Little Ararat is about 13,000 feet (4000 km) above sea-level.

Time to pause and take stock:

As always, I suggest you find your favourite space for this time of prayerful reflection and



**Come to pray as you can, accept the invitation to be with
Christ,
so
Slow down, breathe calmly, be comfortable and relax.
Light a candle, turn off your phone. Be ready to discover!**

We start with a prayer of confession. We all miss the mark and Lent gives us an opportunity to become more aware of those times when we get things wrong, we miss the mark, we sin.

A prayer of confession as we begin the season of Lent.

Forgive us Lord for our apathy, for our lack of courage to speak out.
Lord have mercy.

Forgive us when we walk past and don't offer help.
Christ have mercy

Forgive us when we get it wrong.
Lord have mercy.

Hearing words of forgiveness.

Lord, Your forgiveness is total
there is no notebook, post-it notes to remind you of that moment when we missed
the mark, sinned.

You take our confession offered with hands outstretched
and gently like the loving heavenly Father that you are
put it to one side to be forgotten.

No grudges, no itching for judgement
No resentment or ill-will
Not like us who find it easy to say sorry
but so hard to forgive absolutely

Forgive us, Father that we are often more willing to accept forgiveness than to forgive.

(John Birch - adapted from a version on the Worship Cloud)

We sing along with the Chet Valley Churches 'Be still and know'.

The words of the hymn appear on the screen via the YouTube link.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/dbBImzfVy94?si=YjocaiNzp-42Bk07&t=8>

Our reading from Genesis is from the closing words of the writer's interpretation of the Great Flood. The story begins recognising the 'wickedness of man' and the 'heart was only evil' (6:5) and the grief of the Lord at such wickedness.

As we turn to the words from Genesis chapter 9 be prepared to read it through slowly. I suggest that once you have read through these verses you read it again but pause after each verse.

12 And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

14 It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;

15 and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

17 And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

New King James Version

Let us pause and reflect on the beauty and simplicity of the rainbow and what it has symbolised within the Judeo-Christian tradition for millennia. Forgiveness, peace, wholeness and the opportunity start afresh.

Fodderty, Ben Wyvis area of Scotland

Robert Struthers - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0



In the stillness of these moments let us bring our fallen world, broken relationships, and ourselves to the Lord.

God of love and light, be seen and felt within the simplest gesture - a welcoming wave,
a greeting, smile,
a helping hand,
a 'Give me five'.

God of love and light, be seen and felt within each of our lives today.

God of rising sun

be the warmth that I feel God of gentle wind

be the air that I breathe God of refreshing rain be the cleansing I need God of sacred space

be the peace that I crave God of setting sun

be the rest I desire

Take that which we are, the potter's chosen clay, and with your hands create from us something beautiful today. (Ripples by John Birch)

When asked about how to pray Jesus gave these simple but profound words, so let them be our prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen

Our closing hymn is Hills of the north rejoice from the Chet Valley Churches.

 **YouTube** https://youtu.be/ufsfurSpPmM?si=VoAMGv05uAWmGHT_&t=1

Lord, pour your Spirit upon us in a gracious, healing way. Make us agents of reconciliation as we live and may we bring a blessing to those we meet. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen

Fr Derek Akker

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(Derek is a retired Anglican Parish Priest and a member of the congregations of All Saints & St James. Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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