

Archaeologist who found the Titanic claims Biblical flood DID happen 12,000 years ago

- **Acclaimed oceanographer Robert Ballard says he has found evidence**
- **Claims massive flood happened in Black Sea region around 5600BC**
- **Waters cascaded down Turkey's Straits of Bospurus and into sea**
- **It is believed to have started story of Noah, which was then passed on**

By Leon Watson

A flood of Biblical proportions just like in the story of Noah's Ark may have actually happened, according to the oceanographer who found the Titanic. Acclaimed underwater archaeologist Robert Ballard claims his team of researchers have uncovered evidence that suggests The Great Flood described in the Bible was actually based on real events. Mr Ballard told how he investigated a controversial theory proposed by two scientists from Columbia University that there was a massive flood in the Black Sea region.



Under sea researcher Robert Ballard (left), who found the Titanic, holds a picture of ancient jugs found off the coast of Israel and lost in a storm around 750 BC. He claims to have found evidence of The Great Flood

In an interview with **ABC News**, he said around 12,000 years ago much of the world was covered in ice and the Black Sea had been a freshwater lake surrounded by farmland.

But when the glaciers began to melt during a warming period in the cycle of the Earth's temperature around 5600BC water rushed toward the world's oceans, Mr Ballard said. This, he claimed, caused floods all around the world and water cascaded through Turkey's Straits of Bospurus towards the Black Sea.

'Where I live in Connecticut was ice a mile above my house, all the way back to the North Pole, about 15 million kilometers, that's a big ice cube,' he said. 'But then it started to melt. We're talking about the floods of our living history. The questions is, was there a mother of all floods?' His research follows a 1997 study by William Ryan and Walter Pitman who, drawing on archaeological and

anthropological evidence, claimed that 'ten cubic miles of water poured through each day', and that the deluge continued for at least 300 days.



A working replica of Noah's Ark built six years ago by Johan Huibers as a testament to his faith in the Bible in Schagen, the Netherlands

The animals coming were two by two: The story of Noah is described in the book of Genesis

More than 60,000 square miles of land were flooded, they said, and the lake's level rose by hundreds of feet after merging with the Mediterranean, triggering mass animal migrations across Europe. According to their study, the force of the water was two hundred times that of Niagara Falls, sweeping away everything in its path. It also transformed the Black Sea from an isolated freshwater lake surrounded by farmland into a saltwater inlet. The researchers, whose findings have been backed up by carbon dating and sonar imaging, claimed that the story of Noah's flood had its origin in this cataclysmic event.

'We went in there to look for the flood,' Mr Ballard told **ABC News**. 'Not just a slow moving, advancing rise of sea level, but a really big flood that then stayed... The land that went under stayed under.' The team found an ancient shoreline which Mr Ballard believes is proof such an event did take place. He believes that, by using carbon dating shells found along the shoreline four hundred feet below the surface, it took place around 5,000 BC. 'It probably was a bad day,' he said. 'At some magic moment, it broke through and flooded this place violently, and a lot of real estate, 150,000 square kilometers of land, went under.' As the theory goes, the story of the disaster was passed down from generation to generation and eventually inspired the biblical account of Noah. Noah is described in the Bible as a family man, a father of three, who is about to celebrate his 600th birthday.

'In the early chapters of Genesis, people live 800 years, 700 years, 900 years,' said Rabbi Burt Visotzky, a professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. 'Those are mythic numbers, those are way too big. We don't quite know what to do with that. So sometimes those large numbers, I think, also serve to reinforce the mystery of the text.'

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Mr Ballard's team has also found an ancient shipwreck, as well as ancient pottery. Although he does not think he will ever find Noah's Ark, he believes he may find evidence of an ancient community washed away. In the book of Genesis, God despairs of human corruption and decides to flood the Earth, instructing Noah to build an ark to save himself, his family and a pair of each animal species.

The Ark is described in the Book of Genesis as 300 cubits long, or approximately 450ft (137m), but despite many rumours and claims of sightings, no scientific evidence of its existence has ever been found. 'The oldest shipwreck that we have discovered so far of that area is around 500 BC, classical period,' Mr Ballard said. 'But the question is you just keep searching. It's a matter of statistics.'

Mr Ballard, who led the international team that located the wreckage of the Titanic in 1985, does not think he will ever find Noah's Ark. However, Mr Ballard does think he may find evidence of a people whose entire world was washed away about 7,000 years ago. He and his team said they plan to return to Turkey next summer.

'It's foolish to think you will ever find a ship,' Mr Ballard said, referring to the Ark. 'But can you find people who were living? Can you find their villages that are underwater now? And the answer is yes.' According to Genesis 8:4, it came to rest 'in the mountains of Ararat'. Experts have agreed that these mountains are to be located in present-day Armenia and eastern Turkey.

Many biblical scholars believe the story of Noah and the Ark was inspired by the legendary flood stories of nearby Mesopotamia, in particular 'The Epic of Gilgamesh.' These ancient narratives were already being passed down from one generation to the next, centuries before Noah appeared in the Bible.

'The earlier Mesopotamian stories are very similar where the gods are sending a flood to wipe out humans,' said biblical archaeologist Eric Cline. 'There's one man they choose to survive. He builds a boat and brings on animals and lands on a mountain and lives happily ever after? I would argue that it's the same story.'

Catastrophic events of this kind are not unique to the Bible. Some contemporary examples include the 2004 tsunami that wiped out villages on the coasts of 11 countries surrounding the Indian Ocean. There was also Hurricane Katrina, described as the worst hurricane in United States history.

Scholars aren't sure if the biblical flood was larger or smaller than these modern day disasters, but they do think the experiences of people in ancient times were similar to our own.

'If you witness a terrible natural disaster, yes, you want a scientific explanation why this has happened,' said Karen Armstrong, author of A History of God. 'But you also need to something that will help you to assuage your grief and anguish and rage. And it is here that myth helps us through that.'

Regardless of whether the details of the Noah story are historically accurate, the author believes this story and all the Biblical stories are telling us 'about our predicament in the world now.'