

Facts & Fancy About the Bible - 6

Voltaire's opinion was that history makes no mention of the Genesis flood. But it is now known that the story of the flood has been embedded in many of the world's cultures and beliefs, and this fact needs explanation.

The greatest number of parallels with the Genesis account of the flood is contained in a group of tablets known as the Gilgamesh Epic, whose main character is King Gilgamesh, who ruled the Mesopotamian city of Uruk around 2600 BC.

While Bierlein's Parallel Myths summary shows six areas of general agreement between these particular accounts, Unger's more thorough review in *Archaeology and the Old Testament* has eleven. Scholars, whose world-view is shaped by secular education, have affirmed that the Genesis account of the flood was therefore an adaptation of the Mesopotamian story.

Accepting that the Flood took place, this would mean that knowledge of it must have survived to compose the various accounts. The pagan Mesopotamians could only conceive of the event in their own polytheistic mindset. Accepting also that God sent His message to mankind through Moses, the story would be presented in the most well-informed way.

A comparison between the Genesis 6-7 and Mesopotamian accounts will demonstrate that this is in fact the case. A few selections from the Gilgamesh Epic:

- The "great gods" Anu, Enlil, Ninurta, Ennugi, and Ea were sworn to secrecy about their plan to cause the flood. But the god Ea repeated the plan to Utnapishtim (Noah's counterpart).
- Ea commanded Utnapishtim to demolish his house and build a boat...The boat must have equal dimensions ...the exterior walls of the boat of 120 cubits....The sides of the superstructure had equal lengths of 120 cubits (a cube-shaped ship!)
- Utnapishtim loaded his silver and gold into the boat...His relatives and craftsmen, and "all the beasts and animals of the field" boarded the boat.The thunder god Adad rumbled in the cloud and storm gods Shullar and Hanish went over mountains and land...The gods were frightened by the flood and retreated up to the Anu heaven.
- The boat lodged firmly on mount Nimush ...On the seventh day he released a dove that flew away but came back to him... He released a swallow, but it also came back to him...He released a raven that was able to eat and scratch, and did not circle back to the boat.

Could the Genesis account simply contain variations of Mesopotamian myths? How could this be while the biblical account has one morally pure God, and while the many gods in the Mesopotamian story are jealous, timid, apprehensive, and tell lies? These gods suffer the consequences of the flood they caused, but God in Genesis controls the entire event. Also, see the great differences in important details ,such as the shape of the boat, the length of the flood,, etc.)

"History can be made into myth and myth can become more mythical, but myth does not become more simple, believable, and historical." Clearly, it is logical to conclude that "the historical event of the flood as documented in the simpler Genesis account was made into myth." See the Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology, "Noah's Ark and the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern Comparative Accounts."