

# The Flood

ACCORDING to the Bible (Genesis chapters 6–9), some 4500 years ago the earth was devastated by a flood. The only survivors were Noah, his family and the animals aboard the ark which he made.

Common opinion these days is that the account of Noah's Flood is a myth, perhaps based on the experience of a local flood.

But when we look at the archaeological record, we see consistency in the accounts in ancient writings from many different cultures. They describe a great flood which destroyed the world. For example:

- ◆ The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is a story written on clay tablets by the Sumerians. In it a man called Utnapishtim tells how the god Ea told him to build a huge vessel to save himself, his family and friends and the animals from a flood that would destroy the world. Many details closely match the Genesis account.
- ◆ In his *Timaeus*, the Greek philosopher Plato tells how the god Zeus was angry with the violence of mankind and

decided to flood the world. The god Prometheus warned his son Deucalion, who built a floating chest. He and his wife were the sole human survivors.

- ◆ The *Popol Vuh* is the creation story of South American Mayans. It relates the attempts by the gods to create people who would worship them. After they failed, the gods washed the people away by a flood.

Academics have suggested various theories to explain why the flood story should be so deeply ingrained in cultural memories all over the world. But surely the most reasonable explanation is the most obvious – the flood was an historical event!

Inevitably the story was gradually changed in the telling over many years – but the actual account is preserved in the Bible.

The fact of the flood is stressed throughout the Bible – not just as an historical account, but as a warning for us! These are words of Jesus Christ about his second coming:

*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all... Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26–30).*

The Epic of Gilgamesh



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