

Amazing Discoveries In Bible Lands

EPIC of GILGAMESH

The clay tablets were found along with 20,000 others amongst the ruins, of Nineveh by Henry Layard.

This epic, originally in 12 tablets tells, of the experiences of the legendary king Gilgamesh and finishes with the story of the great flood as, told by Utnapishtim to Gilgamesh.

It was in 1872 when George Smith working at the British translating these texts, discovered that the eleventh tablet had an account of the flood with striking parallels to the Biblical story. Gilgamesh, goes off to consult the immortal Utnapishtim to find life for his dead friend Enkidu. When he reached him he asked why it was that Utnapishtim was removed alive from the earth to dwell with the gods [similar to the account in Old Testament of Enoch and Elijah who were translated.] The reply is on this; eleventh tablet, and the story goes as so.

Mankind had angered the Storm-god Enlil, so in revenge he. decided to drown all men. Ea, the god of wisdom, took pity on Utnapishtim as he had been a true worshipper and warned him, telling him to build a great ark. Six days after the rains stopped, the waters abated and the ship touched ground, and a bird was released which finding no resting place returned to the 'ark'. Then a swallow was released which also returned; then a Raven who found rest so Utnapishtim left the ark and sacrificed to the gods. The gods were angry with Utnapishtim because he escaped but they granted him divine favour.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE GENESIS ACCOUNT AND THE GILGAMESH EPIC

A. RESEMBLANCES	THE GENESIS ACCOUNT	GILGAMESH EPIC
The flood (deluge) was divinely planned.	"And behold, I (God) even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under the heaven; and everything that is in the earth." (6:9,13)	"... the great gods (produced) the flood" (Anu, Enlil, Ninurta, Ea, and other deities like Ishtar) (XI,14ff)
2.The deluge was divinely revealed to the hero.	"Noah walked with God and god said unto Noah, 'The end of all flesh is come before me;... and behold I will destroy them with the earth.'"(6:9,13)	"Ea, (the god of wisdom) let Atrahasis (Utnapishtim) see a dream, and he perceived the secret of the gods." (XI,185,6)
3. Flood was the result of the defection (evil) in the human race.	"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... for the earth (was) filled with violence ..." (6:5,13b)	"When their heart led the great gods to produce the flood (XI,14) "On the sinner impose ... his transgression!" (XI,180,181)
4. Hero divinely instructed to build a boat (Ark).	"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; ... and shall pitch it within and without with pitch"	"Man of Shuruppak...build build a ship!" (ship built of Kupru wood - Babylonian

	(6:14) - The dimensions are different.	Assyrian equivalent of 'Kofer' wood. It was pitched with bitumen and asphalt) (XI, 23,24,54-57)
5. Deliverance of Hero and family.	"And the Lord said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation (7:1)	"All my family and my kin made I go aboard the ship ... All the craftsmen I made go aboard (XI,84,86) and a boatman (XI, 94)
6. Beasts aboard	"Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female." (7:2)	"Whatever I had of all the living beings I (loaded) upon her (ship) ... The beasts of the field, the wild creatures of the field ... I made go aboard." (XI, 83,85,86)
7. Physical causes of the flood	"All the foundations of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." (7:11)	Torrential rains, destructive winds, lightning and thunder; in addition the breaking of dikes and canals and reservoirs. (XI, 90-131)
8. Duration of the flood mentioned	"And the rain was upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights." (7:12) But the total length of the flood was 371 days: one year, seven days. (cf. 7:11with 8:14)	"When the 7 th - day arrived, the flood (carrying) south-storm subsided in the battle." (XI,1 28,129) But the total length of the flood is unspecified.
9. The Landing place of the Ark	"And the ark rested in the 7 th month, on the 17 th day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat." (8:4) The name is identical with Assyrian Urartu and signifies the general mountainous territory of Armenia (cf.2 Kings19:37; Jer. 51:27; Isa. 37:38) west of the Caspian Sea and SE of the Black Sea.	"On mount Nisir the ship came to a halt. Mount Nisir held the ship fast. Allowing no motion." (XI. 140,141) Mount Nisir is commonly identified with Pir Omar Gudrum, east of the Tigris and south of the lower Zab River, about 400 miles from the Persian Gulf.
10. Birds sent out swallow (XI,146)	A raven and a dove (3 times) sent out from the ark, making four trials. (8:7-12)	"I sent forth and set free a dove ... a raven." Making 3 trials.
11. Acts of worship by hero after his deliverance	"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl and offered deliverance burnt offerings on the altar." (8:20)	"... And offered a sacrifice, I poured out a libation on the top of the mountain, (and burned)" ... cane, cedar wood, and myrtle." (XI. 156-158)
12. Special blessings bestowed upon the hero after the sacrifice.	"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them be fruitful and multiply , and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast ..." (9:1,2)	"Henceforth Utnapishtim and his wife shall be like unto gods. Utnapishtim shall reside far away, at the mouth of the rivers." (XI. 190-195)
As can be seen there are many areas of comparison, but there are also great areas of difference: -		
B. DIFFERENCES	GENESIS ACCOUNT	GILGAMESH EPIC
1. Theological conception	a. Monotheistic b. The Almighty God stood by His	a. Polytheistic b. Includes a multitude of

	judgement and was in full control of the flood.	disagreeing, quarrelling, self—accusing deities, who crouching in fear ‘like dogs’ while the cataclysm is going on, childishly disclaim responsibility for the terrific destruction when it is over and attempt to fasten the guilt on one another. (XI. 113-125,162-188)
Reaction of the Deities to the sacrifice	c. “And the Lord God smelled the sweet savour ...” and determined to bear with the sins of mankind and never again visit the earth with a universal flood or set aside the natural laws as long as the earth lasted. (8:21,22)	When “the gods smelled the sweet savour” they “crowded like flies about the sacrifice.” (XI. 159-161) They had been hungry during the protracted period of the flood when no sacrifices were offered.
2. Moral Conceptions	The flood is presented as <i>a</i> moral judgement (6:5-8,11-13,17).	It confuses the moral causes of the flood, compromises the justice of it, and presents it more as the result of the caprice of the gods than as a necessary punishment of outrageous sin (XI. 158-185) Therefore, it is of ‘doubtful ethical and didactic value.’
3. Philosophical Conception	It is God, alone as Creator and Sustainer of all His creation who rules and over-rules the natural phenomenon of His universe. An all-wise purpose. (cf.6:17)	The various physical causes of the Deluge are attributed to separate causes in the form of deities. a. <u>Adad</u> , the god of storm and rain, thundered: b. <u>Ninurta</u> , the god of the wells and irrigation works caused “the deities to give way.” c. The <u>Annunaki</u> , judges of the underworld raised their torches “lighting up the land with their brightness.” (XI. 98-106)

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