

Chuck Aaron (b. 1948) is one courageous guy. He has made more helicopter flights around Mount Ararat than any other American civilian I know.

Chapter 27

1988-1993 Chuck Aaron

Disappointed? Yes. Discouraged? Sometimes. Defeated? Never! I am forty-seven years old and have owned and operated my own helicopter business for the last twenty years. I have logged more than sixteen thousand hours as a pilot and am rated in both helicopters and airplanes. I am also a certified airframe and power plant mechanic. I consider myself a very stable and objective individual who tries to examine all sides of an issue before I make decisions. I am very active in reading, studying and researching the Bible, especially the Old Testament. This is because I am interested in eschatology or the study of end times, which I see as the bud of the tree. In order to understand the bud of the tree you must first learn the root of the tree and what makes it grow. I believe that root is the book of Genesis.

I became interested in the search for Noah's Ark before the first time I read the Bible. My son Shawn, who had always wanted to be an archaeologist, came to me one night in 1984, right after he had seen the movie *Raiders of the Lost ark*. He asked me if there was anything else out there that would be neat to look for. As if a light bulb had just come on, I thought of Noah's Ark. Why don't you look for Noah's Ark? I don't know that anyone else has tried. His immediate response was, No! That triggered in me an impulse to take down the Bible that my mother had given to me several years before. It was just sitting on my bookshelf collecting a lot of dust. As a matter of fact, I had never opened it since she had given it to me. My mother loved God very much and had been trying for years to get me to read the Bible. I always thought it would be too difficult to understand and I just was not motivated spiritually enough to even try. I decided I could see what the Bible had to say about Noah's Ark, and I knew that it was in the front of the Bible somewhere. Sure enough, I found it in Genesis and I read what it had to say so I could tell Shawn when he came home that night.

After reading chapters six, seven and eight, I thought since it was so close to the front of the Bible I should read from the beginning just so I would not miss anything else about the Ark that might have been mentioned. I flipped back to the beginning, and what did I see but a note from my mother that she had written in 1981. I did not even know it was there. It said, "To my very dear son, Charles Patrick Aaron. About 3/4 of the way through this book begins the New Testament. Read it slowly so you learn more about him whom you seek. I love you, Jesus loves you, Mom, Christmas, 1981."

I was in shock! My mother by this time was in a nursing home in St. Cloud, Florida. She was the victim of poor judgment, which had left her with little or no mental faculties. I hated the place she was in, but she needed 24-hour-a-day care for almost all her needs, as she was completely bedridden. She finally passed away a couple of days before Easter in 1987.

What happened next was really neat. God obviously had his own agenda that was different from mine. By the time I got through chapter eight that night, I found myself really enjoying the picture that was forming in my mind about God and man. I decided to read on a little more. By the time I went to sleep that night I had read through Genesis. I was able to follow the Bible and was beginning to have a new understanding of God.

When I woke up the next day I decided that since it was Saturday I would read Exodus until I got bored. By the end of the day I had finished Exodus, and while I was reading it, I had cried, laughed, and cried and laughed, all at the same time. I was hooked. It was by far the best book I had ever read and I could not put it down. I finished the whole Bible within six months. The most important thing I can tell you is that my whole life changed from just reading this one book. I had a totally different outlook on life on this planet earth. Now I could understand the meaning of life itself. I could spend eternity telling how this book changed my life.

I remembered that in the New Testament Christians are called to use their God-given talents for the glory of God. I was a well-seasoned helicopter pilot and God knows I'm the type of guy who carries through a project once I have it in mind. I've always been an extrovert and involved in all kinds of sports and activities. My friends have always told me that grass never grew between my toes.

Now that I had accepted the Bible, I asked myself what I could do with my talents to serve God? I remembered my conversation with my son, and decided to look into the possibility of locating Noah's Ark myself. I also decided that as long as the doors opened up for me I would continue, but if they closed, then they were closed. I began by getting two 36" X 36" NASA photos of Mt. Ararat taken by satellite. I started jogging every day to get into shape, because I knew that someday I would go to Mt. Ararat. I didn't know when or how, but I knew I would go, I could just feel it.

Six months later, by which time I was jogging up to twelve miles a day, I got a phone call from an individual in Istanbul, Turkey, who wanted to buy one of my helicopters. He said that he wanted to give me a deposit on my JetRanger, but preferred to meet me before transferring \$300,000 into my account. He suggested that I fly to Turkey to meet with him for a week. He said he would pick up the tab and show me Istanbul. Of course, I said that would be fine! That was on a Thursday. Two days later, Federal Express showed up at my house with round trip airline tickets. The plane left the next day, and on Monday afternoon I found myself in Istanbul.



Chuck Aaron Flying Helicopter Over Mount Ararat
 Courtesy of Chuck Aaron via B.J. Corbin

The Turkish gentleman picked me up at the airport and we drove over to one of his offices right on the airport. We had been sitting there, chatting for about twenty minutes when the phone rang. For the next several moments I became very nervous as he spoke in Turkish to the caller, but kept glancing over at me. "Am I going to be taken hostage?" I thought.

I was not feeling good about this at all. Finally he hung up the phone and said, "Chuck, that call was from a friend of mine in Ankara. He needs one of my helicopters in eastern Turkey. It seems there is a man there named Jim Irwin, an American astronaut, who is looking for Noah's Ark. My pilots are afraid of that area and don't really want to go there, but I could convince them to go if they knew that someone with your experience was with them. What do you think?" He stared at me in disbelief when I began to cry. I could not believe what I was hearing. I had difficulty keeping my emotions under control. I was in shock. After I got hold of myself I told him the whole story about my personal quest to look for the ark. Now he was in shock.

The next morning at 7:00 A.M., one of his pilots, one of his mechanics, and I lifted off the ground in his JetRanger helicopter and began the twelve hundred mile trip across Turkey. We arrived at the foot of Mt. Ararat around 9:00 P.M. and the first person to meet us was Jim Irwin himself. I told him the story of my getting there and he became visibly shaken. At that point, Jim and I became the best of friends.

Because of legal issues with Russia and the border agreement between Turkey and Russia, we were not allowed to fly the helicopter on the north side of Mt. Ararat, which is where we wanted to search. In spite of this, the trip was not at all a loss for me. On the contrary, I met many great people who were with Jim: Bill Dodder, Bob Stuplich, Bob Cornuke, Dr. John Morris and John McIntosh. All these men were soldiers for God who were willing and able to risk their lives in the service of God.

Now that you know a little bit about me and my involvement in the search for Noah's Ark, let's press on to the facts that I have found after eight expeditions to Mt. Ararat. There are two basic questions each person must answer. First, is there a God? Does God exist only in our minds? For me, the answer is easy. Of course there is God, and only one God! That became very evident to me after I read the Bible. Second, did God through the Holy Spirit inspire the Bible and is every word factual? Again I overwhelmingly say yes. If these two essentials are agreed upon, we can proceed to see what God has to say about where Noah's Ark landed.

In the New American Standard Bible, Genesis 8:4 states, "And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the Ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat." We know from Genesis 7:20 that "the waters prevailed fifteen cubits

higher, and the mountains were covered." For the definition of a cubit, we turn to 2 Chronicles 32:30 where it says, "It was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the West side of the city (of David)."

An inscription found in 1880 near the mouth of the Siloam tunnel describes this remarkable engineering feat by which water was brought from the spring of Gihon to a place inside the City of David. Diggers worked from both ends, meeting almost exactly in the middle of this self-described twelve hundred-cubit-long tunnel. Since we know from excavations that by today's measurement it extends 1,777 feet, we know that the cubit was about 18 inches in length.

According to the Bible, the Ark landed on Mt. Ararat and the waters were twenty-two and a half feet higher than any mountain in the world. We know the elevation of the highest mountain in the world today, Mount Everest at 29,029 feet. If one assumes that Everest were the same height at the time of the flood, that would put the depth of the floodwaters at about 29,051 feet. I have researched this subject thoroughly, and while there are some who question what happened to allow the waters to abate after being at that depth, I will not go into the answer to that question now. The answer however can be deduced fairly easily using scientific data available today.

In Genesis 8:5 we read, "and the water decreased steadily until the tenth month, in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible." Noah landed on the mountains of Ararat in the seventh month and the seventeenth day, and no mountain could be seen at that time. This is a very important point to remember. It was not until the tenth month on the first day of the month (or 74 days later) when Noah first saw another mountaintop. It is certain that the only mountains he could have seen would have been the top of little Mt. Ararat to the east, or if for some reason the summit of Ararat blocked his view, the next mountain tops would be 33 miles to the west at an elevation of 11,014 feet.

I have flown a helicopter around that mountain many times. I have landed a helicopter on the 15,200-foot western plateau, and have even camped and walked around there for three days with one of the editors and co-authors of this book, B.J. Corbin, and another Ark researcher and co-author, Bob Garbe.

Greater Mount Ararat is about 17,000 feet at its summit, and Little Mount Ararat is beside it five miles to the east-southeast at 13,500 feet. I conclude that when Scripture refers to the "mountains" (plural) of Ararat, it is referencing these two mountains. Since no other mountain could be seen for 74 more days that leads me to the conclusion that Noah landed on the taller of these two mountains.



Bob Garbe, Chuck Aaron, and Alparslan Demirural 1989
Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

The next step is to find out where Noah landed this 450-foot-long, 75-foot-wide and 45-foot-high barge on Mt. Ararat (see Genesis 6:15 for the dimensions). But first we have to ask the all-important question, did God plan to save the Ark to allow it to be seen again at some future date or not? To answer this I refer you to Genesis 6:14 which says, "Make yourself an Ark of gopher wood; you shall make the Ark with rooms, and you shall cover it inside and out with pitch."

Pitch? What is pitch? Pitch is the sap of the tree. It was used between logs as a sealer that kept water out.

The thing that has always puzzled me is why God told Noah to put this sticky pitch or sap on the inside of the ark. Putting pitch on the outside of the Ark was understandable, but why the inside? To me that only makes sense if you want to preserve the ark. By putting pitch inside and out and placing it on Mt. Ararat, which has a perennial ice cap, it makes sense to believe God intended its preservation. If the Ark is on Mt. Ararat and in the ice cap, and if it was originally manufactured of wood covered with pitch both inside and out, then it could easily be preserved indefinitely.

In Matthew 24:36-38 Jesus is talking about the second coming (or as some call it, the end of time):

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the Angels of heaven, nor the Son (Jesus), but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man (Jesus) will be just like the days of Noah. For in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark.

Jesus was hinting that we would know when the time of his second coming is near because we will be reminded of how far people had turned from God in the days of Noah. This leads to the whether God is planning to show the Ark again at some future time. If not, why did he seal it up so well and put it on a mountain, so that it would be preserved for as long as God wanted. Furthermore, why would God preserve such minute detail as to the size of the Ark and the number of days of the receding of the water? These seemingly meaningless facts can actually be clues that lead to a possible location.

My understanding of God according to the Bible is that God often uses man to fulfill his prophecies, and he uses things in the past to reference the present and future for warnings and heavenly reasons. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure this one out. I believe that if God holds true to his long-standing dealings with man, He not only will disclose the location of the ark, but also other items like the Ark of the Covenant. Why? I believe it might be to show the glory of God and act as a silencing agent to man. A sort of divine "I told you so." Furthermore, these things could be strengthening agents to the Christians on earth during the tribulation period, because they will need a lot of encouragement in that time. I know that these things will not "save" anyone. When I first began my search for the Ark I believed that proof of the existence of these items might help convince people of the truth of the Gospel, but I found after reading and studying the Bible, that only God himself can do that. Because Eve and Adam ate the fruit, gaining the knowledge of Satan and sin, that knowledge passed to their offspring, causing the corruption of mankind. We are therefore incapable of saving ourselves.

I believe the Ark to be on Mt. Ararat in the ice cap somewhere between 13,500 and 17,000 feet. That is the altitude range of the perennial ice cap. As to where on Mt. Ararat, that is another question?

I can tell you for certain, as can many of my close friends who have been with me on these eight different expeditions, that it cannot be seen with the naked eye. We have been all over that mountain by helicopter many times at very slow speeds and right up next to the mountain also. We have seen every square inch of it, photographing it as we went. But don't lose hope. We haven't finished yet.

So where could it be? There are only a few places on this mountain that a 450-foot-long barge could hide. There are three peaks: the center peak, the western peak and the eastern peak. Approximately one-half of the ice cap covers the east and south sides right up to the eastern peak. It is thin on this side because it receives the sun's direct rays. I have photos and videos of this area taken from a helicopter in September 1989 showing little or no ice on it at all.

The center peak is the highest at about 17,000 feet, and between this and the western peak is a possible caldera (a large crater formed by the collapse of a volcanic cone, very common to volcanic mountains) located at 16,500 feet. This is one place the Ark might be. The presumed caldera is about 700 feet in diameter. There is also another huge caldera on the northwest side of the summit at 15,200 feet. This area is called the western plateau.

I believe this caldera has a lot of potential for being the resting-place of the ark. Imagine God looking down on the earth at the end of the flood. He sees Noah floating around in this huge boat, knowing that it has all the life on earth inside it. God not only wants them to be saved from the flood, but after the flood as well. God certainly would not let the Ark land on the mountain at its summit where the steep angle of the ground makes it difficult to disembark.

He would plan for it to be as flat as possible and have a route down the mountain for all the animals and Noah's family to be able to get down safely. Also, you can imagine how rough the waters might have been during the flooding because of the incredible altering of the earth's plates and bodies of waters. The scene certainly was not an idyllic setting like "On Golden Pond."

We know by comparing Genesis 7:11 and Genesis 8:14 that Noah was in the Ark for a total of 370 days from the time he and his family entered the Ark and God locked the door behind them.



Immanuel Expeditions Team David Montgomery, Kathy Montgomery, Paul Schiemer, Chuck Aaron, Jr., Chuck Aaron, B.J. Corbin, Bob Garbe, John Wanvig, Debbie Redmer 1989
 Courtesy of B.J. Corbin

Basing our calculations on the 30-day month that ancient calendars generally used, we find that Noah landed on Mt. Ararat exactly five months later, and had therefore spent 150 days floating before the Ark actually touched hard ground. But why did Noah stay in the Ark for another 220 days after landing? Anyone, who has seen Mt. Ararat from a helicopter's perspective, knows why.

The mountain is very steep on all sides, and continues to be steep from the summit down 12,000 feet before the piedmont, or level ground, is reached. We know that Noah had problems: rough seas and a tall, steep mountain, virtually pointed on the top with very little flat terrain to support the Ark in rough water. How did they get down once they landed? The western plateau. Actually, this western plateau was a small lake roughly 2,000 feet in diameter.

Noah had been floating around in very rough seas, and as the water subsided the summit of Greater Ararat appeared, and the dove that Noah let out came back with an olive branch in its beak (Genesis 8:12). Note that this dove was gone for one day at the most (Genesis 8:10-11). At this point there was no land in sight, so the dove came back in the evening. The nearest mountain to Mt. Ararat that is as high or higher is found in the Caucasus mountain range in southern Russia, 248 miles to the northwest. The name of that mountain is Mt. Shkhara. Its elevation is 17,064 feet, only a few feet higher than 17,000-foot Mt. Ararat. The next highest mountain is in the same range but is located an additional 37 miles beyond Mt. Shkhara. This mountain is 1,461 feet higher than Ararat, having a summit of 18,481 feet. These two peaks of Ararat would be the only two peaks visible above the water at this point from which the dove could have retrieved an olive branch, unless it went to China.

Based on these facts, I take the position that this dove got the olive branch from Mt. Ararat itself. If this theory is correct, then the summit of Ararat was higher than sea level before the Ark had landed. This would leave only one other place for the Ark to land on relatively level ground. I think that God put the Ark on the western plateau-lake. It would be easy for God to get the Ark inside the rim of the caldera just as the flood was subsiding, and there it would float naturally



South side of Mount Ararat 1988
 Courtesy of Chuck Aaron

and calmly, safe from winds and weather, while the porous volcanic mountain allowed the waters to subside slowly in the caldera. This is one explanation as to why Noah waited an additional 220 days in the ark. Furthermore, it would be an easy walk for Noah and all the animals if they had walked down the northwest face. That is the path the locals usually use when they climb the mountain, and I have excellent photos showing how easy it could have been.

In 1989 I had the opportunity to lead three more expeditions to Mt. Ararat. The first one, in July, was made up of fourteen people. On this trip B.J. Corbin and Bob Garbe assisted me in a company we formed called "Immanuel Expeditions." On this expedition we were able to prove that the western plateau was indeed a caldera, using the subsurface radar unit that Bob Garbe had brought with him.

I had the opportunity to camp on top of that western plateau at 15,200 feet. B.J. Corbin, Bob Garbe and myself were able to use a special radar unit that Bob had brought. This instrument was for the purpose of looking into the ice on that plateau and seeing how deep the caldera was, perhaps even finding the Ark itself. That was the plan, anyway. What actually happened was that two men with AK-47s who had a different agenda from ours. A Turkish Major told me later that there were a group of four PKK who were caught by the Gendarma and were executed. Just before that incident, however, we were able to conclusively prove that we were reading depths of the ice right underneath our tents of 256 feet. In other words, that caldera we were on was now a frozen pond or lake all the way to rock bottom. That is the reason this area is so flat on top. I believe this caldera's frozen lake may be the hiding place of Noah's Ark.

My next trip was in September of 1989. On this expedition there were just Bob Garbe and myself. You have possibly heard about this trip. It was on this trip that the claim was made that we had "found" Noah's Ark. That statement hit the papers and TV all around the world.

We were sure. Anyone with us would have been sure too! The object that we saw fit most all the clues that some "eyewitnesses" had stated about the Ark over the years. It was on the side of a steep wall, encased in ice, protruding out at an angle, etc. What we saw at 14,500 feet on the west side of Ararat, fit that description exactly, and we had never

seen it before, even though we had been all over that mountain many times in the past. The only reason we saw it this time was because of the tremendous amount of melt-back that had occurred that summer.

Many of the past sightings had been by pilots flying past Mt. Ararat. Astronaut Jim Irwin made the comment, right after he saw our videos of it, saying, "It looks like it could be Noah's Ark, and it probably is what other pilots have claimed to be Noah's Ark. But what is it, really?" There is no question that it looks like Noah's Ark to a pilot in an aircraft, but confirmation by a ground team was still necessary.

A Mr. Gunner Smars called me from Sweden. He had seen our videos of what we thought was Noah's Ark on TV in Sweden and he called me in Orlando, Florida, asking me to send him a copy of the tape so he could analyze it. I sent him a copy immediately and after reviewing it, he also thought it was the ark. He arranged an immediate expedition and went to Ararat and climbed up to it. He was able to get to it by traversing the mountain, and even then was only able to get above it. He wrote a letter to Jim Irwin (which I have) in which he told Jim that he did not think it was the ark. He said the place where he stood was solid rock and that he could not see any wood. Therefore he surmised that it could not be the ark.

Thanks mainly to a brother of ours in the faith, Mr. Robert Van Kampen, a third expedition was made possible that year in October 1989. By then I was completely out of spare funds and Bob was gracious enough to fund the entire trip. On this expedition we took Grant Richards and John Morris, both experts in archaeology and geology, as well as experienced mountain climbers.

The thing I personally appreciated most about them was that they loved the Bible. We got a helicopter in Istanbul, flew it out to Ararat, and on this trip were able to fly within 100 feet of the object that appeared to be the ark. After close inspection we all agreed that it was not the Ark after all. We also agreed that from a distance of five hundred feet or more, most people would swear that it was.

A man who wants to remain anonymous once contacted me after reading an article about me in an Orlando newspaper. He told me a story which, after having talked with him on many occasions, I sincerely believe to be true. He is about 70 years old now and has no reason in the world to track me down just to tell me a lie. I will call him Caleb.

Caleb told me that about 1945 he was loadmaster on a U.S. Air Force C-47 (DC-3) cargo airplane. While based in England he made many trips into Turkey to re-supply military bases. On one of his trips he had to go to eastern Turkey to drop some supplies. After they dropped off the supplies, the pilot said to the crew (four people in all), "Let's fly over Mt. Ararat and see if we can see Noah's Ark." Sure enough, Caleb told me details of the mountain that he would not know if he had not been there. He told me that they saw Noah's Ark complete, not broken up, and he described it as a long, dark, wooden barge made of logs.

He said it was lying in a north to south position, and it looked like it was half-sunken in the ice. It was on the west and north side of the mountain at around 15,000 feet. He said that the pilot indicated they were at 16,000 feet, and they made two passes by it. The passes they made were flown north and south, and when they were flying south on the final pass the summit of Ararat was on their left (east) side, and was above them. The sight mesmerized everyone on the aircraft. They couldn't believe what they were seeing.

He said over and over again how positive they all were that it was Noah's Ark. The sky was clear, and the view of the Ark was perfect, leaving no doubt in any of their minds that it was the ark. Because of the secret military mission they were on, when they returned and told their commander of what they saw, he ordered them to forget about it and to never mention it again.

When Caleb and I first met, before he told me this story, he wanted me to check with the military to see if he would get into any trouble for telling me. He was afraid that I might repeat it to the general public and mention his name. I assured him of the constitutional rights of a writer, and told him not to worry about my revealing his true identity. I can say with God as my witness, this is a true account of the story that this man told me.

Astronaut Jim Irwin personally told me that he was told by an active duty Air Force General that there was a secret file on Noah's Ark. It was so "top secret" that not even Jim Irwin could see it, but the general assured him that the file does exist.

So where do we go from here? If anyone knows any way to get permission from our military or CIA to use the so-called "top secret" radar satellite that looks underground (the one used in the Gulf War to find underground bunkers), or if anyone has access to the archives of the satellite data recorded on tape, please contact me and I will give you the exact coordinates of the place where I believe the Ark is located. The best time of the year to look would be during the coldest part of the winter, because when the ice is frozen solid, radar, set at the right frequency, will penetrate ice as if it was not even there. I believe that with the right equipment, at the right place, at the right time, Noah's Ark could be easily found by one of these satellites.

Others have different ideas about where Noah's Ark is located. Many of them are friends of mine. May God bless them. All I have said here are my thoughts and ideas about where I believe it is located and why. The fact remains that none of us has actually found it. However, a photograph of the summit of Mt. Ararat hangs in the hallway of my house and that keeps me pressing on. I took the picture on one of my expeditions and at the bottom of the photo I have a note that reads:

Disappointed? Yes.
Discouraged? Sometimes.
Defeated? Never!

I just keep reminding myself that this is God's plan. This is a test. This is only a test. I believe that God, not Chuck Aaron or any other person, will decide if and when he wants to show the ark. Whether the Ark is substantiated or not, I am content with my search for the Ark and to continue living my life based on the Bible.

