1485 - Finding Noah’s ark

the question

Assalaamualaikum, I have heard that Noah's ark was found a few years ago using references from the Quraán as opposed to the bible. Is this true?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"The people of Nuh denied (their Messenger) before them, they rejected Our slave, and said: A madman! and he was insolently rebuked and threatened.
Then he invoked his Lord (saying): I have been overcome, so help (me)!
So We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring forth.
And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs. So the waters (of the heaven and the earth) met for a matter predestined.
And We carried him on a (ship) made of planks and nails,
Floating under Our Eyes, a reward for him who had been rejected!
And, indeed, We have left this as a sign, is there then any that will remember (or receive admonition)?
Then how (terrible) was My Torment and My Warnings!"
[al-Qamar 54:9-16]

In his Tafseer, Ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "And, indeed, We have left this as a sign, is there then any that will remember (or receive admonition)? refers to this story, which serves as a lesson." It was also suggested that it referred to the ship or ark itself, which was left so

that those who came after the people of Nuh might learn lessons from it and not reject the Messengers. Qutaadah said: "Allaah left it in Baaqirdi in the Arabian Peninsula (a place in Iraq), as a lesson and a sign, so that the first generations of this ummah would see it. How many ships have there been after it that have turned to dust and left no trace!"

The apparent meaning is that this refers to ships in general, as in the aayaat (interpretation of the meaning):
"And an aayah (sign) for them is that We bore their offspring in the laden ship (of Nuh),
And We have created for them of the like thereunto, so on them they ride."
Yaa-Seen 36:41-42]

"Verily! When the water rose beyond its limits [Nuhs Flood], We carried you [mankind] in the floating (ship that was constructed by Nuh).
That We might make it a remembrance for you, and the keen ear (person) may (hear and) understand it."
[al-Haaqqah 69:11-12]

Hence Allaah says here "is there then any that will remember (or receive admonition)?" i.e., is there anyone who will remember and learn?

In his tafseer of the words "We have left this as a sign" Ibn Katheer, may Allaah have mercy on him, mentions three opinions:

1. That Allaah has left this story as a lesson to those who come after the people of Nuh;
2. That Allaah has left the ship of Nuh so that subsequent nations may see it and learn from it how Allaah saved the believers and destroyed the kuffaar.
3. That Allaah taught mankind how to make ships and left this invention as a reminder of His blessings and how Nuhs children and the believers were saved by means of a ship like those which are well-known.

In any case, there is nothing that would go against either Islamic teaching or reason if Nuhs ark were to be discovered and if generations of mankind after Nuh were to see it, because it would be a sign to them. The issue would be how to prove that the ship discovered was really Nuhs ark; not everyone who finds an ancient ship and claims it to be Nuhs ark is to be believed. And Allaah knows best.