



Lesson 3

Man's Sin and the Global Flood

Apologetics Press Advanced Christian Evidences Correspondence Course

MAN'S SIN AND THE GLOBAL FLOOD

INTRODUCTION

It is one of the first stories that little children hear in Bible classrooms, yet it also is one of the most criticized accounts in history—the worldwide Flood of Noah. Perhaps this criticism should come as no surprise. Through the ages, there have been people who, humbly desiring to comply with God's directives, have accommodated their lives to His wishes and have done their best to live as He has instructed. Many others, however, have misused God's gift of personal volition to bow their backs and stiffen their necks in their rebellion against the Lord. These individuals—thumbing their nose at their Creator—have ignored His commands and have lived in utter defiance to His divine will. It was during just such a period of wickedness and rebellion that we learn of a “just man” named Noah who “walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

According to the Bible, God created the Universe in six literal days of approximately 24 hours each. After that Creation (and the seventh-day rest), the first human pair, Adam and Eve, was given three positive commands and one negative command. The negative command was to avoid eating the fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17). As every student of biblical history knows, however, Adam and Eve transgressed the law of God and ate the forbidden fruit. For this sin, they were evicted from their garden paradise, and a curse was placed upon them (Genesis 3: 16-19; cf. Romans 8:20-22). Outside the garden, men and women eventually found themselves in almost total rebellion against God. Genesis 6:5-7 states:

And Jehovah 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**. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them (emp. added).

The stage, then, was set for God's wrath upon a sin-sick world. His decree was that He would destroy man, beast, and bird from the face of the Earth. There was, however, something that prevented God from carrying out that decree immediately. It was the fact that a man named Noah had remained faithful to God. He was an island of righteousness in a sea of iniquity. His character is described in Genesis 6:9 by three impressive expressions. Noah, the text says: (1) “was a just man”; (2) “was perfect in his generations”; and (3) “walked with God” (cf. James 2:23, where a similar expression is applied to Abraham).

Because of Noah's faithfulness, God imposed a “probationary period” of a maximum of 120 years before destroying the inhabitants of the Earth (Genesis 6:3). During that time, Noah preached to the people of his genera-

tion (1 Peter 3:18-20; 2 Peter 2:5), all the while carrying out the commands of God regarding the building of the ark (Genesis 6). After approximately 100 years, Noah completed his task. [Genesis 5:32 indicates that Noah was 500 years old prior to the events of Genesis 6-8; Genesis 7:6 indicates that Noah was 600 years old when he entered the ark.] The decree had been made; the grace of God had been extended; the time for action was at hand. Mankind's sin now would result in God sending a global Flood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GENESIS FLOOD

The subject of the Flood is one of the most prominent stories in the Bible, with more attention given to it than even to Creation. Four of the first eleven chapters of Genesis are devoted to the Flood and its aftermath. In fact, next to Creation, the Flood of Noah's day is the greatest single geological event in the history of our Earth; nothing comparable to it has happened since, nor will anything comparable happen again—until the final destruction of this Universe in the fiery judgment yet to come (2 Peter 3). There are repeated references to the Flood account in numerous books within the Old Testament. Further, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament often alluded to Noah and the Flood as if both were historical in nature (cf. Matthew 24:36-39; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 3:5-7). Alfred Rehwinkel wrote:

The flood marks the end of a world of transcendent beauty, created by God as a perfect abode for man, and the beginning of a new world, a mere shadowy replica of its original glory. In all recorded history there is no other event except the Fall which has had such a revolutionary effect upon the topography and condition of this Earth and which has so profoundly affected human history and every phase of life as it now exists in its manifold forms in the world. No geologist, biologist, or student of history can afford to ignore this great catastrophe (1951, p. xv).

Numerous theologians and scientists of the past attributed many of the Earth's features to the Flood of Noah, and generally were in agreement with the Bible's teachings on Creation and the Flood. Now, however, that no longer is the case. In our day and age, young people often are subjected to what may well represent one of the greatest possible threats to their faith—the challenge of the conflict between evolutionary geology and the inspired Word of God. The simple fact of the matter is that it is impossible to correlate the Bible with evolutionary geology, even though there have been those who have attempted such a compromise. As our children study under those who do not believe in God, who delight in ridiculing the Flood account, or who attempt to effect a compromise of evolutionary thinking with the biblical record, this challenge to their faith becomes all the more real.

Was the Flood universal in scope, or was it merely a local, Mesopotamian inundation limited to the then-known world? Is the account in Genesis 6-9 of the Flood the record of an actual historical event, or is it simply an allegory,

myth, or legend? Does it matter? Indeed it does! The answers to these questions form an important part of the defense of the biblical record, and thus of a Christian's faith.

THE EXTENT AND DURATION OF THE FLOOD

Genesis 7:11 provides a clear indication of the devastating nature of the Flood when it states that “all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” This was no gentle afternoon shower. Rather, it was the final condemnatory judgment of an angry God on a sin-sick, doomed-to-die world. Water came down (“the windows of heaven were opened”) and water rose up (“all the fountains of the great deep were broken up”), until finally Genesis 7:19-20 records: “And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.” Through the years, various critics have suggested that the Deluge was not a **worldwide** event at all, but rather merely a **local** flood. For example, one Bible professor, Clyde Woods, in *The Living Way Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis-Exodus* that he authored, wrote:

The extent of the flood has been disputed; some scholars insist that only a worldwide flood can satisfy the demands of the record, whereas others believe that the flood was limited to the area of man's habitation. **A local flood seems favored by the extra-Biblical evidence**, but it does appear at first glance that the more natural meaning of the text favors a universal flood (1972, p. 20, emp. added).

Woods then listed the various arguments for a local Flood, and drew the following conclusion: “Thus, the local flood hypothesis seems to be a valid alternative.”

In assessing Genesis 7:19-20 in their classic text, *The Genesis Flood*, Whitcomb and Morris wrote: “One need not be a professional scientist to realize the tremendous implications of these Biblical statements. If only **one** (to say nothing of **all**) of the high mountains had been covered with water, the Flood would have been absolutely universal; for water must seek its own level—and must do so quickly!” (1961, pp. 1-2, emp. in orig.). Other critics have argued that the phrase “all the high mountains” does not mean necessarily **all** high mountains, for the word “all” can be used in a relative sense. H.C. Leupold, however, has dealt a deathblow to that argument.

A measure of the waters is now made by comparison with the only available standard for such waters—the mountains. They are said to have been “covered.” Not merely a few but “all the high mountains under all the heavens.” One of these expressions alone would almost necessitate the impression that the author intends to convey the idea of the absolute universality of the Flood, e.g., “all the high mountains.” Yet since “all” is known to be used in a relative sense, the writer removes all possible ambiguity by adding the phrase “under all the

heavens.” A double “all” (*kol*) cannot allow for so relative a sense. It almost constitutes a Hebrew superlative. So we believe that the text disposes of the question of the universality of the Flood (1942, pp. 301-302).

The biblical text does indeed “dispose of the question of the universality of the Flood.” This Earth was completely covered by water.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLE PETER

One of the most important, and most convincing, passages relating to the magnitude and significance of the Great Flood is found in 2 Peter 3:3-7:

Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

In this stirring passage, Peter speaks of some who—because of a fatal adherence to uniformitarianism—did not take seriously Heaven’s promise of the Second Coming of Christ. Nor did they seem to understand that His return would be a cataclysmic, universal intervention by God in the affairs of men. These “mockers” lamented that all things were continuing as they had “from the beginning of the creation.” In response, Peter discussed two events that simply cannot be explained on the basis of uniformitarianism (the idea that processes we see today always have operated in the same fashion), and in so doing he destroyed forever the arguments of both the infidel and the liberal critics.

The first of these events was the creation of the world: “there were heavens from of old, and an earth...by the word of God.” The second of these events was the Flood of Noah: “The world [Greek *kosmos*] that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” Peter used the account of the Noachic Flood to draw a comparison with Christ’s Second Coming and the subsequent destruction of the world. For, said Peter, as “the world that then was” perished by water, so the “heavens that now are, and the earth” have been “stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” From Peter’s straightforward language, it is logically impossible for men to suggest that Peter meant a coming destruction by fire of only **part** of the Earth. Peter’s terms—“the heavens that now are, and the earth”—obviously are universal in nature. Peter portrayed one event that brought about a transformation not just of the Earth, but also of the heavens as well. That event, according to the inspired apostle, was the Genesis Flood!

There can be no doubt that Peter’s argument (i.e., there is a coming universal destruction awaiting this world—an argument framed from the historical fact of the Flood of Noah) provides inspired testimony as to the universal destruction of the Genesis Flood.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

It was not just inspired writers of the Bible who provided information on the extent, nature, and importance of the Genesis Flood. The Lord Himself addressed the topic of the Deluge in Luke 17:26-30 (cf. Matthew 24:39) when He drew the following parallel:

And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them **all**. Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them **all**: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed (emp. added).

In this passage, the Lord predicted an impending doom that was to befall the Jews of His day who would not listen to, and obey, the Word of God. For our purpose here, however, note the **context** in which Jesus discussed the destruction of Genesis 6-8. He placed the Flood alongside the annihilation of Sodom, and He also placed it alongside the destruction of the ungodly at His Second Coming. Whitcomb has remarked:

In exactly the same manner, Christ’s warning to future generations, on the basis of what happened to the ungodly in the days of Noah, would have been pointless if part of the human race had escaped the judgment waters.... Therefore we are persuaded that Christ’s use of the word “all” in Luke 17:27 must be understood in the absolute sense; otherwise the analogies would collapse and the warnings would lose their force. A heavy burden of proof rests upon those who would maintain that only a part of the human race was destroyed in the Flood, in view of the clear statements of the Lord Jesus Christ (1973, p. 22).

THE NECESSITY OF CONSTRUCTING AN ARK

A fundamental question that must be asked in the biblical context is this: If the Flood were merely a local inundation limited to the Mesopotamian region of that day, **why would Noah need to build such an ark in the first place?** This is a point that almost all advocates of the local flood theory either have missed or ignored. It is easy to understand why. Consider, for example, the case of Canadian anthropologist Arthur C. Custance. In attempting to support the concept of a local flood, while simultaneously trying to provide a logical solution to **why** Noah should have been instructed to build an ark in the first place, Custance suggested that the entire ark-building episode was merely an “object lesson” for the antediluvians.

It would require real energy and faith to follow Noah's example and build other Arks, but it would have required neither of these to pack up a few things and migrate. There is nothing Noah could have done to stop them except disappearing very secretly. Such a departure could hardly act as the kind of warning that the deliberate construction of the Ark could have done. And the inspiration for this undertaking was given to Noah by leaving him in ignorance of the exact limits of the Flood. He was assured that all mankind would be destroyed, and probably supposed that the Flood would therefore be universal. This supposition may have been quite essential for him (1958, p. 18).

Further, consider that Genesis 7:21-23 plainly states:

All flesh died that moved upon the earth, both birds, and cattle, and beasts, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was on the dry ground, died. And **every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground**, both man, and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; and they were destroyed from the earth (emp. added).

One final point needs to be mentioned. Some today mistakenly have insisted that the ark has been found on top of the 17,000-foot-high Mt. Ararat in Turkey. How can someone claim to accept biblical and/or scientific evidence that allegedly points to the remains of Noah's ark being on the top of Mt. Ararat, **and then deny the biblical testimony to the global Flood that put it there?** Do these individuals understand what they are asking us to believe? To claim that the remains of the ark are on top of the 17,000-foot-high Mt. Ararat, while at the same time insisting that it was put there by a **local** flood, is to strain at the gnat and swallow the camel. While actual evidence of the ark has yet to be found, the fact remains that some are doggedly searching without admitting what must have left it there in the first place.

CONCLUSION

The temptation undoubtedly exists, especially in today's climate of extreme scientific prowess, to exalt science above Scripture and opt for the more comfortable local-Flood view. Such a stance, however, is not an option for the person who accepts the truthfulness and inspiration of God's Word. John Morris addressed this temptation, and what happens when Bible believers fall prey to it, when he wrote:

Unfortunately, many others now have begun to judge Scripture's accuracy by its agreement with scientific dogma, and then to distort Scripture until the two seem to agree. In doing so, scientific opinions of some scientists are elevated to a level they don't deserve, and Scripture suffers. If such a method of interpreting Scripture is followed throughout, other doctrines will fall also. After all, miracles are "scientifically" impossible. Scientists know that virgins don't give birth, men don't walk on water, and bodies don't rise from the dead. One

may gain scientific credibility among the secularists by twisting Scripture to fit science, but it would be better to honor God by believing His word (1998, p. d).

Let us openly and fairly examine the evidence that supports the Genesis Flood, and urge others to do likewise. Let us be cautious students, but never willing to compromise inspired testimony.

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Questions—Lesson 3

TRUE OR FALSE

Write TRUE or FALSE in the blanks before the following statements.

- _____ 1. Noah built the ark in 150 years.
- _____ 2. Water prevailed 30 cubits above the high mountains.
- _____ 3. The apostle Peter is the only person to mention the Flood in the New Testament.
- _____ 4. Next to Creation, the Flood is the greatest single geological event in the history of the Earth.
- _____ 5. A local, Mesopotamian flood would require an ark to save the world's wildlife.
- _____ 6. The ark has been located on top of the 17,000-foot-high Mount Ararat.
- _____ 7. The opening of the windows of heaven provided all the water necessary for the Flood.
- _____ 8. Below the equator, water does not seek its own level as it does above the equator.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer(s).

- 1. God imposed a “probationary period” of a maximum of how many years before destroying the inhabitants of the Earth?
(a) 1,000 (b) 500 (c) 1,575 (d) 120
- 2. Which of the following is **not** used to describe Noah?
(a) Faithful in the ages (b) A just man
(c) Perfect in his generations (d) Walked with God
- 3. How old was Noah when he entered the ark?
(a) 100 (b) 500 (c) 200 (d) 600
- 4. In Luke 17:26-30, Christ compared the Flood with the:
(a) Destruction of the Tower of Babel (c) Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem
(b) Destruction of Sodom (d) Destruction of Satan

5. What was Noah required to take with him on the ark?
 (a) Land-dwelling creatures (b) Birds
 (c) Fish (d) Plants
6. Biblical testimony points to a:
 (a) Local flood (b) Mesopotamian flood
 (c) Intercontinental flood (d) Worldwide flood
7. How long were Noah and his family on the ark before the waters that were to form the Flood began to arrive?
 (a) 1 day (b) 2 days (c) 7 days (d) 1 year
8. According to Genesis 8:7, what was the first animal Noah sent out from the ark to see if the waters had receded?
 (a) Raven (b) Dove (c) Sparrow (d) Pigeon

MATCHING

Match the related concepts (place the correct letter in the space provided by each number).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. ____ Greek for “world” | A. Jesus |
| 2. ____ Walked with God | B. Peter |
| 3. ____ Hebrew for “all” | C. <i>Kol</i> |
| 4. ____ Responsible for getting the animals to the ark | D. God |
| 5. ____ Apostle who referred to the Flood in reference to the Second Coming of Christ | E. <i>Kosmos</i> |
| 6. ____ Predicted an impending doom that was to befall the Jews of his day who would not listen to, and obey, the Word of God | F. Noah |

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Genesis 7:21: “All flesh _____ that moved upon the earth, both birds, and cattle and beasts, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man.”
2. Numerous theologians and _____ of the past attributed many of the Earth’s features to the Flood of Noah.

3. Some Bible professors have wrongly argued: “The _____ flood hypothesis seems to be a valid alternative.”
4. Genesis 6:5: “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every _____ of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
5. Rehwinkel stated: “No geologist, biologist, or student of history can afford to ignore this great _____.”

NOTES

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