

THE FLOOD—LOCAL OR UNIVERSAL?

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Current liberal religious writers either reject, in full, the historicity of the Genesis Flood, or at best, describe it as an unimportant local inundation limited, in extent, to a small area in Mesopotamia.

Both groups reach these conclusions largely because of the influence of uniformitarian geology—a theory which alleges that all changes in and on the earth have resulted from natural, and not catastrophic, causes.

Here, as often elsewhere, such writers evidence their slavish dependence on “scholars” in other fields for their conclusions which they then pass on to their readers as assured results of scholarly investigation. If these “results” conflict with what the Bible says, they could not really care less! They do not hesitate to set aside plain affirmations of Sacred Writ for the deliverances of their revered mentors.

Currently, uniformitarian geology is “in”; and liberal theologians, like so many sheep, fall dutifully in line. This disposition, long observable in the denominational world is becoming more and more apparent among “us.” There are those among us, in ever increasing numbers, who are more impressed by the utterances of radical “scholars” than they are by what the Scriptures plainly assert. Bernard Ramm, a denominational theologian, and a devotee of the “local flood” theory is by many among us today more highly regarded than McGarvey, notwithstanding the fact that Ramm has no real background in geology, and his biblical learning is greatly inferior to that which McGarvey had.

It is a distressing commentary on the times that a liberal writer such as Ramm is more widely read and is much more appreciated by some of “our” preachers today than McGarvey who, the *London Times* once said, had the most thorough and profound knowledge of the English Bible of any man on earth! What must the future hold for the cause we love when men, like McGarvey, are ridiculed by *some* preachers in the churches of Christ, and others, like Ramm (who has never obeyed the gospel) , are eulogized? It is later than we think!

The flood, with the sole exception of creation, is the most stupendous event of which man has knowledge. The Scriptures, in the most detailed fashion, tell us *when* it began and ended, *how long* it continued, and *why* it came. In no other matters are the Sacred Writings more minute, more particular, and more specific regarding the events described. (Gen. 7:11-24.)

Moreover, the simple, historical narrative of Genesis is alluded to, and sanctioned again and again elsewhere in the Bible. Of it our Lord said,

For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall be the coming of the Son of Man (Mat. 24:38, 39).

Here the destruction which is to come upon wicked men, at the last day, is compared to that which befell their ancient counterparts, thus necessitating an area of equal extent, in the administration of judgment.

Similarly, Peter indicated the world-wide extent of the flood in a comparable allusion when he said:

For this they wilfully 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 (2 Pet. 3:5-7).

Of special significance here is the apostle's allusion to "the world that then was," which "being overflowed with water, *perished*." The "world" (*kosmos*) which "then was," is identified by him as consisting of "an earth compacted out of water and amidst water," obviously, including the whole of it. It was to this fact that Peter appealed in his argument of another catastrophe equal in extent yet to come, the, destruction of wicked men. If the flood embraced only a small portion of the earth, and included but few people, comparatively speaking, the apostle's parallel utterly fails.

Certain simple basic facts render the concept of a local flood absurd. If the waters were limited to a small area of Western Asia:

(a) Why was it necessary to construct the ark at all? Could not Noah, and his family, simply have departed for lands beyond the reach of the rising waters? They had ample time both to plan and to set forth on such a journey, since warnings of the flood came to them more than a hundred years earlier.

(b) Why did not all the people proceed over the Caucasian mountains to safety if the flood embraced no more than a small area in the Mesopotamian valley?

c) Animals instinctively move to higher ground as waters rise; why was it necessary to take them into the ark if the flood were local?

(d) Could not the birds have easily and quickly flown to drier regions when the rains began?

Does not the *size* of the ark lead logically to the concept of a universal flood? Because of some uncertainty regarding the length of the cubit of measurement used, it is not possible to determine *exactly* the *size* of the ark; but, it had a capacity of at least a million and a half cubic feet, the equivalent of more than *five hundred* single-decked cattle cars. Are we to suppose that Noah and his sons built a vessel of this size to cross a small valley inundated by a local flood? And, why did Noah and his family feed and store their cargo for nearly a year in the ark if the waters which bore them up extended no farther than the horizon?

It is not possible to believe the Bible, and accept the concept of a local, limited flood of waters. Those who thus do have taken leave of faith, and rely on fallacious reasoning, for their conclusions. In so doing, they illustrate well Mark Twain's observation that "It is strange what some men can believe, just so it is not in the Bible!"~

Deceased