

THE GLOBAL FLOOD JUDGEMENT

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The following is an excerpt from a book on Genesis 1-11 currently in process from Wayne Spencer. This is to be considered an early draft and thus is subject to change. But, it is made available to explain the basics of Noah's Flood.

Few things in the Bible have been challenged and criticized as much as the account from Genesis of the Flood of Noah. It is interesting that over the years it has come to be known as "Noah's Flood." It was actually more God's Flood. It was a way of judging the violence and evil that had become prevalent in the pre-flood world, and starting over with a righteous man named Noah. Noah was willing to live a righteous life in an ungodly society. Noah believed God's word saying there would be a Flood, and Noah obeyed in constructing the Ark and preparing to save land animals from complete destruction.

There is significant information in Genesis in chapters 6-9 about the Flood. It is also mentioned a number of times elsewhere in the Bible as an example of God's judgement. Jesus himself mentions Noah and the Flood in passages in the Gospels (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-30), indicating that Jesus considered it an historic event. II Peter 3:3-7 is also a very significant passage regarding the Flood and how it relates to unbelief. The above passages from the gospels make clear that God did not warn everyone about the judgement that was coming. God does not "owe it to" people to warn them all of impending judgement (see Romans 1:18-20 and Romans 2:11-16). God would not be cruel or unjust to wipe out all life on Earth at any time, and then start all over, for instance. All of us deserve to be judged for our sin, but thanks to God's mercy people are given time to turn to faith in Christ and in God's grace those who believe are forgiven and given God's Spirit to help them live for him in this life. In Noah's day, Noah did not experience the presence of the Holy Spirit the way a Christian does today. But on the other hand, God spoke directly to Noah, at least on certain occasions. Why did God not just take Noah off the Earth up to heaven and wipe out all life on Earth, then start over with creation again? Rather than wiping out Noah, along with the rest, God chose to give Noah a job of building a huge barge to save all the land animals. God prefers to get man involved in His plan rather than doing it all Himself. Noah was counted righteous because of his faith (Hebrews 11:7); Noah believed God and constructed the Ark, though Noah could not have imagined the awesome destruction that was about to come upon the world. How odd he must have seemed to his contemporaries! Noah had to figure out how to build the Ark as God had described it. He did not have to gather the animals, since they came to him (Gen. 6:20). Noah also did not have to act as Judge by closing the door to the Ark, Scripture indicates God did that (Gen. 7:16). But Noah's obedience paid off for all of us. If the world was that wicked at that time, what would have happened later in history if God had not stepped in?

In children's Sunday School lessons the story of the Flood is often taught along with other Bible stories. There are aspects of the Flood account that should be made clear to children and often aren't. The Flood account is also something that should be studied

seriously by adults, it is not just for children. In children's Sunday School curriculum, the main application of the Flood story is often that God keeps his promises, since God kept his promise to Noah and God protected them through the Flood. This is true of course, but it is far from the main point of the Flood account. The most important point about the Flood is that God is a holy God who does something about evil in the world! Why is this point so seldom mentioned among Christians? Many people today think God is irrelevant to their personal lives and that God has no involvement in the world. But, God judged the world once and he says that in the future He will judge it again. There are limits to God's tolerance and God does not just allow evil to continue forever. The first judgement was by water but the second global judgement of the world will be by fire (II Peter 3:7).

There are other important lessons from the Flood account that are often taken for granted. Yet these points are very relevant to the thinking of people today, both to the public and to Christians. The Flood judgement story shows that God is completely sovereign or in control both of nature and of mankind. God holds our lives in His hands, individually and collectively. Secondly, the Flood demonstrates forcefully that the God of the Bible is the God of all people, whether they believe in Him or not. Did all people of Noah's day believe Noah's God existed? Unlikely. Yet, that did not make it less true. Jesus commented in Matthew 24 and Luke 17 that the people of Noah's time had no warning that the Flood was coming. We are created to live by the moral principles God has set down and people have to answer to the Creator-God for their actions.

If the Noahic Flood really occurred in history as the Bible says, then it would surely have drastically changed planet Earth in many ways. I believe there are many indications from geological evidence of a powerful global Flood in the past. Thus, confirmations of the global Flood described in Genesis are quite literally right under our feet, in the rocks and fossils. Thus the Flood is not just a story, it is part of our history. It is the most severe catastrophic event in nature to ever occur on the Earth. More than a natural disaster, the global Flood was a divinely appointed judgement that was important in a Biblical view of history.

The rationale for the Flood was to judge evil in the world and start civilization over again. The means used to cause the Flood are not clear from Scripture. I personally believe that somehow God must have intervened in a supernatural way to cause the Flood to occur. This miraculous intervention could have taken many forms. Scientists want very much to know details of how things took place. Some details can be discerned from scientific evidence through scientific methods. This is a matter of ongoing research by creationists. It is important to not let go of clear Biblical teachings as the science of the Flood is investigated. Scripture actually only gives us what could be called a sketchy outline, it takes science to fill in some of the details of the nature of the event. Once the Flood was started, much of what happened in terms of its effects can be described by known physical processes such as erosion, volcanism, sedimentation, etc. As for the question of how did God cause the Flood, this is a question not completely answerable by scientific approaches. In my technical papers presented at the International Conference on Creationism in 1998 I argued that impacts from space could have caused some of (not all of) the Flood's processes. This does not limit God's involvement in an inappropriate way since it would still require miraculous intervention by God to arrange the impact bombardment event to occur at the time of the Flood. While this may be a somewhat controversial suggestion, it was my conclusion that this was a possibility within the

framework of what Genesis tells us of the Flood. The reason for suggesting impacts during the Flood is to explain the abundant evidence on Earth for many impacts from space. A number of well-known creationists in the sciences have supported the general idea of impacts during Noah's Flood, though there are various views on what caused these impacts. It is important to note that in Genesis what we have is essentially a description of the event from the point of view of Noah and his sons. Genesis does not give us a detailed technical scientific description of how the Flood took place.

The Global Nature of the Flood

It should not be necessary to defend the idea that Scripture teaches Noah's Flood was global, yet this has been questioned by so many. Many Christians do question whether the Flood described in Genesis 6-9 was really a flood over the whole earth. Yet, Scripture is extremely clear on this issue. The principles of interpretation are to be remembered and applied at this point. The meaning of individual words in Scripture is always tied to their context and Scripture is to be interpreted the way it would have been understood by those who first heard it. It is not correct to look up a list of definitions for a Biblical word, then choose one definition and assume that the passage you are studying means that particular word meaning. Rather, we must look at the surrounding sentences and paragraphs as well as the whole Bible book and other background information to properly determine the meaning of one word in its context. This can be a great deal of work, but not always. Often, people err by arbitrarily choosing the Bible dictionary definition of a term that they want to believe and then reading it into the Biblical text, rather than basing their understanding on what the passage actually says. The difference between these two approaches is subtle, but crucial, for correctly understanding Scripture. Some will argue that in the Bible the word for land (either 'erets' or 'adamah' in the transliterated Hebrew) could mean a local region or nation or large region, and not the whole earth. Broadly speaking this is true, but this is irrelevant. What matters is how the terms are used in the context of Genesis 6 and 7, especially chapter 7. The following verses are especially relevant to the global nature of the Flood:

Gen. 7:4	"every living thing" points to a global event
Gen. 7:10-12	"all" referring to fountains implies all of them all over the world
Gen. 7:14-16	Use of words "all", "every," and "everything" in reference to living things implies creatures from all over the world
Gen. 7:19-20	" <u>all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens</u> " clearly indicates a global event, not local or regional
Gen. 7:21	" <u>All flesh that moved on the earth perished...</u> ", " <u>and all mankind</u> "
Gen. 7:22	" <u>all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died.</u> " [This may be the clearest verse.]
Gen. 7:23	"He blotted out <u>every living thing</u> that was upon the face of the land...", " <u>they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.</u> "

II Peter 3:5-6 “For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.”

Verses 7:21 and 22 are very explicit, how can they mean anything but a global Flood? Other logical considerations point to the Flood being global also. For instance, why would it emphasize “all” and “every” referring to different land animals if the Flood was only local. If the Flood only covered a limited region of the planet, Noah could have led animals in that area to a different part of the world and Noah would not have had any reason to deal with animals that were not in his part of the world. Furthermore, as has been pointed out many times by creationists, there would have been no reason for Noah to build an Ark at all, if the Flood were not global, for Noah would have had plenty of time to move to any part of the world without undertaking such a large difficult project as the Ark. Another point often made is that when God gave the rainbow He promised never to send another Flood like that again, one that would “destroy all flesh” (Gen. 9:12-15). There have been many floods since the time of Noah, including regional ones. If Noah’s Flood was not global then God would have broken His promise to Noah. So, the global nature of Noah’s Flood is inescapable from Scripture.

Considerations on the Life of Noah

II Peter 2:5 describes Noah as a “preacher of righteousness.” Could it be that when God spoke to Noah telling him the Flood would occur, this prompted Noah to preach to people? Did God’s message to Noah motivate Noah to preach righteousness to try and persuade people to repent and be saved from judgement by coming on the Ark with him? This does not seem possible when you consider all the facts in Genesis. First, Genesis 6:18 is very specific about who was supposed to be on the Ark, from the time God first told Noah about the Flood. Then in Genesis 7:1 God says Noah’s “whole family” were to get on the Ark. While it is tempting to draw a parallel with the New Testament and say that Noah’s preaching was an attempt to persuade others to get on the Ark and be saved, this does not seem to be picture Genesis gives us. There would definitely have been some extra space on the Ark not needed by Noah’s family or the animals or for storing food. When God spoke to Noah telling him the Flood was coming, God had decided exactly who would be saved on the Ark. So, though Noah may have preached to people after learning about the Flood, I do not think he was persuading them to get on the Ark, since that would have been contrary to God’s clear directions. It could have been *before* God spoke to Noah about the Flood that Noah was preaching. Perhaps Noah had spoke out against sin all his life. Perhaps Noah told the people to ask God for forgiveness. It seems likely Noah preached to people before he knew the Flood would happen. If Noah did preach to people after God spoke to him, his message may have changed, in the light of the coming judgement.

There is an interesting issue related to Noah’s three sons that may provide insights into Noah and into how the events of the Flood relate in time. Genesis 5:32 says that

Noah had his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth after Noah was 500 years old. Then later, in Genesis 7:6, it states that Noah was 600 years old when the Flood began. The events of the Flood are then laid out chronologically in relation to Noah's age. Apparently, Noah had no children until he was age 500. He then began having children, and by the time the Flood took place, all three of his sons were grown and had wives of their own. Scripture does not answer all the interesting questions about Noah and his family. It is interesting to imagine what life would have been like for them in the pre-flood world, in the Ark, and in the new post-flood world.

In order to reconcile all the facts we have in the Bible about Noah, some speculation is necessary. My speculation is that Noah actually was unmarried until he was nearly 500 years old. I believe it was primarily during Noah's early years, before age 500, that he was preaching. This would mean that the people had plenty of warning to repent. Noah had preached repentance for many years. Then when God spoke to Noah, there was no longer any opportunity for people to be saved from the judgement. Noah did not marry during those years, perhaps because of the difficulty in finding a righteous wife. Then, after the people of the time had ample opportunity to hear Noah, God appoints a time for the judgement of mankind. I believe the statement by God in Genesis 6:3 represents the moment of God's decision to send the Flood and set a time limit for mankind. It was then 120 years from the time of God's decision to send the Flood to the time when it took place. Some time nearly 20 years after God makes this decision, Noah gets married. Then Noah and his wife began raising a family. Sometime between when Noah was ages 500 and 600, God spoke to Noah. Apparently, judging from Genesis 6:18, Noah already had all three sons and they may have already been married when God told Noah about the Flood. Or, it could be possible God spoke to Noah when his sons were young and not yet married. It is not clear how long was needed for building the Ark, other than that apparently it was less than 100 years. Noah's sons apparently did not have children of their own when the Flood began, since Genesis 7:1 says that Noah's whole family was to get on the Ark and yet no grandchildren of Noah were mentioned.

Life on the Ark

Many have challenged the historicity of the Flood saying it would be impossible for eight people to live on the Ark so long or to take care of all the animals. This does raise many questions. Complete answers on these issues may not be possible, but creationists have published much material answering these type of questions. Even the construction and design of the Ark has been challenged. Some have challenged creationists saying that it would be impossible for a boat as large as the Ark to be built out of wood so that it could survive the event. It would be a very challenging engineering task to build a vessel like the Ark out of wood that would be strong enough to survive the physical stresses it would be put under. If you can believe in the God of the Bible, you can believe God provided Noah some means of constructing the Ark that was adequate for its purpose. Here I only intend to address some of these issues about the Ark very briefly. The reader is urged to consult other creationist sources (see the List of Recommended Sources) for fuller answers to these questions.

The Ark needed to be able to stay afloat and be the home of Noah and his family, and the animals, for a little over one year. The Ark also needed to be able to withstand

the stresses placed on it by the waves of the Flood. Today, even with modern engineering and shipbuilding techniques it would be very challenging to build a boat out of wood as large as the Ark. Noah's Ark did not need to move fast, it only had to keep afloat. So, the Ark did not need to be constructed in a streamlined shape, like large vessels of modern times. This is important because it is much easier to build in the trusses and necessary structural bracing if it is built in a box-like shape than if it were a streamlined shape. From Genesis, we cannot tell exactly what type of wood was used in its construction. There are varieties of wood that are especially dense and strong that may have been used. There is also some fossil evidence that there were once extremely large trees, larger than any in the world today. Some sort of lamination process could have been used to increase the strength of the planking. It is not impossible Noah may have found trees as tall as the Ark was long, to build from. Constructing the Ark would have required some very ingenious engineering skill, but it would not be outside of the realm of possibility for Noah. It is also logical to suppose that there was a high degree of skill in the pre-flood world with metalworking and carpentry, since the beginnings of these skills are hinted at in Genesis 4, many years before the time of Noah. Special means of joining planking and trusses together would have had to have been devised to make the Ark strong enough to bear up under the forces put on it by the catastrophe. But, I suspect it could be shown that all this is possible with engineering and construction techniques known and used throughout history. A group of Japanese ship engineers once did a study of the Ark to evaluate its stability. They found that the unique Ark dimensions optimize the various factors that determine its stability against large waves. Henry Morris, of the Institute for Creation Research has shown that the Ark could be tilted close to 90 degrees in angle side-to-side and it would still right itself, due to its unique proportions. When the Ark encountered a large wave, it would have turned lengthwise into the wave and then it would ride over the wave. Thus, the people and animals in the Ark would experience the Ark turning left or right frequently perhaps but they probably would not experience too much tilting from side-to-side. This is easy to see for yourself by making a scale model of Noah's Ark according to the Biblical proportions and placing it in water. Thus, the Ark was very capable of surviving the Flood and protecting those aboard it.

Another frequent challenge to the Genesis account from sceptics is how could Noah and 7 other individuals care for all the animals? See the Lesson Tools section of this guide for outlines on Noah's Flood, these give dimensions and factual data on the Ark. The Ark was an extremely large vessel. It's volumetric capacity was nearly 1.4 million cubic feet. If you were filling the Ark with sheep, it would likely hold on the order of 125,000. The Ark was large enough that at least 24 standard sized mobile homes could have fit inside it, on each deck! Not all species of animals would have had to be saved on the Ark, only those that could not have survived in the Flood waters. This would have included land mammals, birds, reptiles, dinosaurs, and probably a number of smaller creatures. Many insects would have survived in the waters of the Flood, as would fish and other marine creatures. The Flood waters would not be safe, however, even for fish and other marine creatures, because the violence of the Flood would have buried many marine organisms. Also, all the material washed into the Flood waters as well as all the dying organisms may have altered the water pH, or concentrations of various substances may have made some of the waters temporarily uninhabitable to some fish species. But,

marine organisms, and many plants would survive in representative numbers in the Flood waters.

Another point that is important is regarding the Biblical “kinds”, (also referred to today by creationists with the technical term “baramins”). There was no need for Noah to save 150 varieties of dogs, for instance, on the Ark. All the varieties of dogs on the Earth today could have descended from only 1, 2, or maybe 3 pairs of dogs. Dogs, as well as most other living things today, have become more specialized genetically with time. So, at the time of Noah the dogs that were on the Ark had built into their chromosomes all the information necessary to give rise to all the varieties of dogs, wolves, coyotes, foxes, etc., that we see today. This would very drastically reduce the number of animals that would have to be saved on Noah’s Ark.

John Woodmorappe, a creationist geologist and biologist, has done some very thorough research on many issues about the Ark and the care of the animals on the Ark. He estimates that the number of animals that would have had to be on the Ark would be somewhere in the range of 2,000 to 16,000. Arriving at this figure is a long technical process that will not be addressed here. Even if the number of animals on the Ark were more than this, there would be plenty of room. There would have been large amounts of space for storing all kinds of food and other provisions. The questions of feeding the animals and dealing with their waste is also a question Woodmorappe addresses in detail. This would boil down to clever management and construction techniques. Woodmorappe shows that with known techniques used by experienced people in agriculture today, the problems of feeding and caring for the animals could be very manageable. It is possible a number of animals slept or hibernated or were in a state of torpor for part of the time, though this would not eliminate the need for some care. Even if this were not the case, wise animal care techniques could make the job workable for eight people. We should give Noah and his family credit for being clever, skilled, and creative. They must have come up with some unique solutions to all sorts of problems and needs, to allow them to survive for over a year in the Ark. Woodmorappe, for example, shows that even assuming Noah did not collect any water from rain, storing enough water for his family and the animals would only take up about 9 percent of the volume of the Ark. Woodmorappe also estimates that approximately 11 to 15 percent of the Ark would have been used for storing food for animals, including hay and hay substitutes. Many animals could have been fed special diets while on the Ark, for reducing the amount of hay that would have to be stored or for other practical reasons. Even animals that are normally meat eaters today, can survive for a time as vegetarians, when necessary. Though we do not know everything about how the Ark and how Noah’s family managed to live on it for so long, the problems are not insurmountable for individuals with high degrees of skill and experience. God was able to prepare Noah for a job such as this and to bring him and his family through the catastrophe.

What would the Flood have been like? What would it have been like to experience? The first 40 days I suspect was especially intense and widespread rain. Also during this time it seems likely there were many geological catastrophic events taking place. During the 40 days and continuing for some weeks after probably, there were severe storms, volcanic eruptions, impacts from space, large hurricanes, tsunamis from earthquakes and tectonic events in the ocean, the continent (or continents) was probably breaking up, and the sky would have become dark. Impacts would have put large quantities of material into

the stratosphere, blocking some of the light to the Earth's surface and causing temperatures to drop, possibly for a few months. Over half of the time Noah's family were in the Ark, they were sitting on top of the mountain waiting for the water to go down. I suspect it was not very comfortable in the Ark for a number of weeks at least early in the event. The first 40 days would likely have been the most violent part of the event. It would have been impossible for people to survive for long outside the Ark. If you imagine all the various types of natural disasters we have heard of throughout history, all happening at the same time throughout the world, that is probably what the Flood was like. It is a frightening thing to consider. God did not promise Noah that he would be comfortable, but God did give Noah a way to survive.

The post-Flood period would have been difficult as well for Noah and his family. The Earth was no longer an ideal environment, there were wild changes in climate and now they had to experience harsh weather. Because the Flood had affected the Earth's core and mantle, the Earth's magnetic field was dramatically weaker in the post-flood period. This could have caused genetic defects since Earth's magnetic field shields from cosmic rays and other radiation from space. This contributed to shorter lifespans of people in the post-flood Earth. There were still occasional volcanic eruptions, sometimes enormous ones that would partially block sunlight over large regions. There may have been occasional impacts from space as well during this period, though probably in decreasing frequency. It would probably not be unusual for Noah to see meteors streaking across the night sky, or even to see bright flashes on the Moon as impacts took place on the Moon. The warm ocean waters, due to the Flood's tectonics and Earth movements, caused much evaporation of water into the atmosphere in the post-Flood period. This and climate conditions caused by volcanoes combined to cause an "ice age" period that began a few hundred years after the Flood ended and continued for a number of years. This ice age did not make it impossible for people to survive, but it made it more difficult. The harsh and changing conditions of the post-flood period made it difficult for many living things to survive. As a result, dinosaurs and many species went extinct during the post-flood period. All this is the picture that is emerging from creationary research into Earth's geology in the light of this global catastrophe. This is what I believe Noah and his family lived through, by God's grace and mercy.