

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GENESIS FLOOD

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Conflicting Schools of Interpretation

One of the most controversial aspects of the flood narrative concerns the extent of the Genesis flood itself. Commentators have taken three major positions: (1) the traditional, that asserts the worldwide nature of the deluge; (2) limited or local flood theories that narrow the scope of the flood story to a particular geographical location in Mesopotamia; and (3) a nonliteral (symbolic) interpretation that suggests that the flood story is a nonhistorical account written to teach theological truth.

Against the third position, the nonhistorical, we must note the evidences within the biblical account affirming the historical nature of the flood. In the literary structure of the flood story,¹ the genealogical frame or envelope construction (Gen. 5:32; 9:28, 29) plus the secondary genealogies (Gen. 6:9, 10; 9:18, 19) indicate that the biblical author intends the account as factual history. The use of the genealogical term *tôl' dôt* ("generations," "account") in the flood story (Gen. 6:9), as throughout Genesis (13 times, structuring the whole book), reveals that the author regarded his story to be as historically veracious as the rest of Genesis.² Walter Kaiser analyzes the literary form of Genesis 1-11 and concludes that we must take this whole section of Genesis as "historical narrative prose."³

A number of references in the book of Job may allude to the flood (Job 9:5-8; 12:14, 15; 14:11, 12; 22:15-17; 26:10-14; 28:9; 38:8-11).⁴ The historical occurrence of the flood is part of the saving/judging acts of God, and the theological arguments of later biblical writers employing flood typology assume its historicity and build on it.⁵

Thus according to the biblical writers, far from being a nonhistorical, symbolical, or mythical account written only to teach theological truths, the

flood narrative seeks to accurately record a real, literal, historical event.

For evangelical Christians who take seriously the biblical record and accept the historicity of the flood account, the question still remains whether we should regard the event described as a local and limited flood or as a global cataclysm.

The limited flood theories rest primarily on scientific arguments that present seemingly difficult geological, biological, and anthropological problems for a global flood.⁶ Since the scientific argumentation is outside the scope of this chapter, I can only suggest that such problems are not insurmountable given the supernatural nature of the flood. Numerous recent scientific studies provide a growing body of evidence for diluvial catastrophism instead of uniformitarianism.⁷

The local flood theories further assert that we should interpret the terminology describing the extent of the flood in a relative and not an absolute global sense. Such theories regard the various seemingly universal terms as implying only a limited locality, indicating universality within the writer's worldview, but a limited scope in terms of our modern worldview.⁸ We will take up this issue in the next section.

The traditional conservative understanding of the flood narrative is that Genesis 6-9 describes a worldwide deluge. We should note that it is also the view of the majority of liberal-critical commentators on Genesis 6-9, although they regard the biblical view as borrowed from other ancient Near Eastern accounts and not historical.⁹

The thesis of this chapter is that only the traditional position of a literal, global flood does full justice to the biblical data, and such a universal interpretation is crucial for flood theology in Genesis and for the theological implications drawn by later biblical writers.

Biblical Terminology in Genesis 6-9 Indicating Universality

Perhaps the most important kind of biblical evidence for a universal flood is the specific all-inclusive terminology found within the Genesis account itself. The late Gerhard Hasel provided a careful treatment of it in three studies in the publication *Origins*,¹⁰ and therefore I need not go into detail here. Eight different terms or phrases in Genesis 6-9, most echoing their counterparts in the worldwide creation account of Genesis 1 and 2, indicate universality.

First, the term *hā'āreṣ* "the earth," occurring 46 times in the flood narrative (Gen. 6:12, 13, 17, etc.), always without any accompanying genitive of limitation, clearly parallels the usage of the same term in the account of

worldwide, universal creation in Genesis 1:1, 2, 10. (While Scripture may at times elsewhere employ the term without a genitive and still in context limit its scope to a certain “land,” the explicit link to creation in the flood account [see especially Gen. 6:6, 7] clearly gives a universal context for its usage in Genesis 6-9.)

Some have argued that if Moses had wished to indicate the entire world, he would have used the Hebrew term *tēbēl*, which means the world as a whole, or dry land in the sense of continents. The flood narrative never uses it. But we should point out that *tēbēl* never appears in the entire Pentateuch, including the creation account. In fact, nowhere do the narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible contain it, but only poetic texts (39 times), usually as a poetic synonym in parallel with *hā’āreṣ* “the earth.” Thus this argument from silence does not adequately consider the contextual and poetic use of terminology, and therefore carries little weight.

A second expression, *‘al-p’né kol-hā’āreṣ*, “upon the face of all the earth” (Gen. 7:3; 8:9), clearly alludes to the first occurrence of the same phrase in the universal context of creation (Gen. 1:29; cf. verse 2 for a related universal expression), and thus implies a universality of the same dimension as in creation also here, that is, the entire surface of the global mass. While the shortened expression “all the earth” (*kol-hā’āreṣ*) by itself may have a limited meaning elsewhere when indicated by the immediate context (see Ex. 10:5, 15; Num. 22:5, 11; 1 Kings 4:34; 10:24; 2 Chron. 36:23; Gen. 41:57), the immediate context of the flood story is the universal sinfulness of the human beings whom God had made and created (Gen. 6:6, 7) to have dominion over “all the earth” (Gen. 1:26), and the succeeding context is the worldwide dispersal of humanity after the Tower of Babel “upon the face of all the earth” (Gen. 11:4, 8, 9). In each of the four occurrences of the phrase “upon the face of all the earth” in Genesis outside the flood story (Gen. 1:29; 11:4, 8, 9), it clearly has the sense of the entire land surface of the globe, and nothing in the flood narrative restricts such universality. (We should also note that the one place in Genesis where in context a similar phrase “upon all the face of the earth” is not global [the famine mentioned in Genesis 41:56], the Hebrew has a change in word order from elsewhere in Genesis [*‘al-kol p’né hā’āreṣ*]).

Third, the phrase *p’né hā’adāmāh*, “face of the ground” (five times in the flood narrative, Gen. 7:4, 22, 23; 8:8, 13), occurs in parallel with universal terms we have just noted, “the earth” (Gen. 7:23) and “face of the whole earth” (Gen. 8:9). “Face of the ground” likewise harks back to its first usage in the universal context of creation (Gen. 2:6).

Fourth, the term *kol-bāśār* “all flesh,” occurs 12 times in Genesis 6-9

(Gen. 6:12, 13, 17, 19; 7:16, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15, 16, 17). The word *kol*, “all,” (which can occasionally express less than totality if the context demands) when used before an indeterminate noun with no article or possessive suffix, as here in Genesis 6–9, indicates totality. God’s announcement to destroy “all flesh” (Gen. 6:13, 17) and the narrator’s comment that “all flesh” died (Gen. 7:21, 22) except the inhabitants of the ark indicate worldwide destruction. The one occurrence of *kol* plus the determinate noun *hābāsār*, “all the flesh” (in Gen. 7:15), likewise indicates totality as well as unity.

Fifth, “every living thing” (*kol-hāḥay*) of all flesh (Gen. 6:19) is another expression of totality. In Genesis 7:4, 23 the similar term *kol-hay^c qūm* means literally “all existence.” The term acquires further universal dimensions by the addition of the clause harking back to creation—“all existence *that I have made*” (Gen. 7:4)—and by the exclusive statement: “Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive” (verse 23). As Hasel puts it, “There is hardly any stronger way in Hebrew to emphasize total destruction of ‘all existence’ of human and animal life on earth than the way it has been expressed. The writer of the Genesis flood story employed terminology, formulae, and syntactical structures of the type that could not be more emphatic and explicit in expressing his concept of a universal, worldwide flood.”¹¹

Sixth, the phrase “under the whole heaven” (*tahat kol-hā^všāmāyim*), (Gen. 7:19) appears six times in the Old Testament outside of the flood narrative, and always with a universal meaning (see Deut. 2:25; 4:19; Job 28:24; 37:3; 41:11; Dan. 9:12). For example, Scripture uses the phrase to describe God’s omniscience: “For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole heavens” (Job 28:24, NKJV). Again it depicts God’s sovereignty: “Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine” (Job 41:11). (Note that the usage in Deuteronomy 2:25, describing “the nations under the whole heaven,” receives further qualification and limitation from the phrase “who shall hear the report of you” [NKJV], and thus is potentially universal and not an exception to the universal sense.)

The phrase “under the whole heaven” or “under all the heavens” also universalizes the phrase “under heaven” (Gen. 6:17) in this same flood context. The word “heaven” by itself can have a local meaning (e.g., 1 Kings 18:45), but here the context is global. Ecclesiastes, which contains numerous allusions to creation, likewise utilizes the term “under heaven” with a universal intention (Eccl. 1:13; 2:3; 3:1; cf. the parallel universal expression “under the sun” in Eccl. 1:3, 9; 2:11, 17; etc.).

In the flood account “under the whole heaven” forms part of two forceful verses describing the extent of the flood: “And the waters prevailed so mightily

upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep” (Gen. 7:19, 20, RSV). Critical scholar John Skinner notes that Genesis 7:19, 20 “not only asserts its [the flood’s] universality, but so to speak proves it, by giving the exact height of the waters above the highest mountains.”¹²

We cannot simply explain the biblical language here in terms of a local sky, and certainly cannot refer to the local mountains being covered by snow, as some proponents of a local flood have suggested. H. C. Leupold points out that the writer of verse 19 is not content with a single use of *kol* (“all”) in “all the high mountains,” but “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.”¹³

Seventh, Hasel devoted an entire scholarly article to the phrase “all the fountains [*ma’y’not*] of the great deep [*t’hôm rabbāh*]” (Gen. 7:11; 8:2) and showed how it is linked with the universal “deep” (*t’hôm*) or world-ocean in Genesis 1:2 (cf. Ps. 104:6: “Thou didst cover it [the earth] with the deep [*t’hôm*] as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains” [RSV]). The “breaking up” and “bursting forth” (i.e., geological faulting) of not just one subterranean water spring in Mesopotamia, but of *all* the “fountains” of the great deep, coupled in the same verse with the opening of the windows of the heavens, far transcends a local scene. Hasel concludes that “the bursting forth of the waters from the fountains of the ‘great deep’ refers to the splitting open of springs of subterranean waters with such might and force that together with the torrential downpouring of waters stored in the atmospheric heavens a worldwide flood comes about.”¹⁴

Eighth, in another article, Hasel shows how the Hebrew Bible reserved a special term, *mabbûl*, that in its 13 occurrences refers exclusively to the worldwide Genesis flood (12 occurrences in Genesis, once in Psalm 29:10). The word may have derived from the Hebrew root *ybl*, “to flow, to stream.” The term *mabbûl*, which the flood narrative usually associates with *mayim*, “waters,” seems to have become “a technical term for waters flowing or streaming forth and as such designates the flood (deluge) being caused by waters. . . . *Mabbûl* is in the Old Testament a term consistently employed for the flood (deluge) that was caused by torrential rains and the bursting forth of subterranean waters.”¹⁵ This technical term clearly sets the Genesis deluge apart from all local floods. Psalm 29:10 utilizes it to illustrate Yahweh’s universal sovereignty over the world at the time of the Noahic flood: “The Lord

sat enthroned at the Flood, and the Lord sits as King forever” (NKJV).

Summarizing the evidence of the technical terminology Scripture uses to depict the extent of the flood in Genesis 6–9, Hasel writes: “The Genesis flood narrative provides ample evidence of being an account which is to be understood as a historical narrative in prose style. It expects to be taken literally. There is a consistent and overwhelming amount of terminology and formulae . . . which on the basis of context and syntax has uniformly indicated that the flood story wants to be understood in a universal sense: the waters destroyed all human and animal plus bird life on the entire land mass of the globe. To read it otherwise means to force a meaning on the carefully written and specific syntactical constructions of the original language which the text itself rejects.”¹⁶

Other Biblical Evidence for a Universal Flood

Many additional lines of biblical evidence converge in affirming the universal extent of the flood and also reveal the theological significance of such a conclusion. We will summarize 14 points that emerge from the biblical text.

First, key terms and motifs in Genesis 6–9 converge to make a major theological statement: the Noahic flood is nothing less than the cosmic/universal undoing or reversal of creation. Numerous biblical scholars have recognized this highly significant theological point of the flood narrative. Tikva Frymer-Kensky describes the flood as “the original, cosmic undoing of creation.”¹⁷ Elsewhere she writes: “The flood was an undoing of creation: the cosmic waters overwhelmed the earth, coming through the windows of the sky and the fountains of the great deep beneath the earth (7:11; cf. 8:2). Thus, return to the primeval watery condition set the stage for a new beginning for the world.”¹⁸ According to John Skinner, “the flood is a partial undoing of the work of creation.”¹⁹ Similarly, Nahum Sarna writes that “the flood is a cosmic catastrophe that is actually the undoing of creation. . . . The ‘flood-gates of the sky’ are openings in the expanse of the heavens through which water from the celestial part of the cosmic ocean can escape onto the earth. In other words, creation is being undone, and the world returned to chaos.”²⁰ Claus Westermann speaks of the “invasion of chaos into the created order; the flood assumed cosmic proportions.”²¹ Umberto Cassuto points out that at the high point of the flood, “we see water everywhere, as though the world had reverted to its primeval state at the dawn of creation, when the waters of the deep submerged everything.”²² David Clines uses the apt term *bouleversement*, or “reversal” of creation, to depict the theological significance of the flood.²³ For Joseph Blenkinsopp, “the deluge is an act of uncreation, undo-

ing the work of separation by returning everything to the primeval, watery chaos from which the created order first arose.”²⁴

Gerhard von Rad vividly underscores the universal implications of this undoing or reversal of creation: “We must understand the flood, therefore, as a catastrophe involving the entire cosmos. When the heavenly ocean breaks forth upon the earth below, and the primeval sea beneath the earth, which is restrained by God, now freed from its bonds, gushes up through yawning chasms onto the earth, then there is a destruction of the entire cosmic system, according to biblical cosmology. The two halves of the chaotic primeval sea, separated—the one up, the other below—by God’s creative government (ch. 1:7-9), are again united; creation begins to sink into chaos. Here the catastrophe, therefore, concerns not only men and beasts . . . but the earth (chs. 6.13; 9.1)—indeed, the entire cosmos.”²⁵ Only a cosmic/universal flood can theologically encompass the cosmic/universal reversal or undoing of creation described in Genesis 6-9.

Second, the trajectory of major themes in Genesis 1-11—creation, fall, plan of redemption, spread of sin—is universal in scope and calls for a corresponding universal judgment. We have already noted in reference to specific flood terminology the numerous allusions to the universal context of creation. The creation of “the heavens and the earth” certainly is not local in scope, according to Genesis 1, 2.

Likewise, the fall of humanity in Adam and Eve led to the sinful condition of the entire human race (*hā’ādām*), not just the inhabitants of Mesopotamia (see Gen. 6:5, 11; Rom. 3:19; 5:12). Again, the protoevangelium (first gospel promise) outlined in Genesis 3:15 involves the universal moral struggle between the spiritual descendants (or “seed”) of the serpent and the spiritual descendants (“seed”) of the woman, culminating in the victory of the representative Messianic seed over the serpent.²⁶ The biblical plan of redemption is certainly universal in scope.

In a similar way, humanity’s sinful condition described at the time of the flood includes more than those living in the Fertile Crescent. From *God’s* perspective, not simply from the culturally conditioned local view of the narrator, we have the results of the divine investigative judgment: “And God saw that the wickedness of man (*hā’ādām*), (humankind) was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Such universal sinfulness naturally calls for universal judgment.

Third, the divine purpose given for sending the flood makes explicit its universal scope: “And the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man [*hā’ādām*, humanity] whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, creep-

ing thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them” (verse 7, NKJV). Nothing less than a complete destruction of the human race (except for Noah, verse 8) seems envisaged. Given the length of time from creation (more than 1,650 years minimum), the longevity of the antediluvians (nearly 1,000 years), and God’s command at creation to “fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28, NKJV), it is highly unlikely that the pre-flood population would have stayed only in Mesopotamia. Thus the destruction of humanity would necessitate more than a local flood.

Fourth, the genealogical lines from both Adam (Gen. 4:17–26; 5:1–31) and Noah (Gen. 10:1–32; 11:1–9) are exclusive in nature, indicating that as Adam was father of all pre-flood humanity, so Noah was father of all post-flood humanity. From the descendants of Noah “the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood” (Gen. 10:32, RSV). The Tower of Babel incident accelerated humanity’s dispersal across the globe (Gen. 11:1–19).

Striking extrabiblical evidence that all human races, and not just those of the Fertile Crescent, have their origin in the descendants of Noah comes from the amazing prevalence of ancient flood stories throughout the world. Scholars have collected more than 230 different flood stories from among the most diverse peoples of the earth.²⁷ A worldwide flood appears as the most frequently given cause for past universally destructive calamities in the folk literature of antiquity.²⁸

A remarkable number of both the oral and written traditions agree upon the basic points of the biblical account: a great flood as a result of divine judgment against human sin destroyed all humanity, and a single man and his family or a few friends survived the deluge in a ship or other seafaring vessel. The stories nearest to the area of the dispersion from Babel share the most details with the biblical account.²⁹ This vast body of ancient witnesses to a worldwide deluge offers powerful testimony to the historicity and universality of the biblical flood.

Fifth, God gives the same inclusive divine blessing to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth to both Adam and Noah (Gen. 1:28; 9:1), presenting still another linkage between universal creation and the flood, between the original beginning and the “new beginning.” As the human race at creation flows from Adam and Eve, so the post-diluvial humanity comes through Noah.

Sixth, the covenant (Gen. 9:9, 10) with its rainbow sign (verses 12–17), has a clear link to the extent of the flood and thus includes the whole earth (verses 13–17). If only a local flood had occurred, then the covenant would be only a limited covenant, and the rainbow sign of “the all-embracing universality of the divine mercy”³⁰ would lose its meaning.

Seventh, the viability of God’s promise (Gen. 9:15; cf. Isa. 54:9) and the

integrity of God in keeping His promise is wrapped up in the worldwide extent of the flood. We cannot underscore this point too heavily: if Genesis 6-9 describes only a local flood, then God has broken His promise every time another local flood happens! The only way we can see God's promise not to send another flood to destroy every living thing (Gen. 8:21) as being kept is if the flood was a universal one that destroyed the whole human race outside the ark.

Eighth, the enormous size of the ark detailed in Genesis 6:14, 15 and the stated necessity for saving all the species of animals and plants in the ark (verses 16-21; Gen. 7:2, 3) all support the concept of a global flood. A massive ark filled with representatives of all nonaquatic animal/plant species would be unnecessary if it were only a local flood, for they could have survived elsewhere in the world. Yet the biblical record insists that God brought the animals into the ark to preserve representatives of all of the various kinds of life-forms (Gen. 6:19, 20).

As a matter of fact, if God intended only a local flood, the building of any ark at all, even for Noah and his family, would have been superfluous—God could simply have warned Noah and his family in time to escape from the coming judgment, just as He did with Lot in Sodom. But the point of the ark narrative is that there was no other way of escape. In the midst of the flood “only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive” (Gen. 7:23, NKJV).

Ninth, the covering of all the high mountains by at least 15 cubits (Gen. 7:19, 20) could not involve simply a local flood, since water seeks its own level across the surface of the globe. Even one high mountain covered in a local Mesopotamian setting would require that same height of water everywhere on the planet's surface.

In this connection we note that it is not necessary to postulate the existence of mountains as high as Mount Everest at the time of the flood, and thus to require water covering the earth to a depth of six miles, as some proponents of a local flood suggest would be necessary.³¹ The antediluvian mountains were quite possibly much lower than at present. Passages in the books of Job and Psalms may well refer to the process of postdiluvian mountain uplift (see Job 9:5; 28:9; and Ps. 104:7, 8).

Proponents of a local flood often argue that a worldwide deluge would imply “that the earth's surface was completely renovated during the flood year” and thus “prediluvian topography would have been exceedingly different from postdiluvian topography.” This implication, they claim, conflicts with biblical evidence that “strongly suggests that prediluvian geography did basically resemble postdiluvian geography.”³² They particularly cite the top-

ographical descriptions of the Garden of Eden: the lands of Havilah and Cush, and the four rivers, two of which (the Tigris and the Euphrates) were familiar to the readers of Genesis in Moses' time.

What they do not recognize, however, is that although there are some similarities between the prediluvian and postdiluvian topography, we would find more differences than similarities. Two of the rivers mentioned apparently no longer existed in Moses' time. Scripture mentions the Pishon and Gihon in terms of where they used to flow, in the postdiluvian areas of Havilah and Cush respectively. The other two rivers—the Tigris and Euphrates—Scripture describes as coming from a common source in the Garden of Eden, certainly far different from their present courses. Thus the topographical descriptions in the early chapters of Genesis harmonize with a worldwide flood.

Tenth, the duration of the flood makes sense only with a universal flood. The deluge of rain from above and water from the fountains of the deep below continued 40 days (Gen. 7:17), and all the highest mountains still remained covered five months after the flood began. The tops of the mountains did not appear until after seven months, and the floodwaters had not dried up enough for Noah to leave the ark until one year and 10 days had passed (see verse 11; Gen. 8:14). Such lengths of time seem commensurate only with a global and not a local flood.

Eleventh, the text describes the receding of the water (Gen. 8:3) by Hebrew phrases that, in parallel with similar phraseology and grammatical construction for the “to and fro” motion of the raven (verse 7), should be translated as “going and retreating”³³ and imply oscillatory water motion lasting for 74 days (see verses 3–5). The waters rushing back and forth similar to ocean tidal movement as the overall level gradually decreased supports a global interpretation such as “the oceanic energy impulse model of the flood,”³⁴ but is incongruous with a local flood theory.

Twelfth, the New Testament passages concerning the flood all employ universal language: “swept them *all* away” (Matt. 24:39, RSV); “destroyed them *all*” (Luke 17:27, RSV); “he did not spare the ancient *world*, but preserved Noah . . . with seven other persons, when he brought a flood upon the *world* of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5, RSV); “a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water” (1 Peter 3:20, RSV); Noah “condemned the *world*” (Heb. 11:7, RSV). A local flood would not have ended the antediluvian world. As Archer states, “we have the unequivocal corroboration of the New Testament that the destruction of the human race at the time of the flood was total and universal.”³⁵

Thirteenth, the New Testament flood typology assumes and *depends upon*

not only the historicity but also the universality of the flood to argue theologically for an imminent worldwide judgment by fire (2 Peter 3:6, 7). Peter argues that just as a worldwide judgment by water caused the unbelieving antediluvian world to perish, so in the antitype there must be a universal end-time judgment by fire, bringing about the destruction of the ungodly.³⁶

Fourteenth and last, out of the cosmic reversal of creation—the first point noted above—proceeds a cosmic new beginning. As Clines states it, “the ‘un-creation’ which God has worked with the flood is not final; creation has not been permanently undone. Old unities of the natural world are restored (8:22), and the old ordinances of creation are renewed (9:1-7).”³⁷ Jacques Doukhan has shown the precise literary parallels between the successive stages of “re-creation” in the aftermath of the flood (Gen. 8; 9) and the seven days of creation in Genesis 1; 2:

1. The wind over the earth and waters (Gen. 8:1; cf. Gen. 1:2).
2. Division of waters (Gen. 8:1-5; cf. Gen. 1:6-8).
3. Appearance of plants (Gen. 8:6-12; cf. Gen. 1:9-13).
4. Appearance of light (Gen. 8:13, 14; cf. Gen. 1:14-19).
5. Deliverance of animals (Gen. 8:15-17; cf. Gen. 1:20-23).
6. Animals together with human beings, blessing, food for human beings, image of God (Gen. 8:18-9:7; cf. Gen. 1:24-31).
7. Sign of covenant (Gen. 9:8-17; cf. Gen. 2:1-3).³⁸

Thus in the overarching literary structure of the “re-creation” in the flood narrative, the detailed parallels with the cosmic creation account of Genesis 1, 2 underscore the universal dimension of the flood.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the question of the extent of the Genesis flood is not just a matter of idle curiosity, with little at stake for Christian faith. For those who see the days of creation in Genesis 1 as six literal 24-hour days,³⁹ a universal flood is an absolute necessity to explain the existence of the geological column (see chapter 5). A literal creation week is inextricably linked with a worldwide flood.

But a universal flood is crucial not only in seeking to reconcile science and Scripture. It is also pivotal in understanding and remaining faithful to the theology of Genesis 1-11 and the rest of Scripture.

The many links with the universal creation in Genesis 1 and 2 that we have noted in this study not only support the global nature of the flood, but serve to theologically connect protology (creation) and eschatology (judgment/salvation) in the opening chapters of Scripture. The flood is an eschatological step-by-step “uncreation” of the world and humanity followed by a step-by-step

“re-creation” of the new world. “Thus,” writes Von Rad, “the story of the flood—and this is theologically the most important fact—shows an eschatological world judgment. . . . The world judgment of the flood hangs like an iron curtain between this world age and that of the first splendor of creation.”⁴⁰

The theology of the global flood is, therefore, the pivot of a connected but multifaceted universal theme running through Genesis 1-11 and constituting an overarching pattern for the whole rest of Scripture: worldwide creation revealing the character of the Creator and His original purpose for creation; humanity’s turning away from the Creator and the universal spread of sin, ending in the universal “uncreation” through universal eschatological judgment; and re-creation, in the eschatological salvation of the faithful covenant remnant and the universal renewal of the earth.

¹ See William H. Shea, “The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications,” *Origins* 6 (1979): 8-29.

² Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1978), pp. 167-220.

³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Literary Form of Genesis 1-11,” in J. Barton Payne, ed., *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (Waco, Tex.: Word, Inc., 1970), pp. 48-65.

⁴ See Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Record of Job: The Ancient Wisdom, Scientific Accuracy, and Life-changing Message of an Amazing Book* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 26-30.

⁵ See Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical “Typos” Structures* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1981), pp. 326, 327.

⁶ See Donald C. Boardman, “Did Noah’s Flood Cover the Entire World? No,” in Ronald F. Youngblood, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions About Creation and the Flood* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), pp. 210-229; Arthur C. Custance, *The Flood: Local or Global?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), pp. 15-27; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, in D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1967), pp. 93-95; T. C. Mitchell, “Flood,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 380-383; Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 232-249; Davis A. Young, *Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), pp. 171-210.

⁷ See Harold G. Coffin and Robert H. Brown, *Origin by Design* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1983); Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Flood in the Light of the Bible, Geology, and Archaeology* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1951); Ariel A. Roth, “Are Millions of Years Required to Produce Biogenic Sediments in the Deep Ocean?” *Origins* 12 (1985): 48-56; “Catastrophism—Is It Scientific?” *Ministry*, July 1986, pp. 24-26; “Those Gaps in the Sedimentary Layers,” *Origins* 15 (1988): 75-85; *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1998); John C. Whitcomb, *The World That Perished*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988); John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1961).

⁸ See Boardman, pp. 223-226; Custance, pp. 15-27; Kidner, pp. 93-95; Ramm, pp. 241, 242.

⁹ See Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood,” *Origins* 2 (1975): 78 and note 16 for bibliography of representatives of this position: Fohrer, Koehler, Noth, Procksch, Skinner, Sarna, Speiser, Von Rad, Vriezen, Zimmerli, etc. We will cite some of them as well as other more recent representatives of the view later.

¹⁰ Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Fountains of the Great Deep," *Origins* 1 (1974): 67-72; "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood," pp. 77-95; "Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative," *Origins* 5 (1978): 83-98.

¹¹ ———, "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood," p. 86.

¹² John Skinner, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis," in *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930, 1956), vol. 1, p. 165.

¹³ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), pp. 301, 302.

¹⁴ Hasel, "The Fountains of the Great Deep," p. 71.

¹⁵ ———, "Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative," pp. 92, 93.

¹⁶ ———, "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood," p. 87.

¹⁷ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, eds., *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), p. 410.

¹⁸ ———, "The Flood," in Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 312.

¹⁹ Skinner, p. 164.

²⁰ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia/New York/Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 48, 84.

²¹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974/1984), p. 434.

²² Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1964), p. 97.

²³ David J. A. Clines, "Noah's Flood: I: The Theology of the Flood Narrative," *Faith and Thought* 100, No. 2 (1972, 1973): 128-142; cf. Michael Fishbane's reference to Job 3:1-13 in similar language as "a systematic *bouleversement*, or reversal, of the cosmicizing acts of creation described in Gen. 1-2:4a" (Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah 4:23-26 and Job 3:3-13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 [1971]: 153).

²⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 83.

²⁵ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), p. 128.

²⁶ See O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

²⁷ See James G. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion* (London: MacMillan, 1918), vol. 1, pp. 105-361; Byron C. Nelson, *The Deluge Story in Stone: A History of the Flood Theory of Geology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1931).

²⁸ Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955), vol. 1, pp. 182-194.

²⁹ See Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946); Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Eridu Genesis," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 513-529; W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

³⁰ Franz Delitzsch, "Genesis," in Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1888, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 289, 290.

³¹ See Ramm, p. 242.

³² Young, p. 210.

³³ See Steven A. Austin, "Did Noah's Flood Cover the Entire World? Yes," in Ronald F.

Youngblood, ed., *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions About Creation and the Flood* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 218; Hasel, "Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative," p. 93.

³⁴ Austin, p. 218.

³⁵ Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 208.

³⁶ Davidson, pp. 326, 327.

³⁷ Clines, p. 138.

³⁸ Jacques B. Doukan, *Daniel, the Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1987), pp. 133, 134; cf. Warren A. Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter Books, 1984), pp. 10-20.

³⁹ Gerhard F. Hasel, "The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' or Figurative 'Periods/Epoch' of Time?" *Origins* 21, No. 1 (1994): 5-38.

⁴⁰ Von Rad, pp. 129, 130.