
The Flood: Judgment on Sin

Genesis 6:9-8:22

Introduction To moderns, the story of Noah and the Ark is an interesting, but fantastic myth, a nice story for overly religious people and children's coloring books. Most of the great writing civilizations have flood myths in their oral and written traditions. So, it is not surprising that the Christian tradition should have one as well. Whole web sites are dedicated to debunking special creation, young earth science and the Flood.

Hebrews 11 tells us that is by faith we believe in creation. It is by faith we believe in the Flood. Faith is belief in what the Bible tells us. I have asserted even with close friends who did not believe in a 6 day special creation and denied a global flood that they then had to think carefully about their why and on what basis did they believe the rest of the Bible.

While skeptics argue against the Flood narrative saying that it is scientifically impossible, there is something more at stake. Two things are intertwined throughout the Flood narrative: God judges sin. God saves the just. God is punishing and purifying. If God would have caused or allowed such a global cataclysm, then we may face such judgment again.

There are many questions that are raised by skeptics about the idea of a Global Flood. Is a global flood being portrayed here? Is a global flood even physically or scientifically possible? Can the demands of the text be satisfied by (1) the whole globe was not populated by man and animals so (2) the Flood destroyed all humanity and animals because it did inundate where they lived? There has been a long history of science scoffing at the idea of a global flood citing the many scientific difficulties. In reading some of the scholarly work on this, I have observed a common and unbiblical thread through all of them. They assume that the world and the topography of the world we live in now is the same. This is not true. Listen carefully to a very important New Testament text that I believe presses home the literal accuracy of the Mosaic account:

Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 2 Peter 3:3-7 [ESV]

Peter may have Psalm 90:3-8 in mind when he penned this text.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You return man to dust and say,
"Return, O children of man!"
For a thousand years in your sight

are but as yesterday when it is past,
 or as a watch in the night.
 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream,
 like grass that is renewed in the morning;
 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
 in the evening it fades and withers.
 For we are brought to an end by your anger;
 your wrath we are dismayed.
 You have set our iniquities before you,
 our secret sins in the light of your presence. [ESV]

Here is a sampling list of other Bible texts that refer to the Flood most of which treat the Genesis record as historically accurate: Isaiah 54:8; Matthew 24:36-44; Luke 17:26-27; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:17.

As we move into our study of the text itself, rather than using a western style outline, we will follow the Bible's own structure. This section follows a chiasmic structure. Here is an overview so you can have it in your mind's eye as we move through the text.

A	God Purposes to Punish the World	(6:11-13)
B	Noah Builds the ark	(6:14-22)
C	The Remnant Enters the Ark	(7:1-9)
D	The Flood Begins	(7:10-16)
E	The Flood Prevails	(7:17-24)
F	God Remembers Noah	(8:1a)
e	The Flood Recedes	(8:1b-5)
d	The Earth Dries	(8:6-14)
c	The Remnant Leaves the Ark	(8:15-19)
b	Noah Builds an Altar	(8:20)
a	God Promises to Preserve the World	(8:21-22)

So let us begin our study of this large and amazing section of God's Word.

The Prolog

Genesis 6:9-10

These two verses serve as the prolog to the next unit, the next Tol*Dot, of Genesis. The focus here, building on Noah having found favor in God's sight (v.8) is on his standing with God and man. He was righteous and blameless. He was in right standing with God. God's favor on him and righteousness in him are joined with being blameless in his times. Certainly, sinless perfection is not being implied here. But here is a man who is pleasing to God and who undertakes a great task in the midst of terrible times. He walks with God. In the horribly sinful conditions of his day, Noah walks with God. He is preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). If he can, then, brothers and sisters, with all we know and all we have in Christ, so can we, even in the end of the age.

A God Purposes to Punish the World

(6:11-13)

Once again, the Scriptures give us the reason for the Flood. One of the pagan accounts of the Flood is called the Gilgamesh epic. Contrary to it, the cause of the Flood is located in the wrath of God against the pervasive sin of man. Here, the effect of man's sin is indicated for now the way of all flesh is corrupted in all the earth. Once again, the depth to which humanity has sunk is highlighted in not only corruption, but the earth is filled with violence.

So, God declares His intent to destroy all flesh. He announces to Noah his reasons and his plans. The evil and wickedness is universal, so the destruction must be as well. There are commentators who argue the Flood could not be global. They cannot be making that argument from the text itself. The text clearly says that as far as humanity has spread, and that over all the earth, the extent destruction will be as well. The words used here for flood and elsewhere in the Bible referring to this event do not use common words for a flood. In fact, the word used all through the Flood account is the Hebrew word *mabbul*. It is used only of this event. The word for a local flood is a different Hebrew word. The New Testament uses the word *kataklysmos* when alluding to the Genesis Flood. These are words that imply cataclysm and destruction. The choice is to affirm that this is what the Bible plainly says and then either accept it as true or to deny it by saying Moses was mistaken in some way. It is false that Genesis does not teach a global flood. It does. If there was no global flood, then Moses is simply mistaken, the Bible record reflects his error and your doctrine of Scripture is weakened. So, according to the Genesis record, God purposes to punish the world.

B Noah Builds the Ark

(6:14-22)

To preserve the remnant through the coming judgment, God instructs Noah to build an ark, a massive boat. Hebrews 11:7 tells us that Noah believed God in an obeying way. In reverent fear he built what God commanded for the saving of his household. I am struck here by the union of command and wisdom. As it is recorded in the Scripture, God gives enough instruction to identify what was to be built, but seems to have left the details of construction up to the wisdom and skill Noah had.

Its Amazing Design**(v.14-16)**

It is hard for us to get a feel for how large the ark actually was. Our building is 80 feet wide and 120 feet long and around 27 feet high at the peak. The ark then at 450 feet long by 75 feet wide by 45 feet high is a little less than 4 times as long and twice as high. It had three decks; a roof with an opening all the way around, is constructed with now unknown wood and sealed with “pitch”.

Several objections have been raised on the design and purpose of the ark.

- No one could have built by hand a boat that large. How could Noah possibly have the technology, funds, time and man-power for such a project.
- A wooden boat that large would break in half even under normal sea and wave stresses. No wooden boat that large has ever been attempted, even in the last 200 years. Ships larger than 275 – 300 feet have broken along their spine.
- How could you possibly have a floating zoo housing two of all the species of insects, animals and birds all being cared for over a whole year? The task of feeding and cleaning the stalls would alone require an army of attendants, much less 8 people.
- How would you keep carnivores from being unmanageable over that length of time in that confined a space with (presumably) little or no meat or prey?
- How could you possibly provision food and water for that many animals and humans for over a year? Imagine just the cost of procurement, much less of packaging, loading, storing and distributing the food.

Some of the objections, having to do with cost and ability, make certain assumptions about primitiveness of Noah’s day. We really do not know that the ark was built by hand. Even then, it appears that Noah had up to 120 years to build it. Yes, it was a mammoth task to collect all the materials for the construction and provision of the ark. But Noah worked hard and God supplied. It is not logistically impossible, merely difficult. We also do not know if this task fell alone on Noah and his family’s shoulders. It is quite possible that he hired laborers to help build, farm, harvest, store and load the provisions. As is often the case, the Bible is not interested in giving us these kinds of details unless it has direct bearing on the purpose of the narrative.

The second cluster of objections relate to the size of the boat itself. Many studies have been done on its dimensions. The relationship of the length, height and width all would make an extremely stable craft. Studies on scale models using computers to factor up the weight, mass and momentum all show that the ark would right itself, even when tipped almost to 75 degrees. It would have turned through wave and wind action into waves. As to its size making it weak along its length, therefore vulnerable to snapping in half, here the wisdom of building with wood is seen. An internal structure built with

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tens of thousands of small rooms all designed as an integral part of the boat's strength and flexibility would yield an extraordinarily strong vessel that would plow through most waves and be able to flex enough to deal with wave motion stresses.

Now as to some of the other objections, let's consider what we have. [The ark's] volume was 1.54 million cubic feet. To put this in perspective, this is the equivalent volume of 522 standard American railroad stock cars, each of which can hold 240 sheep. If the animals were kept in cages large enough for an average size the 16,000 animal [pairs] would only occupy around 14.4 stock cars. [Even including small space for insects in addition still] would leave room for five trains of 99 cars each for food, Noah's family and 'range' for the animals. Tabulating the total volume is fair enough, since this shows that there would be plenty of room on the Ark for the animals with plenty left over for food, range etc... Woodmorappe shows from standard recommended floor space requirements for animals that all of them together would have needed less than half the available floor space of the Ark's three decks. This arrangement allows for the maximum amount of food and water storage on top of the cages close to the animals... Woodmorappe [also] calculated that the volume of foodstuffs would have been only about 15 % of the Ark's total volume. Drinking water would only have taken up 9.4 % of the volume. This volume would be reduced further if rainwater was collected and piped into troughs.

[Some have objected because the animal dung and waste] would have required overwhelming man-hours [for cleaning]. It is doubtful whether the humans had to clean the cages every morning. Possibly they had sloped floors or slatted cages, where the manure could fall away from the animals and be flushed away (plenty of water around!) or destroyed by vermicomposting (composting by worms) which would also provide earthworms as a food source. Very deep bedding can sometimes last for a year without needing a change. Absorbent material (e.g. sawdust, softwood wood shavings and especially peat moss) would reduce the moisture content and hence the odor. The space, feeding and excretory requirements were adequate even if the animals had normal day/night sleeping cycles. But hibernation is a possibility which would reduce these requirements even more.²

Its Salvation Purpose

(v.17-19)

God again emphasis the global destruction that is about to take place. He is going to bring flood waters on the earth that will destroy everything that breathes. Everything that is on the earth will die. This mighty global flood will wipe out all life. The earth is so corrupt that God will both punish it and purify it with waters of His wrath.

² Sarfati, Jonathan. *Creation Magazine (online)* Volume 19 Issue 2 Full acknowledgment with redaction and rewording.

The purpose for the ark then is to preserve those whom God had chosen to deliver. He establishes a covenant with Noah that God will deliver them. There is the promise of God to preserve Noah. Then there must be believing of that promise in such a way that he goes to the hard work of building the ark, collecting the animals and almost a year of resting in the promise and the provision while all the rest of living, breathing life dies.

God purposes through the saving of Noah and his family, to preserve the animals as well. Once again, the close link between man and the created order is assumed. God has made us stewards to learn and to extend dominion. God does not just miraculously preserve the animals nor do a new work of creation after the flood. Noah and his family, as recipients of the promise, will also bring the animals God had chosen to preserve through with him.

Its Practical Filling

(v.19-22)

God commands Noah what to bring on the ark by listing the creation groups of animals as well as identifying them according to their kinds. He was to bring a male/female set of each kind. It is reasonable to assume that all of the different kinds living in Noah's day were brought into the ark and preserved. Now, this does not mean that we can use the modern scientific categories, particularly at the species level, to say who these were. According to many texts in the Bible, a "kind" is defined by being able to reproduce and have viable offspring. So, it may well be that there were one set of dogs, one set of horses, one set of cats, etc. Many scientists have pointed out then that this means there were around 16,000 kinds of animals (including the birds) on the ark. The ark was capable of holding 135,000 sheep, individually penned. It is quite evident that it is fully capable to hold between 35,000 and 50,000 animals, many of whom would be very small (rats, frogs, birds, etc.). It is generally agreed, that in the wisdom Noah had about everything else, he would probably have taken on mostly very young animals as being smaller, less troublesome and more resistant to rapid climatic and environmental changes.

Noah was also commanded to provide the necessary food as well. Every sort of food necessary would need to be harvested, packaged and stored. We have already seen that the ark was of adequate size to house the animals, the 8 humans and all the foodstuffs necessary for them.

Noah did what God commanded. Now stop and think about all the massive effort and labor poured into this simple sentence. Believing God in an obeying way usually leads, not to ease, but to years of hard work.

C The Remnant Enters the ark

(7:1-9)

Noah is now commanded to enter the ark. His hard work to build the ark is commended by God who observes or takes note of the practical and public righteousness of Noah. He is to take, in addition to all the animals by twos, seven of all the clean animals and birds. We know from the Mosaic Law what the clean animals and birds were. God is making provision so that clean animals will dominate the animal kingdom and to provide more for sacrifice.

God gives them seven days to complete the loading of the ark. Creation scientists have argued that the migration instinct was used by God to bring the animals to the ark's construction site. From the language here, these seven days are to load the household and an additional seven of the clean. It appears that the rest were already on-board.

Again, Noah is warned about the global and cataclysmic destruction by water that is about to happen. God will send 40 days of rain and destruction that will wipe out all life. Noah has a promise. Noah has a warning. Noah is obedient. When he is 600 years old, he enters the ark. He takes his family, his three sons and their wives on board. He finishes loading the animals. And just as God said, on the eighth day, the waters of the flood came.

D The Flood Begins (7:10-16)

The Bible tells us the exact day, month and year that the great Flood began. Noah was told in the second month the ninth day to board the ark. On the seventeenth day, the explosion of waters from beneath the surface and from the heavens erupted and poured across the face of the earth. Assuming that Moses is using the Jewish calendar of the Mosaic Law, then this would have been the seventeenth day of May, 2344 BC as calculated from the date Abraham left Haran (well-established date in history and the Bible [Genesis 12:4]) or around 1,656 years after creation using the Genesis 5 chronology. If Moses is using the civil Jewish calendar, then this is November of the same year.

Verses 13-15 again relate the catalog of all that entered the ark and were preserved through the flood. The description is somewhat expanded to point verbally back to the categories established at creation. Beasts and every winged creature are referred to. It is almost as though Moses is wanting to make sure that anyone hearing and reading the text gets the point. Every breathing living thing on the earth is destroyed. All that went on the ark lived. The amazing diversity we see today came from all the kinds preserved through the Flood.

What is the mechanism that God uses to bring a flood of waters across all the earth? Now, I want to consider objections that are raised. I will only bring forward the serious ones grounded in science.

- There is simply not enough water on the earth for a global flood. The amount of water needed to cover all the mountains of the earth exceeds all the water on the earth.
- It is physically impossible that forty days of continuous rain would occur and would cover the earth with water.
- Where did all that water go? Surely there were seas before the flood. Evaporation, oceans and polar ice simply do not have enough water volume for the million-trillions of cubic feet of water required to cover the mountains.

First, let us remember that at some level, this is exactly the kind of uniformitarianism that was used, in Peter's day, to deny Divine judgment in the future. 2 Peter 3:3-7 tell us some very important things about the world that then was and the world that now is. The world antediluvian (before Flood) world was formed by water and out of water by which waters it was destroyed at God's word (command). Our present world is being reserved to be destroyed by fire. Peter implies that the world before Noah was different in many ways, not the least of which was the storing of water at its creation which were used to destroy it at the Flood.

Does the rest of Scripture attest to this as well? Yes, the witness of Scripture from the Flood accounts themselves to the Psalms to the book of Peter is that the Flood was not the product of just rain from heaven. We have already seen in our study of Genesis that the dry land was formed by taking the deep of waters and storing them in the earth and the sea. Psalm 33:6-7 attest to this as well, "*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; He puts the deeps in storehouses.*"

But now look with me at Proverbs 8:27-31, where wisdom is describing the creation.

When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man. [ESV]

The fountains of the deep were established at creation. The sea (and yes, it is singular, implying a single ocean and a single land mass) was given its boundary and the inner structures of the earth founded. Our text here in verse 11 says that "the fountains of the great deep burst forth." In other words, the great subterranean reservoirs of waters from the original creation exploded through the surface of the earth and poured across it. The massive destruction that can occur downstream from a broken dam is devastatingly multiplied across the whole continent. The world of Noah's day was probably a single land mass and a single ocean. The destructive power of moving water, rapid division and drift of the continents through plate tectonics during the Flood, the explosive force of volcanic action with dust blown into the atmosphere all bring about the destruction across the globe. The dust in the air, the water rushing up from the deeps, and evaporation would provide the mechanics for the amount of water on the earth and the extended global rain.

Then the Scriptures also say that God opened the windows of heaven so that it rained for 40 days across the earth. Here, we do not have much else in the Scripture to know what is meant here. Some have postulated a vapor canopy over the earth from creation to the Flood

providing a universal tropical climate and radioactive shielding yielding the longevity of the antediluvians. The collapse of this vapor canopy may have been the source of the rain. There are many problems with this idea. It seems more reasonable to say that God had restrained rain from falling, initially caused it to rain and then the ordinary process of evaporation and rain took place with the waters from the deeps providing the moisture.

In view of the destruction that was about to occur, the last phrase of verse 15 is significant. God shut them in. The great door through which all who entered and were to be saved was shut and sealed by God. All were safe and sound. God had closed the door.

E The Flood Prevails (7:17-24)

As God promised, the flood came right on time and exactly as He said. Here is an expanded reading of the text here: the cataclysmic Flood (*mabbul*) was coming on the earth for forty days. The waters raged upward and carried up the ark quickly and it rose high above the earth on the face of the rising waters. The waters were overwhelmingly mighty inundating the earth with the ark floating on the surface of the waters-waters (Hebrew intensity). The waters covered the all including the hills and mountains, even to a depth of approximately 22 feet.

There is no mistaking the mighty power of the bursting forth of the deeps and the pouring out of rain from the heavens. It was an explosive rush of water upward so that the ark was quickly carried up. In other words, it did not take very long for the waters at the construction site to reach the depth of 20-25 feet needed for the ark to begin to float. And those mighty waters covered all the hills and mountains. While we do not know what the height of those mountains in that day would have been, the text tells us the whole surface of the earth was covered, inundated, overwhelmed with waters.

The effect of this Flood is also recorded. All flesh died. Everything that had breath, died. God blotted out every living thing. The repetition here with variation is a Hebrew literary structure. Its purpose is to assert, absolutely, without qualification and without question, that every living thing on earth was swept away, blotted out, destroyed, died. Only those safe in the ark lived.

Moses tells us the waters mightily overwhelmed the earth for 150 days. This would include the first 40 days in which the rain poured down and the deeps gushed upward. In working out a chronology of the Flood, you have basically from the 2nd month the 17th day of the 600th year of Noah's life to the 2nd month the 27th day of the 601st year of Noah's life as the beginning and ending points. This is around 377 days (on a 30 day month calendar).

Many of you have seen the pictures of the recent tsunami. The destructive power of the waves and the water was amplified by the scouring effect of the debris. Multiply this across the whole earth. Imagine the tsunamis that swept across rising waters of the seas as they crashed further and further inland. What an awful year of judgment as the wrath of God is poured out.

F God Remembers Noah (8:1a)

This sentence is at the center of the chiasm. The old creation has been swept away. The chaos of the first orders in creation is now repeated as the world lies in chaos and destruction, covered in waters. Waters rage back and forth, feeding the rain, storms and waves that roll across a now shoreless ocean.

It is time for the new creation to begin to emerge. God remembers Noah and the rest of the inhabitants of the ark. This word does not mean that God had forgotten them. This is a Hebrew way of speaking that means “He began to act on their behalf.” (*Genesis Flood*, Morris, p. 205) He thinks about them which leads to action for them.

Part 2

E The Flood Recedes (8:1b-5)

God moves with three distinct actions to reverse the Flood. These actions were taken by God. While they may be in the natural realm, the Bible is portraying a direct intervention by God. God halts the up flow from the fountains of the deep and closes the windows of heaven. These two actions halt the source of waters of the Flood.

Also, God causes a wind to blow across the earth so that the waters subsided. This word is same as used in Genesis 1 where the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the deep. Moses is intentionally creating a verbal and visual parallel. The old creation made out of water was hovered over by the Spirit of God. Now, this new creation, this postdiluvial world emerges as the wind from God, the breath of God, moves across the surface of the waters. Certainly, this would have manifested itself as simply a strong, prevailing wind. So God has now intervened to bring the process of drying the earth so that can be inhabited again.

At the end of the initial 150 days, as the waters begin to recede, the ark comes to rest on the mountains in the area of Ararat. This happened on the 7th month and the 17th day of year the Flood began. We do not know what this exact region or location is. I know that there have been and continue to be numerous supposed sightings of the ark. Also, there have several expeditions to various locations of these sightings none of which have actually turned up