

A Biblical Theology of the Flood (Outline of Presentation)

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Introduction

- A. Terminology: *mabbûl* (13x) and several other terms
- B. Extra-biblical Flood stories
 - 1. Flood stories are almost universal (see Nelson, *Deluge in Stone*)
 - 2. Stories nearest area of dispersion closest to Biblical account
 - 3. Four main flood stories from Mesopotamian sources
 - a. Eridu Genesis (Sumerian, ca. 1600 B.C.)—see T. Jacobsen, *JBL* 100 (1981): 513-529 = Creation, Antediluvian Period, Flood
 - b. Atrahasis Epic (Old Babylonian version, ca. 1600 B.C.)—see w. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atrahasis* (Oxford, 1969) = Creation, Antediluvian, Flood
 - c. Gilgamesh Epic, 11th tablet (Neo-Assyrian version, 8th-7th cent. B.C.)—see Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 23-26; and Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and OT Parallels* (Chicago: University Press, 1946) = only Flood
 - d. Berossus' account (Babylonian priest 3rd cent. B.C.)—see Lambert and Millard, pp. 134-137 = just Flood
- B. Unity of the Genesis Flood Story—see accompanying photocopy from W. Shea, "The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications," *Origins* 6 (1979):8-29.
 - 1. Argues for unity of narrative instead of small textual units (J & P) as suggested by Documentary Hypothesis
 - 2. Note matching parallel members of structure that explain apparent discrepancies in the account (see Gerhard Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God*, pp. 49-50, 150-151)

Theology of the Flood: Ten Subheadings

I. Historical Nature of the Flood

- A. The genealogical frame or envelope construction (5:32 and 9:28-29) plus secondary genealogies (6:9-10 and 9:18-19) show that the account is intended to be factual history
- B. The use of *toledoth* "generations" (6:9) as throughout Genesis indicates historical nature (see discussion of *toledoth* in theology of creation)

II. Motive or Theological Cause of the Flood

- A. Contrast Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) parallels:
 - 1. *Atrahasis Epic* and *Eridu Genesis*—men (the slaves of the gods) are making too much noise so that the gods couldn't sleep, so Enlil decides to wipe them out
 - 2. *Gilgamesh Epic*—no motive mentioned; arbitrary action of Enlil
- B. Biblical account: the cause is man's moral depravity and sinfulness
 - 1. Gen 6:1-4: the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" (see Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God*, pp. 151-152)
 - 2. Gen 6:5-8, 11-12: all-pervading wickedness, corruption, violence

III. The character of God (theodicy)

- A. ANE parallels: gods are arbitrary, acting out of unreasoning anger, selfishness, caprice; seek to deceive the people and not inform them of the coming Flood
- B. Biblical picture:
 1. God sets probationary period of 120 years during which His Spirit is striving with men to repent (6:3)
 2. God sends warning to the people through Noah, the "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet 2:5)
 3. God Himself makes provision for the saving of man (6:14-16)
 4. God "repents" (*nāham*) = "breathe pantingly," be sorry, moved to pity, have compassion, suffer grief; not *šûb* "repent" in the sense of turning from evil, used of man (6:6)
 5. God "grieves" (*āṣab*)—same Hebrew root as woman's "pain" and Adam's "anguish" in tilling the ground; God takes man's pain and result of the curse (6:6; cf. 3:16, 17)
 6. God "destroys" (*šāhat*) (vs. 13) what man had already ruined or corrupted (*šāhat*) (vss. 11, 12); God simply mercifully brings to an end the ruin already done by man

IV. Individual Responsibility

- A. Not only collective responsibility till Ezekiel (as some scholars claim)
- B. Noah's individual response of faith/faithfulness to God
 1. Gen 6:8—Noah found grace (*ḥēn*) or favor in God's sight
 2. Gen 6:9—Noah was righteous (*sadiq*), blameless (*tamîm*) and walked together with God—personal relationship

V. Eschatological Judgment

- A. Gen 6:13—"I have determined to make an end [*qēṣ*]"—the "eschaton"
- B. Period of probation and investigation (6:3, 5)
- C. Retributive judgment as God's strange work (cf. Is 28:21)

VI. Covenant (6:11-22; 9:8-17)

- A. God's initiative, concern, faithfulness, dependability
- B. Universal, everlasting, unconditional
- C. Personal relationship

VII. Remnant

- A. Gen 7:23 "Only Noah was *left* [*šār*]"—first time mentioned in the Bible
- B. Survivors of cosmic catastrophe depend upon right relationship with God
- C. Not based upon caprice or favoritism of the gods (as ANE)

VIII. Grace

- A. Gen 8:1—"God remembered Noah"—memory theology = act in deliverance
- B. Position of Grace in the heart of the chiasm; the apex of Flood theology

IX. Flood Typology

- A. Gen 1-7 a paradigm for the history of the world and Israel (see handout by Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis*)
- B. Reduplication in Genesis carries through only the fourth narrative, implying that the fifth will be fulfilled in cosmic judgment

- C. NT writers point to Flood as type of final eschatological judgment (Matt 24:37-39; 2 Pet 3:5-7)
- D. Conditions of Pre-Flood morality provide signs of the end of time

X. Universality of the Flood

- A. Conflicting schools of interpretation
 - 1. Traditional—universal catastrophe; world-wide
 - 2. Limited flood theory; local flood limited in geographical scope
 - 3. Non-literal (symbolic) non-historical account teaching theological truth (on this latter, see point I above)
- B. Biblical phraseology in Gen 6-9 indicating universality
 - 1. "earth" (6:12, 13, 17)—without genitive, universal language
 - 2. "the face of all the earth" (7:3; 8:9); link with creation (Gen 1:29) gives universal dimension
 - 3. "face of the ground" (7:4, 22, 23; 8:8)—parallel with "face of all the earth" in 8:9 and link with first usage in Gen 2:6 indicate universality
 - 4. "all flesh" (13 times in Gen 6-9)
 - "all" plus "flesh" with no article or possessive suffix (12/13x) = "totality"
 - "all" + article + "flesh" = unity and entirety (Gen 7:15)—context (Gen 7:23) "only Noah left"
 - 5. "every living thing" (Gen 6:19; 7:4, 23)
 - 7:4, 23 literally "all existence" (*kol hayqûm*) = universal
 - 6. "under the whole heaven" (Gen 7:19)
 - heaven can have local meaning like sky (e.g. 1 Kgs 18:45)
 - but "under whole heaven" always universal (see Exod 17:14; Deut 4:19)
 - context of "all the high mountains under the whole heaven" connotes universality
 - 7. "all the fountains of the Great Deep" (7:11 and 8:9)
 - link with the "deep" (*tehôm*) of Gen 1:2 indicates universal
 - 8. The term *mabbûl*, used exclusively in Scripture for the Noachic Flood (13x in Gen 6-9, plus Ps 29:10).

For further discussion, see G. F. Hasel, "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood," *Origins* 2 (1975): 77-95; idem, "Some Issues Regarding the Nature and Universality of the Genesis Flood Narrative," *Origins* (1978): 83-98; idem, "The Fountains of the Great Deep," *Origins* 1 (1974): 67-72.

- C. Other evidence for a universal Flood
 - 1. Trajectory of major themes in Gen 1-11 is universal (Creation, Fall, Plan of Redemption, Spread of Sin).
 - 2. Purpose of Flood is universal—I will destroy humankind (*ha-ādām*)—Gen 6:7.
 - 3. Genealogical Lines: Exclusive
 - Adam = father of pre-flood man (Gen 4:17-26; 5:1-31)
 - Noah = father of post-flood man (Gen 10:1-32; 11:1-9)
 - 4. Blessing - same divine blessing to be fruitful and multiply: Adam and Noah = entire world
 - 5. Covenant - Gen 9:9-10 - with Noah and those with him = universal
 - "with every living creature of all flesh" (9:16)
 - Rainbow - universal (vss. 12-17) sign between God and *all flesh on earth* (9:18)
 - if limited flood, then only limited covenant
 - 6. Promise (9:15): (cf. Isa 54:9) if local flood - then God not keep promise in other local floods (cf. Ariel Roth)
 - 7. Necessity of enormous Ark - why animals in ark if only local flood? (Gen 6:14-21)

8. Covering of "all the high mountains" (Gen 7:19-20)—water seeks its own level.
9. Duration of the Flood implies universality (Gen 7:11, 17; 8:14).
10. Receding, oscillating activity of the water (Gen 8:3a; cf. vs. 7).
11. NT evidence—universal language
 - Matt 24:39 - "swept them *all* away"
 - Luke 17:26-27 - flood came and destroyed them all
 - 2 Pet 2:5 - flood upon world of ungodly — did not spare ancient world, but preserved Noah
 - 1 Pet 3:20 - few saved by water, i.e., 8
 - Heb 11:7 - condemned world
12. Typology (2 Pet 3:6-7)—*world-wide flood a type of world-wide judgment by fire*.
—world destroyed with water and perished
13. The Noahic Flood is presented as nothing less than the cosmic undoing or reversal of Creation. Only a cosmic/universal Flood can theologically encompass the cosmic/universal reversal or undoing of Creation described in Genesis 6-9.
14. The cosmic reversal of Creation is followed by a cosmic New Beginning. The successive stages of "re-creation" after the Flood parallel 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 men, blessing, food for men, 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).
 Thus the overarching literary structure of "re-creation" in the Flood narrative underscores its universal dimension by parallels with the cosmic Creation account in Genesis 1-2.

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, a universal Flood is an absolute necessity to explain the existence of the geological column. A literal creation week is inextricably linked with a world-wide flood.

The theology of the universal Flood is the pivot of a connected but multi-faceted universal theme running through Genesis 1-11 and constituting an over-arching pattern for the whole rest of Scripture: world-wide creation revealing the character of the Creator and His original purpose for creation; humankind's turning from the Creator and the universal spread of sin ending in the universal "uncreation" through eschatological judgment; and re-creation, in the eschatological salvation of the faithful covenant remnant and the universal renewal of the earth.

For further discussion and bibliography

See especially, Richard M. Davidson, "The Flood," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 261-263; and *idem*, "Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood," *Origins* 22/2 (1995): 58-73; revised in John T. Baldwin, ed., *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 79-92.

AN OUTLINE SUMMARY OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE FLOOD NARRATIVE

6. The flood crests
The ark rests
God remembered Noah
(8:1-5)

5. The flood rises (7:17-24) 7. The flood abates (8:6-12)

V. The flood proper VI. After the flood

4. Enters the ark (7:11-16) 8. Exits the ark (8:13-19)

3. Brings in clean animals (7:6-10) 9. Noah's sacrifice (8:20-22)

2. Brings in clean animals (7:1-5) 10. Noah's diet (9:1-7)

1. My covenant with you (6:11-22) 11. My covenant with you (9:8-17)

IV. Preliminary to the flood

III. Secondary genealogy (6:9-10) VII. Secondary genealogy (9:18-19)

II. Prologue: man's wickedness (6:1-8) VIII. Epilogue: man's wickedness (9:20-27)

I. Primary genealogy (5:32) IX. Primary genealogy (9:28-29)

The flood crests, the ark rests, God remembers Noah
(8:1)

4. 150 days prevail (7:24) 5. 150 days waters abate (8:3)

3. 40 days of the flood (7:12, 17) 6. 40 days first birds sent out (8:6)

2. 7 days till the flood (7:10) 7. 7 days next bird sent out (8:10)

1. 7 days till 40-day storm (7:4) 8. 7 days last bird sent out (8:12)

From William H. Shea, "The Structure of the Genesis Flood Narrative and Its Implications," *Origins* 6 (1979): 22-23.

Gage, Warren Austin
The Gospel of Genesis. Studies
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THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD: THE MACROCOSM

GENESIS 1

CREATION

1. Waters of chaos cover the earth, Gen 1:1-2
2. Spirit hovers upon face of the waters, Gen 1:2
3. Dry land emerges, vegetation brought forth, Gen 1:12
4. Old world finished, God rests, Gen 2:2

ADAM

1. Man commissioned in God's image, Gen 1:26
2. Man commanded to fill the earth, Gen 1:28
3. God brings animals to Adam for naming, Gen 2:19

The World That Was

FALL

1. Adam sins in a garden, Gen 3:2
2. Adam partakes of fruit of knowledge, Gen 3:6
3. Adam shamefully naked, Gen 3:7
4. Adam's nakedness covered by God, Gen 3:21
5. Adam's sin brings curse upon seed, Gen 3:15

CONFLICT OF SEED

1. Cain, condemned to wander, founds wicked city of Enoch, Gen 4:17
2. Seth, with son Enosh, begins to call upon Name of Lord, Gen 4:26
3. Daughters of man taken to wife by sons of God, Gen 6:2

JUDGMENT

1. Days of Noah are upon the earth, Gen 6:13
2. God brings cloud upon earth to destroy the wicked with a flood, Gen 7:23
3. Old heavens and earth pass away before the present heavens and earth, 2 Pet 3:5-7

GENESIS 8

GENESIS 8

THE NEW CREATION

1. Waters of Noah cover the earth, Gen 7:18-19
2. Dove "hovers" upon face of the waters, Gen 8:9
3. Olive leaf betokens emergence of dry land, Gen 8:11
4. Present world finished; God receives sacrifice of rest, Gen 8:21

NOAH, THE NEW ADAM

1. Man recommissioned in God's image, Gen 9:6
2. Man commanded to fill the earth again, Gen 9:7
3. God brings animals to Noah for delivering, Gen 7:15

The World That Now Is

THE FALL RENEWED

1. Noah sins in a vineyard, Gen 9:20
2. Noah partakes of fruit of vine, Gen 9:20
3. Noah shamefully naked, Gen 9:21
4. Noah's nakedness covered by sons, Gen 9:23
5. Noah's sin brings curse upon seed, Gen 9:25

SEED CONFLICT RENEWED

1. Noah's sons, to avoid wandering, found wicked city of Babel, Gen 11:4
2. Shem's descendant Abram begins to call upon Name of Lord, Gen 12:8
3. The harlot Babel seduces the sons of Zion throughout the ages, cf. Dan 1:1; Isa 47:1-15; Rev 17-18

THE NEW JUDGMENT

1. "Days of Noah" again upon the earth, Matt 24:37-39
2. God comes in clouds to destroy the wicked with a fire, Matt 24:30; cf. 2 Pet 3:7
3. Present heavens and earth pass away before the new heavens and earth, 2 Pet 3:13

REVELATION 22

THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL: THE MICROCOSM

EXODUS

CREATION

1. Pillar regulates day/night; waters divide, land appears, Exod 14:20-22
2. Spirit given Israel, Isa 63:11-13, cf. Deut 32:11
3. Tabernacle (cosmic order) erected, Exod 35-40
4. Israel like Eden, Num 24:5-6
5. Rest in the land, Deut 12:10; Heb 4:3-4

ISRAEL, THE NEW MAN

1. Israel, the son of God, redeemed from Egypt, Hos 11:1
2. Israel is fruitful, multiplies, Exod 17; Neh 9:23
3. Israel's King to subdue the earth, Ps 2:8; 72:8; 110:2, 6

The First Temple

FALL OF ISRAEL'S KING

1. David sins in garden-terraced palace, cf. Neh 3:15; 2 Kgs 21:18; cf. Est 1:5
2. David "knows" Bathsheba, 2 Sam 11:4
3. David's sin shamefully exposed, 2 Sam 11:5
4. God must cover David's sin, 2 Sam 12:12-13; Ps 32:1
5. David's sin brings sword into his house, 2 Sam 12:10

CONFLICT OF SEED

1. Political Jerusalem becomes the apostate city, like Sodom and Egypt, Amos 4:10-11; Ezek 16:23
2. Spiritual Jerusalem becomes the city of prophetic hope, the site of true worship, Ps 48; Isa 2:2-4
3. Political Jerusalem persecutes the prophets, Heb 11:32; Acts 7:52

JUDGMENT

1. "Waters of Noah" upon the land, Isa 54:9
2. God brings the Chaldeans to destroy city and sanctuary with a flood, Isa 7-8; 17:12-13; 2 Chron 36:17-21
3. Temple (cosmic order) destroyed, 2 Chron 36:19
4. Remnant preserved, Neh 7:6ff

EXILE

EXODUS

CREATION RENEWED

1. New Exodus victory over chaos waters, Isa 51:9-12; 11:15-16
2. The Spirit given to Israel, Hag 2:5
3. Temple (cosmic order) erected, Ezra 3:8-13, Hag 2:9
4. Israel like garden of God, Isa 51:3
5. God receives sacrifice of rest, Ezek 20:41

ISRAEL, RENEWED MAN

1. Israel, the son of God, redeemed from Mesopotamia, Hos 11:1-11
2. Israel to be fruitful and multiply, Jer 23:3
3. Israel's King to subdue the earth, Jer 23:5-6

The Second Temple

ISRAEL'S FALL IN HIS KING

1. Christ made prisoner in a garden, John 18:1-2
2. Christ knew no sin was made sin, 2 Cor 5:21
3. Christ made shamefully naked, John 19:23-24
4. Christ's death a covering, Rom 4:7
5. Christ hung on a tree brings curse and a sword, Acts 10:39; Gal 3:13; Matt 10:34-36

RENEWED CONFLICT OF SEED

1. Jerusalem below a chaos, like Sodom and Egypt, Gal 4:25; Matt 11:24; 2:13-18; Rev 11:8
2. Jerusalem above a city of worship, Gal 4:26; John 4:21-24; Heb 12:22; Rev 21:10
3. Jerusalem below persecutes Jerusalem above, Gal 4:29; Matt 23:37, cf. 5:12; 1 Thess 2:15

THE NEW JUDGMENT

1. "Days of Noah" on land, Matt 24:37-39
2. God brings prince to destroy city and sanctuary with flood, Dan 9:26; Matt 24:15
3. Temple (cosmic order) destroyed Matt 24:1-2
4. Remnant preserved, Matt 24:16; Rom 9:29

EXILE

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Introduction

A. Terminology

The Genesis Flood is denoted in the OT by the technical Hebrew term *mabbûl* (etymology uncertain [perhaps from the root *ybl* "to flow, to stream"]; all 13 OT occurrences of this word referring to the Genesis Flood; all in Genesis except Ps. 29:10; occurrences in the Flood narrative usually associated with *mayim* "waters" [*hamabbûl mayim, mē hamabbûl, hamayim l' mabbûl*]). The LXX and the NT consistently employ the Greek term *kataklysmos* ("flood, deluge") for this event (4 times in NT, plus once using the related verb *kataklyzō* ["flood, inundate"], 2 Pet. 3:6).

Besides the certain allusion to the Genesis Flood in the phrase *mē-Noah* "waters of Noah" (Isa. 54:9), many other possible OT allusions to the Noachic Deluge utilize a variety of Hebrew expressions: *zerem* "inundation, flood" (Isa. 28:2); *mayim kabbîrîm* "mighty waters" (Isa. 28:2), *mayim rabbîm* "great waters" (Ps. 18:17 [Eng. vs. 16]), or simply *mayim* "waters" (Isa. 43:2; Job 12:15; Ps. 124:4); *nāhār/n'harōt* "floods, streams" (Ps. 93:3); *rahab* "storm, Rahab" (Job 26:12); *šibbālet* "flood, flowing stream" (Ps. 69:3, 16 [Eng. vss. 2, 15]); and *šetep* "overflowing, flood" (Dan. 9:26; Nah. 1:8; Ps. 32:6). NT allusions to the Genesis Flood employ the Greek noun *hydōr* "water" (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:6).

B. Extra-biblical Parallels.

Ancient flood stories are almost universal (up to 230 different stories known; see Frazer 1918, 1:105-361; Nelson 1931) and are by far the most frequently-given cause for past world calamities in the folk literature of antiquity (Thompson 1955, 1:182-194). The stories nearest to the area of the Dispersion at Babel are the closest in detail to the biblical account.

Four main flood stories are found in Mesopotamian sources: The Sumerian Eridu Genesis (ca. 1600 B.C., see Jacobsen 1981), the Old Babylonian Atrahasis Epic (ca. 1600 B.C., see Lambert and Millard 1969), the Gilgamesh Epic (Neo-Assyrian version, ca. 8th-7th Cent. B.C., see Heidel 1946), and Berossus' account (Babylon, 3rd cent. B.C., see Lambert and Millard 1969, 134-137).

C. The Unity of the Genesis Flood Account

The detailed chiasmic literary structure of Genesis 6-9 argues for the unity of the Flood narrative instead of small textual units (J and P) as suggested by the Documentary Hypothesis (Cassuto 1964, 30-34; Shea 1979). A close reading of the Flood narrative as a coherent literary whole, with particular attention to the chiasmic structure, resolves apparent discrepancies in the Genesis account (Wenham 1978; Shea 1979; Hasel 1980, 49-50, 150-151).

The Theology of the Flood

The theology of the Flood may be summarized under ten headings.

I. Theology as History: The Historical Nature of the Flood.

In the literary structure of the Flood narrative (see Shea 1979) the genealogical frame or envelope construction (Gen. 5:32 and 9:28-29) plus the secondary genealogies (Gen. 6:9-10 and 9:18-19) are indicators that the account is intended to be factual history. The use of the genealogical term *tôf'dô t* ("generations," "account") in the Flood account (6:9) as throughout Genesis (13 times, structuring the whole book), indicates that the author intended this narrative to be as historically veracious as the rest of Genesis (Doukhan 1978, 167-220; Kaiser 1970). A number of references in the book of Job may allude to the then-relatively-recent Flood (Job 9:5-8; 12:14-15; 14:11-12; 22:15-17; 26:10-14; 27:20-22; 28:9; 38:8-11; see Morris 1988, 26-30.) The occurrence of the Flood is an integral part of the saving/judging acts of God in redemptive history, and its historicity is assumed and essential to the theological arguments of later biblical writers employing Flood typology (see Davidson 1981, 326-327).

II. The Motive or Theological Cause of the Flood.

In contrast with the ancient Near Eastern flood stories, in which no cause of the flood is given (Gilgamesh Epic) or the gods decide to wipe out their human slaves because they are making too much noise (Atrahasis Epic and Eridu Genesis), the biblical account provides a profound theological motivation for the Flood: humankind's moral depravity and sinfulness, the all-pervading corruption and violence of all living beings ("all flesh") on earth (Gen. 6:1-8, 11-12), which demands divine punishment.

III. The God of the Flood (Theodicy).

The theological motivation provides a divine justification (theodicy) for bringing the Flood. In contrast to the other ancient Near Eastern stories, in which the gods are arbitrary, acting out of

unreasoning anger, selfishness, and caprice, seeking to deceive the people and not inform them of the impending flood, the biblical picture of the God of the Flood is far different. God extends a probationary period of 120 years during which His Spirit is striving with humanity to repent (Gen. 6:3) and God is warning the antediluvian world through Noah, the "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5; cf. 1 Pet. 3:19-20).

God Himself makes provision for the saving of humankind (Gen. 6:14-16). He "repents" (*nāham*), i.e. "is sorry, moved to pity, having compassion, suffering grief" (Gen. 6:6). God "grieves" (*āṣab*), the same Hebrew root used of the woman's "pain" and Adam's "anguish" in the divine judgment of Genesis 3; the implication is that God Himself takes up humanity's pain and anguish (Gen. 6:6; cf. 3:16, 17). The divine act of destruction is not arbitrary. God "destroys" (*šāhat*, vs. 13) what humanity had already ruined or corrupted (*šāhat*, vss. 11-12); He simply mercifully brings to completion the ruin already wrought by humankind.

The God of the biblical Flood is not only just and merciful; He is also free to act according to His divine will, and He possesses sovereign power and full control over the forces of nature (in contrast to the weakness and fright of the gods during the Flood, according to ancient Near Eastern stories). Yahweh's omnipotent sovereignty seems to be the theological thrust of Ps. 29:10, the only biblical reference outside Genesis employing the term *mabbûl*: "Yahweh sat enthroned at the Flood [*mabbûl*]."

The choice of divine names throughout the Flood narrative, instead of indicating separate sources, seems to highlight different aspects of God's character: the generic *Elohim* when His universal, transcendent sovereignty or judicial authority is emphasized; and the covenant name *Yahweh* when His personal, ethical dealings with Noah and humankind are in view (Cassuto 1961, 35-36; Leupold 1956, 280-281).

IV. Human Moral Responsibility.

The portrayal of humanity's moral depravity as the cause of the flood highlights human responsibility for sin. Noah's response of faith/faithfulness (*pistis*, Heb. 11:7) underscores that accountability to God is not only corporate but individual: Noah found "favor" (*ḥēn*) in God's sight, he was "righteous" (*saddîq*), "blameless" (*tāmîm*) and "walked together" (*hālak*, Hithpael) in personal relationship with God (Gen. 6:8-9); he responded in implicit obedience to His commands (Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9; cf. Ezek. 14:14, 20).

V. Eschatological Judgment.

When God said, "I have determined to make an end [*qāy*] of all flesh" (Gen. 6:13), he introduced the "eschatological" term *qāy* which in later Scripture became a technical term for the eschaton. The divine judgment involved a period of probation (Gen. 6:3), followed by a judicial investigation ("The Lord saw . . ." Gen. 6:5; "I have determined," Gen. 6:13 RSV; Cassuto 1964, 56-57), the sentence (Gen. 6:7) and its execution (the bringing of the Flood, Gen. 7:11-24). The NT recognizes the divine judgment of the Genesis Flood as a typological foreshadowing of the final eschatological judgment (see Flood typology, below).

VI. The Noahic Covenant.

The word *b'rīt* "covenant" first appears in Scripture in connection with the Flood (Gen. 6:18; 9:8-17), and the covenant motif is an integral part of the Flood narrative. The Noahic covenant comes at God's initiative, and demonstrates His concern, faithfulness, and dependability. He covenants never again to send a Flood to destroy the earth. This covenant promise flows from the propitiatory animal sacrifice offered by Noah (Gen. 8:20-22; Wenham 1987, 189-190).

Unlike the other biblical covenants, the Noahic covenant is made not only with humankind but with the whole earth (Gen. 9:13) including every living creature (Gen. 9:10, 12, 15, 16), and is thus completely unilateral and unconditional upon the response of the earth and its inhabitants. The sign of this everlasting covenant is the rainbow, which is not primarily for humankind, but for God to see and "remember" the covenant He has made with the earth (Gen. 9:16).

VII. The Flood Remnant.

The Flood narrative contains the first mention in the biblical canon of the motif and terminology of remnant, Gen. 7:23: "Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained [*šā'ar*]." The remnant who survived the cosmic catastrophe of the Flood were constituted thus because of their right relationship of faith and obedience to God, not because of caprice or the favoritism of the gods, as in the extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern flood stories.

VIII. Salvific Grace.

God's grace is revealed already before the Flood in the 120 years of probation granted the antediluvian world (Gen. 6:3) and in his directions for the building of the ark to save those faithful to Him (Gen. 6:14-21); and again after the Flood in His covenant/promise never again to destroy the earth with a Flood, even though human nature remained evil (Gen. 8:20-22; 9:8-17).

But the theological (and literary, chiasmic) heart of the Flood account is found in the phrase "God remembered Noah" (Gen. 8:1; Anderson 1978, 38). The memory theology of Scripture does not imply that God has literally forgotten; for God to "remember" is to act in deliverance (see Exod. 6:5). The structural positioning of God's "remembering" at the center of the narrative indicates that the apex of Flood theology is not punitive judgment but divine salvific grace.

Numerous thematic and verbal parallels between the accounts of Noah's salvation and Israel's Exodus deliverance reveal the author's intent to emphasize their similarity (see Sailhamer 1990, 89). Various references in the Psalms to God's gracious deliverance of the righteous from the "great waters" of tribulation, may contain allusions to the Genesis Flood (Ps. 18:16 [Hebrew vs. 17]; 32:6; 65:5-8 [Hebrew vss. 6-9]; 69:2 [Hebrew vs. 3]; 89:9 [Hebrew vs. 10]; 93:3; and 124:4).

IX. Flood Typology.

The typological nature of the Flood account is already implicit in Genesis. Gage (1984, 7-16) has shown how Genesis 1-7 is presented by the author as a paradigm for the history of the world; the reduplication of the motifs in Genesis only carries through the fourth narrative, implying that the fifth (universal judgment) will be fulfilled in the eschatological cosmic judgment. Isaiah provides an explicit verbal indicator that the Flood is a type of covenantal eschatology (Isa. 54:9), along with several possible allusions to the Flood in his descriptions of the eschatological salvation of Israel (the "flood of mighty waters overflowing," Isa. 28:2; "the waters . . . shall not overwhelm," Isa. 43:2; God's "overflowing wrath," Isa. 54:8; and the "windows of heaven," Isa. 24:18). The prophets Nahum (1:8) and Daniel (9:26) depict the eschatological judgment in language probably alluding to the Genesis Flood.

The NT writers recognize the typological connection between Flood and eschatology. The salvation of Noah and his family in the ark through the waters of the Flood finds its antitypical counterpart in NT eschatological salvation connected with water baptism (1 Pet. 3:18-22; see Davidson 1981, 316-336). The Flood is also a type of the final eschatological judgment at the end of the world, and the conditions of pre-Flood morality provide signs of the end time (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27; 2 Pet. 2:5, 9; 3:5-7).

X. Universality of the Flood

A. Conflicting Schools of Interpretation

One of the most controversial aspects of the Flood narrative concerns the extent of the Genesis Flood. Three major positions are taken: (1) the traditional, which asserts the universal, world-wide,

nature of the Deluge; (2) limited or local flood theories, which narrow the scope of the Flood story to a particular geographical location in Mesopotamia; and (3) non-literal (symbolic) interpretation, which suggests that the Flood story is a non-historical account written to teach theological truth.

Against this third position, the non-historical, we have already noted the evidences within the biblical account affirming the historical nature of the Flood. In the literary structure of the Flood story (see Shea, 1979) the genealogical frame or envelope construction (Genesis 5:32 and 9:28-29) plus the secondary genealogies (Genesis 6:9-10 and 9:18-19) are indicators that the account is intended to be factual history. The use of the genealogical term *tôl' dôt* ("generations," "account") in the Flood story (6:9) as throughout Genesis (13 times, structuring the whole book), indicates that the author intended this story to be as historically veracious as the rest of Genesis (Doukhan, 1978, pp. 167-220). Walter Kaiser analyzes the literary form of Genesis 1-11 and concludes that this whole section of Genesis must be taken as "historical narrative prose" (Kaiser, 1970).

We have seen how a number of references in the book of Job may allude to the then-relatively-recent Flood (Job 9:5-8; 12:14-15; 14:11-12; 22:15-17; 26:10-14; 28:9; 38:8-11; see Morris 1988, pp. 26-30.) The historical occurrence of the Flood is part of the saving/judging acts of God, and its historicity is assumed and essential to the theological arguments of later biblical writers employing Flood typology (see Davidson, 1981, pp. 326-327); more on this point later.

Thus according to the biblical writers, far from being a non-historical, symbolical or mythical account written only to teach theological truths, the Flood narrative is intended 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 the event described is to be taken as a local, limited Flood or a universal, world-wide cataclysm.

The limited flood theories rest primarily on scientific arguments that present seemingly difficult geological, biological and anthropological problems for a universal flood. (See Boardman, 1990, pp. 212-223; Custance, 1979, pp. 28-58; Kidner, 1967, pp. 93-95; Mitchell, 1962; Ramm, 1954, pp. 232-249; Young, 1977, pp. 171-210). Since the scientific argumentation is not the subject of this paper, I can only suggest that these 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 (see Coffin and Brown, 1983; Rehwinkel, 1951; Roth, 1985, 1986a, 1988, 2000; Whitcomb, 1988; Whitcomb and Morris, 1961).

The local Flood theories further assert that the terminology describing the extent of the Flood should be interpreted in a relative and not absolute universal sense. The various seemingly universal terms are regarded as implying only a limited locality; they are seen to indicate universality within the writer's world-view but a limited scope in terms of our modern world view. (See Boardman, 1990, pp. 223-226; Custance, 1979, pp. 15-27; Kidner, 1967, pp. 93-95; Ramm, 1954, pp. 241-242.) We will take up this issue in the next section of this paper.

The traditional conservative understanding of the Flood narrative is that Genesis 6-9 describes a universal, world-wide Deluge. It should be noted that this is also the view of the majority of liberal-critical commentators on Genesis 6-9, although they regard the biblical view as borrowed from the ANE accounts and not historical. (See Hasel 1975, p. 78 and note 16 for bibliography of representatives of this position: Fohrer, Koehler, Noth, Procksch, Skinner, Sarna, Speiser, von Rad, Vriezen, Zimmerli, etc.)

The thesis of this part of the paper is that only the traditional position of a literal, universal world-wide Flood does full justice to the biblical data, and this universal interpretation is crucial for Flood theology in Genesis and for the theological implications drawn by later biblical writers.

B. 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 has provided a careful treatment of this terminology in three penetrating studies in previous issues of *Origins* (Hasel, 1974, 1975, 1978), and therefore I need not go into detail in this paper. Eight different terms or phrases in Genesis 6-9, most echoing their counterparts in the world-wide creation account of Genesis 1-2, indicate universality.

First, the term *hā'āreṣ* "the earth," occurring 46 times in the Flood narrative (Genesis 6:12, 13, 17, etc.), always without any accompanying genitive of limitation, clearly parallels the usage of the same term in the account of world-wide, universal creation in Genesis 1:1, 2, 10. (While the term may at times elsewhere may be used without a genitive and still in context be limited in scope to a certain "land," the explicit link to creation in the Flood account (see especially Genesis 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 *tāḫāl*, which means the world as a whole, or dry land in the sense of continents. This word is never used in the Flood narrative. But it should be pointed out that *tāḫāl* is never used in the

entire Pentateuch, including the creation account. In fact, the term appears nowhere in the narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible, but only in 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 carries little weight.

A second expression, "upon the face of all the earth" *p'ne kol-hā-āreṣ* (Genesis 7:3; 8:9), clearly alludes to the first occurrence of the same phrase in the universal context of creation (Genesis 1:29; cf. Genesis 1:2 for a related universal expression), and thus implies a universality of the same dimension as in creation also here, i.e., the entire surface of the global mass. While the shortened term "all the earth" (*kol-hā-āreṣ*) by itself may have a limited meaning elsewhere when indicated by the immediate context (see Exodus 10:5, 15; Numbers 22:5, 11; 1 Kings 4:34; 10:24; 2 Chronicles 36:23; Genesis 41:57), the immediate context of the Flood story is the universal sinfulness of humankind whom God had made and created (Genesis 6:6,7) to have dominion over "all the earth" (Genesis 1:26), and the succeeding context is the universal dispersal of man after the Tower of Babel "upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 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 (Genesis 1:29; 11:4,8,9), it clearly has the universal sense of the entire land surface of the globe, and there is nothing in the Flood narrative to indicate any less universality. (It should be also noted that the one place in Genesis where in context a similar phrase "upon all the face of the earth" is not universal [the famine mentioned in Genesis 41:56], the Hebrew has a change in word order from elsewhere in Genesis [*kol p'ne hā-āreṣ*]).

Third, the phrase "face of the ground" *p'ne hā-ādāmāh* (five times in the Flood narrative, 7:4, 22, 23; 8:8, 13), occurs in parallel with universal terms we have just noted, "the earth" (7:23) and "face of all the earth" (8:9), and this phrase "face of the ground" likewise harks back to its first usage in the universal context of creation (Genesis 2:6).

Fourth, the term *kol-bāśār* "all flesh" occurs 12 times in Genesis 6-9 (Genesis 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), 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" (Genesis 6:13, 17) and the narrator's comment that "all flesh" died (Genesis 7:21-22), except the inhabitants of the ark, indicates universal destruction. The one occurrence of *kol* plus the determinate noun *hābāśār* "all the flesh" (in Genesis 7:15) likewise indicates totality as well as unity.

Fifth, the expression "every living thing" (*kol-hāḥay*) of all flesh (Genesis 6:19), is another expression of totality; in 7:4, 23, the similar term *kol-hay'qûm* means literally, "all existence." This term is given further universal dimensions by the addition of the clause harking back to creation—"all existence *that I have made*" (7:4)—and by the exclusive statement "Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive" (7:23). 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, world-wide flood" (Hasel, 1975, p. 86).

Sixth, the phrase "under the whole heaven" (*tahaṭ kol-hāššāmāyim* Genesis 7:19), is used six times in the OT outside of the Flood narrative, and always with a universal meaning (see Deuteronomy 2:25; 4:19; Job 28:24; 37:3; 41:11; Daniel 9:12). For example, the phrase is used to describe God's omniscience: "For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees under the whole heavens" (Job 28:24). Again, it depicts God's sovereignty: "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11 KJV). (Note that the usage in Deuteronomy 2:25, describing "the nations under the whole heaven," is further qualified and limited by the phrase "who shall hear the report of you," and thus is potentially universal and not an exception to the universal sense).

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

In the Flood account this phrase "under the whole heaven" is 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 fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered (7:19, 20)." Critical scholar John Skinner notes that 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" (Skinner, 1930/1956, p. 165).

The Biblical language here simply cannot be explained 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

suggest. H. C. Leupold points out that the writer of vs. 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" (Leupold, 1942, pp. 301-302).

Seventh, Hasel devoted an entire scholarly article to the phrase "all the fountains [*ma'yenoth*] of the Great Deep [*ʿhôm rabbāh*]" (Genesis 7:11; 8:2), and showed how it is linked with the universal "Deep" (*ʿhôm*) or world-ocean in Genesis 1:2 (cf. Psalm 104:6: "Thou didst cover it [the earth] with deep [*ʿhôm*] as with a garment; the waters were standing above the mountains.") 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 perceptively 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." (Hasel, 1974, p. 71.)

Eighth, in another article, Hasel (1978) shows how the Hebrew Bible reserved a special term *mabbûl* which in its 13 occurrences refers exclusively to the universal Genesis Flood (12 occurrences in Genesis, once in Psalm 29:10). This word may be derived from the Hebrew root *ybl* "to flow, to stream." The term *mabbûl*, which in the Flood narrative is usually associated 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) which was caused by torrential rains and the bursting forth of subterranean waters" (Hasel, 1978, pp. 92-93). This technical term clearly sets the Genesis Deluge apart from all local floods, and is utilized in the Psalm 29:10 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."

Summarizing regarding the technical terminology used for 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" (Hasel, 1975, p. 87).

C. 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 this conclusion. We will summarize fourteen points that emerge from the biblical text.

First, 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 Genesis 6:5, 11; Romans 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 (see Robertson, 1980). This plan of redemption is certainly universal in scope.

In a similar way, the sinful condition of humankind 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" (Genesis 6:5). Such universal sinfulness naturally calls for universal judgment.

Second, the divine purpose given for the bringing of 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, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). Nothing less than a complete destruction of the human race (except for Noah, 6:8) seems envisaged. Given the length of time from creation (over 1650 years minimum), the longevity of the antediluvians (nearly a thousand years), and God's command at creation to "fill the

earth" (Genesis 1:28), 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.

Third, the genealogical lines from both Adam (Genesis 4:17-26; 5:1-31) and Noah (Genesis 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" (Genesis 10:32), and the Tower of Babel experience spreads humanity across the globe (Genesis 11:1-19).

Striking extra-biblical evidence that all human races, and not just the nations of the Fertile Crescent, are included in the descendants of Noah, and retain memory of the universal Flood, is found in the amazing prevalence of ancient flood stories throughout the world. Over 230 different flood stories are known and occur among the most diverse peoples of the earth (see Frazer, 1918, 1:105-361; Nelson, 1931). A world-wide flood is by far the most frequently-given cause for past universally-destructive calamities in the folk literature of antiquity (Thompson, 1955, 1:182-194).

A remarkable number of these oral and written traditions agree upon the basic points of the biblical account: all humankind was destroyed by a great flood as a result of divine judgment against human sin, 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 at Babel are the closest in detail to the biblical account (see Heidel, 1946; Jacobsen, 1981; and Lambert and Millard, 1969). This vast body of ancient witnesses to a world-wide Deluge is powerful testimony to the historicity and universality of the biblical Flood.

Fourth, the same inclusive divine blessing to be fruitful and multiply fill the earth is given to both Adam and Noah (Genesis 1:28; 9:1). This is 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 postdiluvial humanity is populated through Noah.

Fifth, the covenant (Genesis 9:9-10) with its rainbow sign (Genesis 9:12-17) is clearly linked to the extent of the Flood, and includes the whole earth (Genesis 9:13-17). If there was only a local flood, then the covenant would be only a limited covenant, and the rainbow sign of "the all-embracing universality of the Divine mercy" (Delitzsch, 1888/1976, 1:289-290) would be stripped of its meaning.

Sixth, the viability of God's promise (Genesis 9:15; cf. Isaiah 54:9) and the integrity of God in keeping His promise is wrapped up in the world-wide extent of the Flood. This point cannot be underscored too heavily: if Genesis 6-9 describes only a local flood, then God has broken His promise

every time another local flood has happened! The only way God's promise not to send another flood to destroy every living thing (Genesis 8:21) can be seen to have been kept is if the Flood was a universal one and the whole human race outside the ark was destroyed.

Seventh, the universality of the Flood is underscored by 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 (Genesis 6:16-21; 7:2-3). A massive ark filled with representatives of all non-aquatic animal/plant species would be unnecessary if this were only a local flood, for these species could have been preserved elsewhere in the world. Yet the divine insistence in the biblical record is that the animals were brought into the ark to preserve representatives of all of the various species (Genesis 6:19-20).

As a matter of fact, if only a local flood were in view, 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 narrative concerning the ark is that there was no other escape; in the midst of the Flood "only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained" (Genesis 7:23).

Eighth, the covering of "all the high mountains" by at least 15 cubits (Genesis 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 Mt. Everest at the time of the Flood, and thus to require waters covering the earth to a depth of six miles, as some proponents of a local flood suggest would be necessary (see Ramm, 1954, p. 242). The antediluvian mountains were very possibly much lower than at present. Passages in the book of Job and Psalms may well be referring to the process of postdiluvian mountain uplift (see Job 9:5; 28:9; and Psalm 104:7-8).

Also in this connection we may address the objection that proponents of a local flood often raise, namely, that a world-wide Flood 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, is in conflict with Biblical evidence which "strongly suggests that prediluvian geography did basically resemble postdiluvian geography" (Young, 1977, p. 210). Reference is made particularly to the topographical descriptions in connection with 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 is not recognized in these arguments, however, is that although there are some similarities between the prediluvian and postdiluvian topography, there are more differences than similarities. Two of the rivers mentioned apparently no longer existed in Moses' time: the Pishon and Gihon are mentioned 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—are described 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 are in harmony with a world-wide Flood.

Ninth, 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 (Genesis 7:17), and all the highest mountains were still covered five months after the Flood began; the tops of the mountains were not seen until after seven months, and the Flood waters were not dried up enough for Noah to leave the ark until one year and ten days had passed (see Genesis 7:11; 8:14). Such lengths of time seem commensurate only with a universal and not a local flood.

Tenth, the receding activity of the water (Genesis 8:3a, 54a) is described by Hebrew phrases which, in parallel with similar phraseology and grammatical construction for the "to and fro" motion of the raven (Genesis 8:7), should be translated as "going and retreating," (see Austin, 1990, p. 218; Hasel, 1978, p. 93) and imply oscillatory water motion lasting for 74 days (see Genesis 8:3-5). The waters rushing back and forth like in ocean tidal movement as the overall level gradually decreased, supports a universal interpretation such as "the oceanic energy impulse model of the flood" (Austin, 1990, p. 218), but is incongruous with a local flood theory.

Eleventh, the NT passages concerning the Flood all employ universal language: "swept them *all* away" (Matthew 24:39); "destroyed them *all*", (Luke 17:27); "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); "a few, that is eight persons, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20); Noah "condemned the *world*" (Hebrews 11:7). 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" (Archer, 1985, p. 208).

Twelfth, the NT Flood typology assumes and *depends upon* not only the historicity, but also the universality, of the Flood to theologically argue for an imminent world-wide judgment by fire (2 Peter

3:6-7). Peter argues that just as there was a world-wide judgment by water causing the unbelieving antediluvian world to perish, so in the antitype there must-needs-be a universal end-time judgment by fire bringing about the destruction of the ungodly (see Davidson, 1981, pp. 326-327).

Thirteenth, according to a major trajectory of biblical theology presented in Genesis 6-9, the Noachic Flood is nothing less than the cosmic undoing or reversal of creation. Numerous biblical scholars have recognized this highly significant theological point of the Flood narrative. According to John Skinner, "The Flood is a partial undoing of the work of creation" (Skinner, 1910, p. 164). Similarly, Nahum Sarna writes that "The Flood is a cosmic catastrophe that is actually the undoing of creation. . . . The 'floodgates 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" (Sarna, 1989, p. 48,85). Tikva Frymer-Kensky describes the Flood as "the original, cosmic undoing of creation" (Frymer-Kensky, 1983, p. 410). 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" (Frymer-Kensky, 1985, p.312). Claus Westermann speaks of the "invasion of chaos into the created order; the flood assumed cosmic proportions" (Westermann, 1974/1984, p. 434). 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" (Cassuto, 1964, p. 97). [For Joseph Blenkinsopp the Flood signifies "uncreation": "The world in which order first arose out of a primeval watery chaos is now reduced to the watery chaos out of which it arose — chaos-come-again" (Blenkinsopp, 1971, pp. 46-47).] David Clines uses the apt term *bouleversement* or "reversal" of creation to depict the theological significance of the Flood (Clines, 1972, p. 136; 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-ii 4a" [Fishbane, 1971, p. 153]). For Joseph Blenkinsopp, "the deluge is an act of uncreation, undoing the work of separation by returning everything to the primeval, watery chaos from which the created order first arose" Blenkinsopp, 1992, p. 83).

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" (Von Rad, 1972, p. 128). Only a cosmic/universal Flood can theologically encompass the cosmic/universal reversal or undoing of creation described in Genesis 6-9.

Fourteenth and last, the cosmic reversal of creation is followed by a cosmic New Beginning. As Clines states it, "the 'uncreation' 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)" (Clines, 1972-73, p. 138). Jacques Doukhan has shown the precise literary parallels between the successive stages of "re-creation" in the aftermath of the Flood (Genesis 8-9) and the seven days of creation in Genesis 1-2 (Doukhan, 1987, p. 133-134; cf. Gage, 1984, pp. 10-20):

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 men, blessing, food for men, 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.

Thus in the over-arching literary structure of the "re-creation" in the Flood narrative, the universal dimension of the Flood is underscored by detailed parallels with the cosmic creation account of Genesis 1-2.

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 (see Hasel, 1994), a universal Flood is an absolute necessity to explain the existence of the geological column. A literal creation week is inextricably linked with a world-wide 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 1-2 which we have noted in this study not only support the aspect of universality in 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" (von Rad, 1972, pp. 129-130).

The theology of the universal Flood is therefore the pivot of a connected but multi-faceted universal theme running through Genesis 1-11 and constituting an over-arching pattern for the whole rest of Scripture: world-wide creation revealing the character of the Creator and His original purpose for creation; humankind's turning from the Creator and the universal spread of sin ending in the universal "uncreation" through eschatological judgment; and re-creation, in the eschatological salvation of the faithful covenant remnant and the universal renewal of the earth.

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