



## The Genesis Flood

*“Now the land was corrupt in the sight of God, and the land was filled with violence. God looked on the land, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the land. Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the land is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the land.”*

*Genesis 6:11-13*

*“Then the flood came upon the land for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the land. The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the land,*

*and the ark floated on the surface of the water. The water prevailed more and more upon the land, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. All flesh that moved on the land perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the land, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the land; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. The water prevailed upon the land one hundred and fifty days.”*

*Genesis 7:17-24*

*(eretz and adamah are translated above to English as the word land instead of earth where underlined)*

I was recently informed by my son who lives in Seattle that something that people currently struggle with when considering Christianity is the story of Noah's flood. The main issue is primarily tied to the idea of the flood covering the entire planet and the things connected with that concept. While it is certainly possible that the planet could be entirely covered in water, and there were even periods in the history of our planet where indeed the planet was completely covered in water, as well as times that it was covered in ice (frozen water), is there evidence of a worldwide flood roughly 4,300+ years ago, as ICR (Institute for Creation Research) and many creation scientists teach? What have we learned over the last two millennia regarding the history of our planet? What historical and scientific evidence have we found, or not found, for this event? What should we, as born again followers of Jesus, the very Son of the living God, both believe and teach?

### Galileo and the Church

Before answering, we must first discuss how we handle the word of God. During the history of the church, there have been times when the church held to dogma and beliefs based on the accepted understanding or interpretation of scripture that conflicted directly with reality. One of the best known instances was in the early 1600's when the church (and the entire world for the most part) believed that the sun orbited the earth (geocentrism), and Copernicus and Galileo proposed that in reality, the earth orbited the sun (heliocentrism). Galileo was put on trial by the church for proposing

such a preposterous idea. The details read like a “who shot JFK” conspiracy story, so who knows what really happened. But regardless of what actually happened, the church has never lived this moment down. People still use this as an excuse for why they cannot believe in God or have anything to do with Christianity. While that is a pathetic excuse, nevertheless, it gets a lot of play by unbelievers and we spend a lot of time trying to undo the damage this error in church behavior has caused us when sharing Christ with the lost.

One of the primary lessons of the Galileo incident for believers is that when our understanding or interpretation of God’s word does not line up with reality, we should not try to bend reality to line up with our beliefs, but rather we should look at God’s word and see where we might have gone wrong. Indeed, a closer look at God’s word reveals that the idea of the sun orbiting the earth is nowhere to be found, and was simply interpreted to be the case based on certain theological ideas and verses in God’s word. Fortunately, the church has given up the idea that the sun orbits the earth, and we have moved on from that disastrous moment in church history. But have we learned our lesson?

### **Noah and the Flood Story**

Returning to the Noahic flood story, that there was indeed a flood, and a man who built an ark loading it with his family and animals in order to survive the flood, appears to be supported by history. It probably happened. There are similar stories, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh. The epic of Gilgamesh is a very old story, predates the bible, and most importantly, it provides a possible second historical reference to the Noahic flood story. There are other flood stories as well in the area of Mesopotamia. So if asked about whether we believe in the Noahic flood, our first response is that, yes, there was probably a catastrophic flood, and a man named Noah who built a boat so that he, his family, and animals would survive the flood. It appears to have happened and is corroborated by other writings from early pre-history. The bible tends to be quite accurate regarding history and there is really no reason not to believe it.

### **Was it a Worldwide Event**

The next thing we must address is what size was the flood. Did it actually cover the entire planet, or was it a large disastrous partial flooding of the earth? Geologically speaking, it is possible that one of the extinction level events that we see in the rocks could have been the Noahic flood. There are five worldwide extinction level events recorded in the rocks that I am aware of. It would probably have to be the last one if it was a worldwide flood event, and this would place it a lot longer ago than the 4,300+ years ago that the creation scientists and ICR propose. Significantly longer ago – roughly 65 million years ago according to geologists. For the sake of argument and to be fair to the ICR guys, let’s assume geologic dating is off dramatically, as they contend. There is still no way a worldwide flood occurred only 4,300+ years ago as there are still many serious problems with this proposal (tree ring dating going back over 12,000 years, for example) – just [check the internet](#) for a listing.

That said, it is still possible that there was a worldwide flood that wiped out the entire planet, but it would have had to have occurred much longer ago than 4,300+ years ago. This actually could be the case, if the genealogies in the bible skipped names - lots of names. For example, when the bible says that Eber begot Peleg, maybe there were a lot of people between Eber and Peleg that are not mentioned, making Eber Peleg's great X  $10^{23}$  grandfather or something. Perhaps the other names were not listed because they were lost or they didn't do anything noteworthy enough to make the genealogical list, etc. If this were the case, this could get the date for the flood far enough back in time to actually have been a worldwide catastrophe. But there is no reason for us to think that the bible left names out of the genealogies, and even if indeed this is the case, there are still issues, like kangaroos and other inexplicable things, if indeed the flood was a planetary extinction level event?

### **A Local or Regional Event**

While it is possible that the flood was worldwide, especially if names were left out of the genealogies listed, it is more probable that it was not a worldwide event but a really large local or regional flood. Historical and scientific data to date supports this as well. This means that from our lesson we learned from Galileo, we are to go back to the word of God and see if perhaps we have an incorrect understanding of the text or are reading something into it that is not there. Starting with the Hebrew word that is translated "earth", which is *eretz* (and *adamah* in a few spots), we must look to see how these Hebrew words are translated in other places? It turns out that they are translated as the English word "land" many more times than they are translated as the English word "earth". If we read the Noah account, translating *eretz* (and *adamah*) as "land" instead of "earth", with the idea that the flood was more of a local or regional event, we can see that it is entirely possible that indeed, that is probably what the bible is saying happened. I have done this in the above sections of scripture, just to illustrate the difference it makes. When you read the entire account, doing this, it is quite amazing how we can see that this story may just be referring to a local or regional flood that killed everything in that land.

I am no Hebrew scholar, but Dennis Prager is, and he says that it is not a worldwide flood in a short piece he did on the Noah story (it can be found [here](#) on the internet if you are interested). Tim Keller and many other Christian scholars also teach that the flood was most likely a local or regional event, not a worldwide planetary disaster. The idea of the worldwide flood had pretty much been settled a few centuries ago as being a local or regional event until the publishing of the book "The Genesis Flood" in 1961.

So when challenged by an unbeliever regarding the veracity of the Noachic flood, we as Jesus Christ's representatives on earth may want to respond that yes, there was indeed a catastrophic flood, and a man named Noah who built an ark so that he, his family, and the animals in his area would survive the flood. It probably happened – I believe that it did. But it was probably not a planetary wide flood, but rather a really big local or regional flood, unlike anything we have ever seen probably. And then we need to go a step further and discuss why the story is in the bible. After all, they brought it up, so let's

take advantage of this to move them closer to a relationship with Jesus. Why did God choose to include this story in His word? Maybe its unbelievable nature is intentional in order to cause people to bring it up so we can discuss what the story teaches?

## **The Gospel**

There are many reasons God included this story in His word, and the many lessons from the story of Noah and the Flood can be found in books and on the internet if you are interested, so I will not provide an exhaustive listing of them as they are quite numerous. Rather, we will focus on one lesson that might most benefit an unbeliever who has raised this objection to faith in Jesus Christ. It is the problem of evil and morality, and God's provision to save us that He has provided in Jesus Christ. The story of Noah is an outline of the gospel message. It is possibly God's original "[Four Spiritual Laws](#)" booklet, as it contains all of the elements most of these type of gospel tracts contain (some of the key points underlined in the following paragraphs).

First, the story of Noah illustrates the fallen sinful nature of humankind. In the Noah story, without any moral guidance or principles other than our conscience, and because of the fallen sinful nature of man, we had devolved quickly into such an evil culture that God had to wipe the slate clean and start over where Noah lived. We can only imagine how bad it must have gotten. It is a story that clearly illustrates that man is inherently sinful, and if left to our own devices we move towards sinful and evil behavior on a grand scale, getting worse and worse with each passing generation. This has not changed, and we only have to watch the news on any given day to see this concept in action every day in our world.

The story also teaches us that God is holy and hates evil and sin, but God loves us very much, and wants to save us from our sinfulness, just as He saved Noah. The story illustrates our need to be saved from our sinful state because of judgment, and that God desires to provide a way for us to avoid judgment. In the story of Noah we see God warning Noah of the coming judgment on sin, and providing for him a way out - build an ark and get into it. Similarly, God today warns us that we too will be judged for our sins at death, but that we can escape that judgment, just as Noah did, if we care to. God's provision to save us from the flood of judgment we will face at death is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the "ark" so to speak that God has built for us to get into in order to avoid the coming judgment we will otherwise face.

In the Noah story God comes to Noah and warns him of the judgment. Similarly, God has come to us in the form of His Son and has also warned us of the coming judgment. Just as Noah was saved from the flood by getting into the ark that God told him to build, we too escape the flood of judgment by "getting into" Christ, the 'ark' that God has told us to "get into" so that we will not end up being judged for our sinful behavior but have eternal life. We must receive Christ by faith order to be saved from judgment – this is how we get into the ark of Christ so to speak. Ultimately the story of Noah is a picture of the gospel. We are even baptized into Christ, just as Noah was baptized in the flood, and we

pass out of the old sinful “Noahic” existence that we lived before being born again, and emerge into the new life that God has for us now that we are in Christ. Some of the scriptures that talk about this include:

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”*

*John 3:16-21*

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature;  
the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

Noah was saved because God found him to be righteous. In order for us to be found righteous, we must be born again, becoming a new person in Christ as the verses above indicate. When we exercise faith in Jesus, his righteousness is transferred to us, and when God sees us, He sees Jesus righteousness rather than our sinful thoughts and behavior. Jesus righteous sacrifice on the cross protects us from the flood of God’s judgment. I often wonder if any of the people living around Noah asked if they could get into the ark and go with him, or if they just laughed and made fun of him while they continued in their sin. The story does not say, so we can only speculate. Judgment of sin is certain for all people, and the only provision that we have to escape judgment is the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. We enter into this saving relationship with God by faith, by believing in Jesus. It is as simple as Noah and his family getting into the ark. We simply believe. Even a five year old can do it.

The primary difference between Noah and us, is that we can invite people to join us in the “ark”, Jesus Christ, and they can escape the coming judgment of sin they will face at death if they choose to remain outside of Christ. The judgment of Noah’s day was physical death by drowning. The judgment unbelievers today will face is eternal separation from God in hell. The story of Noah is a call to all Christians to warn people of the certain judgment for sin they will face if they remain outside of Christ, and to invite them to join us in the Kingdom of Heaven with Him by getting into the “ark”, by exercising faith in Jesus. Jesus said that “He is the way, the truth, and the life,” and that “no one comes to the Father but by Him” (John 14:6). There was only one ark in Noah’s flood story, and there is only one way to God today, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to God. He is the only way to escape the flood of

judgment we will face when we die. Let's encourage everyone we can to get into the "ark", the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Lord God almighty, we come before you in Jesus name, and ask that you give us opportunities to share the story of Noah's flood with those who do not know You yet. Enable us to help them get past the current creationist ideas being circulated regarding the flood story being worldwide, and focus on the real meaning of the story, judgment of sin and our need to be saved from judgment by being in Christ. Give us a sense of urgency to share this message. We thank You for granting us a measure of faith, and we thank You for Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. Be with us always, as You have promised, and let us truly walk in newness of life, as the scripture says. Bless us and prosper us, as you blessed and prospered Noah when he passed thru the flood, and bless those who choose to get into Christ our lifeboat with us when we share with them the true meaning of the story of the Genesis flood. We pray these things in Jesus Name, amen.*