

How Should We Interpret the Genesis Flood Account?

Downloaded from the Bio Logos Website on 9-8-2012

Excerpts from the report are by section and numbered to the responses I sent to them on 9-8-2012. However, I have never received a response: my letter to them is in **bold**, excerpts from the Bio Logos article is in *italics*.

Section: *In a Nutshell*.

“Genesis 6-9 tells the fascinating story of Noah, the Ark, and the Flood. Some Christians interpret the text to mean that the biblical flood must have covered the entire globe....The scientific and historical evidence does not support a global flood, but is consistent with a catastrophic regional flood....”(it) “teaches us about human depravity, faith, obedience, divine judgment, grace and mercy.”

To the Editors and Writers of Bio Logos,

Sept. 8, 2012

I have heard of your group but have not until the last few days visited your site. I applaud your desire to weld the field of science and religion into a workable worldview. It appears that your statement of faith is consistent with “conservative” creeds regarding Christ, His atonement for our sins, and forgiveness of sins if we turn and repent. However, many of the rest of your beliefs cause me sorrow. I believe that you confound and weaken the majesty of the Scriptures. It is as though you mix clay with gold into an almost worthless amalgam. I apologize for the putting it this way, but I believe that you do the Body of Christ a great disservice.

How can you and I as believers in the Lord and in Him as the author of truth be on such diametric poles on issues that touch the integrity of God’s Word? I believe that it lies in how we apply our understanding of the interfacing of science, philosophy, and religion. I submit to you, though I’m sure that you will not agree, that the current secular philosophic frameworks of science have dominated and caused you to alter the plain truths of the scriptures to fit into those frameworks. This is truly sad. What makes it more difficult is that as trained scientists and theologians there is probably nothing I can say to have you reconsider your views. But I can say with full confidence that there has never been a piece of data, a concrete physical observation, that if I understood it correctly, I have not been able to put within the framework of a short age for the earth, unique created groups of animals, and single man/woman creation.

I have recently completed a 500 page dissertation on the Noah Flood Account. It involved assessing it as a possible True Narrative Account. I found it a reliable eye witness account compatible with a worldwide flood-which is what a plain reading of the text lends itself to. We could talk about it if you want sometime. In contrast, I found your presentation of the Noah Flood Account on your website to be very weak and biased.

Section: *The History of "Flood Geology"*.

1. *"In the 19th century, a growing body of extrabiblical evidence began to undermine the traditional belief in a global flood....But in the 20th century, George McCready Price, a Seventh-day Adventist from Canada and self-taught amateur geologist, took a less compliant stance and began the modern flood geology movement, ...and he did so with such style and sophistication 'that readers untrained in geology are generally unable to detect the flaws.'* Others followed Price in the modern flood geology movement, including Byron Nelson, Harold Clark, Alfred M. Rehwinkel, John C. Whitcomb, and Henry M. Morris."

For example in the "History of 'Flood Geology'" you presented "geologists" of the 1800's that considered the Flood local, and not the "geologists" that supported a worldwide flood. As you know this was a time of capitulation among theologians, scientists, and others from the integrity of the scriptures. Yet, the foundations of modern science were founded by men who followed the scriptures and most believed in a worldwide flood-at least in the 1600-1700's. Many books reference this. But there were also the "Scriptural Geologists" during the 1800's such as Fairholme, Murray, Bugg, Ure, Young, Rhind, and De Saint Pierre who believed in a worldwide flood. They had just as good credentials as the local flood advocates. As well, there are recent and current geologists such as H. Morris who had a PhD in Hydrology; and ones that you did not mentioned such as J. Baumgardner, A. Snelling, and R. Humphreys (physics). You ought to amend the account on your web page.

Section: *Scientific Problems with a Universal Flood.*

2. *"There are a number of practical problems that conflict with the idea of a global flood. First, a universal flood would have changed the topography of the land....Tigris, and Euphrates rivers of Genesis 2:14 would have disappeared under layers of flood-laid sedimentary rock. Instead, the Euphrates is mentioned again in Genesis 15:18...This suggests that the rivers' integrity was maintained. Second, it would require an inordinate amount of water to flood the entire Earth.... popular explanation....water canopy...However, this explanation is incongruent with archaeological evidence that concludes ancient Mesopotamia - the land of the Tigris and Euphrates - was 'an extremely arid environment that necessitated the use of irrigation for successful agriculture....But when we look at the original Hebrew text and consider the use of the words fountains and deep in other passages, it is more likely that the fountains of the deep were also irrigation canals."*

Your exposition on the "fountains of the deep" is very weak and it tears down the majesty of the scriptures-this is truly sad. The context of the scriptures in

early Genesis had nothing to do with canals. As well, your comments that Mesopotamia, initially pre-flood, was dry and arid is only valid in a local flood context. Pre-flood (e.g. if worldwide) this would not have been the case- nor can it be tested for.

3. *“Another supposition is that all animals and humans are derived from the survivor’s on Noah’s Ark....there is no way that the 2 million known species of animals could have fit onto the ark- not to mention the estimated 10 to 100 million species yet to be discovered.”*

There has been great discussion as to what animals, and at what level of diversity would be required to be on the ark. It is complex. But it is peculiar to me that you accept transmutation among whole animal groups but seem to limit the amount of variation within a group. This then is used to assess what would be needed post-flood to repopulate the earth with the diversity of animals that we now see on it. Of course this whole subject is affected by one’s views of time.

4. *“Finally, the migration of animals across the proposed mountains and oceans is quite difficult to explain. To make matters worse, there are no traces of animal ancestors along the proposed courses of migration.”*

Migration among continents is only an issue if it took long ages for the separation of continents, and that animals did not begin to migrate until the ocean expanses were already developed. This presents a difficulty only because of the time sequencing you have chosen to accept. Yet, there is good evidence that there have been massive migrations of many if not most land animals into the various continents. Of course there are examples of local isolated animal and plants forms.

Section: *The Location of the Flood.*

5. *“Assuming that the Flood was local, its location has not yet been precisely determined. Though excavation of flood deposits in Mesopotamia provides evidence of ancient flooding, there is no evidence that it is unambiguously the biblical flood.The location of the flood remains mysterious and of continued interest to modern geologists.”*

Your comments regarding the location of the flood and landing of the Ark are correct only if one is a local flood advocate. While Mt Ararat is a traditional site-and problematic to explore, the whole Uratu Mountain Range remain possibilities.

Section: *Other Flood Stories.*

6. *“In 1931 Nelson compiled more than 41 flood stories and found that despite their remarkable similarities, there were also striking differences....’Flood stories are almost entirely lacking in Africa, occur only occasionally in Europe, and are absent in many parts of Asia....This evidence again raises concerns for the theory that flood stories have all spread from on original source.”*

The information regarding flood stories throughout the earth is inaccurate. I know of at least 17 African flood stories and 27 in Asian countries that have between 5-7 similarities. Yet, it is true that the Noah Flood Account is strikingly different in the context of who God was and is. Is this surprising? Do you not admit that natural man opposes the knowledge of God? Is not the Flood an example of God’s judgment upon mankind? Why would they want to retain a correct understanding of it? Of course if one believes in “primitive man” then the concept of God probably evolved as well, and thus the image of Him in flood stories. I don’t believe this-and to believe otherwise is to truly limit the ability of God to reveal Himself to mankind.

Section: *Lessons of the Flood.*

7. *“In other words, God’s intention in this story is to bring Earth back to its state of chaos and start over again, with a new ‘Adam’ (Noah). We will read throughout scripture that God’s plan of ‘starting over’ will culminate in Jesus, the ‘last Adam’.”*

Your comment about allegorizing the Noah Flood story so as to bring the earth back to chaos and to start over again with a new Adam (Noah); and then that Jesus will start over as the last Adam is weak exegesis-especially if one is a local flood advocate. Will Jesus be a local Adam or will He be King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all the whole earth when He returns next time?

Section: *Conclusion.*

8. *An informed reading of the Genesis story neither permits nor requires it to be a universal, global flood, and geology does not support a universal reading. A non-global interpretation does not undermine the lesson learned from the Genesis Flood account that are pertinent to the life of faith.*

This comment was not in the letter but I add it at this point. I profoundly disagree. If one undermines the historicity of major portions of the Bible then how is one to have faith in the historicity of the life of Jesus Christ. If the sin of men was not physically judged by God in a universal way then (Noah’s time), how do we know that Jesus Christ will judge all men when he returns? If the Flood was local is the return of Jesus going to be local?

My final comments to them:

Much more could be said, and we could debate details back and forth. Yet again, it all depends on our application of the philosophic assumptions, religious beliefs, and the limited observations of science as to how we build our worldview. I applaud and thank God that you claim to have faith in Christ. And I apologize if some of my words seemed to be unkind, but your group deeply concerns me. I believe that you violate the integrity of the scriptures.

Sincerely,

John G Leslie PhD, MD, PhD

PhD Experimental Pathology (Obtained from the Univ. of Utah, 1980 for work done on some sequencing of the protein Elastin and its metabolism. Later post doc work involved isolating mtDNA from cancer cells.)

MD (Obtained from Oral Roberts Univ. Medical School, 1989; and subsequent dual residencies in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at the Univ. of Oklahoma, 1993.)

PhD Archeology and Biblical History (Obtained from Trinity Southwest University, Albuquerque, NM, 2012 for an analysis of the Noah Flood Story as a True Narrative Account.)