



THE FLOOD

Course 3, *People of Destiny*, Lesson 2

The Problem: Is the Bible's account of a worldwide flood true, or does it conflict with scientific evidence? This question has sparked debate for generations and continues to challenge the minds of many today. The prevailing view taught in schools and colleges is that the Biblical flood, much like the account of creation, contradicts established geological and biological theories. Evolutionary theory, often presented with great certainty, asserts that the world as we know it is the product of millions—or even billions—of years of gradual development. This process, we are told, is ongoing and will continue indefinitely.

Geological theories frequently cite the formation of sedimentary and metamorphic rock layers, believed to have developed over millions of years, as evidence against the concepts of special creation and a global flood. These rock layers, often arranged into a "geological timetable," are said to demonstrate both the age of the Earth and the evolution of life from primitive to complex forms. However, young-earth creationist scholars, such as Jonathan Sarfati in his book [The Genesis Account: A theological, historical, and scientific commentary on Genesis 1–11](#) (2015), challenge this interpretation. Sarfati critiques the assumptions underlying evolutionary and geological theories, pointing out that many of these ideas are not based on direct observation but rather on speculative extrapolations.

Sarfati explains that supposed "evidence" for the progression of life forms in rock layers is inconsistent and does not hold up under scrutiny. He argues that the geological timetable is a construct of interpretation rather than an observable reality. Furthermore, Sarfati emphasizes that much of the evolutionary framework requires as much—if not more—faith to believe as the Bible's account, given its reliance on theoretical assumptions that cannot be directly tested.

While Christians acknowledge that the Genesis creation and flood cannot be verified through the scientific method, belief in these accounts is not a matter of blind faith. Instead, it is a reasoned faith supported by both Scripture and evidence. As we delve into this study, we will see how the facts of geology and history lend credence to the Biblical narrative of a worldwide flood.

Objectives:

- I. We begin by exploring the Biblical account of the flood as presented in Genesis chapters 6–8.
- II. We examine and discuss key questions raised by the Bible's narrative.
- III. We investigate whether Jesus and the apostles affirmed the concept of a universal flood.
- IV. We review flood traditions that have persisted across cultures and nations throughout history.
- V. We highlight significant geological evidence that supports the possibility of a universal flood.
- VI. We reflect on the relevance and significance of the Genesis flood for people in the modern world.

I. THE BIBLE FLOOD STORY: GENESIS 6-8

We encourage Bible students to take the time to read Genesis chapters 6–8 independently. In this study, we will focus on key highlights from the account to guide deeper understanding and reflection.

The Word:

1. Why did the Lord decide to destroy the earth with a universal flood? Genesis 6:1-7, 12-13, 17
2. Describe the ark or ship which the Lord commanded Noah to build. Genesis 6:14-16
3. How long did Noah spend building the ark and warning the world of the coming disaster? Genesis 6:3; compare 5:32; 7:6; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5
4. What animals were miraculously taken into the ark? Genesis 7:2-3, 8-9
5. Who were the human beings saved in the ark? Genesis 7:7; compare 6:10
6. Who closed the door of the ark? Genesis 7:16
7. How long did it rain? Genesis 7:12 17
8. Did the waters cover the entire earth? Genesis 7:19-23
9. How long did the ark float on the waters before coming to rest in the mountains of Ararat? Genesis 7:24; compare 7:11; 8:4
10. How long were Noah and his family in the ark after it came to rest? Genesis 8:13-16
11. What was Noah's first act after leaving the ark? Genesis 8:20-22

Explanation: Noah was about 480 years old when God revealed His plan to judge the earth with a flood. At 500, Noah welcomed his first son, Japheth, and his other two sons followed in the years ahead. Over the next 120 years, Noah faithfully served as "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), warning the world of the coming judgment. Sadly, his message went unheeded, and the flood arrived as God had foretold during Noah's 600th year. Only Noah, his family, and the animals that entered the ark were spared from destruction, with the ark sealed by God Himself one week before the rain began.

The floodwaters surged for 40 days, and the ark remained afloat for five months before resting on the mountains of Ararat. After another two and a half months, the mountain peaks became visible, and over a month later, the ground was dry enough to leave the ark—but Noah waited for God's command. Scripture notes that Noah and his family spent a total of one year and 17 days in the ark (Genesis 7:11; Genesis 8:14-16).

The Bible vividly describes the catastrophic events surrounding the flood: "*All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened*" Genesis 7:11. Prior to this, it had never rained on the earth (Genesis 2:5–6). The flood narrative suggests intense seismic and volcanic activity accompanied by torrential rains for 40 days. As the waters rose, people and animals likely sought higher ground in desperation, but the floodwaters ultimately covered even the highest mountains, extinguishing all life outside the ark. Noah had faithfully warned the world for 120 years, yet his message was met with rejection and mockery.

Relevance: Have you reflected on the message in Genesis 6:3: "*And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man*"? How might this verse speak to us today about God's patience and our response to His call?

Questions Concerning the Bible Account

Four questions immediately come to mind as we read the Bible story of the flood.

1. What was the capacity of the ark? Was it large enough to accommodate Noah, his family, and representatives of every kind of animal and bird, as well as containing sufficient room for the storage of a year's supply of food?
2. How many species were in the ark? What do we mean by a species? Does it mean that every single variety within a particular kind was represented in the ark?
3. How did the animals get into the ark? Assuming that the whole earth was populated at that time, how could animals come from long distances to enter the ark?
4. Where did all the water come from, and what became of it after the flood?

1. What was the capacity of the ark? The dimensions as given in Genesis 6:15 are 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. It was to have three floors (6:16). Taking the cubit as 18 inches, the floor space on one deck would be 33,750 square feet. For the three decks, the floor space was 101,250 square feet. However, the smaller animals were probably in cages stacked one above the other. Hence, we must consider the cubic space. Considering the cubit as 18 inches, the cubic capacity of the ark was 500,000 cubic feet for each deck, or 1,500,000 cubic feet for the three decks.

There were various cubits in ancient times. The cubit of 20.7 inches was the standard measure for Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia. The "great cubit" of Ezekiel was about 2 feet. Taking the cubit as 2 feet, the ark would have been 600 feet long, 100 feet wide, and 60 feet high, with a capacity of 3,600,000 cubic feet; large enough to store 10,000 railroad cattle cars each containing 18 to 20 head, or 80 to 100 head of sheep.

2. How many species of animals and birds were in the ark? It depends on what is meant by "species." If species refers to a kind of creature, which when bred over a period of time is capable of producing many different varieties within that kind, it would have been possible for the ark to contain representatives of the animal and bird kingdom as described in Genesis. Genesis 6:20 indicates that the birds, creeping things, and animals were taken into the ark "*after their kind.*" All of the varieties of horses could be descended from the few taken into the ark. Not every variety of the bovine family would need to be represented. The varieties within the kind developed later. This is demonstrated by the many different races and colors of humans who have developed from Noah's family. Undoubtedly there were some of the larger, more destructive animals left out. It is difficult to imagine the Brontosaurus being represented in the ark. The flood mercifully destroyed some of these fearsome antediluvian species.

3. How did the animals get into the ark? The fossil record provides evidence suggesting that Earth once had a more uniform climate, supporting the possibility that animals and birds of the same species could thrive in various regions before the flood. Fossils of tropical plants and animals have been discovered in areas that are now polar, indicating significantly different global climate conditions in the distant past. This evidence aligns with the idea of a stable, temperate environment prior to the catastrophic changes caused by the flood.

Contemporary research in paleoclimatology further supports this notion. For example, tropical fossils found in Antarctica and large coal deposits formed by dense forests in areas now arid or polar demonstrate that climate conditions in the past were far different from those today. As noted by creationist scholar Michael J. Oard in [Flood by Design: Receding Water Shapes the Earth's Surface](#) (2008), these findings align with the flood model and challenge the evolutionary framework. Similarly, mainstream paleoclimatology resources such as William F. Ruddiman's [Earth's Climate: Past and Future](#) provide insights into global climate stability in Earth's distant history, corroborated by geological evidence from fossils, sediments, and ice cores.

Given these conditions, it would not have been necessary for representatives of each animal kind to traverse continents to reach the ark. Furthermore, the Biblical narrative (Genesis 7:2-4, 8-9) emphasizes that the animals and birds were drawn to the ark by God—a miraculous event beyond human comprehension.

It is worth noting that the theory of evolution also relies on its own set of "miracles"—phenomena that cannot be explained by natural processes alone. If we choose to place our faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and allow our faith to grow by examining its fulfilled prophecies and transformative power in human lives, accepting the miracle of the animals being drawn to the ark becomes an act of reasoned faith rather than blind belief.

4. Where did all the water come from to cover the entire earth, including the highest mountains? While any explanation can only be suggestive, there are several possibilities to consider. The flood described in Genesis was likely accompanied by dramatic climatic and geological changes. Before the flood, evidence suggests that the earth may have experienced a more uniform, temperate climate. Fossil discoveries, such as tropical plants found in polar regions, support the idea of a stable global climate prior to the flood. A sudden shift in climate could have triggered violent storms as warm and cold air and water interacted for the first time.

Additionally, the Bible describes the breaking up of "*the fountains of the great deep*" (Genesis 7:11-12), which could indicate significant volcanic and earthquake activity. Active volcanoes release vast amounts of water vapor, while earthquakes can bring water, steam, and molten rock to the surface. These events, combined with massive tidal waves, could have contributed to the inundation of land. Evidence of extinct volcanoes and past seismic activity is found in many parts of the world, lending credibility to this scenario.

It is also plausible that large-scale geological shifts occurred during the flood. The sea floor may have risen, and vast sections of land could have sunk below sea level, allowing water to cover the earth. The Bible states that the water rose to a height of 15 cubits above the highest mountains (Genesis 7:19-20). It is worth noting that the mountains before the flood may not have been as high as today's peaks. Fossiliferous rock layers found at the summits of modern mountains, such as the Himalayas, indicate that these rocks were formed underwater and later uplifted by tectonic activity during or after the flood.

5. Where did the water recede to? The answer lies in the current distribution of land and water on Earth. Today, approximately 70% of the planet's surface is covered by water, with land making up the remaining 30%. If the ocean basins were leveled and the landmasses were smoothed to an average elevation, the entire earth would be submerged under about 1.5 miles of water. This aligns with the idea that the floodwaters receded into the ocean basins as the land rose and the sea floor settled.

Contemporary creationist scholars, such as Dr. Andrew Snelling, have explored these ideas in works like [Earth's Catastrophic Past](#) and articles from the Biblical Science Institute. These resources discuss geological evidence for the flood, including marine fossils found at high altitudes and sedimentary rock layers deposited by water on a global scale.

These are crucial questions for a Christian believer. If Jesus and the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, accepted the universal flood of Noah's time as a historical fact, then rejecting the flood on the basis of apparent scientific evidence raises significant concerns. To do so would imply that the Lord Himself, along with His inspired prophets, was either mistaken or uninformed—a position incompatible with faith in Christ. For a Christian, belief aligns with what Christ believed and taught.

What is the New Testament evidence?

The Word

12. How did Jesus demonstrate His belief in the historic reality of Noah's flood? Matthew 24:38-39; Luke 17: 26-27
13. What does the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews say about Noah and the flood? Hebrews 11:7
14. How did Peter reveal his acceptance of the universal flood as an historical reality? 1 Peter 3:19-20; 2 Peter 2:5

Explanation: A Christian believes in the reality of the worldwide flood because Jesus and the apostles affirmed it as a genuine historical event. Their teachings and the context of their words make it clear that, for them, the flood was far more than a symbolic or mythical illustration. It was a true event in which Noah, a righteous man, and his family were the sole survivors of a universal judgment on a sinful world.

Relevance: As a Christian, do you share the same belief as Jesus that Noah's flood was a real, historical event?

II. THE FLOOD TRADITIONS AMONG THE WORLD'S NATIONS

The Genesis account of the flood does not stand alone. Traditions of a catastrophic flood are found among nearly all nations and tribes across the globe, as one would expect if such an event truly occurred. These traditions, preserved through oral histories and religious practices, provide compelling evidence of a shared memory of a world-altering disaster. The widespread existence of flood traditions aligns with the Biblical narrative, suggesting that the survivors of the flood passed down the story to their descendants, who carried it with them as they spread across the earth.

Flood traditions from diverse cultures share striking similarities, including three key points:

1. All living beings, including humans and animals, were destroyed by water.
2. An ark or boat served as the means of escape for a small group of survivors.
3. This remnant of humanity became the foundation for repopulating the earth.

In many accounts, the flood is attributed to the wickedness of mankind, echoing the moral themes of the Genesis narrative.

Dr. Richard Andree compiled 88 flood traditions from around the world, including 28 from Asia, 5 from Europe, 7 from Africa, 10 from Australia and the South Seas, and 46 from the Americas. These traditions demonstrate the global scope of the flood's impact on human memory and culture.

Perhaps the most well-known flood tradition is the Babylonian account found in "The Epic of Gilgamesh." Discovered by British orientalist George Smith in 1872, this story was recorded on clay tablets in the ancient library of Assurbanipal in Nineveh and is now housed in the British Museum. Written in cuneiform centuries before Moses penned Genesis, the Babylonian account shares several points in common with the Biblical flood story:

1. The flood was caused by the earth's violence and corruption.
2. The dimensions of the ship are described, though they differ from the Biblical ark.

3. Representatives of all animals were brought aboard the vessel.
4. The flood lasted 7 days in the Babylonian account, while Noah was in the ark 7 days before the rains began in Genesis.
5. Both accounts mention the release of birds—a raven and a dove in the Bible, and a raven, dove, and swallow in “The Epic of Gilgamesh.”
6. A thank offering is made after the flood in both stories.
7. Both narratives include a covenant promising that the earth will never again be destroyed by a flood.
8. Each story concludes with a blessing upon the hero and his wife.

Contemporary creationist scholars, such as Dr. Andrew Snelling in Earth’s Catastrophic Past (2009), have emphasized the significance of these global flood traditions. Snelling argues that the consistency of these accounts across cultures points to a shared historical event—a universal flood that left an indelible mark on human history. Additionally, studies of oral traditions and archaeological findings continue to affirm the plausibility of a worldwide flood as described in Genesis.

The similarities among flood traditions, despite cultural variations, provide strong evidence for the historicity of a global flood. While mythical embellishments may exist, the core elements of these stories align with the Genesis account, increasing confidence in its reliability as a record of a real event.

We conclude that the world-wide existence of a universal flood tradition is strong evidence that such an event did occur. The similarities of the stories, which have been handed down for many centuries, indicate that, whatever the mythical additions, there is, indeed, a firm basis of historic fact, and that our world was once inundated by floodwaters. This fact increases our confidence in the Genesis account.

III. GEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR A UNIVERSAL FLOOD

1. **Ossiferous Fissures:** These are large fissures in the earth filled with the remains of animals that do not naturally coexist, such as elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, reindeer, and wolves. The incomplete skeletons suggest a catastrophic event, such as animals fleeing rising floodwaters and congregating on higher ground, only to be overwhelmed and buried by sediment during seismic activity. Examples of such fissures have been found in England, France, Spain, Germany, Russia, and the U.S., including the bone bed at Agate Springs, Nebraska, where the remains of approximately 9,000 animals were discovered. This phenomenon aligns with the catastrophic conditions described in the Genesis flood narrative.

2. **Fossil Lakes:** Large inland lakes, remnants of receding floodwaters, provide further evidence. Some, like Lake Baikal in Siberia, remain filled with water, while others, such as the Gobi Desert and the Sahara, have become arid. Marine fossils and salt deposits in these regions suggest they were once submerged. In North America, ancient lakes such as Lake Agassiz and Lake Bonneville (the precursor to the Great Salt Lake) covered vast areas. These features are consistent with the aftermath of a global flood.

3. **Coal Beds:** Coal deposits, found worldwide, are formed from compressed vegetation buried under sediment. The vast coal beds on every continent suggest a pre-flood world rich in vegetation, rapidly buried and compressed during the flood. Well-preserved plant fossils within coal layers further support this explanation. The global distribution of coal aligns with the catastrophic burial of vegetation during a universal flood.

4. **Oil Reservoirs:** Oil, derived from organic matter, is found in fossil-bearing strata deep within the earth. The sudden burial of massive quantities of marine and terrestrial organisms during the flood could explain the formation of these reservoirs. Fossil fish, often found in pristine condition, indicate rapid burial and preservation, consistent with a catastrophic event.

5. Fossils Worldwide: Fossils of marine organisms are found on mountain ranges, such as the Himalayas and the Rockies, indicating that these areas were once underwater. Polystrate fossils (fossilized trees extending through multiple sediment layers) and mass fossil beds, such as those in the Canadian Rockies, suggest rapid burial during a catastrophic event. The presence of marine fossils far inland, such as fossil seals near Montreal, further supports the flood model.

6. The Mammoth: Mammoths, primarily found in Siberia, were preserved in permafrost with food still in their stomachs, indicating a sudden and catastrophic event. The temperate climate required to sustain these creatures no longer exists in these regions. The rapid burial and preservation of millions of mammoths and other animals align with the Genesis flood narrative.

Conclusion: Each of these geological phenomena is best explained by a global flood as described in Genesis. Contemporary creationist scholars, such as Dr. Andrew Snelling, Dr. Leonard Brand, Dr. Ariel A. Roth, and Dr. Timothy G. Standish, have extensively documented these findings in works like Earth's Catastrophic Past and Faith, Reason, and Earth History. Their research challenges uniformitarian assumptions and provides compelling evidence for the historicity of the flood as described in the book of Genesis.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FLOOD FOR US TODAY

In the statement of Jesus already cited (Matthew 24:38-39) the significance of the flood is spelled out as a warning to us all. Just as people of the pre-flood world refused to listen to the preaching of Noah and persisted in their lives of sin, so many people today are rejecting earnest appeals that they repent and accept Christ as Lord and Savior. As the antediluvians were overwhelmed by a flood which they did not expect and refused to believe could occur, so end-time mankind will be horrified when Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven "*inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus*" 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

The Word:

15. How do the Scriptures illustrate the suddenness and unexpectedness of the second coming of Jesus? 2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3; 16:15
16. What attitudes of end-time people are a repetition of the attitudes of Noah's contemporaries? 2 Peter 3:3-7
17. How will the unbelieving react when they see Jesus coming? Revelation 6:14-17
18. What is the reaction of the remnant who are saved when they see Jesus coming? Isaiah 25:8-9.

Explanation: The moral and spiritual conditions of Noah's day are mirrored in our world today—immorality and violence permeate every corner of the earth. Just as God declared then, He says now: "*My Spirit shall not always strive with man*" Genesis 6:3. For 120 years, Noah faithfully proclaimed that the righteousness of God was the only path to salvation from the impending flood. Similarly, thousands of voices around the world today herald the message that Jesus is coming soon, and only His righteousness can save us from the coming judgment—a cataclysm of fire that will consume the ungodly.

Sadly, as in Noah's time, countless people refuse to heed the warning, rejecting the possibility of such a cosmic event. Yet, like Noah, the remnant of faithful believers will continue to share the message until they are sealed

with the Lord at the close of probation (Revelation 22:11). Following this will come a brief time of waiting and trouble (Daniel 12:1), leading to the triumphant return of Christ: *“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God”* 1 Thessalonians 4:16. For the lost, the glory of Christ and the holy angels (Matthew 25:31) will be overwhelming, and they will cry out for the mountains and rocks to fall on them. Yet the saved will lift their eyes in joyful anticipation, saying, *“This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us”* Isaiah 25:9.

Relevance: The Lord's love for you is immeasurable and everlasting. He declares, *“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you”* Jeremiah 31:3. Do not let Him say of you, *“I have called and you refused”* Proverbs 1:24. Jesus holds the gift of eternal salvation, offering peace and power now, and joy unspeakable at His coming.

Will you receive Him as Lord and Savior and escape the calamity that is approaching? Open your heart to His boundless love and allow Him to prepare you for the ark of safety.

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. There was not enough room in the ark for all the animals Noah wanted to save.
 - b. The theory of evolution leads to rejection of the Bible flood account.
 - c. The fossil record proves that life on our world evolved for millions of years.
 - d. As a Christian, accepting the Biblical account of the flood aligns with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles
2. Discuss: Why do you think God requires faith rather than providing undeniable scientific evidence for His existence, creation, and the flood? How does this dynamic shape our relationship with Him and our understanding of His character?
3. Further reflection: Faith is central to our relationship with God because it requires trust, dependence, and humility. If absolute scientific evidence for His existence, creation, and the flood were provided, belief might become a matter of intellectual certainty rather than a heartfelt choice. Faith allows us to willingly connect with God, beyond just tangible proof, fostering a deeper bond. Furthermore, God often reveals Himself in ways that engage both our hearts and minds, inviting us to explore creation, history, and His Word to see the evidence that aligns with faith. While He does provide signs and testimonies of His existence—such as the intricacies of nature, fulfilled prophecies, and transformed lives—He leaves room for faith as an essential act of free will. Faith not only shapes our understanding of His character but also strengthens our reliance on Him, preparing us for eternity.