

SESSION 50: THE EXTENT AND POWER OF THE FLOOD, PART ONE

Genesis 7:13-22

November 24, 2024

PREFACE

Let us begin by reading the first part of our passage.

Read Genesis 7:13-16.

We have already demonstrated the repetition employed in Chapter Seven—but it is important that we note that it is not *just* repetition, as if the repeated passages have no merit in themselves. Thus I would like to offer just a few brief observations on this passage—nothing earth-shattering, just interesting—before we move into the more dramatic second part.

v13

On this very day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,

I love to discover things hidden beneath the text—things which, in varying ways, illumine the richness of God's word. Here we have the simple word “very,” as in “On this very day...” This is the Hebrew *etsem*, which means “bone.” This seems odd to our ears, but it is a Hebrew idiom which means that the “bone” of a thing is in the very thing itself” (thus in the KJV, “selfsame,” which is the most accurate rendering, but a bit confusing without the explanation). It refers to the *substance* of something, as it was used in Genesis 2:23, when Adam declared,

“This one finally is **bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh.”**

v14

they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind—every fowl, every winged creature.

This verse closes with what is called an apposition—a helpful, explaining second phrase or expression—so after “every bird after its kind,” we have “every fowl, every winged creature.”

Leupold: After the general expression, “every sort of bird according to its kind,” comes an apposition which in Hebrew reads: “every little bird of every wing,” or even better: “every sort of little bird of every sort of wing.” Meek has found a very happy rendering for the phrase by the expression: “everything with feathers and wings.” That is practically what is meant. Insects are manifestly included under this head.

v16

And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as **God had commanded him; and **Yahweh** closed it behind him (emphasis added).**

Here we have an eloquent example of how the two designations for God are used by Moses. Again, from H. C. Leupold,

God, the awe-inspiring Ruler of all, **Elohîm**, laid all these commandments upon Noah by virtue of His supreme authority. In the same breath, with skillful use of the proper divine name, the author asserts that it was **Yahweh**, the always gracious and faithful, who “closed the door after him,” so guarding him against possible assaults of the wicked, as well as preventing him from attempting to show ill-timed mercy to last minute penitents.

Now we are ready to appreciate the cataclysmic ramifications of the Flood.

Read Genesis 7:17-22. 

To proceed we must answer two important questions:

1. Was the Flood a *global* or a *localized* event?
2. What was the physical impact of the Flood on the earth?

Was the Flood a global or a localized event?

Look again at v19.

And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered.

Whitcomb writes,

One need not be a professional scientist to realize the tremendous implications of these Biblical statements. If only *one* (to say nothing of *all*) of the high mountains had been covered with water, the Flood would have been absolutely universal; for water must seek its own level—and must do so quickly!

For this next section I have relied—not totally, but substantially—on John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris' *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and its Scientific Implications*, (P&R Publishing, 1961). As stated earlier in Session 48, I do not agree with Whitcomb on all points, but his book is a thoroughly researched, scientific and scholarly treatise examining Creation and the Flood from the perspective of biblical inerrancy.

Whitcomb then quotes our familiar source, H. C. Leupold:

Leupold: A measure of the waters is now made by comparison with the only available standard for such waters—the mountains. They are said to have been “covered.” Not a few merely but “all the high mountains under all the heavens.” One of these expressions alone would almost necessitate the impression that the author intends to convey the idea of the absolute universality of the Flood, e. g., “all the high mountains.” Yet 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. ❏

As to the height of the water, I have heretofore been confused by the statement in v20 that “The water prevailed fifteen cubits [i.e., 22 feet] higher...” I have scratched my head over the common interpretation that this refers to the draft of the ark; *how do you get that from this statement*, I wondered. But at last, Whitcomb explains it in a way that even I can understand. He points out that it does not mean “the flood was only fifteen cubits deep,” nor does it mean that all “the mountains were covered to a depth of *only* fifteen cubits, for this would require that all antediluvian mountains be exactly the same altitude.”

Whitcomb: The true meaning of the phrase is to be found in comparing it with Genesis 6:15, where we are told that the height of the ark was thirty cubits. Nearly all commentators agree that the phrase “fifteen cubits” in 7:20 must therefore refer to the draught [draft] of the ark. In other words, the ark sank into the water to a depth of fifteen cubits (just one-half of its total height) when fully laden. Such information adds further support to this particular argument for a universal Flood, because it tells us that the Flood “prevailed” over the tops of the highest mountains to a depth of *at least* fifteen cubits. **If the Flood had not covered the mountains by at least such a depth, the ark could not have floated over them during the five months in which the waters “prevailed” upon the earth.** (emphasis added)

Let me add some more etymological background to this passage—specifically, vv18-20. Note the repetition of the word translated “prevailed”—except for in the NIVs—the Hebrew, *gabar*). One might be inclined to interpret “prevail” as meaning “to continue,” but it really means to be strong, mighty—and the passage shows the water becoming mightier and mightier. YLT says it well: “and the waters are mighty, and multiply exceedingly upon the earth; and the ark goeth on the face of the waters. And the waters have been very very mighty on the earth, and covered are all the high mountains which are under the whole heavens; fifteen cubits upwards have the waters become mighty, and the mountains are covered.”

That tracks for me.

Frankly, here we have another of those moments where one must either take the Bible for what it says—or not. But a word of caution: one might be inclined to base their argument for a global inundation on the word translated “earth.” But the Hebrew *erets* is a flexible word, and can refer to the globe, land, countryside, a district or region, or even the soil. So that alone cannot be the basis for arguing for a global Flood. There is, however, plenty without it.

As we have seen already, the most readily available—the most obvious—basis for a global (or universal) Flood is found in vv19-20:

And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that *all the high mountains under all the heavens were covered*. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and *the mountains were covered*. (emphasis added)

Now, as we consider the various heights of mountains on this planet, we might be inclined to look favorably on the argument for a localized inundation. After all, Mt. Ararat may be a mere seventeen thousand feet, but Mt. Everest has an altitude of *twenty-nine* thousand feet. In answering this I believe Leupold stumbles.

Leupold: We hold that the solution lies in this that those few peaks that rise above Mt. Ararat were unknown both to the people of the days of the Flood as well as to the contemporaries of Moses. All the mountains, they knew of were covered. In any case, as Keri indicates, such mountain peaks in relation to the whole earth would amount to no more than a few pinpoints on a globe, and are disregarded because of the limited horizon of the ancients.

To that I say, *Now hold on: you can't have it both ways*. Look at vv21-22:

And all flesh that moved on the earth breathed its last, that is birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, as well as all mankind. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life—of all that was on the dry land—died.

How would the ancients—Noah, Moses, et al—have *any visual* knowledge that *all* animals, *all* mankind was wiped out by the Flood? Even if the inundation were localized, they could not possibly be able to visually account for the death of “All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life.”

No doubt Moses, the human author of Genesis, along with Noah, hadn't a clue about a peak located on the border between Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China—just as neither of them could vouch, humanly speaking, for every last human and every last animal drowned in the Flood. Moses wrote by faith in God's Holy Spirit who fed him the information—just as we *read* by faith God's holy word, which states clearly that *every* mountain was covered, and *every* being that breathed was extinguished, save for those shut inside the ark—just as God had declared from the outset.

Read Genesis 6:12-13.

“...I am about to destroy them with the earth.” 📖

In our next session I will be speaking more to this business of the heights of mountains, but for now let's press on.

I have included in this session's handout a helpful chart found in Whitcomb's book, which he gleaned from a commentary on Genesis by E. F. Kevan. Whitcomb disagrees with Kevan's conclusion that the Flood waters continued to rise during the first 150 days, contending that the Flood reached its maximum depth after the first forty days.

Nonetheless this is a very helpful chart, offering a timeline for the entire Flood epoch, showing that the inhabitants of the ark were so secured for—not just “forty days and forty nights”—but for just over one year: 371 days.

There is much more evidence that can be cited—geological, historical, textual, etc.—to show that the extent of the Flood was global, but for time's sake (and the sake of your level of endurance) I have chosen to focus on the text itself for establishing this position. And I believe it clearly supports a global, or universal extent for the Flood.

In our next session we will be looking at the dynamic, physical impact the inundation had on the geology of this earth.

I do believe that in this passage as well as those in Chapter Seven *erets* is referring to the entire globe. It's just that that word *alone* is insufficient for grounding a universal or global interpretation for the Flood.

SESSION 50

The Extent and Power of the Flood, part one Genesis 7:13-22

v16

H. C. Leupold: God, the awe-inspiring Ruler of all, **Elohim**, laid all these commandments upon Noah by virtue of His supreme authority. In the same breath, with skillful use of the proper divine name, the author asserts that it was **Yahweh**, the always gracious and faithful, who “closed the door after him,” so guarding him against possible assaults of the wicked, as well as preventing him from attempting to show ill-timed mercy to last minute penitents.

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vv21-22

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Fig. 1. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE FLOOD^a

There were forty days during which the rain fell	40
Throughout another 110 days the waters continued to rise, making 150 days in all for their "prevailing" (7:24)	110
The waters occupied 74 days in their "going and decreasing" (AV margin). This was from the 17th day of the seventh month to the 1st day of the tenth month (8:5). There being 30 days to a month, the figures in days are 13 plus 30 plus 30 plus 1	74
Forty days elapsed before Noah sent out the raven (8:6-7)	40
Seven days elapsed before Noah sent out the dove for the first time (8:8). This period is necessary for reaching the total and is given by implication from the phrase "other seven days" (8:10)	7
Seven days passed before sending out the dove for the second time (8:10)	7
Seven days more passed before the third sending of the dove (8:12)	7
Up to this point 285 days are accounted for, but the next episode is dated the 1st of the first month in the 601st year. From the date in 7:11 to this point in 8:13 is a period of 314 days; therefore an interval of 29 days elapses	29
From the removal of the covering of the ark to the very end of the experience was a further 57 days (8:14)	57
TOTAL	371

This table appears in E. F. Kevan's commentary on Genesis in *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Davidson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1953), pp. 84-85.

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