

Was the Flood Worldwide?

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Christians who accept evolution as true, change the Bible to conform with evolutionary theory. They do not believe the Noachian Flood covered the entire Earth, because evolutionists do not accept a planetary flood. This article will make a reasoned discussion based on what the Bible says about the Flood. Was the Flood regional, or did it cover the entire Earth? We will critique what one Christian evolutionist claims are biblical reasons for the Flood being just regional.

The Foundation of Faith

Glenn Morton was a creationist who “published more than twenty items in the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*.”¹ As a geophysicist working in the oil industry, he was constantly confronted with data that he could not interpret in a creationist way. Because there was no creationist explanation that satisfied him, his faith grew weaker until he “was on the verge of becoming an atheist.”² He then started interpreting Scripture in a way that conformed to evolutionary theory, and he credits that for saving his Christian faith. Glenn Morton was one of five authors published in the book, *God’s Word or Human Reason? An Inside Perspective on Creationism*. All were formerly young-Earth creationists. Two of these five authors are now atheists, and one is a deist.³ These three shipwrecked their faith in Jesus due to evolutionary theory.

1 Glenn Morton, “Chapter 2: The Flood and the Fossil Record,” in *God’s Word or Human Reason? An Inside Perspective on Creationism*, ed. Jonathan Kane (Tigard, Oregon: Inkwater Press, 2016), 54.

2 Morton, 56.

3 Emily Willoughby, “Introduction,” in *God’s Word or Human Reason? An Inside Perspective on Creationism*, ed. Jonathan Kane (Tigard, Oregon: Inkwater Press, 2016), xix.

My first reaction is that creation is an article of the Christian faith. Like all articles of the Christian faith (like all biblical teachings), we believe in creation through faith. In Hebrews 11:3 (EHV) we read, “By faith we know that the universe was created by God’s word, so that what is seen did not come from visible things.” *If your belief in creation rests on how well creationists can explain fossils and geology, then your faith has the wrong foundation.* It is a faith built on sinking sand, not on the Rock that is the resurrected Christ.

My second reaction is that there is much that creationists cannot explain in detail about how fossils and the geologic column formed. The same goes for evolutionists. See the article, “Fossils in the Geologic Column—Problems for Evolution,” on pages 17-32 of the spring 2018 *LSI Journal* (www.LutheranScience.org/2018spring).

My third reaction is that yes, oil companies use evolutionary models to successfully find new oil, coal, and gas deposits. That does not mean those evolutionary models correctly describe the history of those deposits. Many scientific models, theories, and laws successfully explained and predicted observations about the world for decades or even centuries, until they didn’t and were then replaced by new models, theories, and laws. For more on this see the article, “How Can a Lie Like Evolution Have Evidence?” at www.LutheranScience.org/2015Lie.

A Regional Flood?

Glenn Morton proposes,

If one accepts that Noah’s flood was not necessarily global, the account in Genesis could be describing any of a few massive localized floods that have occurred at various points in human history. ...Whichever of these floods one identifies with the Genesis account, they offer an alternative to the young-Earth perspective that the Flood covered the entire planet.⁴

⁴ Morton, 25.

Geologists see evidence that several very large regional floods have occurred in the past. Morton tries to convince his readers, using Scripture, that one of these regional floods is the Noachian Flood. He begins with the Bible passage that he claims is “most often used as an argument for a global flood,”

The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Genesis 7:18-20 [An unidentified translation used by Morton.]

Morton seems to be correct that this passage is commonly used as proof that the Flood was global. It is the primary passage used in *The New Answer Book 1*,⁵ which is one of the most widely read creationist books, and is a product of the world’s largest creation apologetics ministry (Answers in Genesis—AIG). This book also uses two other passages to show that the Flood was global.

The Entire Sky

Morton claims that, while this passage may at first seem to say that all the mountains of the Earth were covered by the Flood, that may not be what this passage states. He calls our attention to the phrase “under the entire heavens.” He says this phrase is used six times⁶ in the Old Testament, twice to describe the Flood. He claims that the non-flood uses do not describe the entire planet. It seems to me that only one of these six passages clearly supports Morton’s claim that this phrase can mean only part of the Earth in a Bible passage. That is the passage that Morton discusses:

⁵ Ken Ham and Tim Lovett, “Was There Really a Noah’s Ark & Flood?” in *The New Answers Book 1*, ed. Ken Ham, 22nd printing (Green Forest AR: Master Books, 2015), 136. First printing was in 2006. A free pdf is at ([accessed 8-26-20](https://answersingenesis.org/answers/books/new-answers-book-1/)) <https://answersingenesis.org/answers/books/new-answers-book-1/>

⁶ Morton references Genesis 6:17, 7:19, Exodus 17:14, Deut. 2:25, 30:4, and Job 37:3. Exodus 17 and Deut. 30 are especially weak arguments for Morton’s case.

This very day I will begin to put dread and fear of you on the faces of the people everywhere under heaven, so that they will hear reports about you and they will tremble, and they will be shaking because of you. Deuteronomy 2:25 (EHV)

Morton asks if the Lakota Sioux in North America, the Zulus in South Africa, the indigenous Australians, or the Pacific Islanders heard reports of the Jewish victory over the Egyptian army and became scared of the Jews. So, if “under the entire sky” means only part of the Earth in Deuteronomy 2:25, could it also mean only part of the Earth when describing the Flood in Genesis?

Earth

Next Morton correctly points out that the Hebrew word translated as “earth” in Genesis 6:17 and 7:18-20 is translated as “land” and as “country” in hundreds of other places in the Old Testament. Morton says it is the translator’s interpretation to use the English term “planet Earth” instead of “land” or “country” in Genesis 6:17 and 7:18-20.

Morton “Corrects” the Translation

Using his recommended changes, Morton creates what he calls “the correct translation of Genesis 7:18-20”:

The waters rose and increased greatly on the land, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the land, and all the high mountains in the region were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits. Genesis 7:18-20

[Morton’s “corrected” translation with changes underlined.]

World

Morton states that 2 Peter 2:5 is often used as proof that the Flood was global.

And if God did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, along with seven others when he brought a flood on the world of ungodly people:
2 Peter 2:5 (EHV)

Morton states that the Greek word *kosmos*, here translated as “world,” can also have other meanings such as “harmonious order,” “worldly affairs,” and “ungodly multitude.” In essence, his argument is that once again the translators have put their own interpretation into the Bible text, when other translations would be equally valid.

Clarity from Other Passages

A summation of Morton’s argument is that Genesis 6:17, Genesis 7:18-20, and 2 Peter 2:5 can be understood as describing a worldwide flood or a regional flood, depending on which dictionary definition of the Hebrew and Greek words are used. *It seems to me that the context of the Genesis Flood account (Genesis 6:1 – 9:17) makes it clear that this was a worldwide flood, but let’s give Morton the benefit of the doubt for a moment.* When we find a passage to have multiple possible meanings, we turn to the rest of Scripture to make things clear. What do we find in the rest of Scripture that sheds light on the scope of the Flood?

Rainbow Promise

God said to Noah and to his sons, who were with him, “Listen, I will now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with everything with you that has the breath of life: with the birds, with the livestock, and with every wild animal that is on the earth with you, with everything that

went out of the ark, even with every wild animal on the earth. I will establish my covenant with you: Never again will all living creatures be cut off by the waters of a flood. Neither will there ever again be a flood to destroy the earth.

Genesis 9:8-11 (EHV)

To me this is like the time of the waters of Noah. As I swore that the waters of Noah will never again cover the earth, so I am swearing that I will not be angry at you, and I will not rebuke you. Isaiah 54:9 (EHV)

In Genesis 9:8-17, which is partially quoted above, God promises, “Never again will all living creatures⁷ be cut off by the waters of a flood.” Now, if the Flood was just a regional flood that killed people and animals in a certain area, God has not kept his promise! There have been many people and animals killed by regional floods since the time of Noah. Now I suppose that Morton might claim that “all living creatures” not on the ark did die, since they all inhabited the region that was flooded and none lived in the rest of the world. That would be difficult to believe, since there were more than 1,650 years between creation and the Flood.

Even if Morton was correct in that claim, there is a second part to God’s rainbow promise which cannot be so easily written off. God promises: “Neither will there ever again be a flood to destroy the earth.”⁸ God repeats this promise in Isaiah 54. If the Flood was just a regional flood, God has not kept this promise! There have been many regional floods since the time of Noah.

In these words (Genesis 9:8-17), God promises to never again send a flood like the one He sent in Noah’s day, and He declares that rainbows⁹ are the sign of His promise. This rainbow promise is very clear. It is solid proof that the Flood was worldwide in scale. With this rainbow

⁷ The Hebrew words here translated as “all living creatures” literally mean “all flesh.”

⁸ The Hebrew word here translated as “earth” is the same Hebrew word that Morton wishes to translate as “land” or “country” in Genesis 6:17 and 7:18-20.

⁹ Genesis 9:12-17.

promise, Scripture itself rejects Morton's "corrected" version of Genesis 7:18-20. Even so, let's look at a few of the many other reasons why the Flood was not regional, but was instead worldwide.

Twenty Feet Above the Mountains

Even Morton's "corrected" version of Genesis 7:18-20 has the water twenty feet (fifteen cubits) above the mountains and also covering "all the high mountains in the region." It is difficult to imagine how this situation could exist in a regional flood. The flooded area would have to be surrounded on all sides by water tight barriers taller than the high mountains of the flooded region and even 20 feet taller than the flooded mountains. An area that is well below sea level, like the Dead Sea area in the Holy Land, would meet this requirement. The problem then, is how would the water drain away to end the flood (Genesis 8:3-5). The water from a worldwide Flood could drain away by having the land rise and/or the sea bottom lower during the months that the water drained. Morton cannot use that as a way to drain his proposed regional flood. Since Morton is attempting to make the Bible conform to evolution, he cannot include fast moving land masses (land rising and/or falling in only months) which evolutionary theory does not allow. Of course, Morton could claim God used a miracle to drain the water.

Purpose of the Flood

The LORD saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that all the thoughts and plans they formed in their hearts were only evil every day. The LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with sorrow. The LORD said, "I will wipe out mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, along with the animals, the creeping things, and the birds of the sky, because I regret that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ...In the sight of God the earth was morally corrupt, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked at the earth

and saw that it was corrupt, for all flesh was corrupt in all their ways on the earth. So God said to Noah: I have decreed the end of all flesh, because the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Genesis 6:5-8, 11-13 (EHV)

God gives people time to come to saving faith in their Savior Jesus Christ. We call this time their “time of grace.” God brings our time of grace to an end when we die. The purpose of the Flood was to bring the time of grace to an end for the pre-flood people. God would end the lives of the people and animals who were not on the ark. The Flood did exactly that:

All living creatures that moved on the earth perished, including birds, livestock, wild animals, every creeping thing that crawls on the earth, and all mankind. Everything that breathed the breath of life through its nostrils, that is, everything that was on the dry land, died. Every living thing that was on the face of the earth was wiped out, including mankind, livestock, creeping things, and birds of the sky. They all were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, as well as those who were with him in the ark. The waters overwhelmed the earth for one hundred fifty days. Genesis 7:21-24

Every day, God ends the time of grace for many people through their death. Sometimes, God ends the time of grace for many people with a single event, such as was done with the Flood. Many times God revealed in advance His intention to end the time of grace for many people, including the accounts of: Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20 – 19:29), Nineveh (Jonah 3:1–10), the Egyptian first born (Exodus 11:4–8), Jericho (Joshua 6:17–21), and the Israelites when David sinned (2 Samuel 24:9–25). In these cases and others, God was very clear in the details of who would die. God was also clear about who would die in the Flood—everyone on the Earth who was not on the ark. Morton proposes we reject the normal and most obvious meaning of the Genesis Flood account and instead interpret it in a cumbersome way, so that the Flood conforms to evolutionary theory.

People and Animals Escape Death

We have now considered several passages revealing that the purpose and result of the Flood was to kill every person, bird, and land animal not on the ark. If Morton is correct and the Flood was just a regional flood, wouldn't some people, birds, and animals be able to escape death by leaving the flooded area? This would be especially true for those living near the edge of the flood zone. They could cling to floating debris to escape. The birds could fly to dry land. Even if you somehow interpret these passages so that God only planned to kill the people, animals, and birds in the flood zone, there is a problem. No one can escape God.

Why an Ark?

Why did God command Noah to build a 450-foot-long, 75-foot-wide, 45-foot-tall ship (Genesis 6:13-21)? If the Flood was regional, why not have Noah, his family, and the animals leave the flood zone? Such a journey would be far easier than building a giant ship, stocking it with food and water, and living on it for an entire year.

Conclusion

We can be certain that the Flood covered the entire Earth because God reveals that in Scripture. It was not simply a regional flood. Still, Christians who reject what God says about creation and the Flood, and instead embrace evolutionary theory, will continue to claim that the Flood was regional in scope.

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