

HOW TO BELIEVE THE BIBLICAL TEACHING OF A "UNIVERSAL" FLOOD WITHOUT VIOLATING THE NATURAL LAWS WHICH WE SEE IN THE EARTH (A brief summary-type presentation)

There are several evidences that the Biblical flood was widespread in the earth, rather than being a very localized flood. Most important is the fact that the Genesis account (chapters 6-8) indicates that the Flood was a very major physical disturbance on the earth. Some of the statements in these chapters (Amer. Revised Version, 1901) which make it necessary for us to recognize the major proportions of the Flood are these:

Genesis 7:11 states that "all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." This seems to make it clear that the oceans supplied water for flooding, in addition to the falling of rain. Probably earthquakes in the oceans caused great waves of water to wash up on the land, and it may be that uncommonly large cyclone funnels carried water onto the land from the sea.

Genesis 8:4 and 5 give us information by which we know that the ark was floating continuously for six months (cf 7:11), and that the water was still so high that no appreciable amount of land could be seen until about seven and one-half months after the Flood began. Chapter 8:6-10 gives us further confirmation of the long period that was required for the major part of the waters to run off into the oceans. In relation to this fact, remember that the falling of rain had continued for only 40 days (7:12).

These facts, as recorded in the Bible, lead us to conclude that the Flood was a truly major physical disturbance on the earth. We are not saying that the Flood had covered the tops of mountains higher than perhaps 2,000 feet. There were no mountains that high in the area which conservative Bible scholars agree was the dwelling place of pre-diluvian man. (Compare the fact that, even at the time of the building of the Tower of Babel--Genesis 11:1-9, the idea of dispersing beyond the region of Mesopotamia was not something that man had contemplated.) Even though Genesis 7:19 says that "all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered," we do not need to take this as applying to areas of the earth which were completely beyond the region which God had designated for the occupancy of early man. (See the [of Eichman's] for an explanation of why such terms as "all" and "under the whole heaven" of 7:19-23 can legitimately be regarded as spoken from the standpoint of the local observers in the flood area.) But the fact that distant, high mountain ranges and distant continents may not have been covered with water should not lead us to believe that the Flood had no appreciable effect upon the remote continents. Any earth-disturbance which caused all of the conditions described in Genesis 7 to 8, over an area so extensive that an ark was necessary to save the animals of that region, must certainly have been great enough to affect at least the shores and lowlands of all continents of the earth. In fact, it is possible, as many Bible scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries have suggested, that the rotation and axial inclination of the earth could have been somewhat altered--at least temporarily. Three possible effects of such alteration could have been (1) a hastening of the movement of polar ice to produce more intense glaciation, (2) extreme changes in the temperature of air masses in certain parts of the earth, and (3) the conditions which brought about the rapid freezing and burial of large numbers of mammoths in Siberia. (The freezing and burial of these mammoths is a very remarkable reality which does not allow a satisfactory explanation based on presently-known phenomena.)

Belief in a Biblical flood such as we have just described allows us to give due reverence to the Biblical language we find in Genesis 6-8 and still to avoid the contradictions and immense scientific problems which are so common in "Flood