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ARTICLES

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GENESIS FLOOD

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WHAT THIS ARTICLE IS ABOUT

The extent of the Genesis Flood has been vigorously debated by biblical scholars. For those who accept a recent creation week of six literal consecutive, twenty-four-days, a universal Flood is necessary to explain the existence of the geologic column. The thesis of this study is that only the traditional interpretation which posits a literal, universal, worldwide Genesis Flood does full justice to all the relevant biblical data. The author summarizes twenty-two lines of biblical evidence — including terminological, thematic, contextual, grammatical-syntactical, literary-structural, logical-conceptual, theological, canonical, and typological which support the universality of the Genesis Flood.

I. CONFLICTING SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION

One of the most controversial aspects of the Flood narrative concerns the extent of the Genesis Flood. Three major positions are taken: (1) the traditional, which asserts the universal, worldwide nature of the Deluge; (2) limited or local flood theories, which narrow the scope of the Flood story to a particular geographical location in Mesopotamia; and (3) non-literal (symbolic) interpretation, which suggests that the Flood story is a non-historical account written to teach theological truth.

Against this third position, the non-historical, we must note the evidences within the biblical account affirming the historical nature of the Flood. In the literary structure of the Flood story (see Shea 1979), the genealogical frame or envelope construction (Genesis 5:32 and 9:28-29) plus the secondary genealogies (Genesis 6:9-10 and 9:18-19) are

indicators that the account is intended to be factual history. The use of the genealogical term *tôlêdôt* (“generations,” “account”) in the Flood story (6:9) as throughout Genesis (13 times, structuring the whole book), indicates that the author intended this story to be as historically veracious as the rest of Genesis (Doukhan 1978, p 167-220). Walter Kaiser analyzes the literary form of Genesis 1-11 and concludes that this whole section of Genesis must be taken as “historical narrative prose” (Kaiser 1970).

A number of references in the book of Job may allude to the then-relatively-recent Flood (Job 9:5-8; 12:14-15; 14:11-12; 22:15-17; 26:10-14; 28:9; 38:8-11; see Morris 1988, p 26-30). The historical occurrence of the Flood is part of the saving/judging acts of God, and its historicity is assumed and essential to the theological arguments of later biblical writers employing Flood typology (see Davidson 1981, p 326-327); more on this point later.

Thus according to the biblical writers, far from being a non-historical, symbolical, or mythical account written only to teach theological truths, the Flood narrative is intended to accurately record a real, literal, historical event.

For evangelical Christians who take seriously the biblical record and accept the historicity of the Flood account, the question still remains whether the event described is to be taken as a local, limited flood or a universal, worldwide cataclysm.

The limited flood theories rest primarily on scientific arguments that present seemingly difficult geological, biological, and anthropological problems for a universal flood. (See Boardman 1990, p 212-223; Custance 1979, p 28-58; Kidner 1967, p 93-95; Mitchell 1982/1993; Ramm 1954, p 232-249; Young 1977, p 171-210). Since the scientific argumentation is not the subject of this article, I can only suggest that these problems are not insurmountable, although much more study is needed. A number of studies provides a growing body of evidence for diluvial catastrophism as an alternative to conventional long-age geology (see Coffin & Brown 1983; Roth 1985, 1986a, 1988; Whitcomb 1988; Baumgardner 1994a,b).

The local flood theories further assert that the terminology describing the extent of the Flood should be interpreted in a relative and not absolute universal sense. The various seemingly universal terms are regarded as implying only a limited locality; they are seen to indicate universality within the writer’s worldview but a limited scope in terms of our modern

world view. (See Boardman 1990, p 223-226; Custance 1979, p 15-27; Kidner 1967, p 93-95; Ramm 1954, p 241-242.) We will take up this issue in the next section of this article.

The traditional conservative understanding of the Flood narrative is that Genesis 6-9 describes a universal, worldwide Deluge. It should be noted that this is also the view of the majority of liberal-critical commentators on Genesis 6-9, although they regard the biblical view as borrowed from the ANE accounts and not historical. (See Hasel 1975, p 78 and Note 16 for bibliography of representatives of this position: Fohrer, Koehler, Noth, Procksch, Skinner, Sarna, Speiser, von Rad, Vriezen, Zimmerli, etc. Some of these and other more recent representatives of this view are cited later in this article.)

The thesis of this article is that only the traditional position of a literal, universal worldwide Flood does full justice to the biblical data, and this universal interpretation is crucial for Flood theology in Genesis and for the theological implications drawn by later biblical writers.

II. BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY IN GENESIS 6-9 INDICATING UNIVERSALITY

Perhaps the most important kind of biblical evidence for a universal Flood is the specific all-inclusive terminology found within the Genesis account itself. The late Gerhard Hasel has provided a careful treatment of this terminology in three penetrating studies in previous issues of *Origins* (Hasel 1974, 1975, 1978), and therefore I need not go into detail in this article. Eight different terms or phrases in Genesis 6-9, most echoing their counterparts in the worldwide creation account of Genesis 1-2, indicate universality.

First, the term *hā'āreṣ* “the earth,” occurring 46 times in the Flood narrative (Genesis 6:12, 13, 17, etc.), always without any accompanying genitive of limitation, clearly parallels the usage of the same term in the account of worldwide, universal creation in Genesis 1:1, 2, 10. (While the term at times elsewhere may be used without a genitive and still in context be limited in scope to a certain “land,” the explicit link to creation in the Flood account (see especially Genesis 6:6, 7) clearly gives a universal context for its usage in Genesis 6-9.)

Some have argued that if Moses had wished to indicate the entire world, he would have used the Hebrew term *tēbēl*, which means the world as a whole, or dry land in the sense of continents. This word is

never used in the Flood narrative. But it should be pointed out that *tēbēl* is never used in the entire Pentateuch, including the creation account. In fact, the term appears nowhere in the narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible, but only in poetic texts (39 times) usually as a poetic synonym in parallel with *hā-āreṣ* “the earth.” Thus this argument from silence does not adequately consider the contextual and poetic use of terminology, and carries little weight.

A second expression, “upon the face of all the earth” *ʿal-p^enê kol-hā-āreṣ* (Genesis 7:3; 8:9), clearly alludes to the first occurrence of the same phrase in the universal context of creation (Genesis 1:29; cf. Genesis 1:2 for a related universal expression), and thus here also implies a universality of the same dimension, i.e., the entire surface of the global mass. While the shortened term “all the earth” (*kol-hā-āreṣ*) by itself may have a limited meaning elsewhere when indicated by the immediate context (see Exodus 10:5, 15; Numbers 22:5, 11; 1 Kings 4:34; 10:24; 2 Chronicles 36:23; Genesis 41:57), the immediate context of the Flood story is the universal sinfulness of humankind whom God had made and created (Genesis 6:6,7) to have dominion over “all the earth” (Genesis 1:26), and the succeeding context is the universal dispersal of man after the Tower of Babel “upon the face of all the earth” (Genesis 11:4, 8, 9). In each of the four occurrences of the phrase “upon the face of all the earth” in Genesis outside the Flood story (Genesis 1:29; 11:4, 8, 9), it clearly has the universal sense of the entire land surface of the globe, and there is nothing in the Flood narrative to indicate any less universality. (It should be also noted that the one place in Genesis where in context a similar phrase “upon all the face of the earth” is not universal [the famine mentioned in Genesis 41:56], the Hebrew has a change in word order from elsewhere in Genesis [*ʿal-kol p^enê hā-āreṣ*]).

Third, the phrase “face of the ground” *p^enê hā-adāmāh* (five times in the Flood narrative, 7:4, 22, 23; 8:8, 13), occurs in parallel with universal terms we have just noted, “the earth” (7:23) and “face of all the earth” (8:9); and this phrase “face of the ground” likewise harks back to its first usage in the universal context of creation (Genesis 2:6).

Fourth, the term *kol-bāśār* “all flesh” occurs 12 times in Genesis 6-9 (Genesis 6:12, 13, 17, 19; 7:16, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15, 16, 17). The word *kol* “all” (which can occasionally express less than totality if the context demands), before an indeterminate noun with no article or possessive suffix, as here in Genesis 6-9, indicates totality. God’s announcement to destroy “all flesh” (Genesis 6:13, 17) and the narrator’s comment that

“all flesh” died (Genesis 7:21-22), except the inhabitants of the ark, indicates universal destruction. The one occurrence of *kol* plus the determinate noun *hābāsār* “all the flesh” (in Genesis 7:15) likewise indicates totality as well as unity.

Fifth, the expression “every living thing” (*kol-hāḥay*) of all flesh (Genesis 6:19), is another expression of totality; in 7:4, 23, the similar term *kol-hay^eqûm* means literally, “all existence.” This term is given further universal dimensions by the addition of the clause harking back to creation — “all existence that *I have made*” (7:4) — and by the exclusive statement “Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive” (7:23). As Hasel puts it:

There is hardly any stronger way in Hebrew to emphasize total destruction of ‘all existence’ of human and animal life on earth than the way it has been expressed. The writer of the Genesis Flood story employed terminology, formulae, and syntactical structures of the type that could not be more emphatic and explicit in expressing his concept of a universal, world-wide flood (Hasel 1975, p 86).

Sixth, the phrase “under the whole heaven” (*taḥat kol-hāššāmāyim*, Genesis 7:19), is used six times in the OT outside of the Flood narrative, and always with a universal meaning (see Deuteronomy 2:25; 4:19; Job 28:24; 37:3; 41:11; Daniel 9:12). For example, the phrase is used to describe God’s omniscience: “For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees under the whole heavens” (Job 28:24). Again, it depicts God’s sovereignty: “Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine” (Job 41:11 KJV). (Note that the usage in Deuteronomy 2:25, describing “the nations under the whole heaven,” is further qualified and limited by the phrase “who shall hear the report of you,” and thus is potentially universal and not an exception to the universal sense.)

The universal phrase “under the whole heaven” or “under all the heavens” also universalizes the phrase “under heaven” (Genesis 6:17) in this same Flood context. The word “heaven” alone can have a local meaning [e.g., 1 Kings 18:45], but here the context is clearly universal. Ecclesiastes, which contains numerous allusions to creation, likewise utilizes the term “under heaven” with a universal intention (Ecclesiastes 1:13; 2:3; 3:1; cf. the parallel universal expression “under the sun” in Ecclesiastes 1:3, 9; 2:11, 17; etc.).

In the Flood account this phrase “under the whole heaven” is part of two forceful verses describing the extent of the Flood: “and the waters

prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered” (7:19, 20). Critical scholar John Skinner notes that 7:19, 20 “not only asserts its [the flood’s] universality, but so to speak proves it, by giving the exact height of the waters above the highest mountains” (Skinner 1930/1956, p 165).

The biblical language here simply cannot be explained in terms of a local sky, and certainly cannot refer to the local mountains being covered by snow, as some proponents of a local flood suggest. H.C. Leupold points out that the writer of vs. 19 is not content with a single use of *kol* (“all”) in “all the high mountains,” but “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” (Leupold 1942, p 301-302).

Seventh, Hasel devoted an entire scholarly article to the phrase “all the fountains [*ma^c-yemoth*] of the Great Deep [*t^ehôm rabbāh*]” (Genesis 7:11; 8:2), and showed how it is linked with the universal “Deep” (*t^ehôm*) or world-ocean in Genesis 1:2 (cf. Psalm 104:6: “Thou didst cover it [the earth] with deep [*t^ehôm*] as with a garment; the waters were standing above the mountains”). The “breaking up” and “bursting forth” (i.e., geological faulting) of not just one subterranean water spring in Mesopotamia, but of *all* the “fountains” of the Great Deep, coupled in the same verse with the opening of the windows of the heavens, far transcends a local scene. Hasel perceptively concludes that “the bursting forth of the waters from the fountains of the ‘great deep’ refers to the splitting open of springs of subterranean waters with such might and force that together with the torrential downpouring of waters stored in the atmospheric heavens a worldwide flood comes about” (Hasel 1974, p 71).

Eighth, in another article, Hasel (1978) shows how the Hebrew Bible reserved a special term *mabbûl* which in its 13 occurrences refers exclusively to the universal Genesis Flood (12 occurrences in Genesis, once in Psalm 29: 10). This word may be derived from the Hebrew root *ybl* “to flow, to stream.” The term *mabbûl*, which in the Flood narrative is usually associated with *mayim* “waters,” seems to have become “a technical term for waters flowing or streaming forth and as such

designates the flood (deluge) being caused by waters. ... *mabbûl* is in the Old Testament a term consistently employed for the flood (deluge) which was caused by torrential rains and the bursting forth of subterranean waters” (Hasel 1978, p 92-93). This technical term clearly sets the Genesis Deluge apart from all local floods, and is utilized in the Psalm 29:10 to illustrate Yahweh’s universal sovereignty over the world at the time of the Noahic Flood: “The Lord sat enthroned at the Flood, and the Lord sits as King forever.”

Summarizing regarding the technical terminology used for the extent of the Flood in Genesis 6-9, Hasel writes:

The Genesis flood narrative provides ample evidence of being an account which is to be understood as a historical narrative in prose style. It expects to be taken literally. There is a consistent and overwhelming amount of terminology and formulae ... which on the basis of context and syntax has uniformly indicated that the flood story wants to be understood in a universal sense: the waters destroyed all human and animal plus bird life on the entire land mass of the globe. To read it otherwise means to force a meaning on the carefully written and specific syntactical constructions of the original language which the text itself rejects (Hasel 1975, p 87).

III. OTHER BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR A UNIVERSAL FLOOD

Many additional lines of biblical evidence converge in affirming the universal extent of the Flood and also reveal the theological significance of this conclusion. We will summarize fourteen points that emerge from the biblical text.

First, the trajectory of major themes in Genesis 1-11 — Creation, Fall, plan of redemption, spread of sin — is universal in scope and calls for a corresponding universal judgment. We have already noted in reference to specific Flood terminology the numerous allusions to the universal context of creation. The creation of “the heavens and the earth” certainly is not local in scope according to Genesis 1-2.

Likewise, the Fall of humanity in Adam and Eve led to the sinful condition of the entire human race (*hā²dām*), not just the inhabitants of Mesopotamia (see Genesis 6:5, 11; Romans 3:19; 5:12). Again, the Protoevangelium (first Gospel promise) outlined in Genesis 3:15, involves the universal moral struggle between the spiritual descendants (or “seed”) of the serpent and the spiritual descendants (“seed”) of the woman,

culminating in the victory of the representative Messianic Seed over the serpent (see Robertson 1980). This plan of redemption is certainly universal in scope.

In a similar way, the sinful condition of humankind described at the time of the Flood includes more than those living in the Fertile Crescent. From *God's* perspective, not simply from the culturally conditioned local view of the narrator, we have the results of the divine investigative judgment: "And God saw that the wickedness of man (*hā^ṣdām*, human-kind) was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Such universal sinfulness naturally calls for universal judgment.

Second, the divine purpose given for the bringing of the Flood makes explicit its universal scope: "And the Lord said, 'I will destroy man [*hā^ṣdām*], humanity] whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them" (Genesis 6:7). Nothing less than a complete destruction of the human race (except for Noah, 6:8) seems envisaged. Given the length of time from creation (over 1650 years minimum), the longevity of the antediluvians (nearly a thousand years), and God's command at creation to "fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28), it is highly unlikely that the pre-Flood population would have stayed only in Mesopotamia. Thus the destruction of humanity would necessitate more than a local Flood.

Third, the genealogical lines from both Adam (Genesis 4:17-26; 5:1-31) and Noah (Genesis 10:1-32; 11:1-9) are exclusive in nature, indicating that as Adam was father of all pre-Flood humanity, so Noah was father of all post-Flood humanity. From the descendants of Noah "the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood" (Genesis 10:32), and the Tower of Babel experience spreads humanity across the globe (Genesis 11:1-19).

Striking extra-biblical evidence that all human races, and not just the nations of the Fertile Crescent, are included in the descendants of Noah, and retain memory of the universal Flood, is found in the amazing prevalence of ancient flood stories throughout the world. Over 230 different flood stories are known and occur among the most diverse peoples of the earth (see Frazer 1918, 1:105-361; Nelson 1931). A worldwide flood is by far the most frequently-given cause for past universally destructive calamities in the folk literature of antiquity (Thompson 1955, 1:182-194).

A remarkable number of these oral and written traditions agree upon the basic points of the biblical account: all humankind was destroyed by a great flood as a result of divine judgment against human sin, and a single man and his family or a few friends survived the deluge in a ship or other sea-faring vessel. The stories nearest to the area of the Dispersion at Babel are the closest in detail to the biblical account (see Heidel 1946, Jacobsen 1981, and Lambert & Millard 1969). This vast body of ancient witnesses to a worldwide Deluge is powerful testimony to the historicity and universality of the biblical Flood.

Fourth, the same inclusive divine blessing to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth is given to both Adam and Noah (Genesis 1:28; 9:1). This is another linkage between universal creation and the flood, between the original beginning and the “new beginning.” As the human race at creation flows from Adam and Eve, so the postdiluvial humanity is populated through Noah.

Fifth, the covenant (Genesis 9:9-10) with its rainbow sign (Genesis 9:12-17) is clearly linked to the extent of the Flood, and includes the whole earth (Genesis 9:13-17). If there was only a local flood, then the covenant would be only a limited covenant, and the rainbow sign of “the all-embracing universality of the Divine mercy” (Delitzsch 1888/1976, 1:289-290) would be stripped of its meaning.

Sixth, the viability of God’s promise (Genesis 9:15; cf. Isaiah 54:9) and the integrity of God in keeping His promise is wrapped up in the worldwide extent of the Flood. This point cannot be underscored too heavily: if Genesis 6-9 describes only a local flood, then God has broken His promise every time another local flood has happened! The only way God’s promise not to send another flood to destroy every living thing (Genesis 8:21) can be seen to have been kept is if the Flood was a universal one and the whole human race outside the ark was destroyed.

Seventh, the universality of the Flood is underscored by the enormous size of the ark detailed in Genesis 6:14-15 and the stated necessity for saving all the kinds of animals and plants in the ark (Genesis 6:16-21; 7:2-3). A massive ark filled with representatives of all non-aquatic animal/plant kinds would be unnecessary if this were only a local flood, for these kinds could have been preserved elsewhere in the world. Yet the divine insistence in the biblical record is that the animals were brought into the ark to preserve representatives of all of the various kinds (Genesis 6:19-20).

As a matter of fact, if only a local flood were in view, the building of any ark at all, even for Noah and his family, would have been superfluous — God could simply have warned Noah and his family in time to escape from the coming judgment, just as he did with Lot in Sodom. But the point of the narrative concerning the ark is that there was no other escape; in the midst of the Flood “only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained” (Genesis 7:23).

Eighth, the covering of “all the high mountains” by at least 15 cubits (Genesis 7:19-20) could not involve simply a local flood, since water seeks its own level across the surface of the globe. Even one high mountain covered in a local Mesopotamian setting would require that same height of water everywhere on the planet’s surface.

In this connection we note that it is not necessary to postulate the existence of mountains as high as Mt. Everest at the time of the Flood, and thus to require waters covering the earth to a depth of six miles, as some proponents of a local flood suggest would be necessary (see Ramm 1954, p 242). The antediluvian mountains were very possibly much lower than at present. Passages in the book of Job and Psalms may well be referring to the process of postdiluvian mountain uplift (see Job 9:5; 28:9; and Psalm 104:7-8).

Also in this connection we may address the objection that proponents of a local flood often raise, namely, that a worldwide Flood would imply “that the earth’s surface was completely renovated during the flood year” and thus “prediluvian topography would have been exceedingly different from postdiluvian topography.” This implication, they claim, is in conflict with biblical evidence which “strongly suggests that prediluvian geography did basically resemble postdiluvian geography” (Young 1977, p 210). Reference is made particularly to the topographical descriptions in connection with the Garden of Eden: the lands of Havilah and Cush, and the four rivers, two of which (the Tigris and the Euphrates) were familiar to the readers of Genesis in Moses’ time.

What is not recognized in these arguments, however, is that although there are some similarities between the prediluvian and postdiluvian topography, there are more differences than similarities. Two of the rivers mentioned apparently no longer existed in Moses’ time: the Pishon and Gihon are mentioned in terms of where they used to flow, in the postdiluvian areas of Havilah and Cush respectively. The other two rivers — the Tigris and Euphrates — are described as coming from a common source in the Garden of Eden, certainly far different from

their present courses. Thus the topographical descriptions in the early chapters of Genesis are in harmony with a worldwide Flood. Also, it is likely that survivors of the Flood would use familiar names for topographical features after the Flood, even though the earth's surface looked entirely different.

Ninth, the duration of the Flood makes sense only with a universal flood. The Deluge of rain from above and water from the fountains of the deep below continued 40 days (Genesis 7:17), and all the highest mountains were still covered five months after the Flood began; the tops of the mountains were not seen until after seven months, and the Flood waters were not dried up enough for Noah to leave the ark until one year and ten days had passed (see Genesis 7:11; 8:14). Such lengths of time seem commensurate only with a universal and not a local flood.

Tenth, the receding activity of the water (Genesis 8:3a, 54a) is described by Hebrew phrases which, in parallel with similar phraseology and grammatical construction for the “to and fro” motion of the raven (Genesis 8:7), should be translated as “going and retreating,” (see Austin 1990, p 218; Hasel 1978, p 93) and imply oscillatory water motion lasting for 74 days (see Genesis 8:3-5). The waters rushing back and forth like in ocean tidal movement as the overall level gradually decreased, supports a universal interpretation such as “the oceanic energy impulse model of the flood” (Austin 1990, p 218), but is incongruous with a local flood theory.

Eleventh, the NT passages concerning the Flood all employ universal language: “swept them **all** away” (Matthew 24:39); “destroyed them **all**,” (Luke 17:27); “he did not spare the ancient **world**, but preserved Noah with seven other persons, ... when he brought a flood upon the **world** of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5); “a few, that is eight persons, were saved through water” (1 Peter 3:20); Noah “condemned the **world**” (Hebrews 11:7). A local flood would not have ended the antediluvian world. As Archer states, “we have the unequivocal corroboration of the New Testament that the destruction of the human race at the time of the flood was total and universal” (Archer 1985, p 208).

Twelfth, the NT Flood typology assumes and *depends upon* not only the historicity, but also the universality, of the Flood to theologically argue for an imminent worldwide judgment by fire (2 Peter 3:6-7). Peter argues that just as there was a worldwide judgment by water causing the unbelieving antediluvian world to perish, so in the antitype there

must-needs-be a universal end-time judgment by fire bringing about the destruction of the ungodly (see Davidson 1981, p 326-327).

Thirteenth, key terms and motifs that we have already noted in Genesis 6-9 converge to make a major theological statement: the Noahic Flood is nothing less than the cosmic undoing or reversal of creation. Numerous biblical scholars have recognized this highly significant theological point of the Flood narrative. Nahum Sarna writes that “The Flood is a cosmic catastrophe that is actually the undoing of creation.” In other words, creation is being undone, and the world returned to chaos (Sarna 1989, p 48).

Tikva Frymer-Kensky describes the Flood as “the original, cosmic undoing of creation” (Frymer-Kensky 1983, p 410; cf. Frymer-Kensky 1985, p 312). Claus Westermann speaks of the “invasion of chaos into the created order; the flood assumed cosmic proportions” (Westermann 1974/1984, p 434). Umberto Cassuto points out that at the high point of the Flood, “We see water everywhere, as though the world had reverted to its primeval state at the dawn of Creation, when the waters of the Deep submerged everything” (Cassuto 1964, p 97). David Clines uses the apt term *bouleversement* or “reversal” of creation to depict the theological significance of the Flood (Clines 1972, p 136). For Joseph Blenkinsopp,

... the deluge is an act of uncreation, undoing the work of separation by returning everything to the primeval, watery chaos from which the created order first arose (Blenkinsopp 1992, p 83; cf. Blenkinsopp 1971, p 46-47).

Gerhard von Rad vividly underscores the universal implications of this undoing or reversal of creation:

... we must understand the Flood, therefore, as a catastrophe involving the entire cosmos. When the heavenly ocean breaks forth upon the earth below, and the primeval sea beneath the earth, which is restrained by God, now freed from its bonds, gushes up through yawning chasms onto the earth, then there is a destruction of the entire cosmic system according to biblical cosmology. The two halves of the chaotic primeval sea, separated — the one up, the other below — by God’s creative government (ch. 1:7-9), are again united; creation begins to sink into chaos. Here the catastrophe, therefore, concerns not only men and beasts ... but the earth (chs. 6.13; 9.1) — indeed, the entire cosmos (von Rad 1972, p 128).

Only a cosmic/universal Flood can theologically encompass the cosmic/universal reversal or undoing of creation described in Genesis 6-9.

Fourteenth and last, the cosmic reversal of creation is followed by a cosmic New Beginning. As Clines states it:

... the 'uncreation' which God has worked with the Flood is not final; creation has not been permanently undone. Old unities of the natural world are restored (8:22), and the old ordinances of creation are renewed (9:1-7) (Clines 1972-73, p 138).

Jacques Doukhan has shown the precise literary parallels between the successive stages of "re-creation" in the aftermath of the Flood (Genesis 8-9) and the seven days of creation in Genesis 1-2 (Doukhan 1987, p 133-134; cf. Gage 1984, p 10-20):

1. The wind over the earth and waters. Gen. 8:1; cf. Gen. 1:2.
2. Division of waters. Gen. 8:1-5; cf. Gen. 1:6-8.
3. Appearance of plants. Gen. 8:6-12; cf. Gen. 1:9-13.
4. Appearance of light. Gen. 8:13-14; cf. Gen. 1:14-19.
5. Deliverance of animals. Gen. 8:15-17; cf. Gen. 1:20-23.
6. Animals together with men, blessing, food for men, image of God. Gen. 8:18-9:7; cf. Gen. 1:24-31.
7. Sign of covenant. Gen. 9:8-17; cf. Gen. 2:1-3.

Thus in the over-arching literary structure of the "re-creation" in the Flood narrative, the universal dimension of the Flood is underscored by detailed parallels with the cosmic creation account of Genesis 1-2.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the question of the extent of the Genesis Flood is not just a matter of idle curiosity with little at stake for Christian faith. For those who see the days of creation in Genesis 1 as six, literal 24-hour days (see Hasel 1994), a universal Flood is an absolute necessity to explain the existence of the geologic column. A literal creation week is inextricably linked with a worldwide flood.

But a universal Flood is crucial not only in seeking to reconcile science and Scripture. It is also pivotal in understanding and remaining faithful to the theology of Genesis 1-11 and the rest of Scripture. (For a more detailed discussion of the theology of the Genesis Flood in its canonical context, see Davidson in press.) The many links with the

universal creation in Genesis 1-2 which we have noted in this study not only support the aspect of universality in the Flood, but serve to theologically connect Protology (Creation) and Eschatology (Judgment/Salvation) in the opening chapters of Scripture. The Flood is an eschatological step-by-step “uncreation” of the world and humanity followed by a step-by-step “re-creation” of the new world. “Thus,” writes von Rad, “the story of the Flood — and this is theologically the most important fact — shows an eschatological world judgment.... The world judgment of the Flood hangs like an iron curtain between this world age and that of the first splendor of creation” (von Rad 1972, p 129-130).

The theology of the universal Flood is therefore the pivot of a connected but multi-faceted universal theme running through Genesis 1-11 and constituting an over-arching pattern for the entire subsequent worldwide *creation* revealing the character of the Creator and His original purpose for creation; humankind’s turning from the Creator and the universal spread of sin ending in the universal “*uncreation*” through eschatological judgment; and *re-creation*, in the eschatological salvation of the faithful covenant remnant and the universal renewal of the earth.

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