

## Getting to Know your Bible

### *Did the Flood of Genesis 6-8 Actually Happen?*

Many things are possible, but few likely. The degree to which a matter tends toward either extreme of mere possibility or likelihood is the measure of its credibility. To say that something is possible is easy enough, but to say that it is likely requires hard, compelling evidence from a wide variety of sources. What of the Genesis account of the Flood? Is it likely? Or even possible? In this brief discussion, we wish to demonstrate that there is a dearth of compelling evidence that suggests not only the possibility but also the likelihood of the Flood. In other words, in this case the Genesis account is credible. The evidence for the Flood is twofold: scientific and historical. These two lines of evidence, taken together with textual considerations of the extent of the flood, corroborate the authority and authenticity of the account. We will discuss each of these in turn.

#### **The Scientific Evidence:**

Although the incompleteness and disharmonious nature of the scientific evidence for the flood has led some scholars to conclude “there is presently no convincing archaeological evidence of the Biblical flood,” suggestive evidence still abounds (Alexander Baker, 320). While it would easily exhaust the limits of this paper to list all the evidence, here’s an example that is interesting. Certain ossiferous fissures have been found around the globe. Each of these reach a depth of 140-340 ft deep and contain numerous bones of different animals, all unworn by age and piled together as if suddenly. As Gleason L. Archer concludes, “All these finds certainly point to a sudden catastrophe involving the breaking up of the earth surface into enormous cracks, into which were poured the corpses of great numbers of animals who were suddenly overwhelmed in a flood” (Archer, 218). Such scientific data, while not proving the flood account, fit in well with what we would expect to find in the case of a universal flood (see *The Extent of the Flood* for discussion of if the flood was universal or local).

#### **The Historical Evidence:**

Perhaps even more suggestive than the scientific evidence is the historical, by which we mean the number of similar accounts of a global flood from geographically separate peoples. Similar flood stories abound, such as the Hindu Manu, or Mexican Indian Tezpi, or the Algonquin Manabozho to name only a few (Archer, 220). How could so many different peoples separated geographically, linguistically, and historically for so long share such a similar flood story unless it was part

of their shared past? For more reading, see James Frazer’s *Folklore in the Old Testament*.

#### **The Extent of the Flood:**

Due to the logistical difficulties surrounding the Flood account, there are generally two understandings of how far reaching the flood was, geographically speaking. One view is that the Flood was universal; the other, that the flood was local. Proponents of the universal view argue that the text of Scripture leaves no room for a local flood theory; the plain sense of the text emphasizes the universality of the flood. However, those who argue for a local understanding of the flood are not without their own textual defense (see sources below for examples). Generally, proponents of a local flood attempt “to look beyond our own worldview and traditions and see the text in ways that the original audience may have seen it” (Alexander Baker 321). Both views have strong scientific theories to support their views as well.

#### **Taken Together:**

Is the Flood likely? First, we have the Biblical account of the event, the extent of which scholars are still in disagreement about. Second, we have the corroborating testimony of different peoples about a devastating flood and the lone survivor through whom the human race continues. Finally, we have just the kind of circumstantial scientific evidence for a catastrophic flood we would expect to find if the Biblical account was true. Taken together, these lines of evidence point we believe not only to the possibility but also to the likelihood of the event.

#### Sources used:

Archer, Gleason *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Updated and Rev. Ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

*Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* ed. D. Alexander and David Baker.