

2P1453

MOORE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 2042 00113102 2

# **The Flood of Noah's Day**

by Loraine Boettner

The flood recorded in Genesis chapters 6, 7 and 8 was an event that has been of great interest to almost all Bible scholars. We believe that it was of far greater importance both physically and spiritually than is generally believed even by most evangelical scholars.

That the earth has gone through at least one great calamity is indicated by the fact that the rocks over all parts of the earth, not merely in the mountains but across the plains and under the oceans, are not just big chunks of solid rock, but that everywhere they are in layers. And those layers show clear evidence of having been laid down in water as waves of varying intensity, some very great, passed over and left their deposits. In some places those layers are from 20,000 to 30,000 feet deep, sometimes with beds of coal or pools of petroleum between them. It is now known that the coal beds, and apparently the petroleum also, were formed when great masses of driftwood and other vegetation were buried and subjected to intense heat and pressure. And those coal and oil deposits indicate that the original earth had far more luxurious forests and other vegetation and was far more productive than is the present earth.

Various theories have been offered to explain the flood. But the questions remain: How was the flood caused? Where did that great mass of water come from? How was that water put in motion? And what were the physical results of that flood?

The most popular theory concerning the cause of the flood is that originally there was a great water vapor canopy surrounding the earth, and that when we are told that "the windows of heaven were opened," and that "the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:11, 12), what happened was that that canopy condensed and fell on the earth as rain.

But we cannot accept that theory. Surely if such a canopy ever existed with such tremendous water content, it would have caused an atmospheric pressure so great that life as we know it could not possibly have existed on the earth. Nor could the sunlight have gotten through to make vegetation possible. Nor does this theory explain the great mass of water that was involved in the flood,

water sufficient to cover the mountains: "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth: and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail: and the mountains were covered" (Gen. 7:19, 20). Nor does this theory explain how that water could have been put in motion so that the great waves would have left their sedimentary deposits, some of which are very massive. And surely it would not have taken 40 days and 40 nights for such a canopy to have exhausted itself and to have fallen down.

Others tell us that there may have been great subterranean caverns in the earth that were filled with water, and that it is that water that is referred to when we are told that "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up" (Gen. 7:11). But we cannot accept that theory either. If ever there were such masses of water in the earth, that would have produced conditions of such great imbalance, rock being so much heavier than water, that the water would have been forced to the surface in a very short time. And, as in the water vapor theory, the quantity of water from such a source would have been far less than would have been required to produce the effects that are said to have occurred, water sufficient to cover the mountains. And, like the water vapor theory, this theory does not explain how the water could have been put in motion in great waves so that the sedimentary rocks would have been formed.

How then are we to explain the flood? We find no forces at work on the earth today that can explain it. We can only conclude therefore that it had an *astronomical* cause.

But before we suggest a solution let us consider some other phenomena that have an important bearing on this problem. There is strong evidence, even compelling evidence, that at one time the world had an ideal climate from pole to pole. In some places in Siberia and in northern Alaska there are found the remains of warm climate plants and animals buried in the permanently frozen soil, which is known as the tundra or "permafrost." Some of the animals still have vegetation in their mouths and stomachs. There are literally thousands of mastodons (largest animals of the elephant family), bison, deer, sheep, camels, tigers, foxes, badgers and many others, sometimes thrown together in disorderly masses, some

with their heads drawn back and with broken bones, indicating that they died suddenly and in agony. The flesh of some of those animals has not decayed, indicating that a sudden and violent calamity struck them, that there was an immediate and radical change of climate, and that their bodies were frozen and buried before they had time to decay. In some places where the rivers have cut into their banks and have left exposed the bodies of those animals, wolves have torn out the flesh and eaten it. Also found in those northern regions are the remains of tropical and subtropical trees such as palm, elm, oak, maple, beech, fruit trees, shrubs and other warm climate vegetation wonderfully preserved in the coal beds, or more clearly marked in the rock formations immediately above or below the coal beds.

Another problem that has long puzzled scientists is how to account for the massive coal beds and petroleum deposits that are found in many parts of the earth, even in the Arctic. No such coal beds and oil deposits are being formed anywhere in the world today. It seems that great masses of vegetation were brought together by surging waters, whirlpools and other hydrolic phenomena, covered with layers of rock sediment, and subjected to intense heat and pressure. In many places there are huge fossil beds, skeletons of animals and reptiles, thrown together in disorderly fashion and with broken bones, indicating that they were killed as the result of some terrible catastrophe.

Clearly something very unusual has happened to this earth. We believe that it was a global destruction of fantastic proportions. The only credible account that we have of any such event is that recorded in the Bible, in the book of Genesis, which tells of a great, worldwide flood that God brought upon the earth because of man's sin. In Genesis 6:13 we read: "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." And in II Peter 3:6 we read: "... the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." We accept that explanation as the true account of what actually happened—God did "destroy" that earth, and the world that then was "perished."

And now for the real cause of that flood. We submit the following, not that it solves all the problems, but that it perhaps points the way toward various considerations



that as yet have not been given sufficient consideration. We have said that the flood must have had an astronomical cause. We know that in the solar system in the orbit between Mars and Jupiter, the fourth and fifth planets out from the sun, where in accordance with the systematic arrangement of the distances between the planets, where we normally would expect to find a planet, there is none. But in that orbit there are myriads of objects ranging in size from grains of sand to planetoids or asteroids, some several hundred miles in diameter. Those are all circling the sun just as the planets do, a mighty mass of interplanetary material of rock and ice, all very cold, even at sub-zero temperatures, because of their great distance from the sun. But for some reason that material did not coalesce. Astronomers tell us that hundreds or even thousands of those objects, meteorites or "shooting stars" as they are popularly known, fall into the earth every day, but that most of them are burned up before they reach the earth because of friction with the air. Now suppose that massive clouds of that material were providentially drawn off their courses and directed toward the earth. Coming in at low angles and at speeds of perhaps 20 to 25 miles per second as meteorites do, that could have caused such continuous, massive shocks to the earth that great quantities of ocean water would have been swept from their basins and would have spread over the earth in tremendously increasing waves and, given the tremendous carrying power of rapidly moving water even to the sixth power, such water would soon have rasped down the mountains and continents. Much water would have been vaporized, accounting for the 40 days and 40 nights of continuous rain. It would account for the great mass of water when we are told that "all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered"—a point that has long been a stumbling block to many critics. It would account for the sedimentary character of the rock formations that we find all over the earth—in places such as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, where the river has cut a channel a mile deep, with the rock in layers all the way down. And in many other places coal and oil are found much deeper than that. It would also account for the sudden change of climate in the polar regions. And we may add that if the flood did occur in this manner, then when the earth

reached a new equilibrium there would have arisen an entirely new system of continents and oceans, and we would have a totally different earth surface from that which existed before the flood.

Again we cannot say that the flood actually occurred in this manner. But we certainly can say that there was an abundance of interplanetary material available in the form of rock and ice if God did choose to use that method. And we believe that this explanation solves more of the problems connected with the flood than does any other that we have seen.

But some may ask, Does not this explanation rule out the supernatural? No, not at all. The Bible tells us that God created the earth, the sun and the moon and all the starry heavens. The whole course of nature is under His perfect control, and it was created expressly for His glory (Ps. 19:1; Rev. 4:11). He sends the sunshine and the rain, fruitful seasons and droughts, earthquakes and floods. He used the ten plagues and the opening of the Red Sea to deliver His people from Egypt, and He stopped the flow of the Jordan River so that they might pass over into Palestine. We read that "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again: and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17, 18). Certainly God can work through natural causes whenever that suits His purposes. And He may just as well have used natural causes to bring about that great upheaval in Noah's day.

In reality this present world seems to be only the wreck of a once ideal world. We are told that as it left the hand of God it was perfect: "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). But now there is no apparent design in the arrangement of the continents, mountains, islands or oceans. The equatorial regions are abnormally hot, and the polar regions are so cold that man cannot live there even though there are vast land masses near each of the poles. Approximately three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered with salt water, much of the land areas are covered with mountains or deserts that are uninhabitable, and even in the other parts much of the soil is of such poor quality that it is difficult or impossible to produce crops. Extensive fertile areas are comparatively rare. Man has to meet the competition of weeds, thorns, thistles, insects, floods, droughts and



various other diversities of nature.

We can well imagine an ideal world in which the climate would be fairly mild and uniform over its entire surface, as indeed seems to have been the case when this world was created. If originally the earth's axis was approximately parallel to that of the sun, as is that of the planet Jupiter, which is easily the largest planet in the solar system and which has an axis variation of only three degrees, there would have been no variation of summer and winter as the earth made its annual journey around the sun. And if the continents and mountains in the northern hemisphere had extended in a generally northeastern and southwestern direction, with ocean lanes between them, the warm air rising at the equator could have moved freely to the northeast, as is its natural tendency in what we call the "prevailing westerlies." That would have set in motion ocean currents, with warm air and water free to have circulated over the polar areas, being replaced with colder air and water from those areas. In the southern hemisphere the direction would have been the opposite, with the continents and mountains and oceans extending in a generally southeastern and northwestern direction. That would have given the world a moderate climate over its entire surface.

But instead of that ideal arrangement the earth's axis now points off at a 23 1/2 degree angle toward the north star. And in the northern hemisphere the continents and mountains and oceans are so arranged that the wind and ocean currents are seriously hampered in their tendency to circulate from the tropics to the polar regions. In the Atlantic basin the warm "Gulf Stream," which originates in the Gulf of Mexico, flows northeast across the Atlantic, warming the western coast of Europe. But since it cannot enter the polar areas, it turns west along the coast of Labrador and eastern Canada, making those areas colder. In the Pacific basin the warm air and ocean currents move northeast, warming the western coast of the United States, Canada and Alaska. But since that water cannot enter the polar area, the Bering Strait being too narrow, it turns west along the coast of Siberia and Japan. The wind also is deflected to a considerable degree and cannot circulate freely over the polar area because of the long Rocky Mountain range. In the southern hemisphere the wind and ocean currents move in the opposite directions, moving generally toward the southeast, with the ocean currents in

particular turning southwest when they reach the Antarctic land mass. Hence we must say that the present physical world certainly is not the ideal world that it was when it came from the hand of God.

How, then, are we to explain those maladjustments, and, much more important, how are we to explain the extensive phenomenon of sin and evil that we see in the spiritual world? Surely something very terrible has happened in both areas.

We find the explanation of this problem in the Bible, the book that claims to be, and which we believe is, God's word to man, given for the very purpose of enlightening us concerning these problems. There we are told that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). He had created man in holiness, even in His own image, and had given him rulership over the earth. Man was told to "multiply, and replenish the earth; and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the seas, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). That was a marvelous assignment of great blessing to our human race.

Our first ancestor, Adam, was then placed on test. By divine appointment he was made the federal head and representative of all of those who would come after him by natural descent. Whatever he did for good or ill would fall equally on them. It was a simple and most favorable test, a pure test of obedience. No moral principle was involved. Adam had been created in holiness, and so his moral nature was not in question. He was given great liberty, with the privilege of eating of all of the trees of the Garden, *except one*—"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17). It was a test designed to show whether or not he and his descendants, who would be created with his same nature and who therefore would act as he acted, would be loyal and obedient and appreciative subjects in the kingdom of God. If he stood that test he and all of his descendants in their time would be confirmed in holiness and would be given eternal life in heaven. But he was also clearly and severely warned that if he disobeyed and ate of the forbidden tree, the punishment would be most severe, even death. He was told, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). That would mean not only physical death for his body, but also spiritual death for his soul—which would mean eternal

separation from God and endless suffering as a rebel in hell. For that is what hell really is, separation from God and from everything that is good.

But, tragedy of tragedies, Adam fell! That fall brought not only upon mankind but also upon the natural world a terrible curse. Hear these words as God pronounced upon Adam the penalty for his sin: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field and in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:17-19). And the Apostle Paul tells us: "For the creation was subjected to vanity; not for its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:20-22).

Hence in the Bible we find the only adequate and true and full explanation as to how and why mankind and the world are in this present terrible condition. There we find why so much war, suffering, disease, ignorance, adultery, poverty and all the other evils afflict the human race, why the physical world is so inhospitable to man and beast, and why it was necessary for God to bring upon the earth and upon mankind that terrible calamity that occurred in Noah's day. But there we find also the promise of God that through the redemption that Christ accomplished through His perfect life, and through His suffering and death on Calvary, salvation has been provided for all who will put their trust in Him. And the Apostle John tells of "a new heavens and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1) that we may be sure will far surpass anything that our foreparents knew even in the Garden of Eden.

Available from:

Dr. Loraine Boettner  
P. O. Box 56  
Rock Port, MO 64482

Single copies \$.50 each

Ten or more copies ~~\$.25~~ each

10