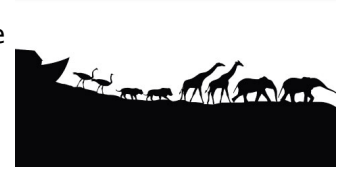


Alleged Discrepancies and the Flood

by Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Name a Bible subject that has been scoffed at or ridiculed more than the account of the Noahic Flood. Name a topic that has borne the brunt of more jokes, or that the unbeliever has used more often to poke fun at the Bible, than Noah's ark. Likely it would be difficult to find any Bible subject that has received more derision in modern times, or has been the subject of more mockery than the story recorded in Genesis 6–9.



The biblical account of the great Flood is one of the more prominent stories in Scripture, with more space allotted to it in the book of Genesis than to the creation of “the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exodus 20:11; Genesis 1–2). Four of the first nine chapters of Genesis are devoted to the record of Noah, his immediate family, and the Flood. We know more about the Flood than any other event (recorded in Holy Writ) from approximately the first 2,000 years of man's existence on Earth. What's more, there are several New Testament references to Noah and the Flood (Matthew 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5). Yet, the account of Noah, his ark, and the great Flood has been, and still is, a favorite target of Bible critics.

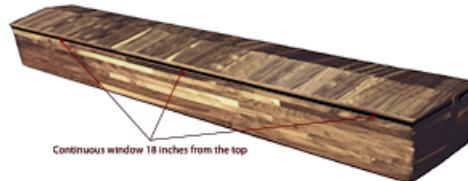
More than a century ago, renowned American agnostic Robert Ingersoll penned his infamous book titled *Some Mistakes of Moses*. Regarding Noah's ark and the Flood, he wrote: “Volumes might be written upon the infinite absurdity of this most incredible, wicked and foolish of all fables contained in that repository of the impossible, called the Bible. To me it is a matter of amazement, that it ever was for a moment believed by any intelligent human being” (1879, p. 155). In more recent times, evolutionist Douglas Futuyma asked: “Can you believe that any grown man or woman with the slightest knowledge of biology, geology, physics, or any science at all, not to speak of plain and simple common sense, can conceivably believe this? (1983, p. 203). In that same year, skeptic Dennis McKinsey, the one-time editor of the journal *Biblical Errancy* (touted as “the only national periodical focusing on biblical errors”), argued that there is a “**large number** of contradictions between biblical verses with respect to what occurred” in Genesis 6–9 (1983a, p. 1, emp. added). Furthermore, McKinsey has alleged there also exist a “great number of difficulties, impossibilities, and unanswered questions accompanying the biblical account” of the Flood (p. 1).

Before answering some of the alleged problems with the Flood and Noah's ark, one must first recognize that we are addressing four chapters of the Bible that involve the prevailing power of an omnipotent God Who performed various supernatural feats. Although a skeptic might consider any mention of the miraculous in connection with the Flood as an untenable defense by a Bible believer, the simple truth is that Genesis 6–9 makes it clear that God worked several miracles during the Flood. Just as God worked miracles prior to the Flood (e.g., creating the world and everything in it—Genesis 1–2), and just as He worked miracles after the Flood (e.g., confusing the language of all the Earth—Genesis 11:1–9), He performed wonders during the Flood. As John Whitcomb noted in his book *The World That Perished*: “A careful analysis of the relevant exegetical data reveals at least six areas in which supernaturalism is clearly demanded in the doctrine of the Flood” (1988, p. 21). What are these areas? “(1) [T]he divinely-revealed design of the Ark; (2) the gathering and care of the animals; (3) the uplift of the oceanic waters from beneath; (4) the release of waters from above; (5) the formation of our present ocean basins; and (6) the formation of our present continents and mountain ranges” (p. 21; cf. 2 Peter 3:4ff.). The fact is, “one cannot have any kind of a Genesis Flood without acknowledging the presence of supernatural powers” (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961, p. 76).

Thus, certain “difficulties, impossibilities, and unanswered questions accompanying the biblical account” (McKinsey, 1983a, p. 1) of the Flood may be explained sufficiently simply by acknowledging God's supernatural involvement. However, apologists do not have to appeal to an “endless supplying of miracles to make a universal flood feasible,” as Bernard Ramm suggested (1954, p. 167). In truth, many of the alleged contradictions and proposed absurdities involving Noah and the Flood are logically explained by an honest and serious study of the Scriptures.

ADEQUATE ARK OR DEFICIENT DINGHY?

One of the most frequently criticized parts of the biblical account of the Flood involves the size of Noah's ark and the number of animals that lived in the vessel during the Flood. Allegedly, "[T]he ark...was far too small to be able to contain the earth's millions of...animal species" (Wells, 2008). Another critic asked: "How could two of every animal survive for approximately 10 months on a boat encompassing 1,518,750 cubic feet. The food alone would absorb tremendous space" (McKinsey, 1983a, p. 1). In a document titled "Biblical Absurdities," infidel.org board member Donald Morgan wrote: "The size of Noah's Ark was such that there would be about one and a half cubic feet for each pair of the 2,000,000 to 5,000,000 species to be taken aboard" (2008). Even one of the evolutionary scientists interviewed in Ben Stein's recent documentary, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, mocked the Bible's account of Noah housing all of the various kinds of land animals on the ark (2008). All of these criticisms beg the question, "Was Noah's vessel an adequate ark or a deficient dinghy?"



Adapted from an Image courtesy of Vance Nelson, CreationTruthMinistries.org

First, contrary to popular belief, the Bible does not teach that Noah took aboard the ark two of every **species** of animal on Earth. The Hebrew term used in the Flood account (as in the Creation account) to distinguish animals is *min* (translated "kind" 10 times in Genesis 1 and seven times in Genesis 6–7). The Bible was written long before man invented the Linnaean classification system. The "kinds" of animals that Adam named on the sixth day of Creation and that accompanied Noah on the ark were likely very broad. As Henry Morris observed: "[T]he created kinds undoubtedly represented broader categories than our modern species or genera, quite possibly approximating in most cases the taxonomic **family**" (1984, p. 129, emp. added). Instead of Noah taking aboard the ark two of the brown bears species (*Ursus arctos*), two of the polar bear species (*Ursus maritimus*), two of the American black bear species (*Ursus americanus*), etc., he could have simply taken two members of the bear family (Ursidae), which could have possessed enough genetic variety so that bears thousands of years later could look significantly different. Even in recent times scientists have learned of a polar bear and brown bear producing an offspring. Some have tagged the bear with the name "pizzly," in order to reflect its "polar" and "grizzly" heritage (see Wittmeyer, 2007). Truly, "[i]t is unwarranted to insist that all the present species, not to mention all the varieties and sub-varieties of animals in the world today, were represented in the Ark" (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961, p. 67). Still, even after analyzing the number of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians proposed by evolutionary taxonomist Ernst Mayr, Whitcomb and Morris concluded that "there was need for no more than 35,000 individual vertebrate animals on the Ark," plus the small, non-marine arthropods and worms (1961, p. 69). Needless to say, the "2,000,000 to 5,000,000 species" proposed by Donald Morgan is grossly overstated.

Second, supposing that the cubit in Noah's day was 17.5 inches (a most conservative "cubit" considering the Egyptian cubit, the Mesopotamian cubit, and the "long" cubit of Ezekiel 40:5 all exceeded this measurement by two inches; see Free and Vos, 1992, pp. 38–39), then Noah's ark would have been at the very **least** 437.5 feet long, 72.92 feet wide, and 43.75 feet high. "[T]he available floor space of this three-decked barge was over 95,000 square feet," the equivalent of slightly more than 20 standard basketball courts, "and its total volume was 1,396,000 cubic feet" (Whitcomb, 1988, p. 25), which means "the Ark had a carrying capacity equal to that of 522 standard stock cars as used by modern railroads" (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961, pp. 67–68). What's more, "if 240 animals of the size of sheep could be accommodated in a standard two-decked stock car," then 35,000 animals could be housed in less than 150 such cars (p. 69), which is less than 30% of the ark's total capacity. Suffice it to say, "[T]he dimensions of the Ark were sufficiently great to accomplish its intended purpose of saving alive the thousands of kinds of air-breathing creatures that could not otherwise survive a year-long Flood" (Whitcomb, 1988, p. 25). [NOTE: God likely allowed Noah to take young animals into the ark, instead of those that were fully grown, in order to save space and reduce the amount of necessary food. It also would have meant that, on average, the animals would have lived longer and produced even more offspring after the Flood.]

THE “WINDOW” OF THE ARK

After informing Noah about an upcoming worldwide flood, and commanding him to build a massive boat of gopher wood, God instructed His faithful servant, saying, “You shall make a **window** for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above” (Genesis 6:16, emp. added). Upon reading about this window in Noah’s ark, many have challenged its usefulness. Since, historically, windows have served two basic purposes (lighting and ventilation), inquiring minds want to know what good one window, about 18 inches square, would be on an ark with a capacity of roughly 1,400,000 cubic feet, occupied by thousands of animals. Dennis McKinsey has asked: “How could so many creatures breathe with only one small opening which was closed for at least 190 days?” (1983a, p. 1). Other skeptics also have ridiculed the idea that sufficient ventilation for the whole ark could have come through this one window (see Wells, 2008). In fact, anyone even slightly familiar with animal–house ventilation needs is taken aback by the apparent lack of airflow allowed by the ark’s design. Unless God miraculously ventilated the ark, one little window on a three–story boat, the length of which was approximately a football–field–and–a–half long, simply would not do.

Questions regarding the “window” on Noah’s ark and the problem of ventilation have escalated largely because the Hebrew word translated window (*tsohar*) in Genesis 6:16 appears only here in the Old Testament, and linguistic scholars are unsure as to its exact meaning (see Hamilton, 1990, p. 282). Translators of the KJV and NKJV use the word “window” to translate *tsohar*; however, according to Old Testament commentator Victor Hamilton, they “do so on the basis of the word’s possible connection with *sahorayim*, ‘noon, midday,’ thus an opening to let in the light of day” (p. 282). Hebrew scholar William Gesenius defined *tsohar* in his Hebrew lexicon as simply “light,” and translated Genesis 6:16 as “thou shalt make light for the ark” (1847, p. 704). He then surmised that this “light” represented, not a window, but **windows** (plural). The ASV translators also preferred “light” as the best translation for *tsohar*. Still more recent translations, including the RSV, NIV, and ESV, have translated Genesis 6:16 as “[m]ake a **roof**” for the ark, instead of make a “window” or “light.”

Such disagreement among translations is, admittedly, somewhat discouraging to the person who wants a definite answer as to how *tsohar* should be translated. What is clear, however, is that the word translated “window” two chapters later, which Noah is said to have “opened” (8:6), is translated from a **different** Hebrew word (*challôwn*) than what is used in Genesis 6:16. *Challôwn* (8:6) is the standard Hebrew word for “window” (cf. Genesis 26:8; Joshua 2:18). Yet, interestingly, this is **not** the word used in 6:16. One wonders if, in 8:6, Noah opened one of a plurality of aligned windows that God instructed him to make in 6:16.

Another assumption often brought into a discussion regarding the “window” (*tsohar*) of 6:16 is that it was one square cubit. Although many people have imagined Noah’s ark as having one small window about 18 inches high by 18 inches wide, the phrase “you shall finish it to a cubit from above” (6:16, NKJV; cf. RSV) does not give the Bible reader any clear dimensions of the opening. The text just says that Noah was to “finish it to a cubit from the top” (NASB; “upward,” ASV). The simple truth is, the **size** of the lighting apparatus mentioned in this verse is unspecified. The text indicates only the distance the opening was from the top of the ark, rather than the actual size of the window. Thus we cannot form a definite picture of it. But, we do know that nothing in the text warrants an interpretation that the “window” was just a “small opening” (as critics allege). A more probable theory, which aligns itself appropriately with the text, is that the opening described in Genesis 6:16 extended around the ark’s circumference 18 inches from the top of the ark with an undeterminable height. According to geologist John Woodmorappe, such an opening would have provided sufficient light and ventilation for the ark (1996, pp. 37–44). [For further reading on this subject, see Woodmorappe’s book, *Noah’s Ark: A Feasibility Study*.]

It is important to remember that many details about biblical events are **not** revealed to the reader. So it is with the plans for Noah’s ark. As Henry Morris commented, “It was obviously not the intention of the writer to record the complete specifications for the ark’s construction, but only enough to assure later readers that it was quite adequate for its intended purpose... ‘to preserve life on the earth’” (1976, p. 182). Truly, absolute certainty regarding the openings on the ark cannot be determined. We know of an opening mentioned in Genesis 6:16 (*tsohar*), as well as one mentioned in 8:6 (*challôwn*). And, since Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark survived the Flood, it is only logical to conclude that God made proper ways to ventilate the ark in which they lived during the Flood. Although nothing in Scripture demands that those living millennia after the Flood know how it was ventilated, lighted, etc., it is very likely that God used the opening mentioned in Genesis 6:16.

HOW MANY ANIMALS OF EACH KIND DID NOAH TAKE INTO THE ARK?

Ask children who are even vaguely familiar with the biblical account of the Flood how many animals of each kind Noah took into the ark, and you likely will hear, "Two!" Most Bible students are familiar with the instructions recorded in Genesis 6:19 that God gave to Noah: "And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring **two of every sort into the ark**, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female" (Genesis 6:19, emp. added; cf. 7:15). It seems that fewer people, however, are aware that God also instructed Noah, saying, "You shall take with you **seven** each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female; also **seven** each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth" (Genesis 7:2-3, emp. added). According to Bible critics, these verses are contradictory. "Are clean beasts to enter by 2's or by 7's?" asked skeptic Dennis McKinsey (1983b, p. 1). Michelle Andrews, writing for a special 2004 collector's edition of *U.S. News and World Report*, was so bothered by the differences between Genesis 6:19 and 7:2-3 that she claimed, "there are two versions of the story of Noah and the flood" in Genesis, neither of which supposedly was written by Moses (2004, p. 28).

The biblical text, however, is rather easy to understand without giving up on the inspiration of Genesis, or the authorship of Moses: the **clean** beasts and birds entered the ark "by sevens" (KJV), while the unclean animals went into the ark by twos. There is no contradiction here. Genesis 6:19 indicates that Noah was to take "two of every sort into the ark." Then, four verses later, God **supplemented** this original instruction, informing Noah in a more detailed manner, to take more of the clean animals. If a farmer told his son to take two of every kind of farm animal to the state fair, and then instructed his son to take several extra chickens and two extra pigs for a barbecue, would anyone accuse the farmer of contradicting himself? Certainly not. It was necessary for Noah to take additional clean animals because, upon his departure from the ark after the Flood, he "built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Genesis 8:20). If Noah had taken only two clean animals from which to choose when sacrificing to God after departing the ark, then he would have driven the various kinds of clean beasts and birds into extinction by sacrificing one of each pair. Thus, after God told Noah to take two of every kind of animal into the ark, He then instructed him to take extras of the clean animals. Similar to how Genesis chapter 2 supplements the first chapter of Genesis by giving a more detailed account of the Creation (see Lyons, 2002), the first portion of Genesis 7 merely supplements the end of the preceding chapter, "containing several particulars of a minute description which were not embraced in the general directions first given to Noah" (Jamieson, et al., 1997).

One translation difficulty, which should not trouble a person's faith, revolves around the actual number of clean animals taken into the ark. Through the years, various Bible students have wondered whether this number was seven or fourteen (Genesis 7:2). The Hebrew phrase *shibb'ah shibb'ah* is translated somewhat vaguely in both the King James and American Standard versions. [According to the King James Version, clean animals were taken into the ark "by sevens" (Genesis 7:2). The American Standard Version has the clean animals taken "seven and seven."] Newer translations are worded more clearly, but there is general disagreement among them. The New King James and New International versions both agree that Noah took **seven** of each clean animal into the ark, whereas the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, and the English Standard Version all translate *shibb'ah shibb'ah* to mean "seven pairs" of clean animals. Although some believe that "there can be no certainty on this point" (Willis, 1979, p. 171), H.C. Leupold argued that the Hebrew phrase *shibb'ah shibb'ah* "would be a most clumsy method of trying to say 'fourteen'" (1990, 1:290). Comparing similar language within Genesis 7, Whitcomb and Morris persuasively argued: "The Hebrew phrase 'seven and seven' no more means fourteen than does the parallel phrase 'two and two' (Gen. 7:9,15) mean four!" (1961, p. 65).

Still another allegation skeptics make concerning Genesis 7:2 is that "[c]lean and unclean animals were not delineated until the eleventh chapter of Leviticus. The Mosaic law arose 600 years after the Flood. There were no Jews, Israelites, or clean/unclean animals in Noah's time" (McKinsey, 1983b, p. 1). Thus, regardless of how one answers the question concerning the number of animals on the ark, this second allegation still lingers in the minds of skeptics. Supposedly, instructions regarding clean and unclean animals were not given until hundreds of years after the Flood (see Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).

Skeptics refuse to see, however, that simply because Moses made laws concerning clean and unclean animals at a much later time than the Flood, does not mean that such rules concerning animals could not have existed prior to Moses—yes, even prior to the Flood. As commentator John Willis noted: "A law or a truth does not have to have its origin with a certain individual or religion to be a vital part of that religion or to be distinctive in that religion" (p. 170). Jesus, for example, was not the first person to teach that man needs to love God with all of his heart (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5), or that man must love his neighbor (cf. Leviticus 19:18), **and** his enemies (cf. Proverbs 25:21-22). Yet these teachings were

central to Christ's message (cf. Matthew 22:34–40; Matthew 5:43–48). Similarly, simply because God chose circumcision as a sign between Himself and Abraham's descendants, does not mean that no male in the history of mankind had ever been circumcised before the circumcision of Abraham and his household (Genesis 17). What's more, Moses wrote in the book of Leviticus years after Abraham lived: "If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. And **on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised**" (12:2–3, emp. added). Moses, however, was not laying down a new law. On the contrary, he knew very well what was expected from God concerning the matter of circumcision, even before he included this sort of instruction as part of Mosaic Law (read Exodus 4:24–26).

For skeptics to allege that differentiation between clean and unclean animals was nonexistent prior to Moses, is totally unsubstantiated. Mankind had been sacrificing animals since the fall of man (cf. Genesis 3:21). That God had given laws concerning animal sacrifices since the time of Cain and Abel is evident from the fact that the second son of Adam was able to offer an animal sacrifice "by faith" (Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:4). Since "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), Abel must have received revelation from God on how to offer acceptable animal sacrifices. Such revelation easily could have dealt with which sacrificial animals were acceptable ("clean"), and which were unacceptable ("unclean"). Furthermore, more than 400 hundred years before Moses gave the Israelites laws differentiating clean and unclean animals, God made a covenant with Abraham concerning the land that his descendants eventually would possess (Genesis 15). Part of the "sign" that Abraham was given at that time involved the killing of a heifer, a female goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon (Genesis 15:9). "It just so happens" that all of these animals were later considered clean under the Law of Moses (cf. Leviticus 1:2,10,14).

Without a doubt, the distinction between clean and unclean animals existed long before the Law of Moses was given. Although this distinction did not include all of the details and applications given by Moses (prior to the Flood the distinction seems only to have applied to the matter of animals suitable for sacrifice, not for consumption—cf. Genesis 9:2–3), animal sacrifice to God **was practiced** during the Patriarchal Age, and it is apparent that the faithful were able to distinguish between the clean and unclean. Noah certainly knew of the difference.

HOW DID NOAH'S ARK REST ON THE MOUNTAINS OF ARARAT?

In Genesis 8:4, the Bible indicates that Noah's ark rested "on the **mountains** of Ararat." This statement, like so many others in Genesis 6–9, has come under attack by critics. For example, in his two-part article on the Flood, skeptic Dennis McKinsey asked: "How could the Ark have rested upon several mountains at once?" (1983a, p. 2). Three months later, McKinsey commented on the passage again, saying, "Gen. 8:4 says 'mountains,' plural, not 'a mountain,' singular.... Apologists repeatedly say one should read the Bible as one reads a newspaper, which is what I am doing. I assume the book says what it means and means what it says" (1984, p. 3). How could the ark rest on more than one mountain?

Although the ark was a huge vessel, it obviously did not rest on more than one of the mountains of Ararat. So why then does the text literally say "the mountains of Ararat?" The answer involves the understanding of a figure of speech known as synecdoche. *Merriam-Webster* defines this term as "a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole (as *fifty sail* for *fifty ships*), the whole for a part (as *society* for *high society*)...or the name of the material for the thing made (as *boards* for *stage*)" (2008, italics in orig.). Just as Bible writers frequently used figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, sarcasm, and metonymy, they also used synecdoche. As seen above (in the definition of synecdoche), this figure of speech can be used in a variety of ways (see Dungan, 1888, pp. 300–309):

- A whole can be put for the part.
- A part may be put for the whole.
- Time might be put for part of a time period.
- The singular can be put for the plural.
- And the plural can be put for the singular.

In Genesis 8:4, the plural obviously was put for the singular. Only a few chapters later this same figure of speech is used again. Sarah asked, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse **children**? For I have borne him a **son** in his old age" (Genesis 21:7, emp. added). Anyone who knows

much about the history of the Old Testament and the genealogy of Christ knows that Sarah had but **one** child (Isaac). In certain contexts, however, one might use a synecdoche and speak of one child (as did Sarah) by using the word “children.” Often, when I call for the attention of my two sons and one daughter, I refer to them as “boys and **girls.**” I actually have only one daughter, but summoning my children with the expressions “boys and girl” or “boys and Shelby,” simply does not flow as well as “boys and girls.” Thus, I frequently use the plural (“girls”) for the singular (“Shelby”). The emphasis is not on the singularity or plurality of the nouns, but on particular categories (“boys” and “girls”).

Another apparent example where Bible writers used “the whole for the part” or “the plural for the singular” is found in Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32. In these passages, Matthew and Mark claimed that “the robbers” (plural) who were crucified with Christ reviled Him. Luke, however, mentioned that “**one** of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed” Christ (23:39, emp. added). Luke then went on to document the humble attitude of the penitent thief. So why did Matthew and Mark indicate the “thieves” (plural) reviled Jesus? Although the penitent thief could have reviled Christ earlier, it is feasible that Matthew and Mark were using the plural in place of the singular in their accounts of the thief reviling Christ on the cross. The emphasis, once again, would be on a particular **category**, and not the number of a noun. Just as other groups reviled Christ (e.g., passers-by [Matthew 27:39], Jewish leaders [Matthew 27:41–43], and soldiers [Luke 23:36]), so did the “robbers” (Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32)—not necessarily a plurality of robbers, but the category known as “robbers,” which included at least one thief who reviled Christ (Luke 23:39).

Although skeptics may dislike the Bible writers’ use of figures of speech, if critics are honest, they must acknowledge the possibility that Moses, Paul, and others occasionally used figurative language (just as people do in modern times). Once a person recognizes the use of figures of speech (e.g., synecdoche) in Scripture, he cannot deny that a very plausible explanation for the use of “mountains” in Genesis 8:4 is that it is written in the plural form, even though it is referring to a single “mountain.”

WHERE DID ALL OF THE FLOOD WATERS GO?

According to evolutionist Bill Butler, “The greatest geologic fiction that the Creationists adhere to is Noah’s Flood” (2002). The idea that water ever covered the entire Earth, including the highest hills and mountains (Genesis 7:19–20), supposedly is unthinkable (and impossible). In Butler’s article, “Creationism = Willful Ignorance,” he asked: “If the earth’s surface were covered by an additional 29,000+ feet of water, how do you get rid of it?” If Mount Everest reaches a height of over 29,000 feet, then the Bible allegedly indicates that the Flood waters reached even higher—approximately 23 feet higher than the peak of Mount Everest (Genesis 7:20). If such is the case, where did all of the water go?

First, the Bible is more specific about **Who** caused the waters to subside, than **where** exactly all of the waters went. Moses wrote: “**God made** a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.... And the waters receded continually from the earth” (Genesis 8:1,3). Years later, the prophet Isaiah recorded how Jehovah compared a promise He made to Israel with His promise “that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth” (Isaiah 54:9). Although these passages do not tell us exactly where the waters went, for the person who believes that God worked several miracles during the Flood, it is reasonable to conclude that **God did something** with the Flood waters.

Second, the skeptic’s assertion (that there presently is not enough water on the Earth for there ever to have been the kind of flood described in Genesis 6–8) is based upon invalid assumptions. The truth is, no one knows the height of the mountains or the depth of the ocean valleys in Noah’s day. Thus, one cannot know how much water was on the Earth during the Noahic Flood. Psalm 104:6–8 indicates that, at some time in the past, God established **new** heights and depths for the Earth’s mountains and valleys. Directing his comments to Jehovah, the psalmist proclaimed:

You covered it [the Earth—EL] with the deep as with a garment; the waters were standing above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled, at the sound of Your thunder they hurried away. **The mountains rose; the valleys sank down to the place which You established for them**” (NASB, emp. added).

Just as God miraculously altered the Earth’s topography during the Creation week (Genesis 1:9–13), and just as He miraculously sent flood waters upon the Earth, God miraculously caused the waters to subside. In all likelihood, the antediluvian world was vastly different from the Earth of today (cf. 2 Peter 3:6). It is reasonable to believe that the mountains of Noah’s day were much smaller than such peaks as Mount Everest or Mount McKinley that are so well known to us. Thus, the Flood would not have had to rise to levels of 29,000+ feet to cover everything on the Earth. According to the Scriptures, the

waters rose above the mountaintops; however, we simply cannot know the heights reached by the antediluvian mountains. (Interestingly, marine fossils have been found in the Himalayas; see “Mt. Everest,” n.d.)

In an attempt to defend his criticism of the Noachic Flood, and to discredit anyone who would argue that the Earth’s topography after the Flood was likely very different than it was before the Flood, Butler suggested the following. First, he emphatically states that, since “[t]he Tigris/Euphrates valley existed in its present form before the flood,” the topography of the Earth could not have changed that much during (and after) the Flood. Second, he argued that “the text specifically states the flood covered ‘all the high mountains.’ If the mountains were low at this time, the word ‘high’ would not be used” (2002).

Notice, however, the faulty reasoning involved in both points Butler made. First, there is **no proof** that “The Tigris/Euphrates valley existed in its present form before the flood.” In fact, according to Genesis 2:10–14, there was one river that went out of Eden that then parted and became four rivers. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers of today, however, do not branch from a common source, but flow from separate sources in the Armenian mountains. The rivers of the same name in Genesis 2 are different from those that exist today by the same name. (It is very possible that the people who left the ark, as well as their descendants, used familiar names for the new rivers they found.) Second, simply because Genesis 7:19–20 stresses that the Flood waters covered “all the **high** hills/mountains” (emp. added), does not mean these mountains could not have been somewhat lower than the mountains of today. Butler stated: “If the mountains were low at this time, **the word ‘high’ would not be used**” (emp. added). On what basis does he make such an assertion? If in a particular class of dwarfs, some were taller than others, could we not speak of certain “tall dwarfs” in his class? Who is to say that we could not use the word “tall” when speaking of a few particular dwarfs who might be much taller than the rest of the class? Similarly, just because Genesis 7:19–20 uses the word “high,” does not mean that the antediluvian mountains were at their current height. Truthfully, however tall the mountains were before the Flood, some were “higher” than others, and thus could be referred to as the “high mountains.”

Third, Butler wrote: “Water is less dense than the rock of the earth’s surface. Thus it would not drain down below the surface. Even if you forced it down, where is it? No oil or gas well has ever hit a subterranean ocean 29,000+ feet thick” (2002). As is often the case with Bible critics, time is not their friend. Repeatedly throughout history, time has helped exonerate Bible writers. Whether it is archaeologists finding remains of a particular biblical people, which critics once alleged never existed (e.g., the Hittites; cf. Butt, 2002), or scientists finally learning why the eighth day of a child’s life would have been the perfect day to perform circumcision (cf. Genesis 17:11; Holt and McIntosh, 1953, p. 126), again and again time has turned out to be a friend of the Bible and a foe to the ever-changing theories of man (cf. Harrub and Thompson, 2002). Consider Butler’s comments. He confidently asserted that the Flood waters would be unable to “drain down below the surface.” He then asked, “even if you forced it [the Flood water—EL] down, where is it?” Apparently, in 2002, no one knew about great amounts of water below the crust layer of the Earth. With the passing of time, however, scientists have learned differently.

Livescience.com staff writer Ker Than reported that “[s]cientists scanning the deep interior of Earth have found evidence of a **vast water reservoir** beneath eastern Asia that is **at least the volume of the Arctic Ocean**” (2007, emp. added). “The discovery,” Ker Than added, “marks the first time such a **large body of water** was found in the planet’s **deep mantle**” (2007, emp. added). Butler criticized the biblical Flood account because the Flood waters supposedly “would not drain below the surface” of the Earth, yet a large amount of water has been discovered “in the planet’s deep mantle.” What’s more, “researchers estimate that up to 0.1 percent of the rock sinking down **into the Earth’s mantle** in that part of the world [eastern Asia—EL] **is water**” (Than).

Once again, time has become the foe of the Bible’s critics. Although no one can be certain what happened to **all** of the water that once flooded the Earth, it is very possible that God sent some of it to reside “in the planet’s deep mantle.” Regardless, it is unreasonable to reject the Genesis Flood account because one **assumes** the Flood waters could not have relocated beneath the Earth’s crust. One wonders how Flood critics will react to news of a “vast water reservoir beneath eastern Asia.”

Where did all of the Flood waters go? The most logical answer in light of the Scriptures appears to be that God made room for the waters by adjusting the Earth’s topography. Much of the water from the Flood likely has retreated into the deeper ocean trenches—valleys that, in places, are over seven miles deep. What’s more, some (or perhaps much of it) may very well be under the Earth’s crust.

CONCLUSION

Skeptic Dennis McKinsey wrote that “[a]nyone believing in the Flood must provide rational answers to...questions” (1983a, p. 1) regarding Noah’s ark, the number of clean and unclean on the ark, where the ark eventually rested, what happened to all of the Flood waters, etc. The fact is, “rational answers” do exist to these questions and many others. Given adequate time and tools (beginning with the Bible), an apologist can reasonably counter any and all criticisms of the Flood and Noah’s ark.

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