

Preterism and Noah's Flood: History and Hermeneutics

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&

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Young-earth
Creationism <-----> Futurism

world of Genesis 1-2		world of Revelation 21-22
our world (digression)		

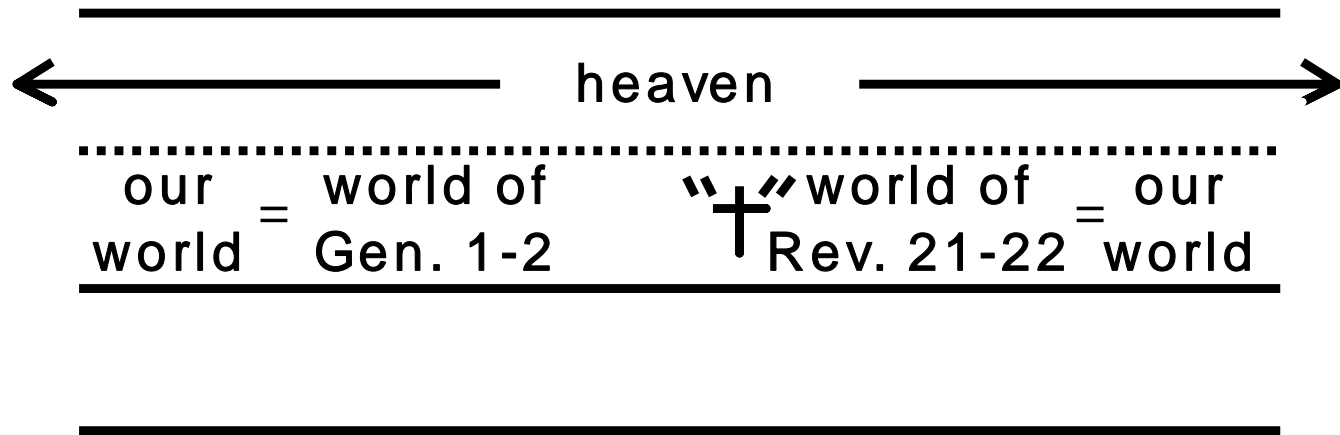
Biological
Death Enters

Cursed World

Biological
Death Removed

Old-Earth

Creationism <-----> Preterism



Biological Death
Predates the Fall

Biological Death
Exists after Redemption

Biological Curse = Global Flood

- Fossils record biological death
- Young-earth creationists teach, “No biological death before Adam’s Fall”
- Therefore the fossils were formed after Adam
- A global Flood is the physical explanation of the fossil record – the flood formed the fossils
- A global Flood is the extension of the biological view of the Curse

To put the issue in its sharpest delineations, a literal interpretation of the Fall demands as its corollary a thorough-going Biblical catastrophism; and the doctrine of the Flood can be fully understood only in light of the Fall and Edenic curse.

But how can such an interpretation of the history of the animal kingdom be reconciled with the early chapters of Genesis? Does the Book of Genesis allow for a reign of tooth and claw and death and destruction before the Fall of Adam? If not, we have further compelling reasons... for finding in the great Genesis Flood the true explanation of the fossil formations in the crust of our planet.

Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 454, 455

Young-Earth Curse/Flood Implications

- All animals in the fossil record lived at the same time
 - Noah took all the Animals in the fossil record on the ark to be preserved
 - 90%+ of the animals God created went extinct right after the flood
- (e.g. dinosaurs went on the ark with Noah only to go extinct right after the flood)

Now all the writers of barbarian histories make mention of this flood and of this ark... Nicolaus of Damascus, in his ninety-sixth book hath a particular relation about them where he speaks thus, 'There is a great mountain in Armenia, over Minyas, called Baris, upon which it is reported that **many who fled at the time of the Deluge were saved**; and that one who was carried in an ark came on shore upon top of it; and that the remains of the timber were a great while preserved. This might be the man about whom Moses, the legislator of the Jews wrote. [emphasis ours]

Josephus

Antiquities of the Jews - Book I, Chapter 3, Paragraph 6

Now the sons of Noah were three – Shem, Japhet, and Ham born one hundred years before the Deluge. These first of all descended from the mountains into the plains, and fixed their habitation there; and persuaded others who were greatly afraid of the lower grounds on account of the flood, and so were very loath to come down from the higher places.

Josephus

Antiquities of the Jews - Book I, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1

Josephus' View – Local Flood

- Josephus gave a 1st century understanding of Genesis
- Did Josephus misunderstand his own history as a Jew?
- Or, does Young-Earth Creationism radically misunderstand the Genesis Flood?

18th & 19th Century

- The geographical extent of the flood was not an issue during the medieval period
- Christians began to connect the Genesis flood to geology during the 1700's with the rise of modern science and industrialism
- This attempt was abandoned around 1800
- Chief prophetess of Seventh Day Adventism, Ellen G. White wrote about her visions of the Genesis flood in 1864
 - Her visions supplied the conceptual framework which developed into flood geology

[After the flood] The beautiful, regular shaped mountains had disappeared. Stones, ledges, and ragged rocks appeared upon some parts of the earth which were before out of sight. Where had been hills and mountains, no traces of them were visible... Before the flood there were immense forests. The trees were many times larger than any trees which we now see....At the time of the flood these forests were torn up or broken down and buried in the earth. In some places large quantities of these immense trees were thrown together and covered with stones and earth by the commotions of the flood. They have since petrified and become coal, which accounts for the large coal beds which are now found. This coal has produced oil...

Ellen G. White, *Facts of Faith, in Connection with the History of Holy Men of Old*, 1864

Two women “prophets”

- Ellen G. White
 - Had visions of a global flood
 - Inspired George McCready Price, who created flood geology
 - Who in turn inspired Henry Morris and John Whitcomb ,who made flood geology popular among conservative Christians
- Margaret MacDonald
 - Had visions of the pre-tribulational rapture
 - Inspired John Nelson Darby to create pre-trib. dispensationalism
 - Who in turn inspired Cyrus Ingerson Scofield who made dispensationalism popular among conservative Christians
- These two women drove American theology into the 20th century
 - The result? LaHaye endorses Morris’ books and Thomas Ice holds joint conferences with Ken Ham (www.pre-trib.org)

Modern Geology Fulfills Prophecy?

Young Earth rejection of geology is rooted in premillennial philosophy of history.

Since “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation,” they will say, therefore, “creation” is still being accomplished by these natural processes that “continue” in the present just as they have throughout the past... This prophecy [2 Peter 3:3-4] began to be fulfilled with the rise of the Lyell/Darwin evolutionary worldview in the mid-nineteenth century.

Morris, *Creation and the Second Coming*, pp. 6-7

Other reforms in other days have been based upon various parts of the Bible here and there. The reform most needed in our day is one based on the first part of the Bible – and upon the last part also. For he who is looking for the return of his Lord, and for the imminent ushering in of the new heaven and the new earth, must necessarily believe in the record of the first part of the Bible... Surely, it is useless to expect people to believe in the predictions given in the last chapters of the Bible, if they do not believe in the record of the events described in its first chapters.

George McCready Price, “Science and Religion in a Nutshell” (1923) as quoted by Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p.

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The most important Creationist writer in the first half-century, at least in my judgment, was a remarkable man by the name of George McCready Price.

I first encountered his name in one of Harry Rimmer's books... and thereupon looked up his book *The New Geology* in the library at Rice Institute, where I was teaching at the time. This was in 1943 and it was a life-changing experience for me. I eventually acquired and read most of his other books as well.

Several other Adventist creationists published papers in *The Naturalist* and other Adventist publications. Although the influence of most of them was largely limited to their own denomination, some (especially Price) have contributed quite significantly to the foundations of the modern [young-earth] creationist revival.

Henry Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 1984, pp 79, 80, 83

What has bothered me about the Creation Science movement for almost two decades is that its leaders will not admit that they have mixed together a particular view of eschatology that has nothing to do with the categories or content of physical science. They refuse to tell their followers, "This part of the essay is based on premillennialism, and the empirically verifiable facts of physical science don't have anything to do with it..."

Gary North, *Letter to ICE subscribers*, May 19, 2001

Unfortunately, however, their dispensationalism was becoming inextricably linked with the emerging “young-earth creation” movement.

Eric Rauch & Brandon Vallorani, “The Recovery of Biblical Creationism,” *Biblical Worldview Magazine*, April 2006

A biblical literalism, gaining strength since the 1870's, has fueled both the intense concern for human origins and end times. Literal readings of Genesis 1-3 find their counterpart in literal readings of Revelation 20 (with its description of the thousand-year reign of Christ.)

[Young-Earth] Creationism could, in fact, be called scientific dispensationalism, for creation scientists carry the same attitude toward catastrophe and the sharp break between eras into their science that dispensationalists see in the Scriptures.

Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 1994, p. 194, 195

For [George McCready] Price, this worldview was all bound up with the premillennialism of the Adventists. The flood at the beginning corresponds to the forthcoming Great Tribulation at the end.

Michael Ruse, *The Evolution-Creation Struggle*, 2005, p 239

Global Flood \Leftrightarrow Global End

- The two views are connected
- They reinforce each other
- As long as young-earth creationism's global flood dominates Christian's minds in Genesis, global futurism will dominate Christian's minds in The Revelation
- The Genesis debate is extremely important to the future growth of covenant eschatology

When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters... When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh...

Genesis 5:3-6 (NIV)

Now this posterity of Seth continued to esteem God as Lord of the Universe and to have an entire regard to virtue for seven generations; but in the process of time they were perverted.

Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 1, Chapter 3, Paragraph 1

It seems, though, that the godly line of Seth fell away.

James Jordan, *Through New Eyes*, p. 170

The genealogical list in chapter 5 has been purposefully restructured at its conclusion in order to accommodate the Flood narrative. ***The Flood narrative has been inserted into the genealogy*** between the notation of the total length of Noah's age at the time he engendered his three sons [5:32] and the notation of his total length of his life (9:28) and his death (9:29).
[emphasis ours]

John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 1992, p 119

For forty days the flood kept coming on the **earth**, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the **earth**. The waters rose and increased greatly on the **earth**, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. They rose greatly on the **earth**, and ***all the high mountains under the entire heavens*** were covered. The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than twenty feet. Every living thing that moved on the **earth** perished - birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the **earth**, and all mankind. Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. ***Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out***, men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the **earth**. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark. The waters flooded the **earth** for a hundred and fifty days.

Genesis 7:17-24 (NIV)

The “coming” of “the Son of Man” is most often taught as a worldwide event since Jesus states that “all the tribes of the earth will mourn.” Again most Bible translations do not capture the true meaning of the Greek... ***The New Testament pattern follows the Old Testament pattern.*** The meaning of the Hebrew word *erets* is simply “the land” and not “the earth” as in most English translations. For the most part, it refers to a specific stretch of land in a local, geographical, or political sense. [emphasis ours]

Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, p 166

This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on ***all the nations under heaven.***

Deuteronomy 2:25 (NIV)

There were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from ***every nation under heaven.***

Acts 2:5 (NIV)

This is the gospel you heard and that has been proclaimed [past tense] to ***every creature under heaven.***

Colossians 1:23 (NIV)

Be careful or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. ***For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth.***

Luke 21:34-35 (NIV)

After the sixty-two sevens the anointed one will be cut off and have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and sanctuary. ***The end will come like a flood...***

Daniel 9:26 (NIV)

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day when Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and ***destroyed them all.***

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and ***destroyed them all.***

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

Luke 17:26-29 (NIV)

And here I cannot but speak my mind... I suppose, that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, that the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been **overflowed by water**, or else been **destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by**, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed.

Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, Chapter 13, Section 6

By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:6-7 (NIV)

Let us now consider the implications of this passage with respect to the geographical extent of the flood... Peter uses the terms “heavens from of old and an earth in a sense that is obviously universal. By the same token, no one can deny that Peter also uses the terms ‘heavens that now are and the earth’ in the strict universal sense... It was the flood to which Peter appealed as his final and incontrovertible answer to those who chose to remain in willful ignorance of the fact that God at one time in the past demonstrated his holy wrath and omnipotence by subjecting “all things” to an overwhelming, cosmic catastrophe that was on absolute par with the final day of judgment, in which God will yet consume the earth with fire and will cause the very elements to dissolve with fervent heat.

Henry Morris & John Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood*, 1961, p xvi-xvii

Global Flood Argument

- The argument works well *only* for a global futurist audience
- For preterists, the end of the old heavens and earth by fire involved the regional events of AD 70
- For preterists, the global flood argument falls apart
- There is a clear comparison between the waters of the flood and the fires of AD 70
- From a preterist paradigm, the explicit biblical connection soundly refutes a global flood (Young-Earth Creationism)

A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur. ... the rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent.

Rev. 9:18, 20 (NIV)

Its rundle or part which should look toward the object aimed at, is always from the earth, showing thereby that it does not aim at men. And it has no string, which shows that the master will not shoot; so that a bow unbent, or without a string, is a proper symbol of peace and friendship.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary: Three Volume Set,
1997 vol 1, p.107

I looked and before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow and he was given a crown, he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

Revelation 6:2 (NIV)

We should ask a rather obvious question at this point – so obvious that we are apt to miss it altogether: Where did Christ get the bow? The answer (as is usually the case) begins in Genesis. When God made the covenant with Noah, He declared that He was no longer at war with the earth, because of the “soothing aroma” of the sacrifice (Gen. 8:20-21); and as evidence of this He unstrung His bow and hung it up “in the Cloud” for all to see (Gen. 9:13-17)... It was thus necessary that the first Rider should be seen carrying the Bow of God’s vengeance, to signify the unleashing of the Curse upon Israel’s ground; for these apostates, the Noachic covenant is undone.

David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance*, 1987, p 187

A few verses above, he has stated that the antediluvian world ***perished in water***. That age abruptly ended. In the same way, he argues, the present heaven and earth will end in fire – which it did in the ***cataclysm*** of 70 A.D.
[emphasis ours]

Douglas Wilson, *And it Came to Pass*, 1993, p 32

As Jesus had repeatedly warned, upon this evil and perverse generation would come the great “Day of Judgment” foretold in the prophets, a “destruction of ungodly men” ***like that suffered by the wicked of Noah’s day*** (2 Peter 3:5-7). Throughout His ministry Jesus drew this analogy (see Matthew 24:37-39 and Luke 17:26-27). Just as God destroyed the “***world***” of the antediluvian era by the Flood, so would the “***world***” of first century Israel be destroyed by fire in the fall of Jerusalem. [emphasis ours]

David Chilton, “Looking for New Heavens and a New Earth,” *Last Days Madness* by Gary DeMar, 1997, p 485

Keep in mind that the tribulation described by Jesus in Matthew 24 was local, confined to the land of Israel... the tribulation had reference to the Jews, the people of Judea; it was not a worldwide tribulation.

Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness*, 1997, p 117

The flood was local to the Mesopotamian valley. The animals that came, prompted by divine instinct, were the animals of that region; they were preserved for the good of man after the flood. Man was destroyed within the boundaries of the flood; the record is mute about man in America or Africa or China.

Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, 1954, p. 169

Conclusion

- Eschatology impacts how we understand the Genesis Flood
- Global-flood preterism is inconsistent
- A local flood implies preterism on the other end of the Bible