



3

Was the Flood Global?

Key Themes

- God’s Word is always our starting point.
- God is omnipotent.

Key Passages

- Genesis 6–9; Luke 17:26–30; 2 Peter 2:5

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify several points that confirm the global Flood—both from God’s Word and from human history.
- Describe the significance and sign of the covenant that God made with mankind after the Flood.
- Compare the local and global explanations for the Flood.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “Why do most cultures around the globe have a legend of a global flood?”



Studying God’s Word

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The fact that the Genesis Flood was global is very clear from the language of the text. Some reject this understanding, teaching that the Flood was a local event. The rainbow covenant and flood legends from around the world confirm the global nature of the Flood.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Local Flood image from the Resource DVD-ROM



Activity: Flood Legends

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Students will compare various flood legends from around the world to the biblical account.

- Print one Flood Legends worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Keep the answer key for your use.



Optional Activity: A Local Flood?

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Students will flood a pan with clay mountains and valleys to show the Flood must have been global.

- Pitcher of water
- Modeling clay
- Cake pan or tray



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare your heart to teach God's precious Word this week, read Genesis 7:17–24, 9:11–17.

We know that the Flood of Noah's day was global. However, this is a fact that is being denied frequently by secularists and some Christians. A clear look at Scripture and a steadfast commitment to biblical authority shows us the truth.

A simple reading of Genesis 7:19–20 will put an end to the discussion. "And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered." This does not mean that the Flood was merely 15 cubits deep—verse 20 explains that the Flood "prevailed" over the tops of the highest mountains to a depth of 15 cubits. (A cubit was a standard means of measurement at the time, which was determined by measuring from the elbow to the tip of the finger—generally resulting in 18 to 20 inches. Fifteen cubits may have been about 22 feet.) These facts about the Flood cannot be reconciled with the idea of a local flood. You cannot have a mountain-covering local flood that lasts more than a year.

Then Genesis 7:21 reiterates the total destruction of this Flood on all the earth. "And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man."

We learn in Genesis 9:11–17 that the rainbow was the sign that God used to promise He would never again flood the entire world: "the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:15). If the Flood were not a global event, God would have repeatedly broken that promise whenever a local flood happened on earth after His promise to Noah.

As students and teachers of the Word of God we need to learn to use Scripture to interpret and confirm Scripture. In that light, let's take a look at a couple of New Testament passages that talk of this global Flood in definitive ways.

In warning of God's judgment on wickedness, we see in 2 Peter 2:5 a reference to a global Flood that came upon the earth and spared only Noah and his family—"[God] did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly."

Jesus Christ Himself confirmed that He believed the Flood killed every person not on the Ark. He referred to this catastrophic Flood as He prepared His disciples for the coming of the Son of Man: "And as it was in the days

of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:26–27). This reference to Noah is repeated in Matthew 24:37–39.

In summary, the following are reasons to be confident that the Bible is clear—the Flood of Noah's day was global.

- Confirmation of Scripture with Scripture—Jesus Christ and others in the New Testament referring to the Flood.
- The language used in Genesis 7:17–24 describes the Flood as global. For example, "all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered," "all flesh died that moved on the earth," "the waters prevailed on the earth," etc.
- The depth and duration of the Flood—15 cubits above the mountains; 371 days total.
- The rainbow covenant.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Because of the wide belief in evolutionary history, many people deny that Noah's Flood was a global catastrophe. They rely on the secular interpretation of geologic formations on the earth as truth. They look to man's ideas first to interpret rock layers, rather than looking to God's Word as the ultimate authority. It is true that the geological processes we see today are slow. But this in no way infers that this is the way it has *always* been.

Again, a clear reading of Genesis, as mentioned above, gives us an understanding of how catastrophic this Flood was. The depth of the water, the destruction recorded in Scripture, and the duration of the Flood are a few of the scriptural evidences given to us by God.

But what would we expect to see on the earth if this Flood were real? Wouldn't we expect to find billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water all over the earth? Yes! And that *is* what we find. Take a look below at some evidences that confirm the reality of a global Flood.

1. Fossils of sea creatures atop high mountains. The global Flood covered the "high hills" Genesis says. At the end of the Flood, the rapidly moving continental plates rammed into each other, causing the formation of mountains. The floodwaters did not rise to cover present-day Mt. Everest, for example. Rather, Mt. Everest was formed after the layers were deposited.

2. The sheer existence of the fossil record including fossil “graveyards”—exhibiting the rapid burial of plants and animals. These animals had to have been buried quickly or they would have rotted away, leaving no evidence to confirm this massive Flood.
3. Rock layers that have been discovered to stretch across continents—some with similar features that can be traced for thousands of miles. These layers indicate a rapid deposition that can be explained by the water devastation described in Genesis.
4. Rock layers that are “folded” or bent with no evidence of fracturing or breaking. These folds could only have been formed if these layers were laid down rapidly over one another while still wet and pliable—before solidifying into rock—discounting the idea that this would have taken millions of years.

Another important fact to remember when defending the reality of a global Flood is that the Bible seems to indicate that the landmasses of the earth were once all connected. In Genesis 1:9 we read, “Then God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear’; and it was so.”

You may have heard of *plate tectonics*. This term refers to the moving of the earth’s plates. These movements are still observed today, though they are very slow. This observation has led secular scientists to suggest that the earth is billions of years old. However, many creationists believe that the breaking apart of the earth’s surface into the continents we know today is best understood in terms of the Flood of Noah’s day—a theory called *catastrophic plate tectonics*. This rapid movement of the plates would have been triggered when “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up” (Genesis 7:11).

More than all the physical evidence we can provide, Jesus Christ, our Creator, spoke of the Flood as real, literal history, and the words recorded in Genesis by God Himself cannot be disputed. Every word of His is true, and we are not to add to His words lest we be found liars (Proverbs 30:5–6).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

God’s Word is the history book of the universe from beginning to end, and this global Flood is a major part of that history.

The only way we could know for sure whether this event really occurred and if it were global or local is by an eyewitness record of what happened. And there is such a record! The God of history moved men by His

Spirit to write His Word. In God’s Word, we are told that Noah’s Flood was a real event. The Flood lasted for 371 days and covered all the high hills under the whole heaven (Genesis 7:19).

But there is other information available to us. Did you know that stories about a worldwide Flood are found in historical records all over the world? There have been more than 200 of these stories documented, in practically all ancient nations, from Babylon onward. And they all have common threads weaving throughout them—mimicking the Flood of Noah. This cannot be discounted as “coincidence.” For if there never were a global Flood, where would these stories have come from?

Another historical verification lies in the writings of a well-known and respected first-century Jewish historian named Josephus. This man served as a governor of Galilee, fought against Rome in the first century, and was eventually captured. He was imprisoned in Rome and was ordered to write a history of the Jewish nation. In *The Revised Works of Josephus*, he writes, “When God gave the signal, and it began to rain, the water poured down forty entire days, till it became fifteen cubits higher than the earth; which was the reason why there was no greater number preserved, since they had no place to flee to.”

This statement from the famous historian not only confirms God’s Word but also gives evidence that the Jewish population in the first century believed the Flood to be global and a real event.

For more on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, as I prepare for this lesson, please guide me in wisdom and understanding so I will be equipped to clearly present your truth. The world is so determined to lie to our children and discount your Word. These students need to know that all of your Word is true and that the catastrophic Flood was global—just as your Word says. I pray, Lord, that these students will be mighty warriors for you, equipped to defend your Word against the secular lies. Help me to impress on them that the Bible is our starting point when it comes to answering questions from the world. Move in their hearts to give them a love for your Word, confidence in the truth of it, and joy in discovering you through it.

Review

In the last lesson we looked at a record of the events of Noah's Flood. We decided that it clearly presents a detailed account of how God flooded the entire earth, killing every land-dwelling, air-breathing animal.

? **What survived the Flood aboard the Ark?** *All of the animals that God brought to Noah and the eight people onboard survived.*

? **What led us to conclude that the account we read was not simply a myth or a fairy tale?** *The level of detail in the account separates it from the typical mythical account.*

We also talked about how the events surrounding the Ark and its salvation were similar to the salvation that is found in Christ. We call those connections from the text "types." The Ark was a type of Christ.

? **What were some of the similarities we saw between the Ark and Christ?** *For example: the Ark had one door and Jesus referred to Himself as the door*

that leads to salvation (John 10:9); all who were not in the Ark perished just as all who are not in Christ will perish; the judgment of the Flood was decreed by God just as the final judgment of mankind is decreed by God; Noah preached righteousness and one way to be saved just as Christ preached righteousness and one way to be saved (John 14:6); God provided the plans for the Ark just as He provided the plan for salvation through Christ (1 Peter 1:17–21).

In this lesson we are going to look at the extent of the Flood from another angle. Last week we saw that every air-breathing land animal not on the Ark perished in the Flood—that was very clear from the text. Don't forget to refer to the Flood Timeline that we talked about last week to keep the order of events in perspective.

? **If every air-breathing land animal on the earth died, how much of the earth must have been covered with water?** *The entire surface must have been covered.*



➤ Write on the board, "Why do most cultures around the globe have a legend of a global flood?"

➤ Have students mark Genesis 6–9; Luke 17:26–30; and 2 Peter 2:5 in their Bibles.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

We are going to look back at a few selected verses from the passage we read last week to help us understand how extensive the Flood was. Did the Flood really cover the entire surface of the earth, or was it a local event? There are many people, including prominent Christians, who reject the global nature of the Flood. Let's see what the text has to say on this issue.

Let's read the following passages together. As I give the reference, someone please read the verses: Genesis 6:7, 6:11–13, 6:17, 7:4, 7:11–12, 7:17–24, 8:1–2. *Have someone read each of the verses or passages, one at a time.*

Genesis 6:7, 6:11–13,
6:17, 7:4, 7:11–12,
7:17–24, 8:1–2

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? **What words were repeated in these verses?** *All, every, whole.*
- ? **What common idea was repeated in the verses we read?** *The whole earth was covered. All flesh on the earth died.*
- ? **Are there any figures of speech in the text?** *All the high hills under the whole heavens, face of the earth, windows of heaven, and fountains of the great deep are figures of speech that will need to be interpreted.*
- ? **What was the source of the water for the Flood?** *Verse 7:11 references the fountains of the great deep and the windows of heaven.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *God destroyed the earth and everything on the land with a Flood.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, the observation phase of our inductive study method, let's interpret some of the ideas that were presented.

- ? **What phrases from the text seem to make an irrefutable point about the global extent of the Flood?** *The repeated use of all and every; the water covered the hills 15 cubits deep (Genesis 7:20).*

A cubit is a measurement that the Bible uses frequently. It is the distance from the elbow to the tips of the fingers. It is roughly 18–20 inches by our measurements, so this means the highest hills were covered by at least 20 feet of water.

Imagine a valley surrounded by high hills with the Ark sitting in the middle. The waters begin to rise, and so does the Ark. Finally, the water reaches the tops of the hills.

- ? **What happens to the water? Is it possible for water to cover a hill by over 20 feet and be contained by the valley?** *The water would overflow the mountains, spilling into the next valley. Use a drawing to demonstrate this. The Local Flood image will be used in the Discover the Truth section.*
- ? **Based on this text alone, in its entire context, is there any doubt that the author intended to communicate a Flood that covered the entire earth?** *No.*
- ? **The text referred to the “fountains of the deep” and “the windows of heaven.” What do these figures of speech refer to?** *The fountains of the deep are springs of water under the ocean, probably within the crust of the earth; the windows of heaven is a reference to the source of rain. It is possible that the hot water from the fountains caused the rain clouds to form. This idea will be discussed in Lesson 5.*

OMNIPOTENT

(Refer to Attributes poster.)

2 Peter 2:5

- ? Is causing a flood to cover the entire earth beyond the ability of God? *No, God is omnipotent.*

Another of our interpretive principles is to interpret Scripture with Scripture. Let's look at two other passages that address the Flood to see if they agree with this conclusion.

Our memory verse for this set of lessons is one cross-reference. Will someone please read, or recite, 2 Peter 2:5?

- ? Does this verse support or deny our conclusion, and how? *Since only eight people survived the Flood, it must have covered the entire earth, unless people only lived in one valley at the time of the Flood.*

Some say that the Genesis Flood was a local flood, but universal in that it killed everyone alive on earth except those on the Ark.

- ? How many years after creation did the Flood occur? *1,657 years.*
- ? Given that much time, and the long lives of the pre-Flood people, does it make sense that everyone stayed in the Mesopotamian valley? *No, of course not.*

Luke 17:26–30

Next, let's look at a passage where Jesus compares the Flood of Noah's day to the coming judgment. Will someone please read Luke 17:26–30?

- ? Does this passage support or deny our conclusion, and how? *Jesus refers to the Flood as a real event that "destroyed them all." Likewise, the coming judgment will involve all of mankind, regardless of where they are on the earth.*

I hope you can see that there is little room in the text to even consider that the Flood was anything but an earth-covering event. However, there are still those in the church that reject that idea. Let's look at another passage about the extent of the Flood.



READ THE WORD

Genesis 9:8–17

As we read this passage, remember that after a little more than a year on the Ark, Noah, his family, and all of the animals had moved off of the Ark. Noah offered a sacrifice of the clean animals and then God addressed Noah. Let's read Genesis 9:8–17 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who was God speaking to? *Noah and his sons (v. 8).*
- ? Who established the covenant? *God.*
- ? Who was the covenant with? *Noah, his sons, and all their descendants, as well as every beast of the earth that was on the Ark (vv. 9–10).*
- ? What is the promise of the covenant? *A flood would never again destroy the earth and the living things on it (vv. 11 and 15) as had just happened.*

- ? **What are the conditions of the covenant?** *None. God made the covenant with no demands and in spite of the continued wickedness of mankind.*
- ? **What is the sign of the covenant?** *A rainbow in the clouds.*
- ? **What is the purpose of the rainbow?** *God would remember His covenant, and man would know the covenant was still in effect.*
- ? **How long ago was this promise given?** *Since the Flood ended in the year 2348 BC, the promise was made close to 4,400 years ago. Refer to the Seven C's Timeline to reinforce the periods of time involved.*

Discover the Truth

Let's move on to interpret the ideas presented in the passage.

- ? **What attribute of God do we see in the keeping of this promise for over 4,000 years?** *God is faithful.*
- ? **Has there been another flood that covered the entire globe?** *No.*
- ? **Have there been other floods that have devastated major areas?** *Yes, many of them.*

Many people who believe the Flood was only a local event rely on the claims of geologists who say that there is no evidence for a global flood in the rock layers we see today. Instead, they accept that the earth's layers represent gradual processes acting over billions of years, and that the Flood, if it were a real event, was confined to some local area. Some have suggested the Mesopotamian region or an area near the Black Sea. It may have wiped out all of the people and animals in a given area, but it was not global. Perhaps the passage in Genesis is simply an exaggeration of a smaller event that was altered to provide a religious, moral story about obeying God—but it is not an accurate account of history.

- ? **If the Flood were simply a local event, would the Ark have been necessary?** *No, the animals could have migrated or animals from outside the flood zone could repopulate the flooded area. Likewise, God could have commanded Noah to move across the mountains and still tested his obedience. He could have delivered the message of following Him to the new land for salvation rather than boarding the Ark.*
- ? **If the Flood were local, has God kept His promise to never send another flood like the one that had just occurred?** *No, there have been many local floods that have destroyed entire areas of the planet. If God promised not to send another small flood that would kill everything in a given area, God is a liar. God repeated the conditions of the Flood within the covenant, promising not to do in the future what He had just done.*
- ? **What other description in the Flood account would be made absurd if the Flood were a local event?** *The highest hills couldn't be covered by water by 20 feet in any local area. The water would spill over into the next valley. Show the image Local Flood from the Resource DVD-ROM to illustrate the absurdity of such an idea.*

FAITHFUL

(Refer to Attributes poster)

Others would suggest that the Flood was global, but it was very tranquil and did not reshape the surface of the earth at all. This allows the fossils in the rock layers to represent billions of years of earth history. This idea is contrary to the laws of physics and would require God to miraculously keep the Flood calm for its duration and then remove the waters without any major erosion taking place. There are many problems, both biblical and scientific, with this view.

This view is a very recent interpretation of the Genesis Flood. In the mid-1800s, many in the church started to bow to the secular scientific interpretation of long ages. To fit these ideas into the Bible, Thomas Chalmers proposed a gap between verses one and two of Genesis 1 to allow for an old earth. Others suggested that the days of Genesis 1 could be understood as long ages rather than normal days. These changes were necessary to accommodate the secular understanding of the rock layers. A global flood would have destroyed these layers, so the Bible had to be adjusted to accommodate the new “understanding” of the geologists. Prior to this, there was little question about the extent of the Flood—people trusted the scriptural record.

If we simply allow the Word of God to speak to us in the plain sense it is given, we cannot accept that the Flood was anything but a global event. To do otherwise is to open the door to compromising God’s Word.





Flood Legends

MATERIALS

- Flood Legends worksheet for each student
- Flood Legends answer key

INSTRUCTIONS

Have the students work in pairs or small groups according to the following instructions, using the Flood Legends worksheet to record their thoughts.

We know that the Flood left only three families to repopulate the earth, and that shortly after the Flood these family groups were scattered across the earth. The account of the Flood was surely a part of the heritage of each of these groups as they settled around the globe.

- ? If this is true and we examined the histories of each of these groups, what would we expect to find as they talk about the history of mankind? *Similar stories and legends about the Flood.*

Talk this over in pairs for a few minutes and think about the stories that we might find in ancient documents. Come up with some of the characteristics of these stories that were based in the history of the Flood. In a few minutes, we'll discuss your ideas in light of what we see in actual flood legends from around the world. *Allow several minutes for*

the students to think about how the stories might change over time.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's take a look at some of the actual flood legends from around the globe. This worksheet has some basic facts about legends from Hawaii, ancient Babylon, and a portion of the Epic of Gilgamesh from Assyria. *Pass out the worksheets to each student and have them scan the explanations.*

- ? What themes are common to these legends? *See table on answer key.*
- ? What elements are missing when compared to the biblical account? *See table on answer key.*
- ? Does it make more sense to say that these accounts developed from a shared history of the real Flood, or that the biblical account was borrowed from one of the others? Why? *Apart from being the Word of God (the most important factor), the biblical account contains more detail and realistic proportions for the Ark. For example, if the Ark had been a cube, it would have tipped over in the water, and it could not have been over half a mile long. It makes more sense that details would be lost, exaggerated, or simplified as the story was passed along. Elements would be lost and some new elements, like the multiple gods, would be added in to match the culture.*



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Today we have looked at several lines of reasoning that point to the global nature of the Flood.

- ? **What evidence did we see in the text of Genesis 6–9 to point to a global Flood?** *The wording is very inclusive, leaving little room to question that it was intended to communicate a global catastrophe.*
- ? **How do the words of Jesus and Peter confirm this?** *Both speak of the global nature of the Flood.*
- ? **Rather than global, how do many people describe the extent of the Flood?** *Many suggest it was a local event that was distorted or that was misinterpreted as a global event.*
- ? **Why was a change in the understanding of the extent of the Flood seen as necessary?** *To accommodate the long-age views being suggested by secular geologists. A global flood was not consistent with the scientific explanations of the rock layers, so the Bible was adjusted to fit the modern understanding.*
- ? **How does the rainbow help us understand the extent of the Flood?** *Since God promised to never send a flood like the one described in Genesis, if the Flood were a local event, God has broken His promise many times.*



A Local Flood? (Optional)

MATERIALS

- Modeling clay
- Cake pan or tray
- Pitcher of water

INSTRUCTIONS

Do this activity if you have additional time. Use the modeling clay to make “mountains” with a “valley” in the center of the cake pan or tray.

- ? **What will happen when we attempt to fill the valley with water to a level that covers the tops of the mountains?** *The water will flow out of the valley before the mountains are covered.*

Pour water into the “valley” until it begins to flow out. Discuss how this shows that the Flood must have been global rather than a local event, since it covered all the hills.



GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **As you interact with people, what is the most likely objection to the Flood account from Genesis?** *Most will likely reject the idea that there was ever a flood that covered the entire globe. Despite the fact that the earth is 70% covered by water, a global flood is rejected. Ironically, many think there was a huge flood on Mars, which has no liquid water.*
- ? **As we talk with unbelievers, should we use the various flood legends from around the world to prove that the biblical Flood really happened?** *No. The flood legends are consistent with the biblical account and confirm it, but they cannot prove the Bible is accurate. The text of the Bible is the only proof for the global Flood.*

- ? **What elements of the text of Genesis 6–9 could you use to point someone to the global nature of the Flood?** *The inclusive language of all, every, and other phrases make it clear.*
- ? **When talking with a fellow believer who believes (or has been taught) that the Flood was only a local event, how would you approach correcting his or her understanding?** *This should be done in a prayerful, loving attitude asking them to examine the text carefully. Some may have been taught a local interpretation without studying the passage.*
- ? **Is a Noah’s Ark/rainbow theme appropriate for a nursery?** *Answers will vary, but it is curious that we use symbols of God’s judgment for a sin-filled world to decorate a nursery and make it “cute.”*
- ? **The rainbow has been hijacked by many different groups as a symbol for their causes. It is used for a multicultural symbol, a symbol of hope, a symbol of obtaining wealth without effort, and even as the symbol for those who engage in homosexual lifestyles. How could you use the rainbow as a way to engage someone in a gospel-centered conversation?** *If you notice someone with a pin or patch on his clothing, you might simply ask, “Why do you wear that rainbow?” That could then be followed up with a conversation leading into the question, “Do you know what the Bible teaches about the rainbow?” Take the time to explain God’s perspective and share the true hope of the gospel through the righteousness of Christ.*
- ? **How can we connect the Flood to the gospel?** *God is just and must judge sin. His judgment involves every person on the earth, not just people in a local area. Just as God judged the sin of the pre-Flood world, there is coming a day when He will judge the entire earth again. As the Ark provided salvation for Noah and his family, Jesus is our way of escape from God’s judgment against sin.*
- ? **How does Genesis 6–9 point to Christ?** *Just as God has been faithful to keep His promise not to flood the earth again, He was also faithful to send the Seed to take away the sins of the world. We can trust in God completely. Other parallels can also be drawn.*



MEMORY VERSE

2 Peter 2:5 And [God] did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for the clarity of what He has revealed to us.
- Thank God for being faithful to His promises.
- Pray that God would give boldness and grace to each person as they seek to share the gospel with the lost.

