



5 Reshaping the Earth

Key Themes

- The Bible records the true history of mankind and the universe.
- God is omnipotent.

Key Passages

- Genesis 1:9–10, 7:10–16, 8:1–7; Psalm 104:6–9

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the source of the water for the Flood.
- Describe how the earth's surface changed during the Flood.
- Relate the fossils in the earth's rock layers to the Flood.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “How were fossils formed?” If possible, have a rock with a fossil available for students to examine.



Studying God's Word

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The Bible describes the Flood as a global event that reshaped the surface of the earth. The waters from under the earth flooded the entire surface of the earth as the continents broke apart. As the floodwaters receded, the mountains rose and the valleys sank to receive the water. The billions of dead things that were buried by the floodwaters are evident as fossils in the rock layers today.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- DVD player and TV or computer
- Preview the video clips “Flood Initiation” (1:49) and “Rock Layers” (3:34) from the Resource DVD-ROM.



Activity: Building Mountains

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Students will watch video segments that explain various aspects of geology related to the Flood.

- Modeling clay



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare for this week's lesson, read Genesis 1:9–10, 7:10–16, 8:1–7, and Psalm 104:6–9.

The Bible describes Noah's Flood as a globe-covering event with water moving about. Scripture describes the water sources and also where the water went as it began to recede. There is not a lot of detail given in Scripture about the pre-Flood world, but there are many clues that we can use to piece together how the earth changed during the Flood.

Genesis 1:9–13 describes Day Three of Creation. Verse 9 seems to suggest that there was originally one land mass. If the waters were gathered together in one place and the land appears out of that, it makes sense that there was one land mass surrounded by water. It is this land that Genesis 7 describes as being covered by floodwaters. The high hills may not have been as tall as the mountains we have today. Covering them would not have required the same amount of water as would be required today.

The source of the water for the Flood is described from Scripture. First, we read of the "fountains of the great deep" that broke open to release water. Most understand these to be some sort of water source within the earth. As the earth's crust cracked open, sea water would have come into contact with the extremely hot magma that erupted from inside the earth. As the magma was released and cooled, it would have caused great jets of steam to blast into the atmosphere, carrying sea water with it. Some of this steam would have condensed to form clouds, but it would have been the sea water carried aloft that was the main source of the rain described as coming from the "windows of heaven." Today, there is much water found under the ground in cracks and in porous rocks (reservoirs or aquifers) in the earth's crust, left there after the receding of the floodwaters.

Others have suggested that there may have been a canopy of water above the earth (Genesis 1:6) that supplied the rain. This idea presents more challenges than it solves and is not a necessary conclusion from the text. The heaviest rain continued for forty days, and on day 150 the sources of the water were shut up. God sent a wind, and the Ark came to rest on mountains that were being lifted up from under the floodwaters due to the dramatic movements of the earth's crust that continued until the end of the Flood 221 days later.

Psalm 104 describes a portion of the events of the Flood in verses 6–9. Some versions seem to indicate that the waters are the subject of verse 8, but the Hebrew

seems to best support the ESV translation: "The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them." Many contend that this section is a reference to Day Three of the Creation Week. Verse 9, however, seems to refute this idea since the waters are not to "return to cover the earth." This could not be about the creation because the waters did indeed cover the earth again during the Flood. Proponents of a local Flood point to this verse to support their claim that the Flood was not global.

As the continents continued to shift and collide, mountains were pushed up and valleys sank down. The floodwaters retreated from the earth, causing massive erosional features. The new oceans were filled, and the land eventually dried, allowing plants to grow again. The landmass and sea that had existed before the Flood no longer existed—everything had been reshaped.

As we develop scientific models based on what the Bible reveals, we must take care not to add ideas into the text. We know that the Flood was global and that it destroyed all living things on the surface of the earth. That destruction is seen clearly in the billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water across the globe.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Many people in the church today look to modern scientific explanations to explain the history of the earth more than they look to their Bibles. Rather than accepting the clear language of the text of Genesis 6–9, they seek to understand the rock layers, the fossils, and the legends of a global Flood in light of modern "wisdom." The secular understanding of rock layers that were deposited slowly over millions of years is imported into the Bible. As a result, many reject the idea that the Flood was global. Instead, they suggest that the Flood was a local event that was distorted over time into a global event. Others suggest that while the Flood was not global, it was "universal," meaning that it covered the area of the earth where mankind was living.

All of these positions depend on a modern understanding of science to interpret the biblical record of the Flood. This is the exact opposite way we should approach the Scriptures. God's Word should inform our understanding of what we observe in the world. We should interpret the rock layers that contain billions of dead things in light of the Flood account—not the other way around.

In this lesson we will look in greater detail at how the fossils and rock layers can be explained from the perspective of the Flood. The billions of dead things

buried in rock layers laid down by water all over the earth are a testament to this globe-covering event.

If the Flood were not a global event, the details of Noah's adventure on the Ark would be absurd. If the Flood only covered the Mesopotamian region, as some would suggest, why didn't God just tell Noah to move? Why was it necessary to take all of the animals aboard when God could have directed them out of the area, just as He brought them to Noah? Has God broken His promise to never send another flood to destroy the earth, if the Flood was just local? All of these questions must be answered in light of what Scripture teaches, not what the secular scientists tell us.

Another important consideration comes from the study of cultures around the globe. Most cultures have some type of flood story. If we think about this from a biblical view, all of these cultures were founded as people were scattered from Babel about 100 years after the Flood. As they scattered, they carried the account of the Flood with them. Over time, the account turned into various stories. People's names are changed, the details are lost, and the focus shifts from the one true God, but many similarities remain.

Hawaiians have a flood story that tells of a time when, long after the death of the first man, the world became a wicked, terrible place. Only one good man was left, and his name was Nu'u. He made a great canoe with a house on it and filled it with animals. In this story, the waters came up over all the earth and killed all the people; only Nu'u and his family were saved.

Another flood story is from China. It records that Fuhi, his wife, three sons, and three daughters escaped a great flood and were the only people alive on earth. After the great flood, they repopulated the world.

These legends, along with many others, confirm the biblical view of history. We rely first on the infallible record of Scripture that comes directly from God, but we also see these other evidences as great confirmations of what is recorded for us.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Over time, there have been many different explanations for the fossilized creatures found in the rock layers. Giant fossilized bones have been imagined to be dragons and giants by various cultures around the world. In the early 1800s, fossilized bones were found in England and were popularized as giant reptiles that once dominated the earth. It was during this period that the fossils and rock layers were being reinterpreted apart from a biblical understanding.

Up to that point, Noah's Flood was generally the explanation for the dead creatures buried in the layers. Rather than a single, global event, scientists began to insist that the layers were better explained by many smaller floods that happened successively over long periods of time. Rather than rapid and catastrophic, they imagined slow and gradual processes. This was the birth of uniformitarianism—the idea that the present is the key to the past. Since new rocks are formed slowly today, they assumed that this is how it had always happened. They rejected the clear record of Scripture and interpreted the rock layers to mean that the world was very old.

In 1859, the year Darwin published his famous book, Antonio Snider proposed that the continents had been connected at one point in the past. He looked at the way the coastlines of the continents appear to fit and proposed that the continents had moved apart during the Flood. In 1915, a secular scientist suggested that the continents had drifted apart slowly. This idea was later embraced by many scientists as the ocean floors were explored, and it has become the common belief.

Rather than happening slowly over millions of years, models based on the Bible suggest that the continents moved apart very rapidly during the Flood—as Snider had proposed. While the details of such models are tested, it is important that we hold loosely to our scientific models and hold fast to the clear truths from Scripture.

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



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, I recognize that you alone are the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. When I think about the idea of a flood that covered the entire earth, I know that it could only have come through your omnipotent hand. You are a righteous judge yet merciful and gracious. Help me to recognize your character as I prepare to teach this lesson and that I would communicate the hope that is found in Christ alone and the truthfulness and trustworthiness of your words for life and godliness. Help the students to look to your Word for guidance as they seek to share your truths with others.

Review

Last week we discussed a biblical view of the Ark that God commanded Noah to build. We found from the text that the Ark was not some tiny tugboat overloaded with animals poking out of every window.

? Who can remember the approximate dimensions of the Ark in feet? *510x85x51 feet.*

That was equivalent to about 500 semi-trailers. That is enough space for all of the animals that Noah went out and captured, right? *There was plenty of room for all of the creatures, but Noah did not have to go and get the animals—God brought them to the Ark.*

? Noah took representatives of all of the land-dwelling, air-breathing animals on board. How many of each did he take? *Pairs of all of the unclean kinds and seven (pairs) of the clean animals.*

? Did Noah have lions, tigers, cougars, and leopards on the Ark? *No, there would have been a representative pair of the cat kind. These modern cats came from that Ark pair.*

There are many issues related to the size of the Ark, the animals that were on board,

how they spread across the globe afterward, and many other things. We certainly can't cover every single aspect in this class, but I hope you are searching for answers on your own as issues arise. Many great resources are available from ministries focused on looking to Scripture as the absolute authority.

Today, we are going to wrap up our look at the Flood with a focus on how the Flood reshaped the earth. We will be touching on issues of the geology of the Flood, how the world changed as a result, and how fossils tie into this global catastrophe. I hope today's lesson will cause you to dig into God's Word to make sure you are prepared to give an answer for the hope you have in Christ and the Bible.

As we go through the lesson today, you may want to refer to the Flood Timeline worksheet that we began using a few weeks ago.



➤ Write on the board, "How were fossils formed?" If possible, have a rock with a fossil available for students to examine.

➤ Have students mark Genesis 1:9–10, 7:10–16, 8:1–7; and Psalm 104:6–9 in their Bibles.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Let's start today by reading Genesis 7:10–16 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Our focus as we examine this passage again is the source of the water. The detailed date should remind us that this is an actual account of an event that really happened.

Observe the Text

- ? What two sources of water are given in the text? *The breaking up of the fountains of the great deep and the opening of the windows of heaven.*
- ? Does heaven have windows? *No, this is a figure of speech that we will need to interpret.*
- ? How long did the rain fall? *Forty days and nights.*
- ? How was the door on the Ark closed? *God shut the door.*
- ? Are there any figures of speech in the text that we need to interpret? *The “fountains of the great deep” and the “windows of heaven” need to be interpreted.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let's spend some time interpreting the information.

We had two figures of speech in the passage that need some interpretation. Remember that one of the rules of understanding God's Word is to interpret Scripture with Scripture.

Throughout the Old Testament, “the deep” often refers to the sea. Jonah referred to being cast into the deep as he was swallowed by the fish (Jonah 2:3–5); many of the prophets referred to judgment in terms of being covered by the deep (Ezekiel 26:19); Isaiah referred to the Red Sea crossing as God drying up the “sea, the waters of the great deep” (Isaiah 51:10).

So, the fountains of the great deep must be some form of water source at the bottom of the ocean.

- ? The second phrase in this passage we need to interpret is “the windows of heaven.” This one seems pretty straight forward. What are these open windows symbolic of? *The pouring out of rain from the sky.*

Now, the source of this rain has been a subject of much discussion among Christians. Some have suggested that it never rained before the Flood, and you may have heard this, but this is not directly stated anywhere in the Bible. Others have suggested there may have been a canopy of water surrounding the earth that collapsed and caused the rain. This idea was proposed to solve several scientific objections to the pre-Flood portions of Scripture, but this idea actually seems to create more problems than it solves. However, there are some who still hold to the canopy model.

We are going to watch a video that explains another source for the rain and the floodwaters. It incorporates some of the modern scientific understanding we have about the structure of the earth with the text of Scripture. In this video, you will see the fountains of the great deep break open as cracks spread across the sea floor. These cracks release hot magma containing gases and water that is superheated, creating jets of steam and giant waves. The steam rises and condenses in the atmosphere

► Play “Flood Initiation” video clip.

Genesis 1:9–10

to cause the rain. This growing cloud covers the earth and produces rain for 40 days. Let’s watch. *Play the video clip “Flood Initiation.”*

This is one probable explanation for how God brought about the conditions of the Flood. You may have noticed that the earth looked a little different as seen from space as the video began—there was only one landmass or continent.

Genesis 1:9–10 tells us a bit more about this. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

From this we can infer that if the sea was gathered together into one place, then there was only one landmass.

Today, we see six major landmasses or continents (Europe and Asia are part of one landmass). A model called Catastrophic Plate Tectonics suggests that the single landmass that existed at the beginning of the Flood was split. The fracturing of the crust of the earth, releasing the fountains of the great deep, initiated the movement of the continents during the early part of the Flood. You may have been taught in your science and social studies classes at school that secular scientists refer to this movement as continental drift and suggest it occurred slowly over millions of years. The biblical model suggests that the movement happened in a matter of months and could be called “continental sprint.”

This reminds us that God truly is omnipotent, or all-powerful. Nothing is too hard for Him to accomplish because He holds power over the entire universe.

Let’s get back to the biblical text and examine some more clues from the text that will help us understand how the Flood reshaped the earth.



OMNIPOTENT

(Refer to Attributes poster)

READ THE WORD

Genesis 8:1–7

Let’s read Genesis 8:1–7 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did God cause to happen in verses 1–2? *He caused a wind to blow and the waters to subside as the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped.*
- ? What day of the Flood did this occur on? *Day 150, verse 3.*
- ? What happened to the water level at this point? *The water decreased continually.*
- ? When did the Ark rest on the mountains? *On day 150—the seventeenth day of the seventh month.*
- ? Where did the Ark rest? *On the mountains of Ararat—not Mt. Ararat itself.*
- ? How long did the waters continue to decrease? *Until the tenth month.*

- ? When were the tops of the mountains seen? *The first day of the tenth month.*
- ? How many more days passed before Noah opened the window and released the raven? *Forty more days passed.*

Discover the Truth

Now that we have asked questions about the text, let's interpret some of the pieces and try to understand how the rock layers and fossils that we see all around the globe connect to this passage.

It might be helpful to have your Flood Timeline worksheets out as we look at some of the details and timing in the text.

The water increased until day 150—the seventeenth day of the seventh month. Using a 30-day month, and knowing that the Flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month, we can arrive at that date. Looking forward, we see that the waters began to recede or get lower from that point, and that by day 224, the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains were visible.

Remember that the text says that the Ark rested “on the mountains of Ararat.” Does this mean that if we search for the Ark we should focus on Mt. Ararat in modern Turkey? *No, the mountains of Ararat are a long chain and there are two possible ranges that have been referred to as Ararat in the past. Added to that is the fact that Mt. Ararat is a volcanic mountain that formed after the Flood. If the Ark had landed there, it would likely have been destroyed by the eruption or buried.*

- ? We are trying to understand the connection between the rock layers we see around the earth and the Flood. How do the fountains of the great deep and the windows of heaven provide an explanation for these rock layers? *If the entire earth was covered by water, the soil and rocks would have been ripped up and transported long distances. These sediments would have been deposited in layers that were laid down quickly on top of one another.*
- ? How did the fossils of plants and animals wind up in the rock layers? *As the Flood began, the sea creatures would have been carried onto the land with the initial tsunamis and deposited in coastal areas. Plants and animals on the land would have been buried as the waters rose across the continent. The purpose of the Flood was to destroy the life from the face of the earth, so the fossils are a confirmation of this. We find billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water all over the earth.*

We are going to watch a short video that describes some of these processes. You will see an explanation of the layers in the rock record, how the fossils formed, how rock layers can be bent, and how the massive erosion features that we see today were formed as the floodwaters receded. *Play the video clip “Rock Layers.”*

► Play “Rock Layers” video clip.

I hope that video gives you a perspective of the extent of the rock layers that were deposited by the Flood and how those layers were bent and eroded as the continents were shifting and colliding. But we still need

to talk about the erosional process that formed the extensive flatlands, valleys, and features like Grand Canyon.

- ? If the Ark was stuck in the mountains at day 150 and the waters began to go down from there, what physical processes would have been occurring across the earth? *The water had to go somewhere, so there were several things happening at the same time. The mountains were rising as the continents collided due to their continued movement. As the mountains rose, the waters began flowing to lower places. The rock forming the ocean basins would have been cooling and sinking, allowing water to flow into the new basins.*
- ? We see a confirmation of this idea in Psalm 104, but there is a bit of disagreement about the best interpretation of this text. Some scholars insist this psalm only describes the events of creation. But there is a problem with that interpretation—the psalm mentions boats in verse 26 and the cedars of Lebanon in verse 16. There would not have been ships present at the time of creation, and Lebanon did not yet exist. There is one other consideration that we will see as we look at the text.

Psalm 104:6–9

We are going to look at this passage in the ESV. *If someone has a copy of the ESV you can have them read verses 6–9 out loud. Otherwise, read the excerpt below.*

⁶You covered [the earth] with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. ⁷At your rebuke they fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight. ⁸The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that you appointed for them. ⁹You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

As the continents and ocean plates continued to move and collide into one another, the mountains were pushed up. The water would have flowed away from the mountains in massive sheets, carrying much sediment into the ocean basins.

- ? There were likely large amounts of water trapped in smaller basins on the continents. What would happen if the water from one of these large lakes would have escaped? *There would have been erosion that would have cut through the relatively soft layers, and large canyons could have been formed in a very short time period. This is the likely explanation for the formation of Grand Canyon at some point shortly after the Flood ended.*
- ? Based on Psalm 104:6–9 (regardless of the version), what other idea points toward this section describing the Flood rather than creation? *Verse 9 says that the waters cannot pass the boundary set for them. If this is describing creation, then we must reject that Noah's Flood was a global event—an idea clearly disallowed by Genesis 6–9.*

Reflecting on all that was going on during the Flood calls attention to two things about God. First, His power is demonstrated in His control over these global, catastrophic events. And second, His sincerity in judgment against the sin that had corrupted the earth is seen.





Building Mountains

MATERIALS

- Modeling clay

INSTRUCTIONS

One of the arguments skeptics use against the truth of the Flood is that there isn't enough water on earth to cover the highest mountains, such as Mount Everest, which rises more than five miles above sea level. In reality, Mount Everest probably did not exist before the Flood. It was formed when two of the landmasses—the Eurasian Plate and the Australian-Indian Plate—rapidly crashed together during the Flood. Before the Flood, the surface of the earth would have been much flatter. There is more than enough water on earth to have covered it completely. In this activity, we are going to model how this would have happened.

For this demonstration, flatten two pieces of modeling clay into "pancakes" to represent two plates of the earth's crust. Place the two "plates" next to each other on a table or other flat surface.

- ? During the Flood, the plates—pieces of the earth's crust—were rapidly moved around, and they crashed into each other. What would happen if the two plates in this demonstration are pushed together? *The area where they meet will be pushed up. Push the two pieces of clay together, forcing the boundary between the two to push upward, forming "mountains."*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Before the Flood the surface of the earth was much flatter, allowing the water to cover the highest hills. Today's massive mountains were rapidly formed as a result of the Flood.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

What we have talked about today and in the last four lessons regarding the Flood is just a small portion of many ideas related to the Flood account and its effects. We have not addressed all of the claims that skeptics throw against this portion of Scripture or answered every question that may have come into your mind, but I hope you see that looking carefully at the text and applying some of the evidence from the world around us can provide answers to the questions. We can trust the Bible to help us rightly understand this world we live in.

- ? *If you have a fossil for students to examine: How was this fossil probably formed? Most fossils were formed rapidly during the Flood when they were buried under tons of sediments.*

We would also expect to see erosional features that can only be explained by truly massive amounts of water moving across the continents. We see

features like Devil's Tower in Wyoming, Grand Canyon, Ayer's Rock in Australia, and others around the globe that stand as testaments to the Flood.

- ? Do biblical geologists have all of the answers to explain every aspect of the geology of the earth in light of the Flood? *No, but that doesn't mean those puzzles can't be solved as more information is gathered and we understand more about our planet.*

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? In light of all that we have studied in this lesson, and the Flood as a whole, do you expect yourself to know all of the answers to every question that a skeptic might ask you about the Flood? *Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to have exhaustive knowledge of every claim someone might bring forward. Having a general knowledge of the Flood should be enough to answer basic questions.*
- ? What if you don't know the answer to someone's question related to the Flood and geologic features? How can you respond? *There is nothing wrong with acknowledging that you do not know the answer. Be willing to do some research to find the answer. This is a gesture of sincerity that will be appreciated by the questioner. Another option is to point them to resources like the Answers in Genesis website and books where they can find the answers.*
- ? Why can we trust that the Flood was a real event that truly reshaped the earth? *God has revealed it to us in His Word and He is trustworthy.*
- ? How can an understanding of the Flood help us understand more about the character and nature of God? *Several of God's attributes are demonstrated in the Flood account: His mercy, justice, grace, omnipotence, etc.*
- ? How can you use questions about the Flood to share the gospel with others around you? *Discussing aspects of the Flood will naturally lead to God's judgment against sin and His mercy toward sinners. These can be used as springboards into the salvation from sin that is found in Christ.*



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 His power over His creation.
- Thank God that He has left us evidence in the rocks that confirms what He has revealed in Scripture.
- Praise God for His mercy and grace demonstrated through the Ark and the Cross.