

Does The Bible Say The Flood Was Global?

In Genesis chapters 6 – 8 we find the Biblical account of the Flood. The passage tells us that the Flood was sent because of the overwhelming wickedness of man:

Genesis 6:5: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

In modern times many people have attacked the idea that God sent a Flood to destroy the whole world, and even many Christians no longer believe it. Some scholars teach that the Flood was simply a minor local event, not a planetary cataclysm that destroyed the entire ancient world. This has caused many people to start wondering what the Bible really teaches. Did God really say that the Flood was global?

Since these questions have become increasingly common I'd like to take some time to discuss what the Bible teaches about Noah and the Flood. Believe it or not, the Bible really *does* teach that the Flood destroyed the entire planet; the evidence *against* a purely local flood is incredibly strong. For example, in Genesis 6 – 8 there numerous verses that speak of the epic scope of the Flood:

Genesis 6:7: “And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air: for it repenteth me that I have made them.”

Genesis 6:13: “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”

Genesis 6:17: “And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.”

Do you see the magnitude of what God had planned? These verses say that the wickedness of mankind had become so great that the Lord decided to destroy “all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven”. *All flesh!* In verse 17 God emphasized that “every thing that is in the earth shall die.” This is *far more* than a simple local flood; God is clearly talking about a planetary event. The Lord wanted to destroy *all flesh* from the *entire planet*! The only survivors would be those on board the Ark (aside from aquatic life, of course, which would not be affected).

In fact, the whole reason God told Noah to build an Ark was to preserve life. If the Flood was just a local event then Noah and his family could have survived by simply leaving town for a few days.

The only reason he would need a boat is if the *entire planet* was under water.

The passage goes on to say that the waters rose above the world's highest mountains:

Genesis 7:17: “And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.

18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.”

This passage could not be more clear: “All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died”. Verse 19 tells us that the water rose above every hill that was under the whole heaven. Every mountain was covered! The only people who survived were those on board the Ark. These verses do *not* teach that a local flood destroyed a few pockets of local wildlife; instead they report the global destruction of all land creatures. *Everything* died.

On top of all this, when the Flood ended the Lord gave Noah a promise:

Genesis 9:11: “And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and very living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.”

The Lord promised Noah that He would never again send another flood like the one that had just occurred. He then gave the rainbow as a sign to remind everyone that such a terrible event would never happen again. If the Flood was just a local event then the Lord has broken His promise hundreds of thousands of times, because local floods happen constantly. The only way His promise makes sense

is if the Flood was indeed global in scope – which is precisely what the Bible teaches.

You may not realize this, but Genesis is not the only book of the Bible that speaks of the Flood. For example:

Isaiah 54:9: “For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.”

10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

Here the Lord uses the Flood as an example of His faithfulness, saying that just as He swore that the Flood of Noah would never happen again, so He swears that He would never stop loving the nation of Israel. If the Flood was just a local event then the Lord has broken His promise many, many times. However, we know that the Lord never breaks His word and cannot lie. If (as Genesis teaches) the Flood was a global event then the Lord has kept His word, just as He promised.

In Ezekiel we find this verse:

Ezekiel 14:14: “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.”

This isn't really a reference to the Flood but it's interesting all the same. When the Lord wanted to give an example of people who had truly outstanding character He picked Noah, Daniel, and Job. Noah is clearly held in very high esteem by the Lord. If you believe that the Genesis account of the Flood is accurate then that makes sense; after all, Noah was the only righteous person on the entire planet! Hebrews explains that it was Noah's faith in God that prompted him to act:

Hebrews 11:7: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

This passage raises some great points. If the Flood was just a local flood then why didn't God just ask Noah to leave the area? After all, if Noah has enough time to build an enormous boat then he surely had enough time to leave town! And how would building a boat “condemn the world” if the Flood was confined to his local area? This passage only makes sense if the Flood was a global judgment on *all* of mankind. By building a boat he saved his family and condemned the world, because the world was offered a chance to repent and escape judgment but they refused. As Peter says, the ungodly world rejected God's offer and as a result only eight people were saved:

I Peter 3:20: “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

II Peter 2:5: “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly;”

II Peter 3:5: “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:
6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”

Notice how clearly these passages state that only *eight people* survived the Flood. Everyone else in the world died! These verses emphasize the fact that the *entire world* perished (as it says in II Peter 3:6). II Peter 2:5 does *not* say “And spared not Noah's village”, or “And spared not Noah's country”. No, it says it spared not *the world*.

Jesus also spoke of the Flood:

Matthew 24:37: “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark;

39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Luke 17:26: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.”

The Lord Jesus Christ compared His Second Coming to the Flood of Noah, which He clearly believed was a real event. Jesus did not speak of the Flood as if it were a myth or merely a local disturbance; instead He taught that the Flood “destroyed them all” and “took them all away”. The scope and suddenness of His Second Coming is likened to the scope and suddenness of the Flood. The Second Coming is never depicted as a small, local event that only impacts a few people; the Bible speaks of it as the culmination of time itself – a terrible time in which God's judgment will be poured out on the entire world.

As you can see, the Bible quite clearly teaches that the Flood was a global event that killed *every last person on Earth* except for the eight people that were on board the Ark. In those days the world was full of wickedness and violence, and one day the Flood came and destroyed them all. Noah and his family were saved because they believed God and accepted His offer of grace. The rest of the world ignored Noah's warning that destruction was coming, and when it came it caught them completely by surprise.

The Second Coming will be just like that. Today the world is full of wickedness and violence. People are sounding the alarm that Jesus' Second Coming is at hand, but they are ignored. One day Jesus will return, and those who accepted His offer of grace will be saved – but the rest will be caught completely off guard and will face judgment and destruction.