

Bible Extra 2020

Strange Scriptures

Week 3

Part 1 Who Built the Ark?

John Stott

Of course any theory of evolution which is presented as a blind and random process must be rejected by Christians as incompatible with the biblical revelation that God created everything by his will and word, that he made it `good', and that his creative programme culminated in Godlike human beings. But there does not seem to me to be any biblical reason for denying that some kind of purposive evolutionary development may have been the mode which God employed in creating.

“At the present time, there is no available complete synthesis of scientific and theological knowledge regarding the Flood. What may be needed is a team, including a competent geologist, an anthropologist and an expert on Biblical languages and culture to work out a synthesis.”

Forster and Marston, Reason & Faith, 1989

Option 1 – Literal, Worldwide Flood

“We believe that the Bible, as the verbally inspired and completely inerrant Word of God, gives us the true framework of historical and scientific interpretation, as well as religious truth. We take this revealed framework of history as our basic datum.”

Whitcomb & Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 1961

Scientific issues with the literal view

1. No geological evidence
2. Where did all the water come from?
3. Where did all that water go to?
4. How long did it take to drain?
5. How did all the animals get to the ark?
6. How did the South American tree sloth get home?
7. How come all the marsupials headed to Australia?

Scientific issues with the literal view

8. More than 8 people work at Chester zoo!
9. Many animals are carnivorous.

The Genesis Flood, (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961) became a best-seller in the Fundamentalist world and polarized Evangelical opinion, though it was ignored by all university scientists and liberal Christians. It was followed by the launch of the Creation Research Society in 1963 and of Morris' Institute for Creation Research in 1972. Ken Ham, the founder of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum near Cincinnati, credited *The Genesis Flood* for "really launching the modern creationist movement around the world."

Wikipedia

Option 2 – Local Flood

1. The language of appearance

The flood seems to have been a comparatively local — though widespread — disaster. The assertion that ‘all the mountains under the entire heavens were covered’ (Gen. 7:19) is not to be pressed with strict literalism, but rather understood from the perspective of the observer, just as the ‘God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven’ who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost evidently refers to the known world of the Mediterranean basin. For Luke goes on to list fifteen such groups. He was not alluding to distant peoples like Eskimos, Australian Aborigines and Maoris.

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Option 2 – Local Flood – arguments FOR

1. Language of appearance
2. Meaning of “*eretz*” (“Earth”)
3. Hebrew use of hyperbole

Option 2 – Local Flood – arguments against

1. A local flood doesn't have the same judgment value.
2. A local flood doesn't make much sense of the promise never to do it again.
3. A local flood feels insignificant for these majestic and foundational opening chapters of the Bible.

Option 3 – A polemical story

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

1. Bible elsewhere seems to regard Noah as a real individual.
2. NT refs (1 Pet 3:20-21, 2 Pet 3:6)
3. What's the point of a judgement story if judgment didn't actually happen?

Option 3 – A polemical story

ARGUMENTS FOR

1. The Genesis 1-11 genre feels like it is exploring theology through story rather than telling literal history.
2. The Gilgamesh Epic