

**St. Mark's Lutheran Church**  
**Sunday Bible Class - April/May 2024**

**The Flood - Introduction**

- 1) The Flood - a trivia quiz (separate handout)
  
- 2) Why is it important for modern-day Christians to study the Flood?
  - The Flood is the greatest post-creation geological event in history.
  - God has given the Flood a prominent place in the Bible (Genesis 6-8)
  - The Biblical account of the Flood has been ridiculed by “modern” (and supposedly enlightened) science, which views the scriptural account of the Flood with skepticism, speculation, and unbelief. These views have brought great harm to many who have rejected the truth.

\*Note: The erosion of humanity's beliefs in the truth and authenticity of the Bible and its harmony with natural science accelerated during the middle years of the 19th century (1800s). The trend led to a movement among eminent British scientists of the time, who drew up a manifesto in 1865 which was signed by 617 members of the British Association of Scientists. They declared their conviction not only in the truth and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, but in the harmony of Scripture with natural science (Rehwinkle, Introduction, p. xviii-xix)
  - The Flood serves to remind Christians of the Final Judgment, of which it is a prototype (see Matthew 24:37-39; 2 Peter 3:3-13).
  
- 3) In this study of the Flood we will see “our God in his wonderful and fearful majesty as he deals in both anger and mercy” with the people on earth (Rehwinkle, *The Flood*, p. xx.)

Questions

- Were there other geological events in history as significant as the Flood?
- What contributed to the “erosion” of Christian beliefs during the 19th century?
- In what ways can Peter's message (2 Peter 3) be both a warning and a comfort to people today?

**Part One - The World before the Flood**

- 1) The pre-Flood earth was geologically superior to today's earth.
  - Martin Luther wrote that the antediluvian earth was a “veritable paradise compared with the world that followed.”
  - See Genesis 1:31. What was God's assessment of his creation?

2) How did the curse of sin affect the physical world? Was there deterioration - none or some, immediate or gradual?

- a) Before the fall the world's geography was "perfect and complete in every detail" (Rehwinkle, p.1). But even after the Fall, "its consequences (especially to the earth's geography) were not immediately apparent" (Rehwinkle, p. 2).
- b) "Though the blight of sin was upon it, its original glory did not depart at once" (Rehwinkle, p. 2).

3) How did the pre-Flood geography of the earth's surface differ from the post-Flood earth?

- a) More living space ... no enormous waste areas
- b) Land masses connected
- c) Fossils (Rehwinkle calls them "the mummified remains of the ancient world") provide evidence of a "uniformly mild climate in high and low altitudes of both northern and southern hemispheres" (Rehwinkle, p. 7). There was a mild and springlike climate in every part of the globe.
- d) Flora and fauna are the "only thermometer with which we can test the climates of the past ... The biological evidence is unmistakable ... reptiles cannot live in icy waters ... semi-tropical and temperate plants cannot grow in arctic conditions" (Howorth p. 427). And yet, fossils of such organisms have been found in such areas today.

4) How could the laws of nature have functioned to produce conditions so different from those that prevail today? There are at least three theories.

- a) The canopy theory proposes that there was no rain before the Flood, but that an atmospheric "ceiling" trapped moisture to create a greenhouse effect that gave the earth a constant temperature of about 70 degrees. Genesis 2:5-6 provides support for this theory.
- b) The perpendicular axis theory purports that God created the earth without the 23.5 degree tilt that it now has. If the axis of the earth was perpendicular to the equator, days and nights would always be of equal length (12 hours), and every portion of the earth at the same latitude would continually receive the same amount of heat and light (see diagram). There would be no change of seasons. Theoretically, the seasons and their dramatic changes were established by God after the Flood when he tilted the earth's axis (see Genesis 8:22).
- c) The uniform climate of the first (antediluvian) world was the result of warm ocean waters that surrounded the continents. These were "so distributed that every portion of the existing land masses was touched and warmed by them" (Rehwinkle, p. 11). This would affect the entire earth in the same ways that the Gulf Stream affects western Europe today; another example is the effect of the Japan Current, which influences the climates of coastal Alaska and British Columbia.

5) Conclusion: The harmony, or balance of nature, between plants and animals and their surroundings in the antediluvian world was superior to what exists in our world today. This is supported by what the fossils reveal:

- a) There was a wider distribution of species across the earth.
- b) There was a greater variety of species.
- c) There is irrefutable evidence of the existence of dinosaurs and many other species that are now extinct.
- d) A definite deterioration of species has occurred (extinction) when we compare fossil evidence to the species that exist today.
- e) Share Rehwinkle quote (Rehwinkle, p. 22).

- What does the patriarchs' longevity teach us?

- a) God used longevity to populate the earth.
  - b) Perhaps the superior geological pre-Flood conditions of the earth contributed to the blessing of longer life spans.
  - c) The existence of sin brought the same result: everyone sinned, and (even though people had longer lives) everyone died.
- What does the fact that God destroyed his beautiful and perfect creation teach us about him?
    - a) Our God is a God of love. He saved the righteous (Noah and his family) at the time of the Flood; he saves his people today through the floodwaters of Holy Baptism. He has compassion for the people of his creation; he is merciful and compassionate toward those that love him and keep his commandments (Reference: Luther's "What Does This Mean?" after the conclusion to the commandments). See Jonah 4:10-11 and Lamentations 1:12 for more evidence of God's compassion.
    - b) God is a righteous and terrible Judge to those that reject his grace and mercy. If he did not spare his magnificent creation, how will the ungodly and wicked of today escape his wrath on the Day of Judgment?

## References

The Flood, Alfred M. Rehwinkle (Concordia Publishing House, 1951).

The People's Bible - Genesis, John C. Jeske (Northwestern Publishing House, 1991).

Concordia Self-Study Bible, NIV, (Concordia Publishing House, 1986).

