

The danger of downgrading Scripture

I recently read through some blogs on the web pages of a famous Charismatic church with which I had association in the distant past. This church has a leader who is respected in evangelical circles and in much demand on the preaching circuit. The church is also considered to be more theologically sound and balanced than other large Charismatic works. However, these blogs contained some of the most serious errors of doctrine. Not only was there the usual demeaning of God's sovereignty, but even the apologetics section had succumbed to liberal rationality and error.

An example of this was several comments regarding the deluge in Genesis. Denying that the ark made by Noah could contain all the necessary animals, it affirmed that the flood was not global but only local; in this way all the local animals could be accommodated. By focusing on a logistical problem, the author ended up not only denying the Scripture of Genesis but also setting Genesis in contradiction to the New Testament.

Now writers with more scientific technical background than myself have evaluated the problem of the animals fitting into the ark and have come to the conclusion that there was more than enough room. Firstly, fully-grown adult specimens were not required but smaller juveniles would have been sufficient. Secondly, certain species would not have needed to go into the ark, Thirdly, many of the varieties of animals around today arose from a single breeding pair. For instance, all dogs in existence today derive from a single pair of wolves. In fact many of the types of dogs common to us were specially bred by man within the last few hundred years. Detailed arguments about this can be found by consulting the *Answers in Genesis* group, *Creation Research* or other creationist sources, as well as good commentaries.

Now we could forgive a person making technical mistakes because he has not done enough technical homework, but what requires repentance is to make errors of exegesis which contradict clear teaching in the rest of Scripture and to misread the purpose of great events in God's plan.

The big picture

The first big mistake is to fail to see the point of the flood story in Scripture. Firstly, it is a warning to all nations that God is sovereign and will require an account for personal behaviour. The flood reasserts the majesty of God as Creator and affirms that man is responsible for his sin, just as the inhabitants of the earth prior to the flood were guilty. Secondly, the flood is used in the Bible as the great warning regarding the end of the world. As the flood destroyed the entire world at that time, so God will also destroy all the earth with fire at the end of this current age.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and 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. ... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. 2 Pt 2:4-5, 9

... when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. 1 Pt 3:20

The flood is the story of how only eight people (eight is the number of resurrection) were saved out of the world of millions. In the same way only a small proportion of the human

race on the earth at the end (those who are resurrected in Christ, those born again) will be saved from the flood of divine condemnation. The Noahic flood is a powerful illustration of what the end will be like. Only those in Christ will be spared, the rest will be judged. For the flood to be able to maintain this figure, it must have been global and not local. Denying the global scope of the flood also denies the purpose of the warning value of the flood used by Christ and the apostles. Those who deny that the flood was global set themselves in opposition to Christ.

The return of Christ

The flood is also an illustration of how the world is complacent and enjoying its sin when the end comes. Just as the world of Noah was filled with evil continually, so also mankind at the end will be at the peak of sinful rebellion and enjoying its lawlessness when Christ returns to initiate judgment.

For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matt 24:38-39

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. Lk 17:26-27

Again, this illustration fails if the Noahic flood was not global.

The problems downgrading Scripture causes

Whenever people adopt a liberal and rational interpretation of Scripture in order to circumvent a technical problem, the result is a bigger mess than they expected. People who deny that the flood was global create all sorts of difficulties.

Contradiction

The first is that the interpretation contradicts others Scriptures. We have already seen this; denying the global flood contradicts clear statements made by Jesus himself and his apostles. This alone means that the argument is false.

Denial of clear statements

The statements about the flood are very clear; they are not confusing but they are unpopular. We have no right to controvert Scripture if the meaning is crystal clear. Straightforward statements (that is, statements that are not figurative, prophetic, symbolic or typical) must be interpreted literally and straightforwardly.

The Genesis account is very clear:

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. 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. All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of the spirit of life, all that *was* on the dry *land*, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark remained *alive*. Gen 7:19-23

Notice:

- The extent of the flood affects the whole earth not a part of it, not a region or a country but 'the earth'.
- All the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. If all the high hills were covered, then the flood must have been global.

- The mountains were covered. If all the mountains were covered, then the flood must have been global.
- 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. If all flesh died, all animals and all men, then the flood was global.
- If only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark remained alive then all the rest of mankind died – then the flood killed all life.

These are clear statements.

This entirely agrees with other clear statements in the New Testament; the flood condemned the whole world and only Noah's household was saved. There were no other people outside the Ancient Near East unaffected by the flood and saved.

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Heb 11:7

What this error teaches people

When a church leader teaches people that clear Scriptural statements are wrong and not to be trusted then we are teaching people not to trust any of Scripture at all. When we teach people that one part of Scripture can contradict another part of Scripture, then we are teaching people that the Bible is full of contradictions and cannot be trusted. If we cannot trust any Scripture, then how can we trust that we are saved by obeying the Gospel, which is Scripture?

Furthermore, this behaviour teaches people to utterly disregard Scripture as God's very word. The denial of the inspiration of Scripture, by casting doubts upon the veracity of parts of it, not only results in people having a low view of Scripture but also a low view of God. If God's word is not to be trusted, then God isn't to be trusted. So how can I then trust him for my salvation?

Conclusion

So adopting some trendy interpretation, which enables a person to avoid being ridiculed by modern academics and worldly scientists, results in:

- Contradicting Christ.
- Contradicting the apostles.
- Denying the clear literal world of Scripture
- Denying the value of the Bible as God's inspired word.
- And finally, leads a person to have no ground for faith in the certainty of his salvation.

Such teaching must be utterly condemned as being dangerous in the extreme. Those who wrote it and those who allowed it to be published on a popular website stand condemned and should repent of their unrighteousness. An immediate apology and disclaimer should be published to try to help those who have read it recover from being deluded by false teaching.

Appendix One

12 reasons why the flood was global

1. The size of the Ark [with a displacement of about 15,000 tons] is unnecessarily big to just deal with a local flood.
2. Continual rain for forty days over the whole earth would have produced a huge amount of water; but to this was added waters from the deep. This amount of water is exceptional and more than local.
3. The tops of the high hills and mountains were covered (see earlier text).
4. Long-distance flying birds had to be saved.
5. The flood changed many things: topography, mountains were raised, valleys dug, seasons changed, even man's life span changed. All of this points to a global catastrophe.
6. The drying out time lasted over a year.
7. All the world's cultures have flood legends that are often very similar to the Genesis account. This occurs even in nations that are very distant from the Near East. One person collected 85 different flood myths, 46 from America. Another person estimated that there are over 500 flood myths. The Epic of Gilgamesh from Nineveh has many parallels with the Genesis text.
8. The Chinese word for a large ship consists of the symbols '8' and 'mouth' (i.e. persons).
9. The prevalence of oil around the world points to a global catastrophe that killed huge amounts of plant matter and buried it.
10. The prevalence of fossils around the world points to the sudden burial of land animals by a global flood.
11. Mountains a mile under the sea today show signs of once being in the air.
12. GOD'S WORD SAYS SO! All life on earth, all animals and men (apart from one family) were destroyed.

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