

## *God, Land, and the Great Flood*

### Chapter Eight

## The “Missing” Global Flood Model: Why it has Been Impossible to Construct

### A Flood of “Biblical Proportions”

Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Ian Michael knows that a flood of “biblical proportions”—if it did not cover the whole planet—would, at a minimum, cover at least a significant portion of it. The Flood would be either a “global” or a “local” or perhaps a “regional” Flood. Ian Michael automatically thinks in terms of Planet Earth, because he knows that he lives on a planet. A Flood that was global or local in extent are the only possible options to a mind equipped with the concept “planet.”



It was not so for Moshe and his contemporaries, those who first heard about the Great Flood. They did not—and could not—visualize (or even conceive of) a flood that covered the entire globe. Visualizing a globe, a rocky sphere called “Earth,” was not possible for any human mind until several hundred years later. Instead, the Flood was of “biblical proportions” because it covered the *’erets*, the “land.” The “land” was very important; it was where Moshe lived, and it determined his identity. That “land” disappeared under the Deluge. The primeval waters, the fearful *tehom* (“the great deep”) that God had confined at Creation, broke loose once again, and torrential outpourings of water erupted from beneath the “land.” The *raqia’*, the great protecting dome of the sky, failed. The primeval waters that had been everywhere and everything prior to Creation now broke free from their God-imposed bounds. Truly, that was a Flood of “biblical proportions.”

Ian Michael cannot begin to understand a Flood that posed an existential threat to Moshe’s “land.” Instead, he visualizes it in terms of universal gravitation, water, and the surface of a planetary globe—a globe hanging in deep space. He cannot think otherwise. Illustrations of a world globe in the grip of a Great Flood are, for that reason, irrational; they do not even rise to the level of being “wrong”!

### Illustrating a “Global Flood”

Still, illustrators keep on trying. In one typical painting, a boisterous, un-bordered ocean is pictured with ominous clouds overhead and flashes of lightening in the distance. A small, blue, cloud-swathed globe floats just to the right of center. Because its surface displays the outlines of North and South America, the globe is clearly recognizable as Planet Earth. Such a picture would, of course, have been utterly unrecognizable to Moshe. He could not have pictured outer space filled with an ocean (he knew nothing of outer space), and he could not have conceived of a planet floating on an ocean-in-space (he knew nothing of planets). He could not have connected his beloved “land” to the continents on the globe (he knew nothing of continents).

As a matter of fact, Ian Michael cannot really picture it either. If he really thinks about it, such an illustration is preposterous, since the unbordered ocean is clearly located in outer space. He knows that such an ocean, no matter how large, would exist for no more than a fraction of a second in the vacuum of space. But what is a Flood illustrator to do? Moshe was unaware of the effect of gravity on a liquid such as water, and he was equally unaware of the globe we know as our planet. If presented with a globe whose surface was obscured by water (a global Flood?), his immediate question would be, “Why doesn’t the water fall off?” That would be followed by, “Where is my ‘land’ in that picture?”

The description of the Flood for Moshe cannot be visualized by Ian Michael, for the simple but decisive reason that Ian Michael uses explanacepts that were not available to Moshe. For Moshe the Flood had to have been something that God did. To the extent that it can be visualized in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it will be visualized not in terms of an action by God but in terms of “nature’s regularities.” So, Ian Michael conceives of water that is deep enough to submerge the entire globe and is held to the planet by gravity.

He assumes that Moshe visualized it that way too. It is that assumption that renders impossible the construction of an intellectually coherent global flood model.

The primeval waters of *tehom* (“the great deep”) continually threatened Moshe’s “land,” and, if God did not constantly protect it, would return the “land” to a pre-creation state in which he and his people could not survive. Not so for Ian Michael. He has no concerns about “the great deep,” and he doesn’t worry about the *raqia* (“dome”) failing; he is pretty sure that there is no “great deep” and that there is no “dome” either. His conception of the Flood is that massive amounts of water for a time overwhelmed and probably reshaped the continents of Planet Earth. Because the explanaccept “nature’s regularities” that undergirds this conception did not exist in Moshe’s world, 21<sup>st</sup>-century attempts to illustrate the Flood simply do not work

For Ian Michael to create a picture of what the Flood narrative describes is a hopeless task if he insists on remaining in his 21<sup>st</sup>-century world while making the attempt. But he could instead try to enter Moshe’s world and experience the Great Flood as Moshe experienced it each time he heard the story. If Ian Michael were willing to do this, all sorts of pestiferous questions would disappear. The source of the water would not be a problem; it had been there since Creation. The primeval waters of “the great deep” under the land were a more-than-adequate supply—to say nothing of the waters above, held in place by the “dome” of the sky. The channels through which those ancient reservoirs could (and did) discharge their unlimited supply of water would be no problem because “the primeval waters burst forth, and the floodgates of the sky were opened” (Gen. 8:11). Where the water went when the Flood was over would not be a problem, either: by means of a great wind God returned the waters to the places assigned to them on the second Creation day, below the *’erefs* and above the “dome.”

Ian Michael is not even close to having an explanation for the Flood. It was an unprecedented God-caused disaster that came close to wiping out the human race. A miracle perhaps? The salvation of Noah and his family would qualify as a miracle by our terminology—a beneficial event that defies what we presently understand about “nature’s regularities.” But what about the Flood itself? God sent it. God took credit for sending it—and then promised not to do it again! Ian Michael’s mental construct “miracle” is not nearly big enough to encompass that set of actions on God’s part.



### **Trying to Make a Two-Explanaccept Account Coherent in a Three-Explanaccept World**

The Flood account was composed for listeners in a world in which all events were the result of human action and/or divine action. The Flood was clearly in the latter category, for it could not have been in the former. Any attempt now to illustrate the Great Flood will be an attempt to model it in a world in which extraordinary events in nature are explained by science, and if that fails, by miracle.

So why do such attempts continue? Conferences are held, books are written, and speeches are given—all based on the assumption that one more research project, one more geological exploration, one more fossil discovery will enable scientists in Ian Michael’s world to come up with a coherent conceptual model of the Great Flood. Attempts continue because these scientists categorize the Flood as a catastrophe in the realm of nature. The text, however, says otherwise. “For my part, I (God) am going to bring a flood of water on the land, to destroy from under the sky all flesh” (Gen. 6:17). To call it “Noah’s Flood” is a literary mistake. It is worse than that; it is a theological blunder. “Flood geology” is a three-explanaccept attempt to make a two-explanaccept Flood account conceptually coherent. The attempt is understandable because this is the way we all now think. But it inevitably fails because it utilizes “nature’s regularities,” an explanaccept that did not exist in Moshe’s world to try to comprehend an event that was, from start to finish, God’s Flood.