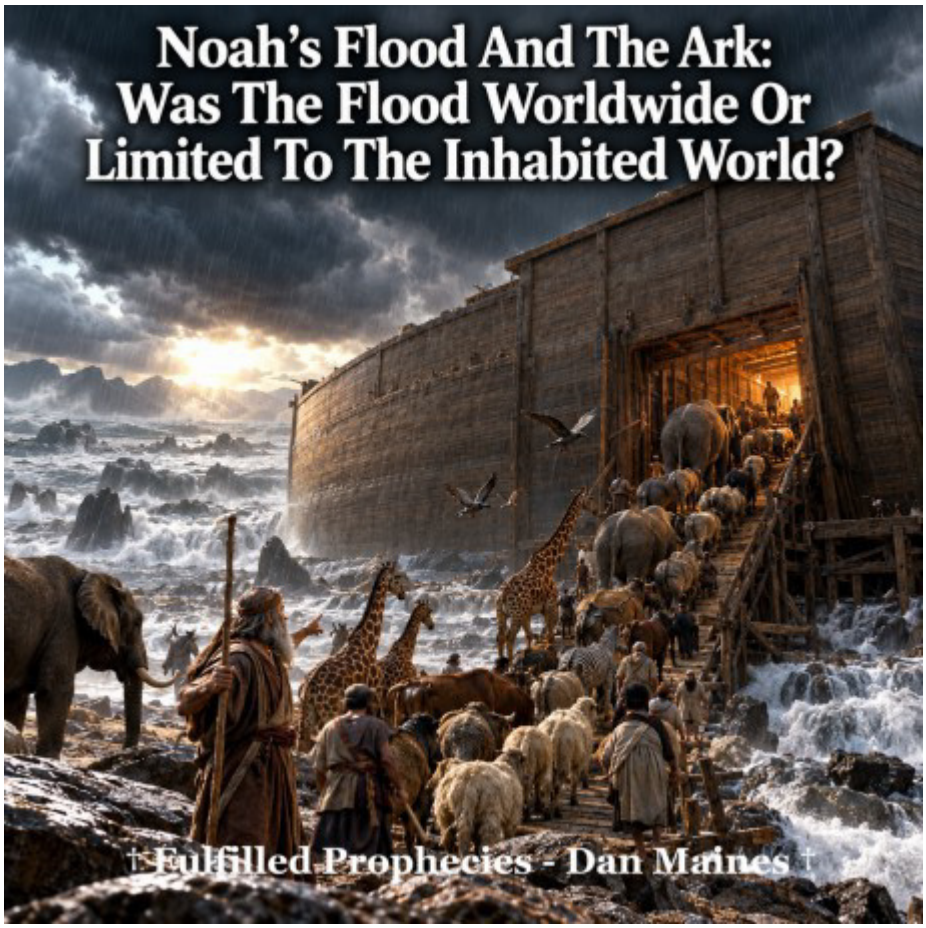
Fulfilled Prophecies

Noah's Flood And The Ark: Was The Flood Worldwide Or Limited To The Inhabited World?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Was Noah's flood a worldwide catastrophe covering every continent, or was it a devastating judgment upon the inhabited world of Noah's day?

† This question deserves careful examination because Genesis describes the waters covering the mountains, the destruction of all flesh, and the preservation of Noah's family and the animals aboard the ark (Genesis 7:19-23).

† Some believe the flood covered the entire planet, while others believe it covered the populated world known to Noah.
† The question becomes even more challenging when we consider how pairs of land animals could've entered a single wooden vessel and survived for more than a year (Genesis 7:2-3; 8:13-19).
† We must distinguish what Scripture explicitly states from conclusions based on geography, science, or theological systems (2 Timothy 2:15).
† Our purpose isn't to defend Covenant Creation or any other system, but to examine the biblical evidence and determine what we can responsibly conclude (Acts 17:11).

Genesis 6:5-7
Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of mankind was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. So the Lord was sorry that He had made mankind on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. Then the Lord said, "I will wipe out mankind whom I have created from the face of the land; mankind, and animals as well, and crawling things, and the birds of the sky. For I am sorry that I have made them."
† The stated reason for the flood was humanity's wickedness, not a divine intention to destroy the physical planet (Genesis 6:11-13).
† God's judgment was directed against corrupt humanity and the living creatures associated with the earth under judgment (Genesis 6:12-13).
† The passage doesn't identify continents, oceans, or the geographical boundaries of the flood (Genesis 7:17-24).
† Therefore, the extent of the flood must be examined through the additional descriptions provided in Scripture (Genesis 7:19-23).

Genesis 6:13-16
Then God said to Noah, "The end of humanity has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of people; and

behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with compartments, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and put the door of the ark on the side; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.
† God gave Noah specific construction instructions, demonstrating that the ark was intended to preserve life through an actual historical judgment (Hebrews 11:7).
† Using an approximate eighteen-inch cubit, the ark would've measured about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high (Genesis 6:15).
† Its three decks would've provided approximately 101,250 square feet of total floor area before accounting for walls, storage, and internal structures (Genesis 6:16).
† The ark was enormous by ancient standards, but its dimensions alone don't establish whether the flood was global or regional (Genesis 7:17-20).
† Scripture gives the dimensions of the vessel but doesn't provide the number of animal species, their individual sizes, or the arrangement of their enclosures (Genesis 6:19-21).

Genesis 6:19-21
And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kind, and of the animals according to their kind, of every crawling thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. As for you, take for yourself some of every food that is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and them.
† God commanded Noah to preserve representative pairs of living creatures according to their kinds, not according to modern biological classifications (Genesis 7:14-16).
† Scripture doesn't say Noah collected every modern species,

breed, or variety of animal existing throughout the planet (Genesis 6:20).
† The biblical word kind cannot automatically be equated with the modern scientific category of species (Genesis 1:24-25).
† The passage specifically identifies birds, livestock, and creatures moving along the ground, rather than fish or every form of marine life (Genesis 7:14).
† The Bible doesn't describe Noah traveling to distant continents to capture animals (Genesis 7:9).
† Instead, Scripture says the animals came to Noah, demonstrating God's direction over their preservation (Genesis 7:15-16).
† A regional interpretation would limit the animals requiring preservation to those within the affected world, while a global interpretation would require a broader representation of land-animal kinds (Genesis 7:21-23).
† Neither interpretation can establish an exact animal count from the biblical text alone (Genesis 6:19-21).

Genesis 7:2-3
You shall take with you seven pairs of every clean animal, a male and his female; and two of the animals that are not clean, a male and his female; also of the birds of the sky, seven pairs, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth.
† Noah was instructed to preserve additional clean animals and birds, making the familiar statement about only two of every animal incomplete (Genesis 8:20).
† The additional clean animals also provided for sacrifices after the flood without eliminating the preserved animal populations (Genesis 8:20).
† The purpose was the continuation of life after judgment, not the preservation of every individual animal (Genesis 9:1-3).
† The text doesn't tell us how many animals entered, how much food was stored, or how Noah organized the living quarters (Genesis 6:21).

Genesis 7:11-12
In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.
† Genesis identifies two sources of floodwater, the fountains of the great deep and rain from the heavens (Genesis 7:11).
† The description presents an extraordinary catastrophe rather than an ordinary seasonal flood (Genesis 7:17-20).
† However, the passage doesn't identify the precise physical mechanism of the fountains or the geographical extent of their activity (Genesis 8:2).
† The forty days of rainfall must also be distinguished from the much longer period during which the floodwaters remained upon the earth (Genesis 7:24; 8:3).

Genesis 7:19-23
And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered. So all creatures that moved on the earth perished: birds, livestock, animals, and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. So He wiped out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from mankind to animals, to crawling things, and the birds of the sky, and they were wiped out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.
† This is the strongest passage supporting the traditional worldwide interpretation because it describes all the high mountains under the whole heaven being covered (Genesis 7:19-20).
† A global interpretation understands this language as describing every mountain on the planet.
† A regional interpretation understands the language as

describing every mountain within the geographical world being discussed.
† Both interpretations must account for the statement that all land-dwelling creatures outside the ark died (Genesis 7:21-23).
† The phrase fifteen cubits doesn't independently establish the total depth of the flood because the passage doesn't specify a modern sea-level reference point (Genesis 7:20).
† We must also recognize that the expression whole heaven can describe an extensive geographical region without necessarily identifying every location on the planet (Deuteronomy 2:25).
† Nevertheless, the language of Genesis is sweeping, and a regional interpretation must explain why such comprehensive descriptions were used (Genesis 7:19-23).
† We shouldn't weaken the passage merely because the logistics of the ark seem difficult to understand (Hebrews 11:7).

Genesis 8:3-5
and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of 150 days the water decreased. Then in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. And the water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.
† The flood lasted far longer than forty days, and Noah remained aboard until the ground was suitable for life again (Genesis 8:13-19).
† The ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat, identifying a geographical region associated with the ancient Near East (2 Kings 19:37).
† Scripture doesn't identify the specific modern mountain upon which the ark rested (Genesis 8:4).
† The reference to Ararat establishes the ark's final resting region but doesn't by itself determine the boundaries of the flood (Genesis 8:4-5).
† The gradual recession of the waters emphasizes the completeness of the judgment and the restoration of habitable

ground (Genesis 8:13-14).

Genesis 9:8-11
Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, "Now behold, I Myself am establishing My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the livestock, and every animal of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, every animal of the earth. I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be eliminated by the waters of a flood, nor shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."
† God's covenant with Noah included his descendants and living creatures, demonstrating the continuing importance of life upon the earth (Genesis 9:12-17).
† God promised that another flood wouldn't destroy all flesh in the manner of Noah's judgment (Genesis 9:11).
† Regional floods have occurred repeatedly throughout history, so the promise cannot reasonably mean that no local flooding would ever happen again.
† Supporters of a global flood argue that this covenant strongly favors a worldwide event because regional floods continue.
† Supporters of a regional flood respond that the promise concerns another destruction of humanity comparable to Noah's flood, not the absence of ordinary regional disasters.
† The covenant therefore provides important evidence, but its interpretation must remain connected to the particular judgment Genesis describes (Genesis 9:15).

Genesis 11:1-2
Now all the earth used the same language and the same words. And it came about, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.
† This passage demonstrates how the expression whole earth can be used in a narrative describing the human population under consideration (Genesis 11:1-9).
† The account centers upon people gathering in Shinar, not a geographical survey of every continent (Genesis 11:2).

† This doesn't prove that Noah's flood was regional, but it demonstrates why biblical expressions must be interpreted within their literary context (Genesis 7:19; 11:1).
† The same Hebrew word translated earth can also refer to land or ground, depending upon the context (Genesis 1:10; 12:1).
† Therefore, the Hebrew word alone cannot settle whether Genesis describes the entire planet or a particular inhabited region (Genesis 6:17; 7:17).

Genesis 41:56-57
When the famine was spread over the entire face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Then the people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.
† Genesis uses the expression all the earth when describing the widespread famine during Joseph's lifetime.
† The narrative concerns Egypt and the surrounding nations that came to purchase grain, not a documented famine across every continent (Genesis 42:1-5).
† This demonstrates that comprehensive geographical language can describe the known world within the context of a particular historical account (Genesis 41:57).
† However, the use of such language elsewhere doesn't automatically establish that the flood account has the same limited meaning (Genesis 7:19-23).
† Context must determine the intended scope rather than assuming every occurrence of earth has precisely the same meaning (Genesis 12:1; 41:57).

Luke 2:1-3
Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all the people were on their way to register for the census, each to his own city.
† Luke describes a registration involving all the world, yet the

context concerns the territory under Roman administration (Luke 2:1-3).
† The decree didn't require people living on continents outside Roman authority to register.
† This provides another biblical example of world language being used within a specific historical and political setting (Acts 11:28).
† The Greek terminology in Luke isn't identical to the Hebrew terminology in Genesis, so the comparison illustrates a principle of language rather than proving the flood's geographical extent (Genesis 7:19).
† We must allow the biblical writers to communicate within the geographical understanding and circumstances of their original audiences (Romans 1:8).

Matthew 24:37-39
For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.
† Jesus used Noah's flood as a historical example of sudden judgment upon an unprepared generation (Luke 17:26-27).
† His emphasis wasn't upon the number of continents flooded but upon the certainty and unexpected arrival of judgment (Matthew 24:38-39).
† Jesus applied this warning to the generation that would experience the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Old Covenant age (Matthew 24:2, 34).
† Just as Noah's family escaped the flood, believers who recognized Jesus' warning could escape Jerusalem's coming destruction (Luke 21:20-22).
† The comparison demonstrates a pattern of judgment and deliverance without requiring both events to have identical geographical boundaries (Matthew 24:37-39).

Hebrews 11:7
By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.
† Hebrews confirms Noah's obedience, the construction of the ark, and the salvation of his household.
† Noah acted upon God's warning before the judgment became visible (Genesis 6:22).
† The emphasis is upon faith and obedience rather than a scientific explanation of the flood's physical boundaries (Hebrews 11:7).
† Noah's example demonstrates that salvation comes through trusting God's provision rather than relying upon human understanding (1 Peter 3:20).

2 Peter 2:5
and did not spare the ancient world, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;
† Peter identifies the object of judgment as the ancient world and specifically calls it the world of the ungodly.
† The Greek word kosmos can refer to the world, humanity, or an ordered system, depending upon its context (John 3:16; 1 John 2:15).
† Peter's emphasis is upon the destruction of the ungodly and the preservation of Noah's family (2 Peter 2:5).
† This language is consistent with judgment upon the human world, but it doesn't independently establish whether every geographical region was submerged (Genesis 7:19-23).
† Peter also compares Noah's judgment with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, demonstrating God's ability to judge the wicked while rescuing the righteous (2 Peter 2:6-9).

2 Peter 3:5-7
For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was

formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed by being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people.
† Peter describes the world that existed before the flood as having perished through water.
† Yet the physical planet continued after the flood, demonstrating that the destruction of a world doesn't necessarily mean the annihilation of the earth itself (Genesis 8:21-22).
† The same principle applies to prophetic descriptions of the heavens and earth undergoing judgment and transformation (Isaiah 65:17; Hebrews 12:26-28).
† Peter's warning concerned the approaching judgment upon the ungodly within the covenantal transition of the first century (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13).
† The destruction of the Old Covenant order in AD 70 fulfilled that prophetic judgment without requiring the physical planet to disappear (Matthew 24:34-35).
† However, recognizing covenantal judgment in Peter's prophecy doesn't establish that Noah's historical flood was geographically regional (Genesis 7:19-23).
† These are related biblical themes, but each account must be examined according to its own historical and literary context (2 Peter 2:5; 3:5-7).

Historical References
† Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 1, Chapters 3-4, records the Jewish tradition of Noah's flood, the ark's resting place in Armenia, and accounts of remains associated with the vessel.
† Josephus wrote during the first century AD, making his account valuable evidence of how ancient Jewish readers understood the flood narrative.
† Josephus generally presented the flood as an extensive destruction of humanity, but his account doesn't independently establish the precise geographical boundaries of the event.

† Berossus, a Babylonian priest of the third century BC whose account survives through later writers, described a great flood and a vessel associated with the mountains of Armenia.
† The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XI, preserves an ancient Mesopotamian flood tradition involving a vessel, preserved living creatures, birds released to test the waters, and a mountain landing.
† These ancient accounts demonstrate that flood traditions existed outside the biblical record, particularly within Mesopotamia.
† Similarities between these accounts and Genesis are historically significant, but they don't establish whether the flood covered the entire planet or a particular geographical region.
† Ancient historical testimony can provide background, but Scripture remains the foundation for our theological conclusions (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

How It Applies To Us Today
† Noah's account teaches that God takes human wickedness seriously and that His judgments aren't empty warnings (Genesis 6:5-7).
† It also demonstrates that God provides a means of deliverance for those who trust and obey Him (Hebrews 11:7).
† We shouldn't reject Scripture simply because we don't understand every detail of the ark's construction, animal preservation, or floodwaters (Genesis 6:19-22).
† Neither should we claim certainty about geographical details that Scripture doesn't explicitly define (Genesis 7:19-23).
† The Bible's descriptions of all the earth and the whole world must be examined in their historical contexts rather than automatically assigned modern geographical definitions (Genesis 41:57; Luke 2:1).
† At the same time, the strong universal language of the flood account deserves serious consideration and must never be dismissed merely because a regional interpretation appears easier to explain (Genesis 7:19-23).
† Our confidence rests upon God's revealed Word, not upon

Covenant Creation, modern geological theories, or inherited religious traditions (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
† The essential message remains that God judged wickedness, preserved Noah's household, and demonstrated His faithfulness to those who trusted Him (Genesis 9:8-17).
† Today, our salvation rests in Jesus Christ, who has established the everlasting New Covenant and brought His people into His kingdom (Hebrews 12:22-24, 28).

Q & A Appendix

Q: Does Genesis explicitly say the flood covered the entire modern planet?
A: Genesis says the waters covered all the high mountains under the whole heaven. That strongly supports a worldwide reading, but the text doesn't identify modern continents or define its geographical boundaries using modern terminology (Genesis 7:19-20).

Q: Could the flood have covered only the inhabited world of Noah's day?
A: It's a possible interpretation because Scripture sometimes uses expressions such as all the earth for a geographically limited world. However, that possibility doesn't prove the flood was regional, and it must account for the comprehensive language of Genesis (Genesis 7:19-23; 41:57).

Q: Does the Bible say every modern animal species entered the ark?
A: No. Scripture describes animals entering according to their kinds. It doesn't provide a modern species list or a total animal count (Genesis 6:19-21; 7:14-16).

Q: How could Noah fit all those animals inside the ark?
A: The ark was a very large vessel with three levels, and Scripture doesn't identify the exact number or sizes of the animals. We therefore can't calculate its required capacity with

certainty from the biblical text alone (Genesis 6:15-21).

Q: If the flood was regional, why did Noah need an ark instead of moving somewhere else?
A: God commanded Noah to build the ark as His appointed means of preservation. Scripture doesn't say relocation was offered as an alternative, so the question doesn't independently prove either interpretation (Genesis 6:13-22; Hebrews 11:7).

Q: Doesn't God's promise never to send another flood prove the original flood was global?
A: The covenant is a strong argument for the global interpretation because regional floods continue. A regional interpretation must understand the promise as referring to another judgment destroying humanity in the manner of Noah's flood (Genesis 9:8-17).

Q: Did Jesus teach that Noah's flood covered the entire planet?
A: Jesus affirmed the flood and the destruction of those outside the ark, but His teaching focused upon unexpected judgment rather than identifying the geographical extent of the waters (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27).

Q: Does believing in a regional flood require accepting Covenant Creation?
A: No. The geographical extent of Noah's flood and the Covenant Creation interpretation of Genesis are separate questions. The flood must be examined through its own biblical account (Genesis 6-9).

Q: What conclusion can we reach from Scripture alone?
A: Scripture unquestionably presents a catastrophic historical flood that destroyed the ungodly human world and preserved Noah's family and the animals aboard the ark. The worldwide interpretation has strong support from Genesis 7:19-23 and God's covenant in Genesis 9:11. A regional interpretation is linguistically possible, but Scripture doesn't explicitly state that

the flood was limited to the populated world. We should distinguish these conclusions from what the text directly establishes.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Genesis 6:5-7; Genesis 6:13-16; Genesis 6:19-21; Genesis 7:2-3; Genesis 7:11-12; Genesis 7:19-23; Genesis 8:3-5; Genesis 9:8-11; Genesis 11:1-2; Genesis 41:56-57; Luke 2:1-3; Matthew 24:37-39; Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:5-7

† Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 1, Chapters 3-4; Berossus, Babyloniaca, surviving fragments; Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XI

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