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THE WATERS PREVAILED

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In his book *Reason in Common Sense*, George Santayana wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” What would you consider to be the key points in history? What sober events caused humanity to turn a new corner, or move in a different direction, for good or for evil? Some very significant events that occurred within the recent past come to mind: the Great Depression, the Holocaust, the austere events of World War II, the first lunar landing, and the destruction of the Berlin Wall, to name a few. There are immense milestones of humanity further back in the past as well, one of which would be the American Revolution and the adoption of a new form of government, a democratic republic. The full impact of the American Constitution and Bill of Rights can probably never be fully appreciated because it has literally changed everything about the world we live in. Farther back, another milestone is the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which saved the world from forced conversion to Catholicism. The *Magna Carta*, signed by King John at Runnymede, bound even the king to obey the law and set a precedent for increasing liberty, which culminated in our own Bill of Rights. These are, of course, all political events; we have not even touched technology, philosophy, or exploration!

There are powerful lessons for those who study history and strive to learn from the examples of the past. One of those lessons is that people who do not *want* to believe in something simply will not believe it, no matter what evidence is presented. For example, there are a large number of people who refuse to believe that the Holocaust happened. Six million Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis during World War II. Some of you have been to the concentration camps where these terrible deeds were done. There are eyewitnesses, including prison guards and survivors. There is abundant documentation, including photographs. Despite the mountain of evidence, there are those who find reason not to believe the Holocaust occurred.

There are also those who insist that our own government conspired to destroy the World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001, including a number of celebrities like Charlie Sheen and Rosie O’Donnell and politicians including former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura and our own former Representative Cynthia McKinney. Even though several leading publications and institutions have examined the events and published reports and articles debunking the conspiracy theories, the people who believe the United States government had a hand in the events of that day continue to believe in a conspiracy.¹

In each of those cases, the people holding the belief have something else at stake. The Holocaust deniers generally reject the legitimacy of the Nation of Israel; the 9/11 “Truthers” generally believe the United States government, under President Bush, needed an excuse to invade the Middle East for oil and to invade the privacy of American citizens.

The Bible discusses this phenomenon in Romans chapter 1. I can’t cover that whole chapter this morning, but let me read verses 16-20:

¹ Wikipedia, “9/11 Conspiracy Theories.” Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11_conspiracy_theories.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

To summarize, the Gospel reveals the power and righteousness of God; God has given ample evidence, even in the realm of nature, to support our reasoning to believe the Gospel; but some men refuse to believe God's revelation. They "hold [suppress] the truth in unrighteousness." The truth is there, but they suppress it. They don't want to believe the truth.

There is a lesson for us here: if people have an agenda to protect, no amount of evidence will persuade them. It is true for the Holocaust, true for the 9/11 conspiracies....and true for the world wide Flood. Let's turn to Genesis chapter 7 and look at verses 17-24:

And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

The Bible here tells us of God's judgment on a world that was entirely given to wickedness. Remember, God had given humanity every possible opportunity to repent and to escape with Noah; but humanity refused God's testimony over and over again, and refused to heed the summons. Now we come to a very sober moment, one of the most significant moments in all of history. Only in this one event has all of humanity been reduced to eight living beings—the end of all prior civilization.

The Bible tells us *what* happened. The Bible tells us that there was a Flood; that there were forty days

of rain; that the fountains of the deep, or subterranean water, broke up; that the waters “prevailed” for one hundred fifty days; but the Bible does not tell us *how* that all happened. What were the scientific mechanisms? Those are not recorded for us. The thrust here is a theological truth: God delays judgment as long as He possibly can, and God gives every opportunity to repent; but because He is holy, He cannot overlook the cries of the victims forever. He must punish sin, and when He does, His judgment is final. It also teaches us that God made a way of escape through one door, and all who entered that door were saved. That is the teaching of this passage. It is not a scientific treatise.

This of course has led to a great deal of speculation on the one hand and scoffing on the other. We don’t know how it rained for forty days and forty nights. Under the world’s current conditions, that simply isn’t possible. We need to remember, though, that the world then was entirely different from the world now. Some have suggested that the earth had a vapor canopy such as other planets have, consisting of vaporized water suspended high in the atmosphere. It’s possible, but there is a problem with that theory in that the greenhouse effect would have made the earth’s surface too hot. I’m not sure we have a way of validating that theory, but I’m not ruling it out.

What the Bible does say is that the fountains of the deep were broken up, and that the waters continued to increase after the forty days of rain. The waters prevailed for 150 days before they began to recede. This suggests water from below the earth’s crust was released at the outset of the Flood. The breaking of the fountains of the deep would have involved volcanic activity and a shifting of what we call tectonic plates. Did you know that volcanic output contains large amounts of water, up to 90% of the total eruption?² In fact, the Mt. St. Helens explosion in 1980 was largely an explosion of steam and rock. The point is that we have a one time, non-repeatable event in which the fountains of the deep broke up worldwide, sending masses of trapped water over the land and into the atmosphere—and what goes up (steam) must come down (rain)! Everything was covered with water, even the mountains (although we need to keep in mind that Psalm 104 describes the lowering of the sea beds and raising of the mountains at the end of the Flood, which we’ll cover later. Suffice it to say that the Himalayas were not yet formed, so there’s no need to think that the Ark was up in a low-oxygen zone).

The original earth was destroyed. Whereas the original earth was probably one continent, it was shattered by this event. Water washed over even the highest mountains at that time. If this account be true, what evidence would we expect to find today? To paraphrase Ken Ham, we would expect to find billions of dead things buried rapidly all over the world—which is exactly what we find!

You know what fossils are, but let me ask you a question: how do fossils form? Nature recycles! Dead organic matter is eaten and decomposed rapidly. Even though there are billions of fossils, they are considered to be rare because of the extraordinary circumstances required to make even one fossil. The most common way to make a fossil is permineralization. Basically, an animal has to die in or near the water, and then be buried rapidly under a great deal of mud or silt before it is decomposed. Then the layers have to keep piling on to create pressure so that minerals will be compacted into the organic matter. Obviously, this set of circumstances happens only rarely, such as in mudslides or perhaps in river deltas or other flood zones. According to uniformitarian principles applied to geology, layers of rock are deposited very slowly, centimeter by centimeter, over millions and millions of years; how then do we find very large animals fossilized *at all* if they had to lie there for millions of years while natural processes slowly deposited layer upon layer over their carcasses? It seems to me that a worldwide

2 John Mackay, “Mt. St. Helens: Key to Rapid Coal Formation?” *Creation* 6(1):6-8. Available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v6/i1/msthelens.asp>

Flood is a more reasonable explanation for the billions of fossils that we find today.

I know you didn't come here for a science lecture today. My intention is to simply say, "Look, this is what God's Word says, and this is what we actually see in the world around us. There is no dichotomy of faith and reason, as the world would have you believe." With that in mind, I want to offer you a very brief overview of six evidences for the Genesis Flood as presented by Dr. Andrew Snelling:³

Evidence #1—Fossils of sea creatures high above sea level due to the ocean waters having flooded over the continents.

We find fossils of sea creatures in rock layers that cover all the continents. For example, most of the rock layers in the walls of Grand Canyon (more than a mile above sea level) contain marine fossils. Fossilized shellfish are even found in the Himalayas.

Evidence #2—Rapid burial of plants and animals.

We find extensive fossil "graveyards" and exquisitely preserved fossils. For example, billions of nautiloid fossils are found in a layer within the Redwall Limestone of Grand Canyon. This layer was deposited catastrophically by a massive flow of sediment (mostly lime sand). The chalk and coal beds of Europe and the United States, and the fish, ichthyosaurs, insects, and other fossils all around the world, testify of catastrophic destruction and burial.

Evidence #3—Rapidly deposited sediment layers spread across vast areas.

We find rock layers that can be traced all the way across continents—even between continents—and physical features in those strata indicate they were deposited rapidly. For example, the Tapeats Sandstone and Redwall Limestone of Grand Canyon can be traced across the entire United States, up into Canada, and even across the Atlantic Ocean to England. The chalk beds of England (the white cliffs of Dover) can be traced across Europe into the Middle East and are also found in the Midwest of the United States and in Western Australia. Inclined (sloping) layers within the Coconino Sandstone of Grand Canyon are testimony to 10,000 cubic miles of sand being deposited by huge water currents within days.

Evidence #4—Sediment transported long distances.

We find that the sediments in those widespread, rapidly deposited rock layers had to be eroded from distant sources and carried long distances by fast-moving water. For example, the sand for the Coconino Sandstone of Grand Canyon (Arizona) had to be eroded and transported from the northern portion of what is now the United States and Canada. Furthermore, water current indicators (such as ripple marks) preserved in rock layers show that for "300 million years" water currents were consistently flowing from northeast to southwest across all of North and South America, which, of course, is only possible over weeks during a global flood.

Evidence #5—Rapid or no erosion between strata.

We find evidence of rapid erosion, or even of no erosion, between rock layers. Flat, knife-edge

3 Andrew Snelling, "Geologic Evidences for the Genesis Flood, Part One: An Overview." Available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v2/n4/geologic-evidences-part-one>

boundaries between rock layers indicate continuous deposition of one layer after another, with no time for erosion. For example, there is no evidence of any “missing” millions of years (of erosion) in the flat boundary between two well-known layers of Grand Canyon—the Coconino Sandstone and the Hermit Formation. Another impressive example of flat boundaries at Grand Canyon is the Redwall Limestone and the strata beneath it.

Evidence #6—Many strata laid down in rapid succession.

Rocks do not normally bend; they break because they are hard and brittle. But in many places we find whole sequences of strata that were bent without fracturing, indicating that all the rock layers were rapidly deposited and folded while still wet and pliable before final hardening. For example, the Tapeats Sandstone in Grand Canyon is folded at a right angle (90°) without evidence of breaking. Yet this folding could only have occurred after the rest of the layers had been deposited, supposedly over “480 million years,” while the Tapeats Sandstone remained wet and pliable.

The Bible is the Word of God. We believe it to be true; and we find that the world around us bears the marks of the catastrophe uniquely recorded here. There are other evidences we could discuss if time permitted,⁴ but I think you’ve got the point. The Bible is not a scientific textbook, but it is a *true* book because it is God’s book.

A fair question before we conclude is, “What is at stake here?” What is at stake for atheists when confronted with this evidence, and what is at stake for us? In other words, why are we unlikely to change our minds? The answer is that we want to keep the foundational beliefs of our lives intact. As I pointed out a few weeks ago, Thomas Nagel, professor of philosophy at New York University, put it this way: “I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and naturally, hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”⁵

Now I want you to take all that scientific stuff we talked about and set it aside for a second. What is the *theological* message of this passage? As we’ve discussed in sermon after sermon leading up to this one, God loves sinners; God warns sinners; God makes a way of escape for sinners; but if sinners reject God’s merciful way of escape, they will find no other escape! Those who trust in their own strength, goodness, wisdom, or wealth will not escape God’s judgment. God made one way of escape, open to all, in Noah’s day; and today there is one way of salvation, purchased with the blood of God’s own dear Son. I urge you to accept God’s provision of salvation today. I close with John 1:10-13:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

4 “Mitochondrial Eve,” ancient Chinese language, and Flood traditions from around the world are a few areas of interest.

5 Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 130. Quoted in Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods*, p. 51.