

God's Broken Promise?



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One of the common claims by young earth creationists is that if Noah's Flood were a local flood, then God has broken his promise many times. According to The Answers Book, chapter 10,

If the Flood were local, God would have repeatedly broken His promise never to send such a Flood again. There have been huge 'local' floods in recent times: in Bangladesh, for example, where 80% of that country has been inundated, or Europe in 2002.¹

Is there any truth to this claim? Do the local floods we see today constitute a breaking of the covenant God made with Noah? First, let's read the covenant in Genesis 9:8-15;

⁸ *Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying,*

⁹ *“Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you;*

¹⁰ *and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.*

¹¹ *And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be shut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.”*

¹² *And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;*

¹³ *I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.*

¹⁴ *And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud,*

¹⁵ *and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature.”*

To answer this question, one must look at exactly what the covenant says. First, who is the covenant with? This is contained in verses 9-10. Clearly, it was made with Noah and his sons, and their descendents. It was also made with every living creature that is with Noah. At the end of verse 10, God extends it to "even every beast of the earth." There is no question who the covenant is with, however it is interesting that God makes a distinction between the living creatures with Noah (*with every living creature that is with you*), and the rest of the creatures (*even every beast of the earth*). Why would God make this distinction? If all the animals were killed, and Noah had all the survivors on the ark, then it was useless to extend the covenant beyond the ark's inhabitants. This indicates that the flood was local, and there were animal populations outside of the inhabitants of

the ark. If every living thing were on the ark, the term "*even every beast of the earth*" gives no additional meaning to the text.

But what is the exact covenant? This is in verses 11 and 15.

11 "And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be shut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."

15 and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh

The key term to examine is "all flesh." What is the meaning of this term? This is tied to the beginning of the ark story, where God stated the purpose of the Flood.

Morris and Whitcomb in their book, *The Genesis Flood*,² say the purpose of the flood was to destroy both man, beast, creeping things, and birds. The key is in Genesis 6:12: *And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.* (KJV)

The purpose of the flood was to wipe out this corruption. The main meaning for the Hebrew word for flesh in the Flood chapters, *bâsâr*, is person or man. The Hebrew dictionary doesn't even make it possible to extend this to animal flesh. God is not talking about the corruption of the animal kingdom, but about man's corruption. This is corrected in some other translations (NIV="people"; Amplified="humanity"). The purpose of the flood was to wipe out man, not animals. Yes, animals in the flooded locations would be killed, but they are not the target of God.

The main point of the covenant is that man shall never again be wiped from the face of the earth. Local floods since the time of Noah have never wiped man from the face of the earth. Yes, many have been killed, but never to the scale of Noah's Flood, where only eight people were left alive.

When local floods occur today, they come nowhere close to wiping out humanity. The Answers Book lists the Bangladesh floods, where thousands have died. Yet there are billions of people still on planet earth after those floods. Clearly this does not compare with Noah's Flood, where more than 99 percent of mankind was wiped out. Even the Tsunami of 2004, which killed hundreds of thousands, cannot compare to Noah's Flood.

In local floods today, less than 1/100th of one percent of the world's populations are killed. In Noah's flood, almost 100 percent of mankind was killed. There is no comparison.

God extends his covenant to the creatures of the earth as well, saying that they would also be spared from floods of the magnitude of Noah's Flood. Yes, animals are killed when local floods occur, but they do not come close to the magnitude of Noah's Flood, where an entire species was almost wiped out (humankind, except for Noah's family).

The only other term to consider is "*neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.*" We cannot know the extent of Noah's Flood geographically...we can only assume that it covered all the lands inhabited by humans at the time. Although local floods do harm the earth, it is a safe assumption that the extent of Noah's Flood has not

been repeated. It may also be important to note that the Hebrew word for earth, *'erets*, also means land in general, such as a field, or nations, or even "ground".

Conclusion

Clearly, God has not flooded the earth in the same way he did during Noah's time, with the same impact. God has not broken His promise. Mankind has never been wiped from the face of the earth again. This claim made by young earth creationists has no basis in fact.

¹ Was the Flood global?, The Answers Book (web version), answersingenesis.org/Home/Area/AnswersBook/global10.asp

² Henry Morris, John Whitcomb, *The Genesis Flood*. Pages 11-14