**The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood (Hasel)**

Script

Instructions: Advance the PowerPoint slides at every new paragraph and anywhere you see “/”

[1] This presentation summarizes the article “The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood” by Gerhard Hasel.

[2] Dr. Hasel begins this article by stating that “The Biblical flood narrative presents the story of the greatest incision in world history. / The events described…are reported in the same matter-of-fact language as the remainder of the book of Genesis and thus claim to be understood in the plain and literal sense. / The Genesis flood story is neither legend nor myth and neither parable, allegory nor symbol. / It is written in the straightforward genre of historical narrative in prose style.” / In this article, Dr. Hasel considers the flood narrative to be an individual account of the flood and treats it as a single literary unit.

[3] Next, Dr. Hasel describes two conflicting interpretations regarding the extent of the Genesis flood. / Traditionally, the flood narrative has been understood to refer to a universal catastrophe of worldwide dimensions. / However, this position has been challenged by some commentators who suggest a limited catastrophe instead.

[4] Interestingly, the disagreement is not about what the scholars think the Bible actually says about the flood. Scholars pay careful attention to the terms, phrases, idioms, and expressions and seek to understand them within their own context. Many scholars—even the majority of liberal ones—agree that the Bible does, in fact, describe a worldwide flood. / However, the disagreement comes in deciding what to do with that conclusion.

[5] Different schools of interpretation handle that conclusion differently. / One school of interpretation gives priority to internal considerations—in other words to the obvious intent of the author based on evidence found in the biblical text itself. This means they accept what the Bible says—/ in this case, that the flood was world-wide. This has been the traditional interpretation. / But when external considerations are given priority over the author’s obvious intent, a different conclusion is reached. In this case, external evidence from the natural sciences—heavily influenced by uniformitarianism and evolution—have been given priority over the internal textual evidence. / In an attempt to resolve the inevitable conflict, the biblical narrative has been reinterpreted, and it is concluded that the flood must have been local.

[6] In other words, in one school, scripture is not allowed to influence the interpretation of evidence from nature. / Instead, priority is given to external evidence / and the biblical account of the flood is reinterpreted. / In the other school, scripture is given priority, / and interpretations of natural data are sought that are consistent with Biblical creationism and catastrophism.

[7] After explaining the two different schools of interpretation, Dr. Hasel states that his investigation is carried out from the point of view that gives priority to the internal considerations found in the text itself. / It seeks to determine **on the basis of the witness of the Bible** whether or not the flood is depicted as a worldwide catastrophe or whether it is of limited geographical extent.

[8] Two kinds of evidence from Scripture are considered: terminology from the biblical account of the flood and insights about how the Flood fits into the history of beginnings.

[9] The Hebrew word for earth appears by itself or in phrases a total of 46 times in the flood story. / It is recognized that the term “earth” gives the flood narrative a universal outlook.

[10] Supporters of the local flood theory point out that the Hebrew word ‘eres’ can also just mean “land,” (which is not global or worldwide) and they are correct. / However, it can also mean ground, in the physical sense of the ground we walk on / or dry land, in contrast with water. If they prefer a less universal meaning of the word earth, Hasel says it is by no means clear why “land” is a more appropriate translation than either ground or dry land, / and wonders if it is because one is too narrow for a local flood theory / and the other too broad.

[11] Hasel agrees whole-heartedly with a scholar (who himself supports the local flood theory) who says that the meaning of the word eres must be determined by the context each time. / To figure out what the word means, we must pay careful attention to the context of the flood narrative within the larger framework of the book of Genesis / and the even larger framework of the entire Bible.

[12] We must also pay attention to the relationships between grammar and syntax in the flood narrative.

[13] If the context, grammar, and syntax are being considered, / it doesn’t matter whether eres has a limited meaning more often than it has a universal meaning in the rest of the Bible. What matters is what it means in the flood narrative.

[14] Supporters of the local flood theory use verses like these, and many other similar ones, to suggest a limited meaning for the word earth, and it i*s* true, that in each of these cases the context indicates that earth (translated “land”) is used in a limited geographical or political sense.

[15] However, Hasel points out that in every case, / the word for earth is followed by a particular grammatical construct called a genitive, which contextually limits it to a geographical area or political territory. This construction must always be present when *eres* is to be understood in the limited sense. In reality, what the word means in these instances isn’t really the point. What we have to look at is how the word is used in the flood narrative.

[16] When we check the context of the word *eres* in the flood narrative, / we find that NONE of the 46 uses of the word is EVER followed by the genitive that would indicate a limited understanding of the word. Since this indicator is missing, it is clear that the word earth is not to be understood in a limited sense, / and the universal meaning remains firmly supported.

[17] In two instances the flood story adds the adjective “all” to the noun earth. / The idea of “all the earth” is undoubtedly universalistic.

[18] It has been argued that “all the earth” need not be understood in a strictly literal sense because of passages like this in which we can tell from the context that it has a less-than-universal meaning. / While acknowledging the limited meaning in this verse, / Hasel suggests these verses, in which God says all the earth is mine, and there is none like me in all the earth, as indications that a limited meaning cannot be generalized from passage to passage / and again urges that the context must be allowed to determine the meaning of “all the earth” each time it appears.

[19] Furthermore the actual phrase in both these verses is “the FACE of all the earth.” This phrase needs further attention because of its connection to creation.

[20] At the opening of the flood narrative, the impending destruction is linked explicitly to the sinfulness of man whom the Lord had made.

[21] God made man sinless but now he is so sinful that he must be destroyed. / Man was created to have dominion over all creatures and over all the earth (which is the entire globe and not just the dry land because his dominion also includes the fish of the sea. / Man and beast have become so corrupt that Noah is instructed to take a limited number of land creatures and birds on board the ark to keep their kind alive upon the face of all the earth.

[22] This explicit contextual link between creation and the flood is a clear indication that “all the earth” in Genesis 7:3 and 8:9 has more than a local and limited meaning.

[23] But that is not all. There is still another connection to creation. / The exact Hebrew phrase is used for the first time in the creation narrative. In Genesis 1:29 God informs man, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth,” referring to the surface of the dry land. / After the two flood references we just talked about, the phrase is used one final time in Genesis, in reference to man’s dispersal by God from the tower of Babel.

[24] The evident universal usage of this phrase in the book of Genesis / supports the universal view of this phrase in the Genesis flood story.

[25] “Earth” or “the face of all the earth” in the flood story is in each instance universal in meaning

[26] Hasel parenthetically inserts a note about the non-universal use of the phrase in Genesis 41:56 which refers to the famine in the time of Joseph. / He points out that there is a subtle difference in word order when compared with other texts where this phrase appears. / On the basis of context and style, Genesis 41:56 does NOT do away with the universal meaning of the phrase in the flood narrative.

[27] Supporters of a local flood theory often ask, the question: Why was the word tebel not used in the flood story if the author intends to describe a universal flood? / Hasel explains that tebel only appears in poetic texts, whereas the flood narrative is prose. / This in no way implies a non-universal meaning for the word “earth.”

[28] The next phrase -- “face of the ground” appears five times in the Genesis flood story, including these: that God WILL blot out man from the face of the ground / and that he DID blot out every living thing that was upon the face of the ground.

[29] Three parallelisms provide evidence about the meaning of the phrase “face of the ground.” / In Genesis 7:23 the phrase “face of the ground” is parallel to “the earth.” / In Genesis 8:8 it is parallel to the “face of the whole earth. / And in Genesis 8:13 it is parallel to “the earth.” We have already seen that “earth” and “face of all the earth” refer to the entire surface of the global mass of land. / These parallelisms indicate that the “face of the ground” is an expression which means the surface of the dry land in its most universal sense.

[30] Once again, it is striking that a phrase used in the flood story appears for the first time in the creation account, / which has an undeniable universal emphasis.

[31] The Hebrew term translated “ground,” which appears in the Old Testament 225 times, has more than one meaning. / Its basic meaning is ground or soil. / Its most universal meaning is earth. / It can also mean the ground upon which man stands, which can separate, and carries the creeping things.

[32] There is no contextual indication whatever in the flood story for a limited usage of the phrase “face of the ground.” / So Hasel concludes that we must read the flood account whole-heartedly in its own terms.

[33] The flood account includes 13 uses of the phrase that is translated “all flesh.” / The narrative states that God will “make an end of all flesh,” that God will “destroy all flesh,” and later that “all flesh died.” / These give the unmistakable impression of universal destruction.

[34] It has been suggested that “all does not mean every last one in all of its usages.” / Hasel readily agrees that the Hebrew word for “all” does not always express totality. / However, he points out that its basic meaning IS totality and that in the rare exceptions where it doesn’t, the individual context provides a clear indication.

[35] A syntactical consideration does not even leave it an open question whether “all” means all in some restricted sense or whether it means “all” in the sense of totality. To understand this, let’s take a quick detour for a grammar lesson.

[36] Kol is translated “all.” / And basar is translated flesh. Kol basar means all flesh. / To say all THE flesh, / we must insert “ha,” which means “the” before basar. / If *kol* (all) appears before the noun (flesh) / without any article or possessive suffix, / then the meaning is totality in the sense of “all men or all living creatures.”

[37] In one of the 13 usages in the flood narrative, kol appears before a determinate noun, meaning all *the* flesh. / In such cases, the phrase retains the meaning of totality / but also carries the meaning of unity and entirety.

[38] The same rule of Hebrew syntax applies to “all THE earth” in Genesis 7:3 and 8:9, which means the whole earth in its entirety.

[39] Since all flesh refers to both man and animals, / there can be no doubt that the destruction of all the flesh refers to the destruction of men and animals on land and in the air in their totality and entirety. / And just in case a question remains, the explicit statement follows that “Only Noah was left and those that were with him in the ark.

[40] Another expression of totality is “every living thing” which appears in Genesis 6:19 where “every living thing of all flesh” is to be brought into the ark by pairs. / This includes birds, animals, and creeping things. / Here again kol is followed by a determinate noun which indicates that kol has the meaning of totality and entirety.

[41] The verse expresses the same threefold division of creatures but also includes man. / However the Hebrew phrase translated every living thing is different. Instead of this phrase from Genesis 6:19…

[42] This word means existence, living being, or what is living. / Since kol comes before the determinative noun, the idea expressed is that God blotted out “all existence” in their entirety of what was living of living beings from the face of the whole earth with the flood waters.

[43] “There is hardly any stronger way in the Hebrew to emphasize total destruction of “all existence” of human and animal life on earth than the way it has been expressed. The writer of the Genesis flood story employed terminology, formulae, and syntactical structures of the type that could not be more emphatic and explicit in expressing his concept of a universal, world-wide flood.”

[44] Hasel discusses one final phrase, which is found in Genesis 7:19. / The phrase “under the whole heaven” presents a serious challenge to the local flood theory.

[45] Scholars acknowledge that if the water covered ‘all the high hills under the whole heaven,’ this would clearly indicate the universality of the flood. / Not only does this verse assert it, but gives the exact height of the waters above the highest mountains.

[46] Hasel points out that most supporters of the local flood theory do not discuss this phrase at all, / but those that do point out that the Hebrew word for heaven can simply mean sky.

[47] An example of this is 1 Kings 18:45, which says that the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. / The context clearly indicates this limited meaning. / The context of the reference to heaven in Genesis 7:19 is entirely different, however. And so is the syntax. / In Kings, the noun translated heavens appears by itself, / but in Genesis, it has both the word kol and the article along with the word for heavens. As we have seen multiple times already, / this syntactical relationship expresses totality and entirety.

[48] Hasel responds briefly to a couple of other possible objections. / To the idea that the rarified atmosphere would render all but a few creatures insensible in a very few moments for lack of oxygen, / he says “all such concerns are misplaced, for it is an elementary fact that atmospheric pressure depends on elevation relative to sea level.” / On the other hand, he points out that there is no Biblical evidence for Mt. Everest or other high mountains to have existed at the time of the flood and consequently it is not necessary to assert that the waters mounted to a depth of six miles.

[49] The Genesis flood narrative provides ample evidence of being an account which is to be understood as a historical narrative in prose style. / It expects to be taken literally. / There is a consistent and overwhelming amount of terminology and formulae such as the frequent usages of “earth” and “all the earth,” the face of the ground, the dry land, all flesh, and under the whole heaven, which on the basis of context and syntax has uniformly indicated that the flood story wants to be understood in a universal sense.

[50] The waters destroyed all human and animal plus bird life on the entire land mass of the globe. / To read it otherwise means to force a meaning on the carefully written and specific syntactical constructions of the original language which the text itself rejects

[51] This universal emphasis with its picture of a world-wide flood finds additional supports from other considerations as well.

[52] The universality of the flood is to be inferred also from the parallelism of pre-flood and post-flood genealogical lines. / The whole antediluvian world is populated from the offspring of Adam, namely Cain and Seth. / As Adam is, in the Bible’s view, the father of pre-flood man, / so Noah is the father of post-flood man. As from Adam’s sons the whole world was populated, / so from Noah’s sons the entire earth is once more populated. This is the clear claim of the postdiluvian genealogical list called the Table of Nations of Genesis 10. / These nations were spread across the entire globe from the Tower of Babel.

[53] Besides the frequent allusions in terminology and thought to the creation story already mentioned, another important aspect indicating the universality of the flood concerns the blessing. / After man had been created as male and female, as the pinnacle of creation, God bestows His divine blessing upon him by saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” / On the basis of this charge the antediluvian world is populated with human beings. / These very words are spoken also to the survivors of the flood, and the postdiluvian world is populated anew. / Man receives the same divine blessing after creation and after the flood. With both there is a new beginning. In this example of blessing we note again that the focus of the first eleven chapters of Genesis including the flood story is the entire world in its global dimension and not a limited geographical area.

[54] In making a covenant with Noah and every other living creature, God pledges unconditionally that “never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood. / Not only is the covenant itself of a universal nature, / but the covenant sign in the form of the rainbow is universal. / It is a world-wide witness to the world-wide flood and a world-wide witness / to God’s promise that “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.” If there had been a limited flood, a limited covenant and covenant sign would have been sufficient. / The universality of both the covenant and the rainbow witnesses to the universality of the flood.

[55] Our investigation of these terms and phrases has consistently shown that this is universalistic language pointing to a flood of global scope. / Indeed, the writer of the Genesis flood story had no means at his disposal to make this more explicit than he actually did. Context and syntax uniformly indicated / that the writer wished to convey the picture of a world-wide flood which covered the entire antediluvian land masses and destroyed all human, animal and bird life that existed on them

[56] Additional supports for the universal concept of the flood offered themselves in the parallel pre-flood and post-flood genealogies, / parallel blessings spoken by God at creation and after the flood, / and the universal covenant and covenant sign.

[57] Hasel concludes this article by referring to the typological analogy of a world-wide flood in 2 Peter. His inspired words build on the world-wide destruction of the antediluvian world by water. / The next universal destruction of the world will be by fire.

[58] “The world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and the earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” / God will again interrupt the steady rhythm of the world; He will again carry out what He has foretold.