

relationships in contemporary society will benefit from this thorough exposition.

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Letters

A Response to Carol Hill's "Noachian Flood" Account

I must say Carol A. Hill's article "The Noachian Flood: Universal or Local?" (Sept. 2002) was a thriller to read. She almost had me convinced she had found the answers among biblical theology, biblical history, and real earth history. She says that she is taking the "realistic approach," Genesis is truthful, and, of course, the scientific disciplines can also accurately be applied. For Carol to come to her conclusions, she has to set two dates.

First, she sets a date for Noah to be alive at about 3000–2900 BC.¹ I am sure there are many Christian groups that would say she is 500 years later than what it should be. Next, Carol thinks that there was a great Mesopotamia flood that happened at about the same time frame in Kish, Shuruppak, Uruk [biblical Erech], and Lagash. Her flood happened about 1,000 years after the Mesopotamia flood which Sir Charles L. Woolley discovered while he was excavating in Ur.²

One of the main problems with Carol's flood in 3000 BC at Kish is that the excavations found four different levels of flood clay, not one. They extended over a period of about four centuries. The earliest was dated to about 3300 BC, the latest to about 2900 BC and the upper most level was about one foot deep compared to ten feet at Ur. The question then is: Which one of the four local flood levels should be chosen as the basis for building a flood legend for the biblical texts? The excavators found that none of the layers seem to be that significant, and the multiple layers dampen the enthusiasm for identifying any one of them with the biblical story. Also the sterile soil layers at Lagash probably did not come from a local river or canal flood but was rather from the foundation of one of the temples of Lagash, according to Andre Parrot, who excavated Telloh in 1930–1931.³

In the other two sites both in the same canal, Eric Schmidt found a deposit of alluvium two feet deep in tell Fara and Julius Jordon found a sterile stratum in Uruk, five feet thick. If we look at all the flood mud in these four cities we find that none of them comes close to what Woolley found in Ur. When the pattern is considered as a whole, however, there is very little archaeological proof for such a big flood theory for 3000 BC.⁴

Carol's theory is that Mesopotamia was Eden and that God placed Adam/Eve there about 5500 BC. In around 3000 BC, Noah was in a big flood that killed all but eight people. If this theory is true then somewhere in the book of Genesis there should be two devastating flood stories, the first flood in Eden was in 4000 BC that Utnapishtim the Sumerian wrote about and the second in 3000 BC about

Noah and his Ark. One would think, if there had been two great floods in Eden that almost wiped out civilization twice, then surely God would have recorded it in the book of Genesis.

But for the sake of argument, let's consider Carol's theory that there was a big flood in 3000 BC in Eden and that God first created humankind there in about 5500 BC. How does she account for all the people who had been living in Old Jericho for 4,000 years before the biblical creation date of 5500 BC?⁵ Also Carol claims that *Homo sapiens* have been on earth from 50,000 to 150,000 years.⁶ I was wondering how she correlates this with Christianity and Original Sin.

I have noticed in Carol's last two published articles that she uses a lot of ambiguous scenarios: it might be, it could be, most likely, seems to suggest, it is probable, one can imagine, this must be, therefore, it must have been, if there was, it is possible, etc. Then in her "conclusions," somehow her ambiguous scenarios leap into a positive logical conclusion. These so-called "leaps of logic" are not what scientific-minded people should delve into.

There is a point or two that I would like to add that Carol did not address in her article on the local flood. The Tigris/Euphrates valley is like a half-bowl, any water you put in at the western end of the half-bowl valley will never fill the valley because it is always runs down hill. And water in a riverine flood travels at a speed of about 3–5 miles per hour, and occasionally faster. The Mesopotamian basin generally flows to the southeast, which is where the Ark would travel. Carol's map, on p. 173, shows that the Tigris River is about 1200 miles long. If we assume that the floodwaters were very heavy, say up to seven miles per hour, it would take only 170 hours or about seven days to float the entire length of the Tigris River in heavy floodwaters. The story in Genesis says that it rained 40 days and 40 nights and that the flood waters abated after five months, about 150 days (Gen. 8:3–4). But wait a minute; Carol says that the Ark landed at a place called "Jabel Judi" which is only about 120 miles from the headwaters of the Tigris River. If what Carol says is true, then the only place the Ark could have been built was up stream from "Jabel Judi," which means that the Ark only floated about 120 miles and in just seventeen hours, or about one day. How does Carol explain where the rest of the 149 days were spent for the good ship Ark to cruise?

What I do not understand is why Carol is trying to make Mesopotamia and Eden the same place? According to Gen. 3:23–24, God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden when they sinned and put a flaming sword at the east end of the garden. No one should have been living in Eden when one or both of the Genesis flood stories happened. This one truth alone negates all of Carol's Mesopotamia/Eden ideas.

I am sorry but I cannot find any "realistic approach" to Carol's theories.

Notes

¹Carol A. Hill, "A Time and a Place for Noah," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 53, no.1 (March 2001): 24–40.

²Read chap. 3, "Digging up the Flood," in Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1981).

³Dr. William H. Shea, "The Flood: Just a Local Catastrophe?" <http://education.gc.adventist.org/dialogue/essays/Shea.htm>

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⁴Ibid.

⁵"Jericho," *Encyclopedia Americana* (1996) and at www.visit-palestine.com/jericho/places/place.htm

⁶Private e-mail with Carol in 2003.

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Just Wait

I would like to briefly address Alan Blodgett's letter, "A Response to Carol Hill's 'Noachian Flood' Account."

1. *Date for Noah/Flood.* Yes, I know that many Christians date the Flood 500-1000 years before ~3000 BC. Some also date it much later than I do. This is because there is no real way of knowing when Noah's Flood occurred, and so one can only do one's best to bracket the date using clues from archaeology and the Bible (which I tried to do in my article "A Time and Place for Noah," *PSCF* 53, no. 1 [March 2001]: 24-40). If it happened a thousand years earlier, Noah's Flood could correspond to the flood of Utnapishtim (the date of which is not firm) and to Woolley's "flood deposits" at Ur. However, since floods are endemic to Mesopotamia, this could have been another flood entirely.
2. *Flood Deposits.* Two points relate to this discussion:
 - (a) Floods not only *deposit* sediment, they also *erode* sediment. Therefore, the intensity or "greatness" of a past flood *cannot* be determined by the thickness of sedimentary deposits in any specific place (such as at Ur).
 - (b) There have been no recent comprehensive studies done on the absolute dating, distribution, deep drilling, or correlation of flood deposits in different parts of the Mesopotamian hydrologic basin. Most studies are old, such as those of Woolley (1920s) and Parrot (1930s). Therefore, any firm conclusions concerning the age and extent of flood deposits in Mesopotamia is premature (i.e., "ambiguous," and so should be treated as such, as I have tried to do).
3. In my past articles on the Garden of Eden and the Flood (*PSCF*, March 2000, March 2001, September 2002), I do not discuss the Origins problem at all—for good reason. This is a very complicated and controversial subject that is not possible to address in a short paper, let alone in a brief response letter. For one possible scenario, the reader is referred to John McIntyre's article on "The Historical Adam" (*PSCF* 54, no. 3 [September 2002]: 150-7).
4. *How Could the Ark Have Traveled Up-Gradient to Jabal Judi?* A series of articles on the hydrology of the Flood is planned for sometime in the future. Arlan Blodgett and others will just have to wait for this explanation.

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Concordism Revisited

I have followed with interest the correspondence between Carol Hill, Art Hill, and Paul Seely concerning a local Genesis flood (*PSCF* March 2003, June 2003, and September 2003). However, not being a geologist, I do not wish to enter into the discussion about the nature of the flood itself.

On the other hand, I would like to comment on an issue that Seely raises concerning the kind of record presented in the early chapters of Genesis. In his letter (June 2003), Seely comments:

I do not believe that concordism's long-standing attempt to read Scripture as describing a merely local flood covering no more than Mesopotamia or the Black Sea is any closer to the biblical data than creation science is to the scientific data.

The purpose of this letter is to note that present archeological data lead to the *presumption* that the chapters of Genesis before Abraham in 2000 BC (chapter 11 back to the formation of Adam in Gen 2:7) present the same kind of reliable history as the chapters after Abraham. Because of this *presumption*, the interpretation of these early chapters (including the flood in chapters 6-8) should assume that the Genesis record is historical.

The basis for this *presumption* of historicity for the early chapters of Genesis is that Scripture has been shown to be in agreement with secular history back to Abraham. For example, in his *History of Israel* (1959), John Bright writes:

It has become increasingly evident that a new and more sympathetic evaluation of the traditions is called for ... Far the most important of these (various lines of objective study) has been the light cast by archaeological research on the age of Israel's origin ... And, as the early second millennium has emerged into the light of day, it has become clear that the patriarchal narratives, far from reflecting the circumstances of a later day, fit precisely in the age of which they purport to tell.¹

Bright repeats this statement verbatim in the 1981 edition of his book.

Scriptural history, then, is reliable back through Abraham (about 2000 BC) in Chapter 12 of Genesis. But the earlier chapters of Genesis, back to the formation of Adam in Gen 2:7, are connected by genealogies to Abraham. Furthermore, these genealogies are repeated without interruption in Luke 3 from Christ to Adam through Abraham. The *presumption*, then, is that the history before Abraham is a continuation of the confirmed history after Abraham. The account of the flood, as part of the history before Abraham, should be historical.

During his investigation of Adam,² I have been surprised how often secular history supports the *presumption* that the Adam of Gen 2-4 is an historical person. Scripture presents Adam as a farmer in lower Mesopotamia with sons who are a farmer and a herdsman. From this information, secular history (archeology) concludes that Adam and his sons lived in Mesopotamia after 10,000 BC.³ This being true, secular history also reveals that other people were living in Mesopotamia at the same time as Adam and his family. The presence of these people from secular