

GENESIS FLOOD OR CATAclysm?

Dear Editor,

Recently I had the opportunity to show the ICR video **Grand Canyon: Monument to the Flood**¹ at my church Bible study. One elderly member indicated after viewing the video that he had a hard time accepting the Flood of Genesis could have such immense geologic effects as suggested by the video.

After reviewing a similar video² it occurred to me that a lack of familiarity with the geologic implications of the Genesis account is largely to blame. A related reason is the lack of appreciation for the intense forces that likely came into play as a natural result of the deluge, such as tidal resonance,³ tsunamis,⁴ cavitation,⁵ and liquefaction⁶ among others.

While many creationist articles have detailed the geologic impact of contemporary flooding,⁷ the image of a flood does not typically evoke much in the average mind in the way of catastrophic geologic activity. There is an incongruity between the formation of thousands of feet of Grand Canyon strata and the vision of ocean waters pouring over a landscape, remaining a year and then retreating.

The term 'flood', in our experience, simply does not carry the full connotation of the massive geologic devastation of the event in Genesis. I began to wonder; is there a better term creationists could use to describe the catastrophe that would convey to the world the profound geologic impact of the Flood? This question drove me to my Bible,

The term 'Genesis Flood' is the term of choice among creationists and non-creationists alike, at least since the publishing of the eventful book of the same name.⁸ It is certainly a legitimate term for the event; modern

Bible translations (King James Version, New International Version, New King James Version, New American Standard Bible, etc.) all refer to the event as a 'flood'. In Genesis the word is translated from the Hebrew *mabbuwl*, described in Strong's Concordance as a deluge or flood with a root that connotes 'flowing'. But is 'flood' the best English word available?

In both the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament the terms used for the catastrophe are only used for this event (with one potential exception, Psalm 29:10). In the King James Version, other words are translated as 'flood' in 26 verses. This includes six terms in the Old Testament and three more words in the New Testament. This suggests that the Deluge of Genesis is meant to be described in an entirely different manner from that of ordinary floods, using words with a unique connotation.

Further, what is the term used in reference to the Deluge in the New Testament? It is the Greek term *kataklysmos*, from which our modern English term *cataclysm*, is derived. This term is only used in the Bible with reference to the Deluge, and carries a much stronger connotation than does the simple word, 'flood'. The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as:

7. *A violent and sudden change in the earth's crust.* 2. *A violent upheaval or disaster,* 3. *A devastating flood.'*

This is exactly the term we are looking for to describe the Deluge. Unlike *flood* the term *cataclysm* includes both geologic and hydrologic activity. It conveys the full implications and original meaning of the biblical record (both Old Testament and New Testament) better than the English word 'flood'. Since geologic activity is frequently the focus of creationist literature on this subject, *Cataclysm* is certainly a more

appropriate term than *Flood*.

Use of the term *Cataclysm* when (and only when) referring to the Deluge will carry a much stronger connotation of geologic activity and tectonic upheaval in the minds of readers. This will make it easier for non-creationists to recognise the geologic action that is implicit in the biblical account and in Flood geology. It will also make it more difficult for 'tranquil flood' advocates and anti-creationists to caricature the Flood as a physically impotent event leaving no trace in the geologic record. The uniqueness of the event should be emphasised by capitalising *Cataclysm* and limiting use of the term to the Deluge.

We should adopt this terminology (The Cataclysm, the Cataclysm of Genesis, or simply Cataclysm, for example) when referring to the events of Genesis 7-8.

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ARCHAIC FOSSIL HUMANS

Dear Editor,

In his detailed consideration of the place of various taxons in human history, Beasley¹ suggests that most of the skeletal markers of the Neanderthals may be due to an active life in cold conditions, along with a naturally delayed maturity consistent with longer life than now experienced. Other than hypervitaminosis in *H. erectus* from East Africa (p. 197), and reduced nutrition in Neanderthals (pp. 197-198), he does not consider the possibility of pathological changes affecting these fossils.

Dequeker² mentions various possibilities of ancient and prehistoric occurrences of Paget's disease (*osteitis deformans*): a parietal bone found on an ancient Egyptian tomb,³ a femur from the Neolithic period,⁴ and the peculiar shape of some Neanderthal skulls.⁵ A consideration of such and other possible pathology would enhance Beasley's study.

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3. Hutchinson, J., 1889. On *osteitis deformans*. **Illustrated Medical News**, 1889(2): 169-179.
4. Pales, L., 1929. Maladie de Paget prehistorique. **Anthropologie**, 39:263-270.
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The Author Replies . . .

Dr Alex Stewart has raised the possibility that some of the morphological characteristics observed in ancient fossil humans may be due to pathologies, including *osteitis deformans* (Paget's disease). In an earlier paper¹ I touched upon a number of pathological disorders that may have afflicted archaic humans, including *osteitis deformans*. Many of these diseases have particular relevance to the Neanderthals of the Near East and Europe. It has been argued by Acton² that the '*simian appearance*' of some fossil humans may have been due to Paget's disease, with the bones of the spine and lower limbs becoming thickened, softer and often curved. A significant reduction in stature can also result from this malady; something which may be reflected in the Neanderthals. However, I would point out that Neanderthal stature is quite variable. Those subjected to colder climatic regimes were, as a rule, shorter than their contemporaries from warmer Mediterranean regions. Furthermore, the incidence and degree of limb bone bowing seems to be greater in individuals deriving from higher latitudes. This suggests that their

'short' stature was at least, in part, due to cold adaptation. It may also have been compounded by dietary deprivation,³ prolonged subjection to degenerative diseases such as *osteitis deformans* and, perhaps, *syphilis*.⁴ The bowing of the limb bones, on the other hand, could be attributed to rickets/*osteomalacia*. I would also argue that the thickening of the limb and cranial bones was due, substantially, to prolonged periosteal apposition.

The fact that the Ice Age adapted Neanderthals — the shortest statured fossil humans — were still taller, on average, than modern-day Inuits and Lapps lends support to the notion that ancient man was generally taller than modern man. This observation runs counter to prevailing transformist theories of human origins.

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3. An instance of how stressful climatic conditions can affect stature is related in a recent article in the journal **Science** (Ref: Fischman, J., 1996. California social climbers: low water prompts high status. **Science**, 272:811). In this article Fischman describes how: '*As water levels dropped, broken skulls, arrow injuries and signs of disease climbed to unprecedented heights.*' He then adds that during a drought around AD 1100 the height of the Chumash Indians decreased.
4. Wright, D. J. M., 1971. Syphilis and Neanderthal man. **Nature**, 229:409. **Wright states that: 'The effect of syphilitic osteitis could produce these bone changes and might, in addition, account for the Neanderthal long bones being so short and stout!'**