

<https://reasons.org/explore/publications/questions-from-social-media/does-genesis-say-the-floodwaters-covered-all-the-high-mountains>

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**Question of the Week:** *If Noah's Flood was not global, why the reference in [Genesis 7:19](#) to floodwaters covering the whole surface of the earth?*

**My Answer:** *First, the Bible repeatedly declares or implies that Noah's Flood was not global in extent.*

Dr. Ross' opening statement completely contradicts the multitude of verses that explicitly declare that the flood was limitless (global) in extent. More than 30 times in Genesis 6,7, and 8 the terms "all", "every", "everywhere", "whole", and other phrases explicitly declare that the flood wiped out everyone and everything on the earth except for Noah and those with him on the ark. In fact, the words "all", "every", "everywhere", and "whole" all come from the same Hebrew word kol, which means "the whole, totality, everything". This means that all of Gen. 6,7, and 8 repeatedly declares the exact opposite of Dr. Ross' opening statement.

*[Genesis 8](#), [2 Peter 2:5](#), [2 Peter 3:6-7](#), and [Psalm 104:6-9](#) imply that it was only the world where ungodly people and their domesticated animals lived that was flooded.*

Note that after Dr. Ross claims the Bible "repeatedly "declares or implies" a local flood he does not list any verses that "declare", only verses that "imply". Dr. Ross begins his answer by putting an unwarranted limitation on the word "world" (which he borrows from 2 Peter 2:5 below) and adds the phrase "and their domesticated animals" without justification because that phrase does not appear anywhere in any of the cited texts or in any other text referring to the flood.

*2 Peter 2:5 states that God "brought the flood on the world of the ungodly."*

Dr. Ross' reference to "the world of the ungodly" in 2 Peter 2:5 claims that only part of the world where the ungodly people and their domesticated animals lived was flooded. This implies that there would be righteous people elsewhere, in direct contradiction to verses like Gen 6:12 "all flesh has corrupted their way", Gen 7:1 "for you (Noah) alone I have seen to be righteous before me in this time" and Gen 7 "all flesh. . . perished. . . all mankind. . . every living thing. . . only Noah was left, together with those that were with him on the ark". This ignores the standard hermeneutic that "the explicit constrains the implicit". In other words, things that are explicitly stated take precedence and overrule any other possible implications, from similar passages, especially something that directly contradicts the explicit text.

*2 Peter 3:6 declares that "the world of that time perished when it was flooded." In both these passages in 2 Peter, the Greek word kosmos is qualified, implying less than the entirety of Earth.*

Here Dr. Ross claims that the Greek word KOSMOS for world in 2 Peter 2:5 and 3:6 is "qualified" implying less than the entirety of the earth, using the phrase "the world of the ungodly" (implying there was an area that was Godly, see above) and "the world of that time" implying not all the world was inhabited and only the inhabited part of the world (KOSMOS) was flooded. These implications again totally ignore the explicit statements of Gen 6:17 ". . . to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life,

from under heaven, everything that is on the earth shall perish", 7:4 ". . . I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made", and 7:19 ". . . the water prevailed more and more. . . so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered." :20 "The water prevailed 15 cubits higher and the mountains were covered" which rules out the possibility of only a local flood event. The absence of "qualifying" (or limiting) terms in these verses and the repeated explicit descriptions of "all" and "everything under the heavens" overrule any possible limiting "qualifications" in 2 Peter (the explicit constrains the implicit).

Dr. Ross also ignores the context of 2 Peter 3:6 by leaving out verse 7, which is tied to verse 6: ". . . the world of that time perished when it was flooded. (7) But by His word the present heavens and earth are being preserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment. . ." The qualifier "world of that time" and "present heavens and earth" are contrasting time periods on earth, not physical locations. Verse 7 refers to the entire earth, so the time reference to "world of that time" in verse 6 must also refer to the entire earth, in conjunction with later verses 2 Peter 3:10-13. The context of 2 Peter 3:3-13 is God judged the entire world in the past with the flood and will judge the entire heavens and earth with fire in the future to make way for a new heavens and new earth.

*Psalm 104 is the longest of the creation psalms. It complements Genesis 1 in providing the scientific details of God's creation works.*

Ross then makes another serious context error by equating the historical narrative genre of Genesis with the poetic genre of Psalm 104. Psalm 104 is not a complementary account or another parallel historic account of creation, it is a poetic rendering (retelling) of the historical events previously recorded in Genesis at least 1,000 years before the Psalm is written. He even claims that the poetic account provides "scientific" details of the creation account without listing what those "scientific" details are, especially since the only "science" that Ross adheres to (in relation to creation) is the naturalistic processes of the big bang and cosmic and biological evolution. As a scientist Ross should be quick to specify these "scientific" details yet he does not. The only identifiable scientific detail is Psalm 104:2 "stretches the heavens like a tent (garment)" which could relate to the scientific concept of the expanding universe, but if Ross points that out then he must admit that the Bible got a modern scientific concept correct thousands of years before modern man stumbled upon it. Perhaps that is reason enough for him to not specify the point, as it would give Scripture credibility in scientific statements.

*Psalm 104:6-8 refers to creation day 3 in Genesis 1 when God transformed Earth from possessing only water on its surface to possessing both oceans and landmasses. Psalm 104:9 states that once landmasses appear on Earth's surface, the newly formed landmasses will "set a boundary they [Earth's surface waters] cannot cross; they will never cover the earth again." This statement in Psalm 104 explicitly rules out the possibility that Noah's Flood could be global in extent.*

There is nothing in the Genesis 1 account that states that the water would never cover the earth again and Dr. Ross concludes that a poetic statement (that does not appear in the historical narrative of Gen 1 is binding on (and overrules) a later event in the historical narrative (Gen 6-8). Some scholars say that verses 6-9 are specifically about creation (Gen 1), others say that they reference both creation (verses 6-8, Gen 1) and Noah's flood in verse 9 (see Gen 9:11). Others point out that Psalm 104:6-9 refer almost verbatim with God's actions during the Genesis flood: Ps. 104:6 with Gen 7:19-20; Ps. 104:7 with Gen 8:1b, 3; Ps. 104:8 with Gen 8:5; and Ps 104:9 with Gen 9:11. Poets have the freedom to embellish and jump from event to event without rhyme or reason because they are not necessarily giving an orderly historical narrative, they are just using poetic language to convey truth, in this case by mentioning

historic events. In Genesis 9:8-17 God gave the rainbow as a sign of His covenant that He would never again flood the entire earth, so if Dr. Ross is correct that the flood was limited and local, then God has broken His covenant countless times with local floods since that time. This would be a serious attack on God's character, and Paul says that God cannot lie in Titus 1:2.

*“they will never cover the earth again.” This statement in [Psalm 104](#) explicitly rules out the possibility that Noah's Flood could be global in extent.*

The phrase "they will never cover the earth again" does not use any qualifying terms like "all the earth" or "entire earth" or "whole earth under the heavens" (as it does do many times in Gen 6-8), so it does not "explicitly rule out the possibility" of a global flood, especially since the historical record of Gen 6-8 clearly states the opposite and the Psalmist would undoubtedly be familiar with this historical record. It is truly mindboggling how Dr. Ross dismisses the multiple explicit uses of all and everywhere in Gen 6-8 to not include the entire earth and then implies that Psalm 104:9 must mean all and everywhere on the entire earth without those terms being used.

And since Ross is claiming that Gen 6-8 is just a local flood (in denial of the explicit descriptive terms "all" and "every" in 6-8) and the phrase in Psalm 104:9 does not explicitly describe the entire earth, that phrase could also rule out all local floods, especially those on the coastlines ("the boundaries").

In addition, to use Ps 104:9 to overrule the explicit historical account is a fantastic violation of the "explicit constrains the implicit" hermeneutic. To be consistent, Dr. Ross would need to claim that Psalm 105:26-36, which recounts the plagues of Egypt, overrules the historical account of the plagues in Exodus 7-12 because Psalm 105 lists plague #9 (darkness) first in verse 28 and then totally omits plagues #5 (livestock disease) and #6 (boils) in the list. Certainly Dr. Ross would not claim that these plagues did not occur because the "complementary" account in Psalm 105 does not list them! This would be required if he were to consistently apply his approach to Psalm 104:9 in Psalm 105. Psalm 105 also makes no mention of the parting of the Red Sea (Psalm 105:37-44), which is another example of how poets (Psalmists) have the freedom to embellish and jump from event to event without rhyme or reason because they are not giving an orderly historical narrative, they are just using poetic language to convey truth, in this case by mentioning historic events.

*As for [Genesis 7-8](#), context is everything. The whole face of the earth means something different for Noah than it does for us who live in the twenty-first century AD.*

Again, Dr. Ross makes a claim that cannot be defended from the text; it is totally arbitrary because it is not justified in the text. Context is everything, and the context is 3<sup>rd</sup> party narrative just like the rest of Genesis, Exodus, etc. and any other historical (non-autobiographical) written record.

*It is the whole face of the earth that Noah, and in Genesis 8:9 the dove, could see from their perspectives. Notice that in Genesis 8:5 Noah, from his perspective on top of the ark, could see distant hills, whereas, later, the dove flying low over the receding waters could not. Note, too, the phrase in Genesis 8:9 about water covering the face of the earth is similar to the phrase in Genesis 7:19. The phrase in Genesis 7:19, "all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered," could just as faithfully be translated, "all the elevated hills under the whole sky were covered." The context for the*

*whole sky is Noah on his ark. Genesis 7:19 declares that from on top of the ark at that time Noah could only see water from one horizon to the opposite horizon.*

Gen 8:6 is the first time we are told Noah opened the window on the ark, which would be the first time he could look out, and Gen 8:13 is the only verse that tells us that Noah “looked” to see that the surface of the ground was dried up. Then how do we know that the tops of the mountains were visible in 8:5

BEFORE he opened the window of the ark in 8:6? Nowhere does it say that Noah saw the mountaintops; that is an assumption on Ross’ part. We know these things because God is the narrator of the entire event; Gen 6-9 is not told from Noah’s perspective; it is told from God’s perspective, the only one who could know, especially things like Gen 7:19-20. There is no way that Noah could measure how high the ark was above the highest mountains (Gen 7:20), or that all the earth was covered everywhere under the heavens or that all flesh died except those on the Ark. God is the narrator of the entire event and to suddenly claim it was only Noah’s limited perspective is unwarranted and nowhere in the text. In fact, the context is that the entire event is told 3<sup>rd</sup> party from God’s perspective, with only 2 statements from Noah’s perspective (Gen 8:6, 8:13).

Ross also ignores the fact that when the dove was sent out in Gen 8:8, the word for land is *adamah*, which means soil, the more specific term used for ground that can be tilled and grow crops, not the rocky ground of the mountaintops. *Adamah* is also used in Gen 7:23, 8:13 and 8:21, so it is interspersed with the general term for earth, *erets*, and in the same context as *erets*, thus negating his attempt to imply that 7:19 does not mean all the mountaintops were covered. In fact, Gen 7:23 uses both terms in the same sentence: “Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land (*adamah*), from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth (*erets*), and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark”.

In summary, Dr. Ross’ claims are not “repeatedly declared or implied” by the text of Genesis or any of the other references he cites or anywhere else in Scripture for that matter. In fact, his claims are explicitly refuted by the Genesis text and his other references at every point when consistent, normal hermeneutical principles are applied. His entire article is a good example of the bad hermeneutic of eisegesis (bringing outside ideas into the text), over exegesis (extracting the meaning out of the text). Dr. Ross’ commitment to secular cosmology (sadly) taints his hermeneutics at every turn.

