

THE FLOOD

Green, W.H. The Unity of the Book of Genesis

The rise of the waters of the flood is depicted in 7.17-20 in four successive stages.

1. The water rose sufficiently to float the ark. v.17
2. Then (v.18) it rose very much higher still, and the ark mounted aloft upon its surface
3. Next (v.19) it attained such a height as to cover all the high mountains within the entire horizon.
4. Finally (v.20), it reached its maximum, fifteen cubits above the mountain-tops.

This regular gradation is broken apart by the critics who assign stage one (v.17) to J, and the other three stages to P, thus giving to each a truncated description, which when put together match precisely and supply just what before was wanting in each.

The destruction wrought by the flood is given in three successive statements of increasing strength. 7.21-23

1. First (v.21) he declares with emphatic particularity that all flesh died, fowl and cattle and beast and creeping thing and man.
2. Then (v.22) in the most universal terms, "All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was in the dry land, died."
3. Finally (v.23), universal and particular terms are combined, and the most forcible expression for complete destruction added in contrast with the sole survivors: "And every living thing was wiped out which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle and creeping thing and fowl of the heaven; and they were wiped out from the earth; and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark."

Disregarding these climactic periods, which are heaped together in order to intensify the contrasts of the last clause, the critics give the first of the sentences to P, thus sundering it completely from what follows, the result of which is to make P affirm, in the most absolute manner, the universality of the destruction without so much as a single survivor.

Seven stages are to be noted in the decline of the water precisely corresponding with the four stages of its rise added to the three statements of its wide-spread desolation. 8.1-13

1. A wind passed over the earth which served to reduce the volume of the water. 8.1
2. The sources of the flood had ceased, and the water flowed off to such an extent that the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat. 8.2-4
3. The water still further decreased and the tops of the mountains appeared 8.5
4. As the water continued to sink, a dove was sent forth after forty days, but the flood was still at such a height that no resting-place could be found. 8.6-9
5. After seven days more the water had abated sufficiently for trees