

Ham Must Never be Swallowed Whole

“They received the Word with all eagerness examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so.” – Acts 17:11

The first thing I wish to do is acknowledge my agreement with Ken Ham¹ on five core matters: 1) the Bible is the inspired Word of God, 2) the degree that people grasp matters of origins has a bearing on their receptivity to the Gospel, 3) it is not legitimate to compromise on the core² meaning of biblical texts including, for the purposes of this paper, matters of creation, Adam’s fall, and Noah’s flood,³ and consequently 4) that Noah’s flood occurred in accordance with the relevant texts of Scripture.⁴ 5) It is for these reasons that I cannot fault Mr. Ham for the *spirit* of urgency which clearly drives his message. Nevertheless, I must now illustrate that his zeal fails to be tempered with a necessary degree of caution. Visitors to his website will surely notice his assertion that any deviation from his young-earth creationist⁵ (YEC) and global-flood⁶ (GF) views amount to both biblical unfaithfulness and an idolatrous loyalty to science; both of which he alleges contribute to growing apathy toward the Gospel of Christ in our day. Indeed, implications from his views effectively overthrow our trust in knowledge from core scientific fields. Consequently, the stakes behind the takeaway from his message are far more massive than is the size of his Ark in Kentucky.⁷ For this reason his agenda demands thorough scrutiny. Indeed it is my judgment that **Mr. Ham commits serious error on several fundamental fronts**; the ramifications of which not only undermine the veracity of the very Scriptures that we **both** embrace; it also thwarts the spread of the Gospel in our society which seeks to expose as folly, every rational fallacy that he commits.

Obviously, this means that my challenge to Ham should likewise receive scrutiny. And indeed, I do encourage readers to undertake that investigation by first of all **asking the question of how the Bible delineates its own authority** specifically in the face of what we today call scientific⁸ knowledge. YECs for example insist that whenever scientific data conflicts with a biblical pronouncement, the former must always yield to the judgment of the latter. In other words, the body of scientific clues which indicate that creation is billions of years old must defer to the text of Genesis 1 on the age of creation. Yet despite a propensity for either camp to claim triumph in the *apparent* clash between science and religion over the course of time,⁹ the Bible quells this very tension, and it does so in two distinct ways. Firstly, in contradiction to YEC, Romans 1:18-20 says that the testimony of nature (TN), aka “scientific data,” is NOT a deceptive conveyor of the cause of nature’s origin. Indeed, this very witness is deemed by Scripture to be so trustworthy, the Bible employs it as one standard (among others) against which those who reject God will be judged. Woe then to anyone who seeks to undermine the testimony of nature! Secondly, the Bible actually *exhibits* (through *employing*) this principle by appealing to evidence *from* science, history, and rationality as external¹⁰ indicators that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17).¹¹

According to the “*correspondence view*” of truth (which is the classical definition of the word) **the only way truth can ever be established is by means of actual demonstration**, irrespective of the context.¹² When for example the biblical prophets uttered the phrase “*thus says the Lord*,” their goal wasn’t to evade scrutiny, but instead to distinguish the *source* of the words they declared; be it Yahweh, or instead the sinful hearts of the false prophets. But *substantiating* their claims was a far different matter that was achieved by other means (Deuteronomy 18:15-22, Isaiah 41:21-24, and Jeremiah 28:9) which consisted of testing the words of the prophets against the *actuality* of the circumstances that they foretold. This is one glaring illustration as to why it is that **Ham’s means for determining truth utterly conflicts with the Bible**. In terms of verifying biblical truth-claims for the purpose of discerning whether or not they be true, they must be *shown* to reconcile with the reality they describe, in the same way that scientific hypotheses can only prevail insofar as they square with the data they address. This means that scientific and legal claims are dealt with in exactly the same manner as biblical pronouncements. I can think of no example in Scripture where it bypasses this very method of substantiating its own truth.

It so happens that with respect to Ken Ham's views, both sides of the equation on the table are sources of contention which demand clarification. The first of these concerns **interpreting Genesis** with respect to, for the purposes of this paper, the *geographical* extent of Noah's flood. I do not challenge the biblical claims about either the extinction of virtually all of the human race living in Noah's time,¹³ or the size of his ark as replicated in Ham's full-scale model which rests on dry ground near Williamstown, Kentucky.¹⁴ What I instead contest are his views both that Noah's flood completely covered the entire globe to such a depth that even the highest mountains were submerged, and that every mountainous feature today was caused by that one flood (with the exception of events observed in *modern* times).

In support of Ham's views, he appeals to such biblical texts as "*the waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep*" (Gen. 7:20 – RSV), which, together with other verses, I **fully concede**, appears to imply that the flood was global. The problem with Ham's tactic, however, is two-fold. Firstly, the Hebrew vocabulary yields a moderating view of the heights of the so-called "mountains" that are referenced in this account. Secondly, when we take note of the *context* of the similar biblical phrases such as "*all the world*," there are good reasons to downscale the geographical extent of Noah's flood¹⁵ from a global event to instead a region which was populated with humans (Gen. 11:1-5) somewhere in what is known today as the Middle East. This view which I am taking, by the way, does not contest God's *ability* to cover the globe completely in water if He had so wished. After all, what problem is this small matter for "a God" who created the entire universe by His word? (Heb. 11:3).

Ham secondly asserts that *geological* evidence too affirms a global flood; a notion he supports by appealing to the presence of fossils on the top of Mt. Everest (which is indeed the case).¹⁶ Upon first consideration this point might seem to amount to a slam dunk argument in favor of a *global* flood. Yet there are two factors which completely undermine the contention that the array of geological features across our world were caused by a single flood. Firstly, the recently discovered phenomenon of plate tectonics fully explains not only the current configuration of our continents, but also the extensive world-wide presence of mountain ranges whose features suggest it was the colliding of landmasses which caused their folded and buckled features. YECs will of course argue that a flood as massive as they allege Noah's to have been, is likewise able to account for such features. Yet that is impossible for two reasons. Firstly, individual layers of rock and/or sand are often sandwiched between other layers which show no geological relationship with their "bed-fellows" above and below. Yet what is even more problematic for YECs is that each individual layer of *fossils* (as opposed to solely rock) must, in order to be preserved, become hardened prior to the formation of the layer of fossils above it.¹⁷ The existence of multitudes of fossil formations thousands of feet high across the globe utterly refutes the possibility that the "whole show" was caused by a single flood within a single year.

YECs in reply occasionally postulate that God has the capacity to miraculously create a multi-faceted fossil record such as geologists have uncovered in their fieldwork. My reply to that assertion is that yes, He *can* do such things. But the all-relevant question is, *did* He?¹⁸ Since, as I stated above, God employs the TN as a standard against which He will judge all of those who deny His existence, I find it ludicrous to suggest that He would resort to a deceptive ploy to achieve that purpose. Finally, in spite of the respect for Ham's piety and zeal that I earlier acknowledged, I judge that the error-ridden *contents* of his message undermine people's receptivity to a Gospel which we proclaim is a matter of sober truth (2 Cor. 5:10). How much better it is to commend the Gospel on the very grounds upon which it appeals: that it is *through* the witness of nature, as opposed to despite it, that "*God's invisible nature, namely His eternal power and deity is clearly perceived*" (Rom. 1:20).

Endnotes

¹ The founder and president of the young-earth creationist think-tank, “Answers in Genesis.”

² In this context I am urging focus on the broad picture as distinct from minute details.

³ I do not resort to compromising Scripture, but instead seek to harmonize Scripture and science with legitimate hermeneutical methods. See my essay, “Defusing the Alleged Conflict Between Scientific Fact and the Text of Genesis 1 Without Compromising Either One,” which together with all my papers can be found at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com.

⁴ See my paper, “The Biblical Extent of Noah’s Flood, Revisited,” at Ibid.

⁵ Young-earth creationists hold that the entire creation is approximately 8,000 years old. I argue, by contrast, that the text of Genesis 1 allows for the view that creation is perhaps billions of years old. ** See my two papers, 16 page “The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten ‘Compelling’ Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days are 24-Hour,” and my 1 page summary, “15 Clues in the Text of Genesis 1 Indicating that Creation is Ancient.”

⁶ By “*global*” is meant that the entire world was covered in water rather than a limited area sufficient to drown only its human population.

⁷ Localized flood proponent astrophysicist Dr. Hugh Ross, whom Mr. Ham relentlessly attacks, nevertheless states that Noah’s Ark could easily have been the same size as “Mr. Ham’s Ark.” Hugh Ross. *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist’s Journey through Genesis 1-11*. (RTB, 2014), pp.174-5).

⁸ Although the term “science” (previously known as natural philosophy) wasn’t coined until 1833 by William Whewell, I choose to employ the cognates, “science” and “scientific” in the loose sense of an intentional careful study of the natural order.

⁹ Concerning the Copernican revolution for example, Gary Ferngren writes, “A *principle point of tension in the religious community centered on various scriptural proof texts that seemed to demand a fixed earth or a moving sun.*” *Science & Religion*. (John Hopkins, 2002), p. 99.

¹⁰ In other words, evidence that is found outside of the pages of the Bible.

¹¹ I reference over forty examples in Scripture. See my paper, “The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible.” Access at Op.cit. (3).

¹² Whether truth is sought in the arenas of science, law, or with respect to biblical claims, each context abides by this dictum.

¹³ Op.cit. (4).

¹⁴ Op.cit. (7).

¹⁵ These insights are spelled out in greater detail in my paper referenced in note 4, above. I full acknowledge my indebtedness to the insights of Hugh Ross referenced in note 7, above.

¹⁶ <http://mathisencorollary.blogspot.com/2012/03/crinoids-on-mount-everest.html>

¹⁷ Access at Op.cit. (3).

¹⁸ See my paper, “Could God Do a Noahic Global Flood?” at Op.cit. (3).