

A Watery World (Let The Dry Land Appear)

by Jim Schicatanano

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep... (Gen. 1:1-2 NIV)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. (Gen. 1:1-2 KJV)

As we observe our world today, it is difficult to believe that the Earth was ever completely covered by water. Vast regions of deserts, rain forests, savannahs, mountains, and plateaus occupy millions of square acres of land, while supporting billions of humans, and millions of plant and animal species. The great mountain ranges of our world that tower thousands of feet above sea level only strengthen our certainty that land always existed. However, the Bible reveals that this was not always true. Most Biblical scholars agree that the Creation Story describes a very young Earth that was completely inundated by water. Two passages in particular indicate a watery world:

darkness was over the surface of the deep... (Gen. 1:2 NIV)

"...Let dry ground appear." (Gen. 1:9 NIV)

The first passage tells us that during Earth's early development, darkness shrouded the water. How prevalent was the water? Did it cover the entire Earth? This Biblical passage answers neither question. It tells us only that water *did* exist on our world at that time.

The second passage reveals that God called forth the dry ground to appear. Since this passage makes little or no sense if land had previously existed, we are left to conclude that the world was completely or nearly completely covered by water. Where did all of the water come from? The Creation Story never addresses God's creation of water.

From a scientific perspective, we immediately must ask: Was there ever a time early in the Earth's history when water enveloped the entire planet?¹

The water that exists on our world today came from a great nebular cloud of dust and gas that formed our solar system billions of years ago. Also included in that nebular cloud were chunks of ice. Liquid water may have existed throughout the solar system as early as 4.5 billion years ago – or shortly after the formation of the Earth.² The water on our planet, like the metals and the gasses, owes its existence to the very formation of the Earth. When the Bible states that God created the Earth, this probably included the creation of water.

Before four billion years ago, the Earth's atmosphere maintained a temperature well above the boiling point of water. Consequently, the water on our world was trapped as super-heated steam. As the Earth cooled, water vapor began to condense into rain.³ Soon the rain turned into a torrential downpour. For millions of years, the primordial atmosphere relentlessly yielded water to the surface of the Earth.

Tectonic plate movement, which is the process that formed the great mountain ranges of the world, had not yet begun, and the Earth's surface was relatively smooth. Water poured steadily from the sky, filling the shallow valleys, and eroding areas of higher elevation. Volcanoes continued to release more gasses and steam into the atmosphere. Comets, which are primarily composed of ice, added even more water upon impact with our planet.⁴

Soon, the Earth was virtually covered by one large body of water.⁵ The continents that we take for granted today did not exist four billion years ago. Volcanoes would occasionally rise above the ocean surface to spew forth their molten materials. But the Earth was essentially in the very condition that the Bible declares – the land was submerged under a global ocean.

NOTES:

1. I have read some accounts where this water is believed to be the water from Noah and the Great Flood. Although water from that mighty flood is said to have covered the globe, the water mentioned in these early verses is clearly from a period of time that preceded Noah. Nearly all Biblical scholars accept this interpretation.

2. R. Monastersky, "Water Flowed Early in the Solar System," Science News, Feb 24, 1996, p.117
3. Jon Erickson, "Plate Tectonics: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Earth", The Changing Earth Series (New York, Oxford: Facts on File, Inc., 1992), p.125
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.