

Flood, The. Rising and overflowing of water to cover the land, specifically the flood of [Noah](#).

Biblical Account. The narrative of the Noahic flood, found in [Genesis 6–9](#), constitutes one of the longest connected stories in the [Pentateuch](#) (first five books of the [OT](#)). The flood is referred to frequently elsewhere in the [Bible](#), in each case being mentioned as a historical event ([Gn 10:1, 32; 11:10; Mt 24:38, 39; Lk 17:27; 2 Pt 2:5](#)). According to the biblical account, [God](#) brought about the flood because of human society’s increasing deterioration, which finally reached a point where “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” ([6:5](#)). [God](#) determined to destroy the race and to begin again with a new people who would obey him (cf. [Gn 1:26–28](#)). Of all the people on earth, only [Noah](#), his sons, and their wives remained faithful to the Lord. They became [God](#)’s means of repopulating the earth following its watery destruction. After a period of 120 years’ preparation, during which [Noah](#) built a great ship and preached of [God](#)’s coming judgment, the flood came in the form of heavy rain and the rise of subterranean waters ([Gn 6:3; 7:11; cf. Heb 11:7; 1 Pt 3:20; 2 Pt 2:5](#)). Only the selected pairs of land animals brought aboard the vessel were saved from the onslaught. For more than a year the waters prevailed, until finally the waters receded and the earth was dry and habitable again ([Gn 7:6, 10–12, 24; 8:3–6, 10, 12–14](#)). When [Noah](#) and his family left the ark, they offered sacrifices to [God](#) in thanksgiving. [God](#) then promised that he would never again destroy the earth by a flood.

The Chronology of the Flood

The 600th–	Day from the	Genesis Reference
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		Event	
10th day of 2nd month	-7	Animals and 8 people enter ark.	7:4, 7-10
17th day of 2nd month	0	Rains begin to fall.	7:11
27th day of 3rd month	40	Underground springs erupt and rains cease.	7:12, 17
17th day of 7th month	150	Water covers the mountains.	7:19, 24; 8:3
		The ark lands on the mountains of Ararat.	8:4
1st day of 10th month	224	Other mountain peaks appear.	8:5
11th day of 11th month	264	Noah sends out a raven and a dove.	8:6-8
18th day of 11th month	271	The dove is sent out again.	8:10
25th day of 11th month	278	The dove is sent a third time.	8:12
1st day of 1st month	319	The water has dried up.	8:13
27th day of 2nd month	375	The ground is dry; animals and 8 people leave	8:14-19

Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988).

Exported from Logos Bible Study, 8:49 March 27, 2026.

Nonbiblical Traditions. No theme is more widely circulated in the world's epic and mythic literature than that of a great flood which long ago destroyed either the entire world or some vast portion of it. Such stories are found among the Chinese, Indians, Greeks, Mayas, islanders of the South Pacific, and elsewhere. Many stories have aspects similar to the Genesis accounts, but none is so strikingly similar as that of the ancient Babylonians. Their story was based on that of their historical and cultural predecessors, the Sumerians of Lower Mesopotamia. The Babylonian version, known as the Gilgamesh Epic, dates in its present form to the period of Hammurabi (c. 1750 BC). It professes, however, to narrate the life and career of Gilgamesh, a celebrated king of Uruk in the 3rd millennium BC. The epic tells how a pious man named Utnapishtim was saved from a devastating flood which the gods sent upon Shuruppak by building an ark. After seven days afloat, the storm ended and the ship landed on Mt Nisir. After sacrificing to Ealil, Utnapishtim became immortal.

Though few deny a connection between the Genesis account and flood stories like the Gilgamesh Epic, how they are to be related is a debated matter. The possibilities are: (1) the Genesis account is adapted from the extrabiblical ones; (2) the extrabiblical stories are adapted from the Genesis account; (3) all find a common source. The nonmythical, transcendent, and monotheistic character of the biblical narrative seems to rule out the first option. The earlier dating of the extrabiblical stories in their written versions excludes the second, unless earlier copies have been lost. The best solution, to those who understand the Genesis record as inspired narrative history, is to see all the major

early accounts as reflections of the same vast deluge recounted in written form.