

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

World Ages

The story of Noah's Flood in the Bible is as famous as the story of Adam and Eve. In fact, the stories are regarded as one continuous tale describing the early history of our world. According to the biblical account Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years; Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty nine years; Noah lived nine hundred and fifty years.

God brought the Flood as a judgment upon man. He saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, Gen 6:5, and that man was corrupt, Gen 6:12. He was determined to put an end to the race he had created, Gen 6:13. But Noah found favor in his sight; therefore Noah and his family were saved.

Why did man go bad? Why did God feel it necessary to bring cataclysmic judgments? What do the long lives of Adam and his descendants mean? What is behind these seemingly mythical stories? If the reality of Adam appears through planetary evidence does the reality of the Flood show itself in other evidence?

Many problems confront us in the biblical story. Genesis 4 has a list of descendants through Cain; the number of those generations from Adam to Tubal-cain is eight. Genesis 5 has another list of descendants through Seth; the number of those generations from Adam to Noah is ten. In the first list no ages are given; in the second list all ages are shown. The name Enoch appears in both lists, as does the name Lamech, who was the father of the last generation in each list. Other oddities are in the parallel names of Irad and Jared, Methushael and Mathusaleh. From a cursory review one is tempted to believe that the lists are artifices designed to accommodate traditions the details of which were lost to human memory.

Fortunately, we can make sense of these stories. There is a reality hidden behind those brief accounts which immediately escapes us. But insight is acquired if we consider other planetary evidence. The Bible alone does not offer sufficient information. If we limit ourselves to the Bible, as so many biblical literalists have done, we cannot fully understand the strange accounts that have come down to us. Without other evidence we have only mythological interpretations.

We shall begin our search with Plato, the Greek philosopher. In *Timaeus*, one of his dialogues, he presents a conversation between Solon, a Greek, and an Egyptian priest^{DOP}.

Oh Solon, Solon, you Hellenes are never anything but children, and there is not an old man among you. Solon asked what he meant. I mean to say, he replied, that in mind you are all young; there is no old opinion handed down among you by ancient tradition, nor any science which is hoary with age. And I will tell you why. There have been, and will be again,

many destructions of mankind arising out of many causes. The greatest have been brought about by the agencies of fire and water, and other lesser ones by innumerable other causes.

. . . Whereas just when you and other nations are beginning to be provided with letters and the other requisites of civilized life, after the usual interval, the stream of heaven, like a pestilence, comes pouring down and leaves only those of you who are destitute of letters and education; and so you have to begin all over again like children, and know nothing of what happened in ancient times, either among us or among yourselves.

As for these genealogies of yours which you just recounted to us, Solon, they are no better than the tales of children. In the first place you remember a single deluge only, but there were many previous ones; in the next place, you do not know that there formerly dwelt in your land the fairest and noblest race of men which ever lived, and that you and your whole city are descended from a small seed or remnant of them which survived. And this was unknown to you, because, for many generations, the survivors of that destruction died, leaving no written record.

This statement by Plato is curious in a number of respects.

We have a powerful and highly technical science in our modern world, but not one that is hoary with age. It is a science that denies God, rejects the old myths as imaginary, and refuses to accept responsibility for the long-term planetary repercussions of its immature creations.

According to our traditions we remember one deluge only, Noah's Flood. If other floods took place in our planetary past we are ignorant of them.

Traditionally, we believe the Flood came about as a judgment upon men but we know nothing about the stream of heaven pouring down after the usual interval. The Flood was a judgment by water; the present world awaits judgment by fire.

Plato says the Greeks were descended from a small remnant of the most fair and most noble race of men that ever lived. The Greeks were unaware of their ancestry because they had no written records surviving from those ancestral days. The linguistic and folk evidence we have considered supports the assertions by Plato. There was a period of time when men were so busy surviving they kept no written records and may have lost the art of writing. The memories of those ancient days come down to us only through oral tradition. Writing had to be reinvented.

Plato was not alone in this view of past planetary cycles; the traditions are widespread around the world.

The people of India had schemes of time which far exceed any other people on this earth. Brahma was the source of all existence, earthly and divine. From him flowed the spiritual and material creations. His equivalent in Judeo-Christian belief is God the Father.

In the Hindu mythologies Brahma lived one hundred days and nights. Each night saw the dissolution of the world; each day saw the renewal of creation. One day and night of Brahma was equal to 1,000 periods, and each period had 12,000 divine years. Each divine year was equal to 360 human years. Therefore, one day and night of Brahma was equal to 4,320,000,000 human years. One hundred days and nights of Brahma were equal to 432 billion human years.

(Curiously, *The Urantia Papers* describe Michael of Nebadon as beginning his organization of this local universe about 400 billion years ago, page 1309.)

Every period of 12,000 divine years was divided into four ages. The age of Krita was equal to 4,000 divine years with additional 400 divine years each of morning and evening twilight. The age of Krita was followed by the age of Treta with 3,000 divine years and morning and evening twilight of 300 years. This was followed by the age of Dvapara with 2,000 divine years and 200 years each of morning and evening. Lastly came the age of Kali with 1,000 years and 100 years each of morning and evening^{CHM}.

In the first age men were noble and spiritual. They held to the four virtues of truthfulness, kindness, devotion, and charity. They were contented, kind, amiable, mild and possessed self-control and forgiveness. In that age there was no buying or selling; the fruits of the earth were obtained merely for the taking. There was no disease and no decline of the body through aging. There was no malice, deceit, weeping, pride, contention, hatred, cruelty, fear, affliction, jealousy or envy.

Each age experienced a decline from the previous until this last age. Only one fourth of the virtues remain, and even this small quantity disappears as vices rapidly increase. Men are wicked, unkind, quarrelsome, deceptive, idle, slothful, full of malice. They highly prize what is low and degraded. Women become shameless, overbold, and lascivious. Cities are filled with thieves and vicious men. Merchants are low and deceitful. Kings become oppressive. Droughts and floods devastate crops; wars and famines depopulate the earth. The earth becomes so depraved wise men pray for the arrival of Kalki, the Destroyer. We now live in that age.

The four ages were characterized by colors: white, red, yellow and black respectively^{EMLI}.

According to the *Puranas* this age will witness Vishnu, the Creator god, who will appear as Kalki, an armed warrior mounted on a white horse with wings and adorned with jewels, waving over his head with one hand the sword of destruction and holding in the other a disc. In the *Bhagbata* we are told that the age of destruction is so horrible that during it the clouds never fall on the earth as drops of rain for one hundred years. The people find no food to eat and being terribly oppressed by hunger they are compelled to eat one another.

In other places a universal cataclysm is predicted in vivid detail. After a drought lasting for many years seven blazing suns will appear in the firmament; they will drink up all the waters. Then wind-driven fire will sweep over the earth, consuming all things . . . Afterwards many colored and brilliant clouds will collect in the

sky looking like herds of elephants decked in wreaths of lightning. Suddenly they will burst asunder, and rains will fall incessantly for twelve years until the whole world with its mountains and forests is covered with water . . .^{EML1}.

Although the Hindu myths are distorted, they preserve certain characteristics of our planetary physical history which are found in other folk memory and in the geophysical records of our world. The long time spans, the four ages, and the nature of each age is echoed by many other people. (They also contain prophecy similar to the prophecy of the Bible.)

Across the world in the ancient land of the Toltecs and Aztecs were folk memories of four great ages, known as the four Suns. The world and men were both created by a supreme god who was the Creator of All Things, Lord of Heaven and Earth. *Atonatiuh*, the Sun of Waters, was the first age terminated by a deluge in which all creatures perished. *Tlalchitonatiuh*, the Sun of Earth, was the age of giants that ended in a terrific earthquake and fall of the mountains. *Ecatonatiuh*, the Sun of Air age closed with a furious wind which destroyed buildings, uprooted trees, and even moved rocks. *Quetzacoatl*, the great white teacher, appeared during this age, teaching the way of virtue and the arts of life, but his doctrines failed to take root. He departed to the east and promised to return in another day. With his departure *Tlatonatiuh*, the Sun of Fire age began. This is the present age; it will be destroyed by fire^{LAM}.

The four ages were characterized by four gods, the ruddy (red) *Camaxtli*, (note a reference to Adam), the black *Tezcatlipoca*, (black man), the white *Quetzalcoatl*, (white man), and the grim *Huitzilopochtli*, born as a skeleton without flesh. The deities created fire. They also created *Oxomoco* and *Cipactonal*, the first man and woman, commanding that the former should till the ground, as Adam was commanded, while the woman was to spin and weave.

Each age in the Aztec memory was counted in relatively short periods of time. The first age lasted 13 X 52 or 676 years; the second lasted 7 X 52 or 364 years; the third 6 X 52 or 312 years. The myths are confused. According to one account it was during the first Sun that the gods created giants who could uproot trees by brute force and whose food was acorns. Time began to be counted from the first Sun; during 600 years of idleness of the gods, when *Huitzilopochtli* was in his bones, time was not reckoned.

Other versions of the Mexican myths exist. In some, Quetzalcoatl is known as the Creator. The first Sun ended with a flood. *Ocelotonatiuh*, the Jaguar Sun, was the epoch of giants and of solar eclipse. The third age, *Quiyauhtonatiuh*, was the Sun of Rains that ended with a rain of fire and red-hot rocks. The fourth age, *Ecatonatiuh*, was the Sun of destruction by winds, while the fifth age is the Sun of Earthquakes, Famines, Wars, and Confusions. This age will bring our present world to destruction. The account of four Suns passed and a present fifth Sun, bringing the destruction of our age, seems by most authorities to be the orthodox version^{LAM}.

To the north of the Toltecs and Aztecs the Navahos also believed in four ages. In the *Age of Beginnings* man emerged through four world-stories from the Underworld to the Earth. In the second *Age of Animal Heroes* the earth was set in order. In the third *Age of the Gods* the giants were slain. In the fourth *Patriarchal Age* the Navahos grew into a nation^{NAM}.

Navaho traditions of color were more distorted than those of the Hindus or the Toltecs. The four world-stories through which they traveled were red, blue, yellow, and multi-colored. But the four gods of this world were White Body, Blue Body, Yellow Body, and Black Body. These gods created the first man (*Atse Hastin*) and first woman (*Atse Estsan*) from ears of white and yellow corn respectively. To this pair were born five sets of twins.

We shall meet this element of five sets of twins again. In the genealogies of Adam they are reflected in the ten generations through Seth.

South of the Toltecs the Maya believed in four worlds. The first world was inhabited by dwarfs, the *saiyam uinicob*, or adjuster men. That world was ended by a universal deluge, the *haiyococab*, or water over the earth. The second world was peopled by the *dzolob*, or offenders. The third world was populated only by the Maya, the common people or *mazehualob*. Both of these worlds also ended in floods. The present world is peopled by a mixture of races and will also end in a flood^{TAM}.

Back across the Pacific Ocean the Chinese had folk records of five world eras but their distorted accounts, ephemerized by their ancient scholars, do not portray them as world ages. Instead of gods they had sages; instead of divine rulers they had earthly emperors; instead of ages they had dynasties. Three periods are given for the earliest men. The first was known as the *Lords of the Bird's Nest*. In those days people lived in bird's nests to avoid danger on the ground. The second was known as the *Fire Driller Lords*. Until this time the people ate raw food but the sages (gods) taught them how to make fire and to cook. The third period saw the *Deluge of Kung Kung*, a king. Following the third period came a golden age which saw the rule of ten emperors. The golden age also ended in a flood. Together these periods make up four world ages; we now live in the fifth^{MOG}.

The Chinese also have stories of ten suns in the sky, (two suns each for five periods). In the mythologized stories a certain Yi shoots down each of the suns except one, which now moves in the heavens. If he had not done so intense heat and fire from the suns would have destroyed the world^{MAW}.

The Chinese call the perished ages *kis* and count ten *kis* from the beginning of the world to the time of Confucius. Each of these occurred with great convulsions of nature; the span of time between two catastrophes is called a Great Year^{AHDAC}.

If we turn to the classical Greek and Roman worlds we also find traditions of a Great Year. This Great Year was associated with the mythical Phoenix bird that died at the end of each period in blazing fire. From the ashes came a worm that grew into another Phoenix bird and another Great Year. Classical writers variously ascribed the Phoenix with different life ages: 500 years, (Herodotus, Ovid), 540 years (Manilius through Pliny, Solinus), 654 years, (Syncellus, Suidas), 1000 years,

(Martial, Pliny, Lactantius), 1461 years, (identified by Aristides and Synesius with the Egyptian Sothic period), 7006 years, (Chaeremon), and, in the most ancient of the references, 972 human generations, (Hesiod)^{MOP}.

Van Der Broek, in *The Myth of the Phoenix*, demonstrates that many of these periods are distorted memories based on Babylonian sexagesimal mathematics and other ancient methods of time reckoning. 540 from Manilius X 60 equal to 32,400 years, which is the same as a generation of one third century of 33 1/3 years, X 972 generations from Hesiod, again equal to 32,400 years.

Other ancient writers also recognized the Great Year as a long span of time. Plato, in his *Timaeus*, described the Perfect Year when all the heavenly bodies would come into alignment in the heavens^{DOP:39d}. From Tacitus and Servius we know Cicero equated the Great Year to 12,954 ordinary years, while Cicero stated elsewhere that the time between the alignment of the planets was a matter of controversy. According to Censorinus, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle believed the Greatest Year was one in which the planets were all in alignment. This Greatest Year was thought to have a winter culminating in a world flood, and a summer culminating with a world conflagration. According to the Roman philosopher Seneca, a Babylonian priest named Berossus, writing in Greek, stated that if the sun, the moon, and the planets all came into alignment under the constellation of Cancer the world would burst into flames. If the heavenly bodies came into alignment under Capricorn the world would be inundated by water in a great flood^{MOP}.

The Greek name for the great winter was *kataclysmos* while the name for the great summer was *ekpyrosis*. Hesiod, in his *Works and Days*, wrote that four ages and four generations of men had passed and that we were now in the fifth age. Each generation of men were destroyed by the wrath of the planetary gods.

Many other traditions could be cited but these demonstrate that ancient people scattered all around this world believed in great cataclysmic cycles of time, and that the planet had experienced four or five world ages. These cycles were related to changes in the rotation and revolution of the planet. As Plato wrote in the Statesman:

There is a time when God himself guides and helps to roll the world in its course; and there is a time, on the completion of certain cycles, when he lets go, and the world, being a living creature and having originally received intelligence from its author and creator, turns and by an inherent necessity revolves in the opposite direction, (269c).

(The numbers in parenthesis are paragraph numbers.)

Velikovsky pointed out the nature of the Sun myths. Whether an ancient Chinese hero shoots the Suns out of the sky, or the Maya called them the Water, Earthquake, Hurricane, or Fire Suns, the myths show that the earth experienced dramatic changes which led olden people to believe that a different sun was in

the sky. While we do not subscribe to Velikovsky's wild theories which condensed remote events into two upheavals at 1500 and 700 BC, nor to his fantastic speculations on wandering planets, we do acknowledge his perception of the cycles^{WIC}.

Further insight into these traditions can be obtained from a passage by Herodotus^{HER.II:142}.

Thus far I have spoken on the authority of the Egyptians and their priests. They declare that from their first king to the priest of Hephaestus was a period of 341 generations . . . Now 300 generations of men make 10,000 years, three generations filling up the century; and the remaining forty-one generations make 1,340 years. Thus the whole number of years is 11,340; in which entire space, they said, no god had ever appeared in human form; nothing of this kind had happened either under the former or under the later Egyptian kings. The sun, however, within this period of time, on four several occasions, moved from his wonted course, twice rising where he now sets, and twice setting where he now rises . . .

We see that the Egyptians believed the gods had withdrawn from the world some eleven millennia earlier. Contrary to other traditions that equated earth changes with dispensations of the gods, the Egyptians believed the world changes had all taken place in the last 10,000 years, during the absence of the gods.

Other ancient Egyptian documents make similar assertions on the motions of the earth. The *Ipuwer Papyrus* states that the land turns round as does the potter's wheel, and that the Earth turned upside down. The *Ermitage Papyrus* in Leningrad states that a catastrophe had turned the land upside down: "*happens that which never had happened*,^{NET}."

Plato writes further in his *Statesman*^{DOP}:

I mean the change in the rising and setting of the sun and the other heavenly bodies. In those times they used to set in the quarter where they now rise, and used to rise where they now set . . . (269a) . . . the revolution of the heavens is sometimes in its present sense, sometimes in its reverse sense, (270b). So it must needs be that in the cosmic crisis there is widespread destruction of living creatures . . . and only a remnant of the human race survives, (270d). For when the whole order of things has come to its destined end there must needs be universal change once more . . . Now the pilot of the ship of the world lets go the handle of its rudder . . . A shudder passes through the world at the reversing of its rotation, checked as it seems, between the old control and the new impulse . . . The shock sets up a great earthquake which causes . . . destruction of living creatures of all kinds, (273a).

Other tales in the folklore of people from around the world tell of great changes in the earth. We can see from this brief survey that different peoples remembered differently, that the ages of the earth are confused, and that the

geophysical mechanisms leading to these great events are not understood. We shall now examine specific evidence, both from the olden records, and from modern scientific evidence, to show how these myths may have come about.