

If you are getting this email, it means I've probably talked to you at some time in the past about this and am thinking you might be interested in seeing the argument with at least some documentation and structure. Some points are not documented well here but that's just because there is no quick and easy link (and/or some things are hard to show/prove with a simple link).

These are ideas still in embryo and this presentation is very rough and in very short form (I have many pages of documentation and quotes) At some point when this is more refined I'll probably promulgate it in a serious way. Until then, please be sensible about how and with whom you share it (at least if you associate it with me or Ron Harris). I would love to hear your reaction and/or thoughts/comments after you read it if you want to share them.

Short Intro

[in very condensed, rough form]

The scientific argument against a global flood is substantial (I just spoke with Ron Harris from the Geology dept today and he was also emphatic about this). You can find these arguments all over the internet.

I'm not arguing that Noah's flood didn't happen (I believe in Noah and the floodstory). There is strong evidence for a major cataclysm in the Mesopotamian region around 2300BC that decimated most of the cultures there. And, humans dealt with massive floods during the recession of the last ice age (so flooding up until about 6000 BC). There are also other good candidates for Noah's (local) flood (e.g. the Black Sea).

How well does a local flood story work within a faithful LDS framework? Quite well. In fact, I think there is a far better case to be found within our doctrine that the flood was local than that the flood was global. This is something Joseph Smith got right (or at least God did in inspiring Joseph as he received the Inspired version of the Bible (e.g. Book of Moses)).

Argument for a local flood from a faithful LDS perspective

A. The Scope of the Flood

A1. The Book of Moses supports a local scope.

Earth should be translated "land" in the flood account. This is explicitly supported by [Moses 1:29](#), and also in the use of close-word-modifiers in the original Hebrew. "eretz" is never qualified in the flood story of Genesis (or "earth" in the flood story of the Book of Moses) in a way to indicate that the flood should be interpreted in a global sense.

A2. Promises of remnant preservation don't make sense with a Global flood.

The promise made to Enoch/Noah in [Moses 7:22](#) makes no sense if Noah and his families were sole survivors of a global flood. [Nibley makes this point eloquently](#)

A3. The author of the flood story [clearly had limited perspective](#).

B. Baptism of the Earth

If you suggest a local flood, the major object from Latter-Day Saints will be that the flood represented the baptism of the earth. This idea requires closer examination.

B1. Baptism of the Earth not a uniquely "LDS" idea.

The doctrine is taught or hinted at in some form by the Catholic church (catechism paragraphs [845](#) and [1219](#)) and Martin Luther, and was espoused by many of the early church fathers including Justin Martyr, Chrysostom, Augustine, and John of Damascus.

B2. Orson Pratt probably picked up the doctrine while in England.

The idea that the flood was a needed baptism for the Earth was initially [promulgated within the LDS tradition by Orson Pratt](#) and was likely seeded by Orson Pratt's potential exposure to those [teachings in England](#) (Pratt was a mission president stationed in England when it was being taught there).

Elder Pratt, while highly respected by the other Brethren for his broad learning, was also officially censured for much of the doctrine he espoused.

B3. Baptism of the Earth not official or revealed LDS doctrine.

The doctrine was never claimed to have been received by revelation and has never been taught as official doctrine.

According to what is documented, Orson Pratt taught Baptism of the Earth before any President of the Church. Neither Elder Pratt, Brigham Young, or John Taylor claimed the idea to be revelation or official doctrine. In fact, it is presented with an air of conjecture in several cases.

B4. The earth has no need for baptism

The earth seems always to obey ([Helaman 12:7-13](#)) [credit to Ron Harris for this point]

Although it can be countered that Christ had no need for baptism and he submitted to baptism anyway, also consider:

- Must the earth be married and/or receive the priesthood for exaltation?
- We believe animals will receive some kind of exaltation: must each animal be baptized to receive its exaltation?

B5. Baptismal symbolism still applicable without global "immersion"

Paul spoke of the children of Israel being "baptized" as they walked through the Red Sea, ([1 Cor 10:2](#)) even though they walked through on "dry ground" ([Exodus 14:29](#)).