

The Rings of Earth describes, in layman's terms, the author's systematic search for the mysterious early "waters above the firmament" of Genesis 1:7. Logic and evidence support his unusual hypothesis about the source of the rain that caused Noah's Flood.

## **The Rings of Earth**

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# The Rings of Earth

*The Waters Above the Firmament  
of Genesis 1:7*

**Larry Cloud**

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The cover pictures are obviously fabrications, strictly for purposes of illustration. The original photographs of Saturn and Earth are courtesy of NASA. If any apology is necessary for my hypothetical combination of NASA's originals, then I do apologize. The illustrations obviously show modern Earth continent outlines and the unique ring structure of Saturn. If I could have found a photograph of the original Earth with its own rings, I would gladly have used it!

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## Chapter 2. Initial Studies

When I began to study local geology and its history, I already knew a bit about how to find information in books, and how to correlate book knowledge with direct observation. It was soon obvious that understanding local geology requires wider knowledge of regional and global geology, so the scope of my search kept expanding. Numerous books in various libraries described basic principles of Earth science, and specialized pamphlets published by Tennessee state geologists provided detailed local and regional information. And there was always my Bible to provide firsthand answers to questions about Earth's distant past.

### New Influences

Then my favorite teacher, colleague, and friend Preson Phillips proposed a special study project. He persuaded me to analyze and compare two unique books that were attracting a lot of attention at that time. *The Genesis Flood* by John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris (1961) and *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch* by Donald W. Patten (1966) both emphasize the evidences for and the effects of a global flood accompanied by sudden cooling. Reading, comparing, and contrasting those complex books was a big job. It's almost impossible to absorb all of the varied information that either book contains, but I tried to comprehend them both. The three Christian authors—a theologian, an engineer, and a geographer—made a lasting impression on me. They explained much about Earth's past and present, and they helped to shape my future.

I was already familiar with the Biblical story of Noah's Flood, but suddenly I came to understand that Earth is now far different from its original created state. I learned that geological evidence shows Earth experienced sudden and

intense flooding, great surface and sub-surface upheaval, and extensive deep-freezing some centuries after Creation. Furthermore, I soon became convinced that such great events as Noah's Flood and Indiana's Ice Age (1) were directly related to each other, (2) shared an original cause, and (3) occurred in sequence; a widespread Ice Age followed Noah's Flood.

Now, I'm not unbiased, and I don't pretend to be. Bias, personal prejudice and preference, is part of human nature. Surely everyone has two critical poles of philosophy and behavior. At some point each person eventually says, "I *will* believe this and do this, regardless of what you may say or show me." And at some other point each of us is equally adamant: "I will *not* accept that or do that, regardless of what you may say or show me." These biases are real and influential, whether they result from environment, education, experience, or just a whack on the side of the head. And the strongest biases can be the deepest hidden to their owners.

Technically trained professionals are no different in this respect. In fact, their biases may be even stronger and more obvious than most, and even more vehemently denied. Max Planck once stated, "A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it." More recently, physicist Richard Muller pondered the same idea: "Old theories never die, I thought, only old theorists. Eventually the present generation of paleontologists would go away and be replaced by a new group, young students not tied to the old ways. That was the history of most new theories."

Is science then just a war of attrition, with new ideas accepted only as prejudiced and stubborn older scientists die out? Is a new hypothesis or theory finally accepted only after death silences its major critics? I certainly hope not, because that doesn't sound very scientific! The facts should always determine our conclusions, especially in scientific work.

But inertia, a stubborn resistance to change, isn't confined only to material bodies. Scientific minds and bodies of knowledge have an intellectual inertia of their own. Arthur C. Clarke warned, "When a distinguished but elderly

scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.”

The major proposition of this book was conceived during the 1970s as I taught introductory Bible college courses in Earth science—astronomy and geology. I dealt honestly with the legitimate scientific facts and principles, working always to interpret and reconcile those facts and principles with my chosen creationist viewpoint. The *Holy Bible* continued to influence my thinking, as did *The Genesis Flood* and *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch*. Dozens of classic and modern astronomy and geology textbooks provided me with a fascinating, ever-growing and ever-improving body of factual information. Continual study, exploration and observation worked to shape my thoughts and my interpretation of the facts.

### **Scientific Simplification**

Contrary to popular opinion, science is primarily a work of simplification. Science is a process of collecting information, often vast and varied, then studying and simplifying the findings so they can be described as easily and compactly as possible. A ‘specialist’ has been jokingly described as “someone who knows more and more about less and less”—which proves that popular opinion can be quite accurate. Nature is incredibly detailed, and great simplification is usually necessary if we are to understand it. Properly done, even great simplification doesn’t distort the facts, but it does help us to absorb, organize and understand what we see around us. A good specialist can explain complex principles very simply but accurately. Almost everything we now know and understand, we owe to specialists and their simplified explanations.

As I studied, I began to organize and interpret various details of what I was seeing and learning. The ‘big picture’ is fascinating, but it can also be overwhelming. Geology still has more questions unanswered than answered, because every new answer raises several more questions. Specialization becomes almost mandatory. For instance, a student may ultimately focus his attention on fossils, as opposed to the rocks that contain them. Further study

may lead to concentration on only land fossils, rather than marine fossils; then on fossils only of reptiles, or of mammals, or insects. It has been centuries since any one person could supposedly know ‘all there is to know,’ or (more realistically) all that is known right now.

My own interest in astronomy and geology directed my general and specific reading, my study and observation. As a survey course teacher I spent roughly half my time working with what is ‘up there’ above my head (astronomy), and the other half on what is ‘down here’ in front of my face and below my feet (geology). Both sciences are fascinating, both are vast and varied, and I don’t claim great expertise in either one. But as I continued to study and work, always using my Bible as a companion to the best secular sources, various details began to coalesce and solidify in my thinking. Certain facts merged into a discernible pattern. A strange mental picture began to form that explained several details of the Bible record. I was, in my own slow and limited way, discovering or understanding more and more about less and less. And in that sense, one Bible detail finally seemed simple enough for me to understand.

### **An Inevitable Conclusion**

Eventually I arrived at a distinct conclusion. In describing the second day of Creation, *Genesis 1:7* says, “And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so.” Somehow, back at the very beginning of time, there were strange and abundant ‘waters above the firmament’ (above Earth’s atmosphere). Based on other Bible information and the presently observable facts of nature, I realized those waters were not the sparse vapors present in today’s atmosphere. The old details were explicit and critical: The waters in question were abundant, they were located not *in* but *above* Earth’s atmosphere, and that was utterly different from the current situation. It became obvious this was a catastrophe just waiting to happen. Surely those waters above the firmament became the famous rain at the beginning of Noah’s Flood.

That idea seemed inevitable to me, it was forceful and inescapable, and it



kept leading and driving me further. At times the implications seemed almost too obvious, too simple and logical to deserve notice, hardly deserving of study and proclamation. Nevertheless, as I continued to expand and firm up my conclusions, I became convinced this is a valid scientific possibility, and its ramifications will stimulate other people. Modern results of American space exploration, using ever-improving techniques and sending durable instruments to the far edge of the Solar System, seem to support my hypothesis and make it even more obvious, compelling, and significant.

### **Disclaimers**

This book isn't a deep and tedious theological dissertation, or any kind of Christian apologetic. It doesn't involve extensive, detailed thermodynamic analyses of Earth's atmosphere either past or present, and I don't pretend to answer every possible question about the subject. This book isn't packed with abundant details and intense data the way *The Genesis Flood* and *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch* are. But it isn't a spoon-feeding of soft, warm baby food, either. I simply describe the more or less orderly way in which I found myself driven to this special conclusion. *The Rings of Earth* is presented for enlightenment, understanding, and consideration. It's meant to be thought-provoking, without being exhaustive or exhausting.

The facts don't change. They are eternal and consistent, and each of us can draw our own conclusions from them. We can all build on the facts in our own way. Certainly a general comprehension of basic physical principles is useful for understanding this book. Special vocabulary terms are defined briefly as they are introduced. General physical science textbooks can help to fill specific gaps in personal understanding. I haven't included every pertinent detail from either science or Scripture; those facts can all be easily found and verified, if desired.

Now and then sensational books based upon half-truths, misconceptions, and outright misrepresentations become briefly popular; that was especially true during the 1960s and '70s. Such books are always disappointing. They are

unsatisfactory because of their lack of real substance, but few readers bother to question even their most glaring errors and deceptions. Although my obvious intention here is to influence readers toward my own conclusion, I've tried throughout to avoid giving information that is not factually sound, and I've definitely tried not to be misleading. I believe the 'true facts' of legitimate science can always defend themselves.

I hope that my idea as described here will interest and enlighten others, and will stimulate further thinking on the subject. If you disagree with me, that's fine; we're still allowed to disagree about some things in America. And, of course, I could be wrong—that has certainly happened before. But if you do disagree, be honest about it: Do you disagree with the facts themselves, or just with my interpretation of those facts? You should be able to find the same basic facts that I have used; my sources are easily available in libraries and elsewhere. If you develop a better idea, that's great. There's always room for improvement!

It's time once again for men to take seriously the Biblical account of Earth's history. I don't totally agree with every detail of interpretation in either *The Genesis Flood* or *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch*, but both of those books have greatly influenced me. They're both chock-full of information, details of fact and interpretation and possibility, and they both allow plenty of room for individual evaluation and reasonable disagreement. I respect both books and their worthy authors, because together they showed me a simple outline for geological history.

Ever since studying those two intense and innovative books I've continued to use the three distinct points of reference they showed me. I believe it's fundamental that (1) the Flood and the Ice Age were directly related to each other, (2) they shared an original cause, and (3) they occurred in close sequence—almost simultaneously, from our now distant viewpoint.

These three basic concepts offer a simple and logical framework for us to understand early Bible history and interpret authentic geological details. That's never a boring task, and sometimes the results are surprising.

*The Rings of Earth* describes some very exciting results.

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