

Psalm 104:6–9 likely refers to Noah’s Flood

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A majority of church scholars and some young-earth creationists believe that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the third day of creation, despite the straightforward reading of the verses indicating the Flood. A deeper analysis of the verses along with the usage of certain words and phrases in the rest of Scripture suggests that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the Flood and not to creation. The psalm is likely not a creation psalm as only three out of 12 phrases in the first five verses refer to the creation. The proof texts, Job 38:4–11, Proverbs 8:22–31, and Jeremiah 5:22, used to support a creation interpretation are analyzed and shown to be equivocal. Besides being within the context of the Flood, verse 8 likely refers to tectonic forces of mountains rising and valleys sinking, as translated in the ESV and NASB. The linguistic arguments brought forth to support creation from verse 8 are shown to be either equivocal or support the Flood. Geology and geophysics are also consistent with Psalm 104:8 referring to the tectonics of the Flood.

The meaning of Psalm 104:6–9 is controversial. The majority of scholars in the church at large believe that these verses are referring to the creation, where on Day 3, God caused the dry land to appear amidst the waters below that were gathered into one place.¹ This may be because most church scholars do not even believe that Genesis 6–9 refers to a global flood. For instance, Davis Young, a retired Professor of Geology from Calvin College, believes in a local flood and that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the creation.² He accepts secular geology, including uniformitarianism, deep time, and evolution. So, it is not surprising that he cannot see any evidence whatsoever for a global flood: “... there is no geological evidence to confirm the idea of a universal deluge.”³ This is exactly why most Psalms commentaries fail to even mention the Flood in their treatment of Psalm 104—they do not look for something in the text that they believe never happened to begin with. An example of this type of influence on interpreting Psalm 104 shows up with Kidner’s two commentaries on Genesis and Psalms. He speaks of the Flood as causing limited destruction and being “a mere token of judgment”⁴ in Genesis. In addition, he argues that the language of Genesis 7:19–24 does not eliminate the possibility of the Flood being merely a localized event—the wording of the text is merely the language of appearance.⁵ With regard to mountains and the Flood in the Genesis account, Kidner says:

“It should perhaps be added that some of the writers who consider the flood to have been global conjecture that in the pre-diluvian world the main mountain ranges had not yet been thrust up (see, e.g. Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, pp. 267ff.).”⁵

Thus, in his commentary on Psalm 104, Kidner does not even mention the Flood. Interestingly, however, he does understand verse 8 to refer to the rising of mountains and the depression of ocean basins, but at creation:

“The vivid rhetoric of verses 7 and 9 finely dramatizes the rise of continents and the formation of ocean depths which their companion verse 8 presents in more sober terms.”⁶

In other words, commentators who have already made up their mind that Genesis 6–9 refers to a local flood, have no reason whatsoever to even consider the Flood as a topic in Psalm 104 with the globality of what the psalmist describes. We must, therefore, understand that the relative absence of the Flood as an interpretation in most Psalms commentaries merely reflects their rejection of the global language of the Genesis Flood account. God reminds us throughout His Word not to accept the wisdom of man, which is foolishness to God (1 Corinthians 1–3). The secular beliefs upon which they depend reflect mere human wisdom attempting to explain the origin of everything without God—as well as their reliance on uniformitarianism to explain away the global catastrophe of the Flood.

A word of caution must be given here—an interpreter can take Genesis 6–9 as referring to a literal global Flood and yet interpret Psalm 104 as solely a reference to creation.⁷ Still, others have argued that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the Flood.^{1,8,9} If so, then it may provide relevant information for understanding the geotectonics of the Flood that Flood models would need to take into account. So, does Psalm 104:6–9 refer to Creation Week or Noah’s Flood?

Psalm 104:1–10

We will first quote Psalm 104:6–9¹⁰ in its context with the verses before and the verse after:

¹“Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD my God, you are very great!

You are clothed with splendor and majesty,

²covering yourself with light as with a garment,

stretching out the heavens like a tent.

³He lays the beams of his chambers on the waters;
he makes the clouds his chariot
he rides on the wings of the wind;

⁴he makes his messengers winds,
his ministers a flaming fire.

⁵He set the earth on its foundations,
so that it should never be moved.

⁶“You [God] covered it [the Earth] with the deep as
with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.

⁷At your rebuke they [the waters] fled;
at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.

⁸*The mountains rose; the valleys sank down*
to the place that you appointed for them.

⁹You set a boundary that they [the waters] may
not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.

¹⁰You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills; [brackets and emphasis
added].”

Straightforward indications Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the Flood

Psalm 104:1–5 provides the context upon which verses 6–9 build. Verse 1 opens the psalm with praise for the greatness, the majesty, and the splendour of the LORD God. Verses 2–4 focus primarily on how certain aspects of creation accompany the Creator and demonstrate His control over all things. It is at verse 5 that readers see the psalmist’s emphasis switching to the earth and those who inhabit it. Psalm 104:5b (“so that it should never be moved”) presents a theme occurring in contexts like Psalms 93:1; 96:10; and 1 Chronicles 16:30 (this final text seems to be quoting Psalm 96), which all speak of the Lord’s sovereign rule over the earth. In such texts the seas also appear (Psalms 93:3–4; 96:11; 1 Chronicles 16:32). The psalmist’s primary concern in Psalm 104:1–5 consists of meditating on the sovereign God’s control over all creation at all times—from creation up to the psalmist’s own day. We suggest the psalmist develops his theology from an orderly reference to the events under God’s control as described in Genesis 1–9. Those early biblical chapters testify to His mighty deeds and continuing control over creation—even through the Flood. The psalmist speaks of the past relative to his own time. For example, Psalm 104:32 refers to volcanic activity predating the psalmist but occurring in the post-Flood world.

At first reading, Psalm 104:6–9 seems to refer to the Flood.¹¹ Psalm 104:6 states that God “covered” the earth, including the mountains. The language in Genesis 1 is quite different. Genesis 1:2 states: “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And

the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Genesis 1:6 does not speak of the waters covering anything: “And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’” Then, Genesis 1:9 speaks of *uncovering* land on Day 3 of creation—and no mention of mountains: “And God said, ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.’ And it was so.” Not until we reach the Flood account in Genesis 7:19 do we read, “The water prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were *covered*” (emphasis ours). The same Hebrew word for “cover” also was used for when the Red Sea covered the Egyptians.¹² Psalm 104:9 repeats the word “cover” emphasizing again that the psalmist refers to the Flood and not to Day 3. Those who believe Psalm 104 refers to the creation point out that these Flood indications are equivocal. They believe God covered the earth in water on Day 1, so that Day 3 would represent an ‘uncovering’, which could include uncovering pre-existing underwater mountains. However, the text in Genesis does not specify any mountains whereas Psalm 104:6 directly states that the mountains were covered in the event to which the psalmist refers (just as Genesis 7:19 also states). Dry land did not “appear” until Day 3, and the text does not indicate whether any land or mountains were beneath the waters on Day 1. Such specificity might argue more effectively for the Flood as a reference.

In verse 9, God set a boundary that the water would not return “again to cover the earth”. He gave the rainbow as His promise that He had fixed the boundary perpetually. The Old Testament refers specifically to God setting boundaries only in this verse and in Joshua 22:25 and Jeremiah 5:22. In Joshua, however, the writer used the Hebrew verb *nathan* (“set”), whereas Psalm 104:9 uses the Hebrew *sim* (“set”). In Joshua, the waters of the Jordan River comprise the boundary, but in Psalm 104 a boundary is set *for* the waters of the seas. Only two other biblical texts use the Hebrew verb *sim* (“set”) for setting a “boundary” (*gevul*): Isaiah 54:12 and Jeremiah 5:22. Isaiah reveals God’s promise to protect His people by setting a “boundary” around them. He compares this promise to God’s promise to never destroy the earth by water again: “This is like the days of Noah to me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you.” In his commentary on this text, Grogan ties the mention of the Noahic Flood (Isaiah 54:8) to the mention of mountains (v. 9): “Illustrating his theme from both history and nature, the prophet compares God’s oath to the great postdiluvial promise of Genesis 8:22, which itself related to the natural environment of man and so suggested the reference to the mountains.”¹³ Grogan’s point involves the protection of humanity’s natural environment to enable them to carry on with life—a similar theme to what Psalm

104 depicts. We cannot ignore these verbal similarities. Isaiah and the anonymous psalmist chose their particular wordings with care and with a view to the biblical event of the Flood to which they each were alluding. Jeremiah 5:22 presents a more compelling case by using the same verb “set” (*sim*) and the same noun “boundary” (*gevul*). God says, “I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.” The readers of Jeremiah would understand this as a reference to their experience in the present post-Flood world rather than being about creation. In addition, “prevail” (*yakul*) is the semantic equivalent of “prevailed” (*gavar*) in Genesis 7:19, but a synonym more commonly employed for the concept in post-exilic Hebrew literature (see the same verb in Jeremiah 1:19; 15:20).

When “rebuke” (Psalm 104:7a) occurs in Hebrew poetry (as a noun or a verb) with water as the object, the meaning has nothing to do with either judgmental or insulting speech. In Isaiah 17:10–14 the prophet compares the nations around Israel to roaring waters threatening to sweep Israel away. His message to Israel points to the fact that the Lord will *protect* His people. “Rebuke” in that context refers to turning the nations back and nullifying their destructive power. Thus, metaphorically, the raging waters picturing the threatening nations will “flee” (*nus*, the same verb used in Psalm 104:7). God, as the Creator, can command the sea to dry up, cause the vegetation of the mountains to dry up, and make the mountains quake (Nahum 1:4–5). Therefore, no one should doubt that He can bring judgment upon the unrighteous anytime He chooses to do so (just as He did in Noah’s day). The psalmist declares that God “rebuked” the waters of the Red (Reed) Sea so that Israel might leave Egypt walking on dry ground (Psalm 106:9). “Rebuke” is nothing more than a figurative way of saying “turn back” or “remove,” when it is used of what the Almighty God does to protect His people from either literal water or dangerous peoples depicted by raging waters. “Rebuke” occurs in reference to protection and deliverance from danger—as in the case of the psalmist in Psalm 18:15 (same as 2 Samuel 22:16; see also Isaiah 50:2). Such language does not fit creation, because the Holy Spirit was already protecting the waters before there were any landforms. Also, when the dry land appeared on Day 3, there’s no indication that the land needed deliverance from danger. However,

since water had destroyed the world of Noah’s time (2 Peter 3:6), the post-Flood world does need divine protection. God provided assurance that He would never again destroy the world with a flood by His promise in Genesis 9:11–17 and His assigning the rainbow as the sign of that promise.

Is Psalm 104 a creation psalm?

Although elements of the creation occur in Psalm 104, the psalm does not seem to be strictly a creation psalm. Psalms scholars tend to classify Psalm 104 as a hymn of celebration or remembrance of the Lord’s deeds and character.¹⁴ Such hymns may refer to creation, but are not limited to that particular divine deed. The first five verses only partly refer to the creation from Genesis 1 while praising God for His greatness. Only three out of 12 phrases in the first five verses refer to the creation. Verses 10 to 35 seem to apply to the post-Flood world, especially since the cedars of Lebanon are mentioned in verse 16b. In other words, the psalmist’s meditation moves from creation to the Flood to the post-Flood. In all three eras he sees the glory of God in what He has done and what He is doing. Psalms 105 and 106 also present a chronology of history in regard to Israel as hymns of celebration and remembrance—and, the psalmist(s) certainly includes his(their) own time(s) as being impacted by earlier events. An argument could be made that Psalms 104–106 comprise a chronological trilogy describing Yahweh’s deeds for which His people should praise Him. W.A. VanGemeren identifies a common motif in these three psalms dealing with “God’s fidelity as Creator-Ruler and as the Redeemer of his people.”¹⁵ Therefore, Psalm 104 should be considered part of

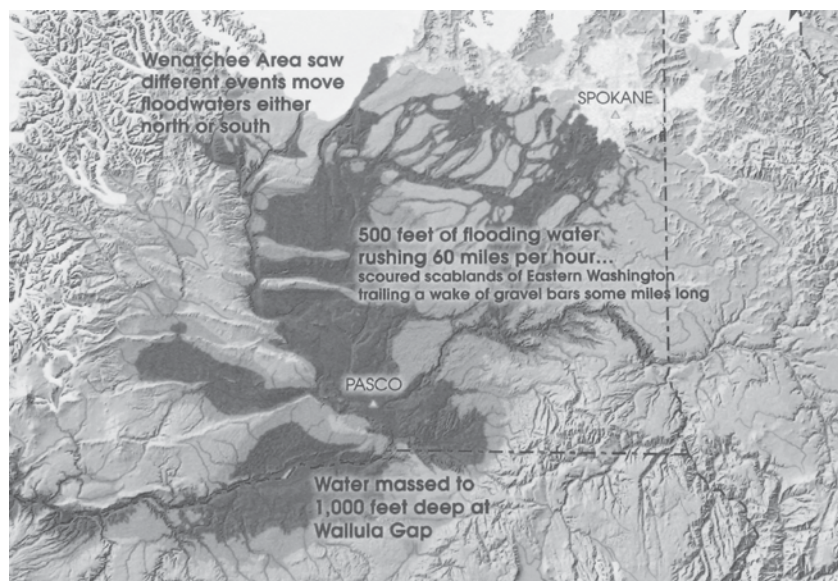


Figure 1. A satellite picture of eastern Washington showing the erosional path of the Lake Missoula Flood (Landsat image courtesy of NASA). The flood eroded the light-coloured silt and exposed the black basalt, which shows up like a braided stream bed, but it is about 160 km (100 miles) wide.

a trilogy of historical psalms focused on the sovereign God's works from creation through Redemption.

Thus, the psalm is a praise for God's greatness, power, and providence over His creation throughout history, which opens up the possibility that more than the six-day creation is described in the psalm. The Flood and its aftermath can be included in such a psalm. Barrick believes the psalm to be divided into three parts: the creation, the Flood, and the post-Flood period:

"Psalm 104 does not limit itself to creation. The psalmist writes of three major eras in earth history: creation (vv. 1–5), Flood (vv. 6–9), and post-Flood (vv. 10–35). Proponents of creation as the event involved in these verses tend to ignore the details of the Hebrew text or to come under the influence of uniformitarian preconceptions or to reveal an over-emphasis on pagan myths depicting creation as a battle between God and chaos."¹⁶

Reasons why some young-earth creationists believe Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the creation

Although many young-earth creationists believe that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the Flood, some do not. Rick Lanser of the Associates for Biblical Research is one such example.¹⁷ He bases his thesis on 'proof texts' in Job 38:10, Proverbs 8:29, and Jeremiah 5:22 and therefore claims Psalm 104 is a creation psalm. But Lanser also has several anomalous views of the Flood. Unfortunately, he displays ignorance of Flood geology by positing a tranquil flood and continental split *after* the Flood related to the time of Peleg (Genesis 10:25). However, a global flood could not be tranquil. Such a flood would be highly erosive. The Lake Missoula flood (figure 1) eroded 128 km³ of hard basalt and soft silt in eastern Washington.¹⁸ Moreover, the context of Genesis 10 and 11 is the "dividing up" of the land and the spreading of people groups all over the earth. So, it is likely that the division in Peleg's time is referring to the Babel dispersion.

Andrew Kulikovsky also believes Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the creation mainly for linguistic reasons:

"But only Psalm 104:2–9 specifically refers to creation events. ... Numerous young earth creationists have appealed to the translation of Psalm 104:8 in the NASB as biblical support for the idea that the catastrophic flooding caused the mountains to rise and the valleys to sink: 'The mountains rose; the valleys sank down to the place which thou didst establish for them.' However, the grammar and context of this verse strongly mitigate against this translation. ... Nevertheless, it is still highly likely that the flood did in fact cause the mountains to rise and the valleys to sink ..."¹⁹

He gives two reasons for his belief, which will be discussed below.

An analysis of the scriptural proof texts

Lanser brings up several proof texts from the Bible, namely Job 38:4–11, Proverbs 8:22–31, and Jeremiah 5:22, believing that these verses should interpret Psalm 104:6–9. Therefore, he believes that because these verses refer to a boundary set on the oceans at creation, the boundary set in Psalm 104:9 must also refer to the creation.

In Job 38, God begins asking Job questions. Job 38:4–11 states in referring to the creation:

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determines its measurements—surely you know!

or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

⁸ Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb,

⁹ when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors,

¹¹ and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?"

Proverbs 8:22–31 states, in personifying wisdom about the creation:

²² "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.

²³ Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth,

²⁶ before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he made firm the skies above,

when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command,

when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him

always,

³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the children of man.”

Jeremiah 5:22 states:

“Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it.”

Lanser states in reference to this verse:

“In Jeremiah 5:22 God further states, ‘For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, an eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it.’ ‘An eternal decree’ is mighty strong language; it testifies to an original land/sea boundary that the Flood event could not change!”¹⁷

The aforementioned proof texts mostly revolve around the “boundary” that God set in Psalm 104:9 so that the water may not cross. Job 38:10–11 and Proverbs 8:29 likely refer to the *general* rule of the sea set at creation. See our previous discussion of Jeremiah 5:22 for its different reference. There is more to what Jeremiah says than what Lanser covers. A more detailed comparative analysis of Jeremiah 5:22 with other Old Testament texts (see above) demonstrates that it fits better for a post-Flood situation. God could intervene at any time in His created world—He did so at the time of the Flood. He can contravene His own decrees and His creation’s natural boundaries for the sea. Moreover, setting a boundary after the Flood does not mean there will not be minor rises and falls of sea level, such as happened during the Ice Age or happens during an earthquake.

Does Psalm 104:8 refer to the mountains rising and the valleys sinking?

The difficulties encountered in translating Psalm 104:6–9 contribute to the issue regarding whether the text refers to the creation or the Flood. English versions give alternative translations. Rather than stating that “The mountains rose; the valleys sank down” as quoted above in the ESV and NASB, other versions (such as the NIV^{20,21}) translate the text as: “they [the water] flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you [God] assigned for them.” Some might argue the water refers to floodwaters, others might argue the waters are the primeval waters flowing off the original continent as it rises out of the water on Day 3.

However, based upon the preponderance of evidence the ESV version provides a more accurate translation, which is similar to the New American Standard Bible. Since verse 7a states that the water fled, making the water

return in verse 8 does not appear to be an option by context. The simplest way to take the grammar and structure of the Hebrew text itself is to take the normal word order of a Hebrew sentence (the verb followed by the grammatical subject) and translate “the mountains rose; the valleys went down.” The only other use of these two verbs in a poetic text with geophysical entities occurs in Psalm 107:26: “they [the sailors] rose to the heavens; they descended to the depths”. However, the very next line of the verse (“their courage melted away”) clarifies the antecedent for “they.” Psalm 104:8 does not include that kind of clarifying statement to identify any subjects other than the nouns following each verb.

Psalm 104:8b says that the mountains and valleys ended up in the place God established for them. “Valleys” consist of depressions or possibly ocean basins. The Hebrew root word from which “valley” was derived means “split, split open” (as when the earth “split open” and swallowed Korah in Numbers 16:31 and the Mount of Olives “split” in Zechariah 14:4). Such terminology fits well with tectonic activity occurring as the floodwaters sought the lowest elevation as the mountains were rising. This corresponds with the *only* way for a global flood to drain: some areas of the crust and mantle must rise and others must sink. Taylor also interprets verse 8 as supporting vertical tectonic change.²²

Analysis of the Hebrew linguistic arguments

Although not challenging that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the Flood, Pete Williams²³ contests the ESV and NASB translation of verse 8. Andrew Kulikovsky challenges both the interpretation of verse 8 and believes that Psalm 104:6–9 refers to the creation.²⁴ They give the following reasons.

First, although in the Septuagint, the nouns “mountains” and “valleys” are both considered the nominative (subject) case, Williams and Kulikovsky state that it is more likely these nouns are in the accusative (object) case. The problem with this argument shows up in the fact that the Septuagint translated Psalm 107:26 (LXX Psalm 106:26) differently than it did Psalm 104:8 (LXX Psalm 103:8). In the first case the Septuagint translators added “unto” (“they ascended unto the heavens and they descended unto the depths”). In the latter they translated without such a preposition. Since



Figure 2. The Precambrian granite and sedimentary rocks below Paleozoic and Mesozoic sedimentary rocks in Wyoming that were generally horizontal at the end of the Mesozoic (by Melanie Richard)

Table 1. Correlation of events from Psalm 104:2–9 that show the psalm does not clearly allude to the creation, but refers to both the creation and the Flood²⁹

Psalm 104	Genesis events	Entity
Psalm 104:2a	Day 1—Genesis 1:1–5	Light
Psalm 104:2b	Day 2—Genesis 1:6–8	Sky
Psalm 104:3	Day 2—Genesis 1:6–8	Waters
Psalm 104:5	Day 3—Genesis 1:9–13	Earth / Dry Land
Psalm 104:6a	Flood—Genesis 7:11	The deep covers the land
Psalm 104:6b	Flood—Genesis 7:19–20	The water covers the mountains
Psalm 104:7	Flood—Genesis 8:1–3	The waters flee (recede)
Psalm 104:8	Flood—Genesis 8:5	The mountains rise and ocean basins sink
Psalm 104:9	Post-Flood—Genesis 9:11	Preservation and promise

both “mountains” and “valleys” are neuter in grammatical gender, in Greek the nominative plural is identical in form to the accusative plural.²⁵ The Septuagint translators indicate they understood Psalm 104 to be speaking of the movement of the mountains and the valleys, not the waters. That makes the Septuagint supportive of a late Flood interpretation of verse 8.

Secondly, Williams and Kulikovsky also argue that the word “valley” is feminine and the verb “descend” is masculine, violating the “grammatical agreement, which, though possible when the verb precedes the subject, is improbable.”²⁶ However, major Hebrew grammars indicate that the masculine plural verb is preferred to the feminine plural verb even when the subject is feminine plural:

“This form is often replaced by the 3rd masc. pl. form, especially when the verb precedes: Jdg 21.21 יָצְאוּ בָנוֹת-שִׁילוֹ *the daughters of Shiloh will come out*; 1Kg 11.3b; Lv 26.33 יִהְיוּ חָרְבָה עָרֵיכֶם *your cities shall be a ruin*; ...”²⁷

In Psalm 104:8 the verbs do precede their subjects, thereby negating any possible argument attempting to make the grammar an anomaly.

Third, Williams and Kulikovsky take “waters” (from v. 9) as the subject of the masculine plural verbs “pass over” and “return” (see also v. 7). Therefore, the verbs “ascend” and “descend” may govern the direct accusative, making the NIV the correct translation and eliminating verse 8 as a reference to tectonic activity. We have already responded to that argument above in our comparative analysis with Psalm 107:26.

Kulikovsky adds three more reasons. Fourth, in verse 8c, the word translated “place”, where the waters ended

up, means a geographical position in Hebrew. The mountains changing geographic position would not make much sense if the mountains were the subject. In response, we point out that the Hebrew for “place” fits the relocating of mountains and ocean basins from where they were located in the pre-Flood world. The tectonics at work during the Flood, especially late in the Flood, resulted in totally new mountain ranges on the earth’s surface as well as new seas.

Fifth, the word translated “appointed” or “assigned” is in the qal perfect meaning a completed action in the past. Thus, the assignment of the places had already been established by God, probably in Genesis 1:9 during the creation. We respond that this argument ignores the way the use of the Hebrew

verb depends upon its context and its relative timeframe with regard to the writer. When the psalmist wrote that the assigning of place was completed, it was completed before his time. That leaves it quite open as to when exactly it occurred. Both the Flood and creation predated the psalm’s composition. The use of the qal perfect form of the verb does not decide anything here.

Sixth, Kulikovsky believes verses 6 to 9 clearly refer to the creation: “Secondly, the Psalm clearly alludes to the first three days of creation rather than the flood.”²⁸ An analysis of Psalm 104:2–8 parallel to Genesis, however, results in the correlations in chronological order in table 1.

Therefore, the bulk of the evidence supports the view that Psalm 104:6–9 points to Noah’s Flood. Barrick concludes that “structural, grammatical, and word study analyses point to the Flood as the historical event referred to by Psalm 104:6–9, rather than creation.”¹² Verse 8 also supports the idea that the mountains rose and the valleys sank to drain the floodwater. Barrick summarizes:

“Psalm 104’s structure, literary devices, grammar, and word studies support the preservation of the simplest understanding of the Hebrew text in verse 8: ‘The mountains rose; the valleys sank down.’”³⁰

Although someone could argue, with some degree of possibility, that the psalmist could be using the nouns in verse 8 as adverbial accusatives of location, the context does not signal anything other than normal word order taking the nouns as subjects.³¹ Barrick also argues that “the psalmist maintains the imperfect form for the verbs, but drops the final *nun* suffix,” which could signal a change of grammatical subject from “waters” in verse 7 to “mountains” and “valleys” in verse 8. Hoftijzer identifies the primary function of such *n*-suffixed

Table 2. Elevations of granitic rocks of the upper crust in some mountain ranges and below the sedimentary fill in adjacent basins in Wyoming^{35,36}

Mountains		Basins	
Wind River Mountains	14,000 feet	Wind River Basin	-23,000 feet
Beartooth Mountains	13,000 feet	Bighorn Basin	-21,000 feet
Bighorn Mountains	13,000 feet	Powder River Basin	-14,000 feet
Medicine Bow Mountains	12,000 feet	Hanna Basins	-31,000 feet
Owl Creek Mountains	9,000 feet	Washakie Basin	-21,000 feet
Laramie Range	10,000 feet	Red Desert Basin	-23,000 feet
		Green River Basin	-14,000 feet

**Figure 3.** Tilted Paleozoic and Mesozoic strata at the north-west edge of the Bighorn Basin at Clark Canyon due to vertical tectonics between the Beartooth Mountains that rose and the Bighorn Basin that sank

verbs as contrastivity,³² which suits a change of grammatical subject in contrast to the immediately surrounding verses.

Geology is consistent with Psalm 104:8 during the Flood

Although not a proof of the ESV and NASB translations of Psalm 104:8, geology is consistent with it. For instance, in the state of Wyoming, USA, it can be shown that at one time the granitic upper crust, which was nearly flat at one time and is part of the Great Unconformity in this area (figure 2),^{33,34} now is separated by up to 13,000 m between the mountains and the bottom of the sedimentary rocks in the valleys (figure 3).³⁵ This is called differential vertical tectonics, i.e. the mountains rose and the valleys, or basins (wide valleys) in this case sank. Table 2 shows the elevations in Wyoming of the upper crust (the Great Unconformity) on the tops of the mountains

and deep below the sedimentary rocks in the basins.

Moreover, differential vertical tectonics are easily inferred all over the earth. Evolutionary geomorphologist and world traveller, Lester King writes:

“So the fundamental tectonic mechanisms of global geology are vertical, up or down: and the normal and most general tectonic structures in the crust are also vertically disposed ... But one must bear in mind that every part of the globe—on the continents or in the ocean basins—provides direct geological evidence that formerly it stood at different levels, up or down, and that it is subject to in situ vertical displacements.”³⁷

Conclusions

We have shown that Psalm 104:6–9 most likely refers to the Flood. Besides the straightforward reading pointing to the Flood, such as verses 6 and 9 referring to a covering of the earth and its mountains and verse 9 referring to the boundary set for the oceans that the water would not return “again to cover the earth”. The usage of the word “rebuke” with water in verse 7a is used elsewhere in biblical Hebrew poetry of protecting someone or something

threatened with disaster. Following the catastrophic Flood of Noah’s day such protection provides assurance that it will not happen again—just as God promised in Genesis 9:11–17. The psalm is not a creation psalm but rather a psalm of praise for God’s greatness, power, and providence over His creation throughout history.

Proof texts for the verses referring to the creation are analyzed and found equivocal. The proof texts, Job 38:10–11 and Proverbs 8:29, likely refer to the *general* rule of the sea set at creation, which God can contravene. A more detailed comparative analysis of Jeremiah 5:22 with other Old Testament texts demonstrates that it fits better for a post-Flood situation.

An analysis of verse 8 as “The mountains rose; the valleys sank down” makes sense with other verses within the psalm and suggests vertical tectonics late in the Flood to drain the floodwaters.

Some consider there are linguistic reasons for belief that these verses refer to the creation and/or that verse 8 does not refer to Flood tectonics. We analyzed these linguistic arguments and found them either equivocal or supportive of the Flood.

Geology and geophysics from all over the world is also consistent with this interpretation of verse 8 as the mountains rose and the valleys sank.

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