

The Division of the Earth

Commentary for February 19, 2009 — “Peleg; for in his days ...”

QUESTION: *Thank you for continuing the work that Dr. Martin has worked at for many fruitful years. I have a question. In Gen. 10:25 it mentions that, “One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided.” He lived around 4,100 years ago according to my calculations from the Bible. Are you aware of any research done on this subject of what I assume to be reference to the continental drift (which is still going on at about three inches per year)? Scientists are talking of millions and billions of years ago and the Bible makes reference of four thousand years ago that something significant happened regarding the division of the earth.*

[If there was uniform separation @ 3 inches per year, then it would have taken 63 million years for continents to drift 3,000 miles. Something unusual must have happened in Peleg's time, (Shem, who outlived Peleg, his great great grandson, died when Abraham was 150 years old) for it to be mentioned in Genesis by Moses.]

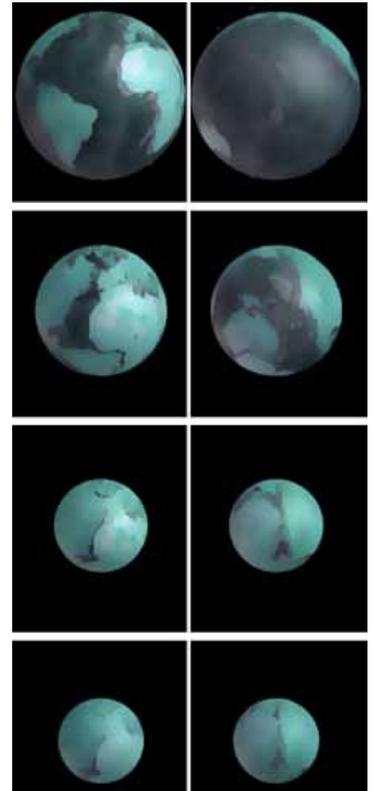
ANSWER: Something radical did occur after the flood during the time of Peleg. I used to think that the continents drifted, but in reality the continents do not “float” on the crust. Beneath the oceans the continents are all one solid piece (with fissures, but still solid). In spite of appearances, Brazil does NOT “fit” into Africa. It is much too small. Nor do any other pieces in the continental drift theory fit.

I have become partial to a different explanation which seems to fit with biblical information. See the Wikipedia article “[Expanding Earth](#),”¹ and particularly look at the videos at the website “[New Model of the Universe](#)” where you can view several representational models of the hypothesized expansion for Earth, the Moon, Mars, and other planets. Earth and all planets in the solar system, so the theory goes, are expanding from the inside out.

An analogy would be if you blow up a balloon, cut out and paste paper “continents” on the surface, and then blow up the balloon more. As the surface expands and paper continents spread out. On a physical earth this would cause cracks and expansion of the surface. Continents would “appear” to drift, but are in reality physically separating from each other at the surface.

This adds a new perspective to possibly answer your question. If you can visualize this, it will cause a paradigm shift in your thinking about the division of the land. What is the mechanism for an “expanding earth”? Where does the extra matter come from to expand the earth? No one knows.

On the other hand, what is the mechanism for continental drift? No one really knows that for sure either. Continental drift is the current theory developed in the 1960s although it was first put forth in the early 1900s.² Although it is the current popular theory it has its flaws. As I said



1. Wikipedia articles have been criticized for not being “peer reviewed” but they are an excellent source for quick “basic” information on a host of subjects. And the links usually refer to basic and well-known sources.
2. See the NASA website “[Evidence Supporting Continental Drift](#)” for information regarding this theory's origins. The continental drift theory was strongly condemned when it was first proposed.

above, it has never been proven that the rock plates are fluid, float or "drift." The theory of continental drift supports an evolutionary model of a very old earth, and therefore it is biblically untenable.

Contrary to the continental drift theory, consider this biblical passage from a Davidic Psalm:

"The earth [erets] is YHWH's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods."

• *Psalm 24:1–2*

This is supported by this provocative passage:

"To him [YHWH] that stretched out the earth [erets] above the waters: for his mercy endures for ever [olam, for the age]."

• *Psalm 136:6*

These passages refer to the creation event at the time of Adam — before the flood of Noah. The *erets* was founded upon the seas and established upon the floods," *i.e.*, a mass of water. There is no evidence that mass water is still under the *erets*. That water is now in the oceans that cover 71% of the surface of the earth.

"Thus says God YHWH, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth [erets], and that which comes out of it; he that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein."

• *Isaiah 42:5*

"**That which comes out of it**" may refer to the water mentioned in Psalm 24:2. Isaiah 42:5 says that the earth itself, the *erets*, is "**spread forth.**"³ An identical Hebrew phrase is used in Isaiah 44:24:

"Thus says YHWH, your redeemer, and he that formed you from the womb, I am YHWH that makes all things; that stretches forth the heavens alone; that spreads abroad the earth [erets] by myself."

• *Isaiah 44:24*

What did Isaiah mean when he said that God "**spread forth the earth**" and "**spread abroad the earth**"? We can only take Isaiah at his word and God at His word. They mean that *erets*, the earth, was "spread" in some manner.

Personally I have not come to a final conclusion as to which model is better, continental drift or expanding earth, although I lean toward the expanding earth model. I do know that Genesis 10:25 definitely happened, so did Deuteronomy 32:8 and the confusion of tongues in Genesis 11:1–11. I believe all three happened close in time to each other. There may be other verses in Psalms or Job that clarify the situation so a definitive biblical answer can be given. Here is my understanding of the biblical (and historical) post-flood sequence of events:

1. During the time of Peleg the languages were divided at Babel (Genesis 11:1–11, particularly verse 9).
2. This resulted in the nations being divided (Deuteronomy 32:8, Acts 17:26).
3. Once divided, further separation was caused by the earth [*erets*] itself being divided (Genesis 10:25). This also occurred during the lifetime of Peleg. This division would have caused massive geological changes and disruption quite apart of the flood.

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com

3. *Erets* is a Hebrew term translated in the King James Version as "land" 1543 times, "earth" 712 times, "country" 140 times, and "ground" 98 times.