

Uniformitarianism, Part 2

Scripture: Genesis 7:11; 2 Peter 3:4–6

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Scripture expressly condemns uniformitarianism in 2 Peter 3:4. Peter prophesied that this erroneous view would be adopted in the last days by scoffers—men walking after their own lusts—who imagine that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." The apostle Peter goes on to write, "For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water" (2 Peter 3:5–6).

In other words, the plain teaching of Scripture is that this world's history has *not* been one of uniform natural and geological processes from the beginning. But according to the Bible, there have been at least two global cataclysmic events: creation itself and a catastrophic worldwide flood in Noah's time. These would sufficiently explain virtually all the geological and hydrological features of the earth as we know it.

In fact, large-scale catastrophic forces are the only really plausible explanation for some geological features. Not far from where I live is an area known as Vasquez Rocks. It has the appearance of a rugged moonscape (and is a familiar site in science-fiction films, where it is often employed as a setting for scenes depicting exotic planets). Its main features are massive shards of jagged rock strata, broken sharply and thrusting out of the ground to great heights. Whatever force stood those rocks on end was obviously sudden and violent, not slow and gradual. The entire region is filled with similar evidences of catastrophe. Not far away is the notorious San Andreas fault. There, where the roadway has been cut into the hillside, travelers may observe violently twisted rock strata. These features are mute evidence to extraordinary forces that have shaped the topography of Southern California—far exceeding the power of any known earthquake. Such phenomena are what we might expect, given the historicity of the biblical record. Scripture says, for example, that when the Flood began, "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up" (Genesis 7:11). No doubt the Flood was accompanied by volcanic activity, massive geological movements, and the shifting of the earth's tectonic plates. Such a catastrophe would not only explain twisted and upthrust rock strata, but it would also easily explain why so many of the earth's mountain ranges give evidence of having once been under the sea. Uniformitarians cannot agree on any feasible explanation for features like these.

A massive flood would also explain the formation of the Grand Canyon. In fact, it would be a better explanation of how the canyon came to be than any uniformitarian hypothesis. The features of the canyon itself (extremely deep gorges with level plateaus at the rims) suggest that it was formed by rapid erosion. A strikingly similar formation is Providence Canyon, near Lumpkin, Georgia—a spectacular canyon that covers more than eleven hundred acres. In the early 1800s the entire area was flat farmland. By the mid 1800s, farmers had completely cleared the area of trees and their root systems, leaving the area susceptible to erosion. In 1846, heavy rainfall began forming small gullies and crevices. These expanded with every successive rainfall. By the 1940s, nearby buildings and towns had to be moved to accommodate the growing canyon. Today the canyon comprises sixteen fingers, some more than one mile in length. At places the distance from the canyon floor to the rim is as high as a fifteen-story building. Today it is a scenic area, lush with trees and wildlife, often called

"Georgia's Little Grand Canyon." Its features are indistinguishable from canyons geologists claim took billions of years to form.

Douglas F. Kelly writes:

The uniformitarian assumption that millions of years of geological work (extrapolating from present, slow, natural processes) would be required to explain structures such as the American Grand Canyon for instance, is called into serious question by the explosion of Mount St. Helens in the state of Washington on the 18 of May 1980. Massive energy equivalent to 20 million tons of TNT destroyed 400 square kilometers of forest in six minutes, changing the face of the mountain and digging out depths of earth and rock, leaving formations not unlike parts of the larger Grand Canyon. Recent studies of the Mount St. Helens phenomenon indicate that if attempts were made to date these structures (which were formed in 1980) on the basis of uniformitarian theory, millions of years of formation time would be necessarily postulated.

Christians who reinterpret the biblical text to try to accommodate the uniformitarians' old-earth hypotheses do so unnecessarily. To imagine that the earth was formed by natural processes over billions and billions of years through slow and steady evolution is to deny the very essence of what Scripture teaches about the earth's creation. It is to reject the clear account of God Himself that He created the earth and all its life in six days.

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