The Scriptural Necessity of the Global Extent of the Flood

As Christians, we must always consider first the biblical data. And so we ask: Do the Scriptures speak of a global flood? Does its narrative make sense if the Flood was merely local? While it certainly doesn't give us all the details about the Flood, can we reasonably infer the character and extent of the Flood from what it does say? Was the great Flood of Noah's day uniform and local, or catastrophic and global? Scripture speaks to this issue in numerous ways.

The Depth of the Flood

> And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. (Genesis 7:19-20)

Nearly all Bible students throughout Old Testament, New Testament, and modern times have interpreted Genesis 7–9 as describing a global flood. Not only does a plain-sense meaning imply a global flood, but details of the Hebrew grammar necessitate it, such as in the verses quoted above. The waters did not simply inundate the land, they overwhelmed it, almost as in a military conquest, and did so "exceedingly." These verses describe neither a local flood nor an insignificant flood, but a global, world-destroying event, and earth has never again been the same.

The author of Genesis used a double superlative in these verses to describe the Flood, wherein the passage literally could be rendered "all the high mountains under all the heavens." While "all" in Scripture may sometimes be understood in a limited sense, such repeated phrasing goes out of its way to insure that a Bible-honoring reader would not mistakenly conclude that the flood being described is anything other than a global flood.

The Flood covered all the high mountains (the Hebrew word for hills and mountains used here is the same) to a depth of at least 15 cubits. God had instructed Noah to build the Ark 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. Most historians consider a cubit to be the distance from a man's elbow to his fingertips, about 18 inches. Thus, the Ark was about 45 feet high. The fully loaded Ark, with the animals and foodstuffs on board, likely sank about one half its height beneath the water. Presumably, the Ark could have floated anywhere on earth at the Flood's maximum and not struck ground.

Next, consider the fact that advocates of the local flood concept consider the mountains of Noah's day, some 4,500 or so years ago, to be the same mountains we encounter today. They argue that whatever "uniformitarian" changes are currently happening to the mountains—whether rising, sinking, or eroding—would not have changed them much in "only" a few thousand years. Many mountains are quite high today, with portions of "the mountains of Ararat" (Genesis 8:4) rising some 17,000 feet above sea level, and with the world's tallest mountain, 29,000-foot-high Mount Everest, towering above the Himalayas. Nearly all of the earth's mountains and mountain ranges are composed

Gaps in the Geologic Column

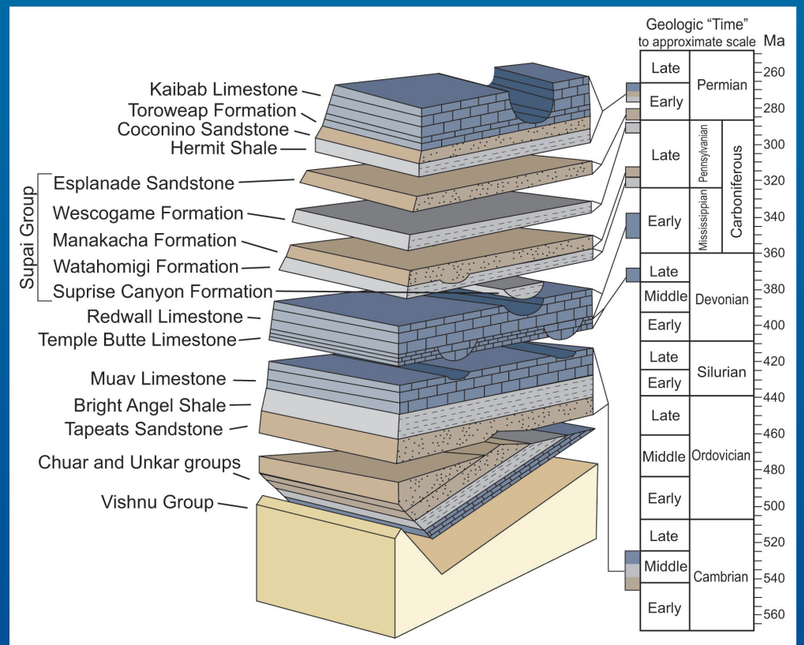
The geologic column—that presentation of the rock record that places rock strata into various ages—can be intimidating. Because it seems authoritative and we see it so frequently, we sometimes place more faith in it than it actually deserves.

Without a doubt, rocks and rock strata can be characterized by placing them on the column. While many incorrect notions are imbedded in this diagram (most particularly the "absolute" ages given), rock layers really do usually line up the way the drawing presents them. This visual illustration can be a useful tool, especially when considering one rock's age "relative" to another. But the rock layers are frequently dated by their fossil content, arranged in the erroneous evolutionary order. How much credence should the Christian creationist place in it?

It might help to consider the rock layers in Grand Canyon, since they are so well known and studied in creationist literature. Obviously, the layers rest one on top of another, with no gaps between them. Schematic drawings present them this way, but while the layers are dated consecutively, they are not dated one right after the other. Often there are lengthy time gaps postulated between the layers. The rock record of those time periods is missing. These gaps, called "unconformities," represent either a period of non-deposition or of erosion.

If the old earth view is correct, then the record is woefully incomplete. Most Grand Canyon strata are dated in the supposedly 300 million-year-long Paleozoic Era, but of the seven periods within that era, only five are represented in Grand Canyon. More importantly, if the upper and lower surfaces of each stratum are dated by questionable uniformitarian means and plotted on a vertical line showing the entire Paleozoic Era, less than ten percent of the total time postulated by evolutionists is represented! It better represents brief episodes of deposition within the great Flood of Noah's day.

The geologic column as normally presented should not be considered accurate history and should be recognized as a statement of evolutionary old earth dogma. There is some truth contained in the geologic column, but not as it is normally taught. Its implications can never justify doubting God's truth as recorded in Scripture.



The rock layers in Grand Canyon represent only a small portion of the total time postulated by uniformitarians. Their "evidence" for evolutionary time is the space between the layers! They interpret each period as representing many millions of years, but the strata are better understood as brief episodes of deposition during the great Flood of Noah's day.

the same large area as does the Tapeats. Normally fine particles of shale and clay require long times and calm waters to be deposited, but under conditions of abundant and continuous supply, a bottom-hugging slurry can quickly result in thick deposits. Thus, two beds, one on top of the other, result, but they are actually growing laterally farther and farther inland.

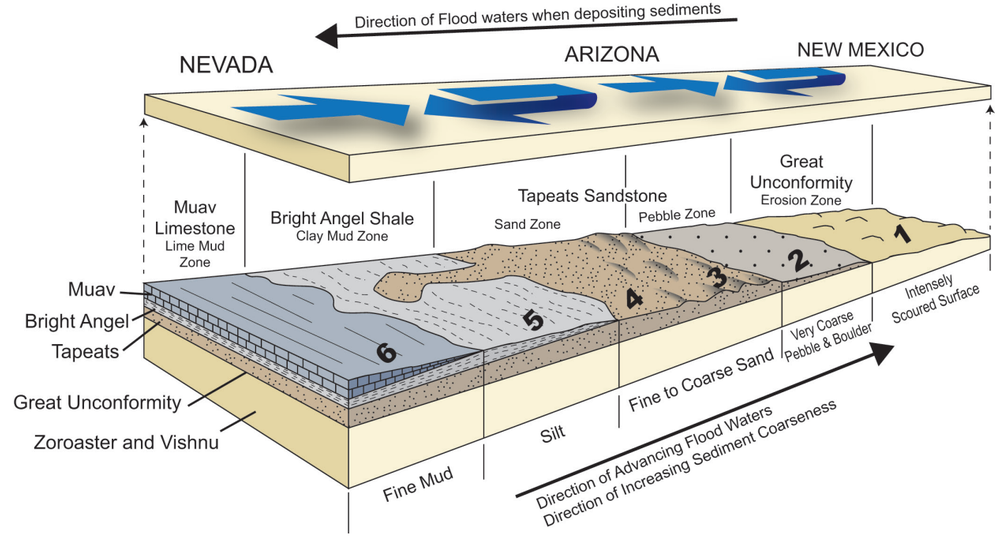
Muav Limestone

Capping the Bright Angel, a yellow-brown muddy layer called the Muav Limestone can be found transitioning with the formation below it. It consists of hard, resistant limestone, and forms prominent cliffs throughout the area, again of Cambrian age. Floodwater was even deeper and velocities were slower when it was deposited, allowing extremely fine particles to agglomerate and settle, and dissolved chemicals to be precipitated, thus continuing the series of fining-upward sedimentation. Fossils here are not abundant, but some trilobite trackways have been found. Again, it covers approximately the same area as does the Tapeats and Bright Angel.

The Tonto Group

The three formations discussed above—the Tapeats Sandstone, Bright Angel Shale, and the Muav Limestone—are considered a "package," a continual sequence of sediments resulting from the transgression of the ocean onto the land. Geologists of all persuasions recognize this sequence, and have named it the "Sauk Sequence." The area covered by Tapeats would be essentially the same for any and all of the three individual beds. The sequence has been called a *megasequence*, which is followed by another megasequence, and then another. The upper and lower limits of all megasequences ignore the Period or Era boundaries of the standard geologic column designations, illustrating the ad hoc nature of the column. Each represents one great dynamic incursion of the ocean onto the land.

To simplify the story, when shallow but powerful water first encounters the land and water energies are greatest, erosion is extensive. As velocities lessen and begin to curl back, only large boulders and cobbles can be deposited. As the water velocity tapers off with increasing depth and wider area, larger and then smaller sand grains drop out, then finer particles, and finally chemical precipitates. As transgression progresses, three zones are deposited laterally and essentially simultaneously. As shown in the accompanying diagram, as the transgression moved inland, the zones took shape as linear beds, one on top of the other. In the first stage, larger particles are carried out by stronger currents where they are deposited, then smaller ones as current slows. Meanwhile, smaller particles are transported even further out. All were deposited virtually simultaneously, as their lateral extent progressed. In Grand Canyon, this series has been named the Tonto Group, all assigned to the Cambrian system.



Strata laid down side by side. As an energetic turbidity current or mudflow encounters land, it first erodes, and then deposits large boulders, then sand and smaller particles, ending up in a vertical series of layers.