

Creation Science Rebuttals
The Permian Extinctions
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The multiple Ice Ages, and multiple extinctions of earth's past are frequently the target of young earth creationist ministries. Such an attack can be seen in the pages of Technical Journal (TJ) in the April 2001 issue.¹ Young earth writer Emil Silvestru examines the Permian extinction event, and attempts to relate it to the Flood of Noah.

Background

The [Permian extinction](#) event occurred near the boundary of the Permian–Triassic periods, approximately 251 million years ago. In this event, 90–95 percent of all marine life, and 70 percent of all terrestrial vertebrates became extinct. As Silvestru points out, there have been nine extinction events in earth's history.

The purpose of this article in TJ is to provide a young earth comment on a National Geographic article dealing with the extinction. Silvestru points out that an asteroid/meteor strike is one of the major theories behind this event, but it is not the only theory. The evidence for an

asteroid strike consists of a supposed impact site in Australia, and the presence of shocked quartz crystals.

Another key feature that he points out is the massive amount of volcanism at the time, as can be seen in the Siberian Traps, an area with enough lava to cover the earth in six meters of lava.

The Theories

After giving some background information, Silvestru gives the prevailing theories concerning the Permian extinction. These are not significant to this rebuttal, so I will only briefly mention them.

The asteroid impact theory says that an impact in Australia caused the atmosphere to be clouded with gases and dust, triggering global cooling and acid snow and rain. This was followed with fires and rotting trees, which raised CO₂ levels, leading to global warming.

The ocean anoxia theory says that the circulation of the oceans stalled for an unknown reason. Without circulation, oxygen levels in the water dropped, CO₂ increased in the oceans, starving the organisms from lack of oxygen.

The volcanic eruption theory points to the Siberian Traps, with rising CO₂ leading to global warming.

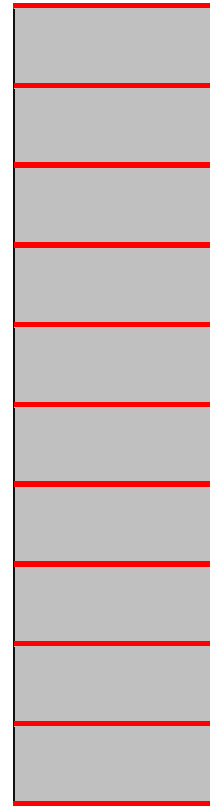
"One BIG Catastrophe"

Silvestru says that the nine extinctions causes uniformitarian geologists major problems. This is because the nine extinction events are now thought to have happened as a result of catastrophic events. However, this poses no problems at all...after all, it is uniformitarian geologists who are proposing these catastrophies!

Geologists recognize that there have been many catastrophies throughout earth's history. We see them in the rock record. However, these catastrophies are proceeded with slow, uniformitarian evidences, and followed by the same. Silvestru wonders if "their uniformitarian views...(are) bubbling away like volatiles in a degassing magma." Nothing could be further from the truth. We geologists are quite happy with these catastrophic events within our uniformitarian framework!

The solution, according to Silvestru, is the Flood. He says creationists (young earth) have addressed all these catastrophies within their Biblical flood. He suggests that the volcanism could have been triggered by the impact of asteroids during the flood.

Here is the problem with the theory. Consider the column at right. This column is a simplified geologic column, representing the rock layers of the earth over the last 540 million years. The red lines are the nine extinction events. In between all these events, is a normal period of slow, gradual deposition, many millions of years in duration.



If the flood caused the extinctions, why do we have nine separate, distinct events in the fossil record? The flood was a year long, single event, and would have caused a single extinction event.

Furthermore, consider the extinction of the dinosaurs, which would be the second red line from the top. All the dinosaur fossils, including trace fossils (footprints) are in the layer of rock between the second and third red line. How did they survive, and leave footprints, on top of rocks that young earth creationists claim were deposited by the flood? If you look at the dinosaur footprints and fossils of the western United States, there is over 8,000 feet of flood-deposited sediment below ALL of the dinosaur evidences. How did they survive this first 8,000 feet of deposition during the flood?

In the end, Silvestru puts it all together for the geologic world to finally understand what happened. "Asteroid impacts at the beginning of the Flood triggered catastrophic plate tectonics and the rapid movement of the continents. This severely disrupted oceanic circulation and lead to

the ocean anoxia that poisoned much marine life." However, as is common with young earth claims, they give you bits and pieces, but don't combine the bits and pieces, because they would contradict each other. Creationist scientists Baumgardner and Barnette did a study of the ["Patterns of Ocean Circulation Over the Continents During Noah's Flood,"](#) which showed that ocean currents were as high as 194 miles per hour, centered in large gyres over the continental edges. Young earth creationists rely on this study to provide the necessary erosional forces to erode rock and deposit it elsewhere during the flood. However, Silvestru is proposing that there was a lack of ocean circulation, leading to the ocean anoxia. Young earth creationists, you cannot have it both ways! Unfortunately for Silvestru, the Baumgardner/Barnette study is a good one, and gives an excellent picture of what would happen in a globe full of water. Thus, this entire theory proposed by Silvestru can be trashed.

There is one other major problem for Silvestru's theory. Silvestru alludes to it, when he says "The Ice Age was by far the most important aftermath (climate-wise) of the Flood." Silvestru's model, and the model proposed by Michael Oard for the Flood-induced ice age, both rely on great amounts of volcanism. There are two problems with this. First, there is no evidence of a post-extinction ice age at the end of the Permian extinction. Even more importantly, volcanism has a byproduct...the introduction of massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere...a greenhouse gas. Analysis of the Flood model by geologist [Glenn Morton](#) shows that global temperatures after a worldwide

flood with volcanism would have essentially roasted Noah alive. The young earth model would produce a hot earth, not a cold one.

Conclusion

This article has given no evidence that would cause anyone to doubt the old age of the earth. Silvestru's model for the extinctions, with the global Flood of Noah, is unworkable, and does not even agree with other young earth studies. The old earth theory, with a local flood, is a much better fit with the scientific evidence, and you can still believe in a literal Genesis, and an inerrant Word of God.

¹ Silvestru, Emil, The Permian Extinction: National Geographic Comes Close to the Truth, TJ 15(1): April 2001. Available online at answersingenesis.org/tj/v15/i1/permian.asp