

# Follow the SCIENCE



By Jeff Reich

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If I asked you where the world's largest waterfall is located, how would you reply? Would it be Inga or Kisangani Falls, both located in the Congo, or Niagara Falls in New York, or maybe Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe? Well, those are some great answers. But would you believe it is located just several miles from our Ministry in central Washington State in America? "What?" you might exclaim. But it is true. The only problem is, this falls has not had water running over it for centuries; thus the reason for its name—Dry Falls.





Here is what Wikipedia tells us: "Dry Falls is a 3.5-mile-long scalloped precipice in central Washington on the opposite side of the Upper Grand Coulee from the Columbia River, and at the head of the Lower Grand Coulee. At five times the width of Niagara, Dry Falls is thought to be the greatest known waterfall that ever existed. According to the current geological model, catastrophic flooding channeled water at 65 miles per hour through the Upper Grand Coulee and over this 400-foot (120 meter) rock face at the end of the last ice age." This was no normal waterfall.

As stated, it is around 400 feet high and over 3 miles long, which makes it almost five times the width of Niagara Falls and over twice as high. What

must the falls have looked like with its full volume of water thundering over it? It would have shaken the ground for miles around. Evidence shows that its current hurtled boulders the size of houses over the precipice!

What is equally impressive is how this massive flow of water affected the landscape downstream. It is calculated that 3,000 square miles were "swept" by the water roaring over Dry Falls, which at one point was estimated to have been up to 1,000 feet deep! More than 2,000 square miles of central Washington State were scrubbed bare, forming what is called "the scablands." And nearly 1,000 square miles of the scablands contain gravel deposits from the eroded



basalt. But how could such falls even exist, being located in the arid dry lands of central Washington State? Where did the water come from, and where did it go? What is the history dealing with the geological research of this area?

### **Following the Science**

There was this professor of geology named J. Harlen Bretz. He launched his career as a high school biology teacher in Seattle, Washington, where he began studying the glacial geology of the Puget Sound area. He continued his studies at the University of Chicago, earning his Ph.D. in geology in 1913. He then became an assistant professor of geology, first at the University of Washington and then at the University of Chicago. So, Washington State was a place he was familiar with.

In the summer of 1922, and then for the next seven years, Bretz conducted field research of the Columbia River Plateau with the help of a few advanced geology students. He was especially interested in

the barren areas of the central Washington area near the Grand Coulee. He saw that this whole area was channeled, meaning there were obvious directional lines carved into the rock and desert which show that at one time a massive amount of water moved over the whole area. In our day these are easily seen by satellite images. Bretz coined the name "Channeled Scablands," by which they are known today.

In 1923 he wrote a paper that was presented to the Geological Society of America that described what he saw on his various field trips. He deliberately took special care not to present any sort of explanation or interpretation for his observations. He did note, however, that the observed channel erosion required large non-specified quantities of water. As he continued to examine all the evidence, he became more and more convinced that the Grand Coulee and the scablands were carved out by a gigantic, catastrophic flood. Bretz took note of the very steep sides of the channels and their relatively straight pathways, as well as the presence of very large

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gravel bars deposited by water. He saw huge islands of land protruding from the surrounding landscape with streamlined features as if they were carved by massive torrents of water. Dry Falls, he reasoned, had no doubt once been a gigantic waterfall, due to the evidences of plunge pools, undercutting, and cataract retreat at the base of the falls.

The 2,000 square miles of eastern Washington State that were scrubbed bare, forming the Channeled Scablands could have only occurred by a massive amount of rapidly moving water. Nearly 1,000 square miles of the scablands contain gravel deposits from the eroded basalt. Later calculations indicated that it all most likely happened within 30 days. Quincy Basin, in the western part of the scablands, has huge amounts of gravel — the gravel covers 500 square miles, at a depth of at least 125 feet, all made from very hard basalt rock. It has been estimated that at its peak, water from the catastrophic flood flowed at a rate greater than the combined flow of all the rivers of the world today. This volume of water is almost unimaginable. And for water to pulverize rock as hard as basalt, it had to reach speeds of over 60 miles per hour to create cavitation, the process by which small bubbles created by the force of the water literally chisel away solid rock!

### **Ridiculed For Following the Science!**

As far as I know, Professor Bretz did not have a Creationist agenda, nor was he trying to prove the Flood story of the Bible. He simply was following the “scientific method” as a scientist, and came to his conclusions which have been validated today. When Bretz made his findings public, he was openly and vigorously ridiculed for presenting such an absurd notion that a super flood created the scablands or carved the coulee and the surrounding areas. The thought of the day was that this region had obviously been carved out, as they extrapolated, over millions of years by uniformitarian processes. For them, if Bretz’s theory were true, it would undermine the very foundation of Uniformitarianism and their evolutionary worldview.

Charles Lyell, who is considered to be the father of Uniformitarianism, promoted the idea that the steady accumulation of minute changes over enormously long spans of time created the geological forma-

tions we see today. This advances the idea that all strata were formed over millions of years through a sedimentary process, and that erosion, as seen in canyons, was carved out by small localized floods also over very long periods of time. Uniformitarianism is the backbone of evolutionary thought and has been a powerful tool used to expunge God and the Biblical Flood from scientific thought.

Just as anticipated, the general outcry against any hint of a catastrophic flood model was very loud! There was a determination to publicly discredit and humiliate Bretz. He was asked to present his ideas in public forum to the Geological Society of Washington. He was rather unconscious of the underlying purpose of this gathering and just how hostile his audience actually was to his ideas. Unaware to Bretz, six “challenging elders,” as Bretz later referred to them, were chosen to counter Bretz’s claims and beat him in public debate. This became known later as the infamous 1927 “scabland debate.” The next week Bretz wrote to a friend and said, “They were all loaded for me, and after letting me talk for two hours, they opened fire.”

### **Science or Worldview?**

As mentioned earlier, Professor Bretz used the “scientific method” to come to his conclusions. As a scientist, he gathered the evidence, evaluated it, and then came to a hypothesis. He had no agenda other than that of trying to find the truth. But we need to ask ourselves, why were his colleagues so against his hypothesis? Why did so many of them ridicule and attack him? As scientists, why were they not willing to look over the evidence to see if the hypothesis was sound? The answer is obvious: they were predisposed to their opinions because they needed to preserve and protect their worldview. Any, and I repeat, ANY hypothesis that even slightly indicated that a catastrophic flood created these geologic formations could lend credibility to the Biblical Flood account. It was obvious that they were not willing to open their minds to that suggestion.

It does make one wonder. With all the research that is done in the areas of geology, paleontology and other sciences in general, are all these scientists really approaching the evidence without a bias? When research is carried out, are they looking through

rose-colored glasses? As the evidence is examined, are they selectively choosing to preserve and protect their worldview? I think the answer is obvious, and this case with J. Harlen Bretz proves the point very well.

While our team was filming for *The Days of Noah Project* I had the opportunity to talk to several geologists. We also spent weeks in the Grand Canyon where I had the chance to read the propaganda plaques that explain the geological formations from an evolutionary worldview. What I found was that behind the scenes all these leading geologists strongly disagree with each other over the formation of the Grand Canyon as well as other geological formations. Yet there is one thing they hold in common, and that is to make sure that they preserve their worldview and try to stop a Christian worldview that defends the universal Biblical Flood story or interjects God into anything to do with science.

Bretz became a laughing stock, ridiculed by his colleagues. They realized that if his discovery proved to be right, Uniformitarianism, the explanation that allowed for the earth to be old enough for evolution to have taken place, would be in part discredited. Bretz did not give up his battle for the truth. He pointed out huge now-dry rivers and waterfalls, tremendous canyons and other evidence, but still that generation of geologists had to pass off the scene before his discovery of 1923 would be accepted around 1960. When one stops at the visitor's center at Dry Falls, there is a plaque outside the building with a quote on it from J. Harlen Bretz that reads, "Ideas without precedent are generally looked upon with disfavor, and men are shocked if their conceptions of an orderly world are challenged."

### **Lake Missoula and the Flood**

Lake Missoula is a geological subject that comes close to home for me. Missoula is the city where I grew up. Over the years I hiked and fished this whole area, so I am very familiar with all these places we are talking about in this article. I remember as a kid seeing the water lines on Mount Sentinel left over from Lake Missoula, and how the valleys were, at one time, lakebeds.

The evidence Professor Bretz presented was irrefutable. So, when other geologists began to see that

Bretz was correct in his conclusions, they needed to come up with some kind of explanation — something that could protect their worldview. Bretz himself had a theory that during the ice age there developed a huge glacial ice dam close to the area where Lake Pend Oreille is located in northern Idaho. The dam broke as the glaciers started to recede, thus releasing the massive amounts of water trapped in the mountainous areas of western Montana and what was called Lake Missoula. Geologists coined a new term: "localized catastrophe." This expression is used today to explain any formation that is obviously shaped by something like a catastrophic flood.

Those of us who believe in the Biblical Flood know that the planet was changed dramatically as a result of that event. The earth's crust was broken, and plates shifted, lifted or sunk. There were massive earthquakes, high winds and torrential volumes of water that scarred much of the planet's surface. Glaciers were formed due to the shifting of the earth's poles and the violent rush of wind and release of water from both the heavens and the "fountains of the deep" (Genesis 7:11). A lot of the reforming of the earth's surface came from the massive erosion from the runoff of the water to the oceans as the waters subsided. There was water trapped in many places on the earth's surface. Evidence shows many places where there were massive lakes, such as Lake Missoula, the whole Salt Lake Basin, areas around the Grand Canyon, etc. All scientists agree to this. The picture painted by J. Harlen Bretz fits perfectly into the model of the Biblical Flood and testifies to the force of these flood waters in reshaping the surface of the earth.


There is even more evidence that was not mentioned by Bretz. It is amazing enough that in the midst of a very arid area, there was at one time volumes of water which rushed with such force that it carved Dry Falls, the Grand Coulee, the Columbia Gorge, and created the Channeled Scablands. But at the very bottom of the Columbia Basin in the middle of this same area are found petrified ginkgo trees. In fact, there is the Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park, which consists of 7,470 acres located at Vantage, Washington, on the Columbia River. Lots of petrified wood was discovered in the region in the early 1930s. Ginkgo trees are considered to be the world's



oldest living species of tree, which is native to China. The fossil record shows them as well. These trees do not grow in dry, arid climates such as that of central Washington, and most today are found in more temperate climates such as in parts of Asia. These ginkgo trees were buried by the same flood that created the scablands. Think about that. Tropical trees buried by massive water flow from an Ice Age?? These trees had to be there in order to be buried during the Lake Missoula flood. This is why they are buried in the very same basalt sand and rock carved out by this flood Bretz was researching. To me, it all testifies of a global catastrophic flood and its aftermath as found in the Bible!

### Following True Science

Little did J. Harlen Bretz realize that by uncovering these evidences, which were contrary to the contemporary scientific thought of his day, he was actually defending the catastrophic Flood of the Bible. He also revealed that scientists of his day cared little about the "scientific method," which is the very apex of impartial observation, measurement, and testing for the modification and proving of hypotheses, if indeed, the

evidence was contrary to their worldview. It makes one wonder if things are any different today than in his day? I think not! Many men of science interpret their data through rose-colored glasses and not by honestly evaluating the evidence by the "scientific method." This incident with Bretz testifies to that fact. And what about today? It's very likely if people teach that which is against a commonly accepted worldview, they too will be ridiculed! 

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3. J Harlen Bretz And The Great Scabland Debate, Sean D. Pitman, M.D.© April 2004
4. Thomas Pardee and the Spokane Flood Controversy, Joseph V. Baker, GSA Today, 5 (9), September 1995, also from his article "The Channeled Scabland of the Columbia Plateau". Journal of Geology, Bretz, J Harlen (1923).
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6. Newman, J., Missoula Floods, Oregon Field Guide, Episode 1001, 2002-2004
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