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Considered through the eyes of faith, a recent and currently unfolding discovery in the Grand Canyon carries deep, encouraging theological and spiritual significance.

Steven A. Austin, a Christian geologist, has been privileged to be the principal investigator in a remarkable find of a two-state-wide bed of Nautiloids buried in, of all places, the Redwall Limestone within the Grand Canyon. Austin reports his discovery in scholarly detail with charts, diagrams, and pictures.¹ The fossil Nautiloids he has found show an average length of about 12 to 18 inches and look like long ice cream cones whose large circular ends are about 2 or 3 inches in diameter. These fossils are characterized as orthocone Nautiloids.

It is helpful to understand the profound potential problem the discovery helps to solve and to hear the story of how Austin was led to this discovery. In studying the Grand Canyon for his entire professional

**GRAND CANYON
REVEALS NAUTILOID
MASS KILL EVENT**

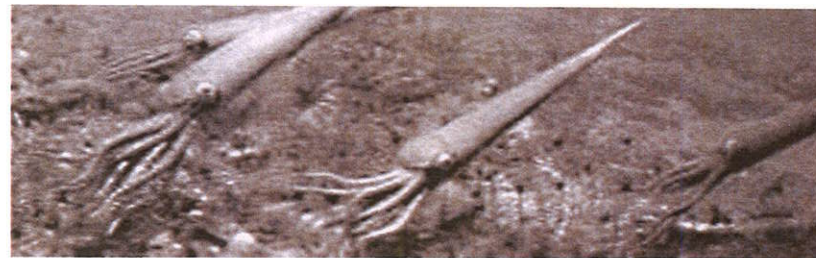
career, he has felt the sting for many years from colleague geologists, who are not believers, and who invoke the massive Redwall Limestone (more than 600 feet in height) of the Grand Canyon in support of their claim that life forms must have existed on Earth for millions of years.

For example, they cite the Redwall Limestone as empirical corroboration of the conventional geological claim that hundreds or millions of years were required to form this huge limestone configuration by slow accumulation, and that, therefore, the biblical claim that a global flood formed part of Earth history cannot be trusted. Therefore, Austin has been intensely interested in the geological study of the Redwall Limestone. In fact, he has personally brought this specific challenge before the Lord in prayer, asking for divine guidance in researching this problem. He entreated the Creator to guide him in making, if possible, a genuine paleontological and geological discovery in the Grand

Canyon—following the principles of good scientific research—that would be consistent with what one would expect in a global flood and thus constituting empirical support of the historical truth of God’s claims in Scripture. In a powerful way God has rewarded his prayer and continuing, hard, honest work.

The story behind Austin’s find is fascinating. He was already acquainted with the few known fossil Nautiloids—around 17 in quantity—that he personally had seen while

creative research strategy to the officials of the Grand Canyon that would give him the formal authority to study the other Nautiloids. He applied for a project permit to inventory scientifically the number of Nautiloids existing in the Grand Canyon. Thankfully, he received formal permission to undertake the project. This gave him the official authority to hire a motorized boat to make his way up the Colorado River and to stop at the places indicated by the boatman. To his sheer amaze-



stopping at Nautiloid Canyon on several raft trips down the Colorado River. While he was talking about his interest in Nautiloids in the Grand Canyon with a knowledgeable boatman on one of these raft trips, however, the boatman informed him that many more were exposed along the Colorado River, but that no scientists had studied them because the raft trips were permitted to stop only at designated places that did not include these other Nautiloid locations.

This inspired Austin to propose a

ment, Austin began to find not only one or two Nautiloids, but scores at each new stop.

Then he made an enormously important discovery. He himself began to locate and chart completely new locations of Nautiloids that were unknown even to the boatman who had first told him of the Nautiloid locations. Above all, these new locations also yielded the same high numbers of Nautiloids present at the other locations. He was stunned, because this meant that he had discovered a mass kill, mass burial event

recorded within the Redwall Limestone itself.

The inventory figures of the total number of Nautiloids in the Grand Canyon run high. Austin estimates that on average one Nautiloid can be found per square yard along a flat bed (about 7 feet to 8 feet thick) that he has named the Whitmore Nautiloid Bed, which extends from Arizona into Nevada. The Nautiloids themselves are found within the Whitmore Nautiloid Bed in an upper layer with an average thickness of only about 13 inches. This bed can be traced throughout the entire Grand Canyon and also into its many side canyons. Thus the number of Nautiloids present in the Grand Canyon can be placed conservatively at hundreds of thousands.

What is the potential significance of this discovery? Scientifically, Austin's research indicates that "a large population of living Nautiloids was swept up, smothered within, and buried by the flow."² As indicated by the average burial orientation of the Nautiloids, the aquatic debris flow hydroplaned westward, at speeds of about 12 to 15 miles per hour, probably out of southwestern

Colorado, and moved toward southern Nevada through northern Arizona.

Theologically, the existence of such a large aquatic catastrophic transport and rapid deposition of Nautiloids within the Redwall Limestone over hundreds of square miles is consistent with the numerous kinds of aquatic catastrophic phenomena that might be expected to occur during a global aquatic disaster on the scale described as the Genesis flood. The closer and longer we study the geological record through good scientific field work and through the eyes of faith, the more it reveals a consistency with biblical history, thus indicating that these biblical claims can be trusted. The history of the Earth, and of our lives, are both in our Creator's hands.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Steven A. Austin, "Nautiloid Mass Kill and Burial Event, Redwall Limestone (Lower Mississippian), Grand Canyon Region, Arizona and Nevada," *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Creationism 2003*, Technical Symposium Sessions, Robert L. Ivey, Jr., ed. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Creation Science Fellowship, 2003), pp. 55-100.

² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

