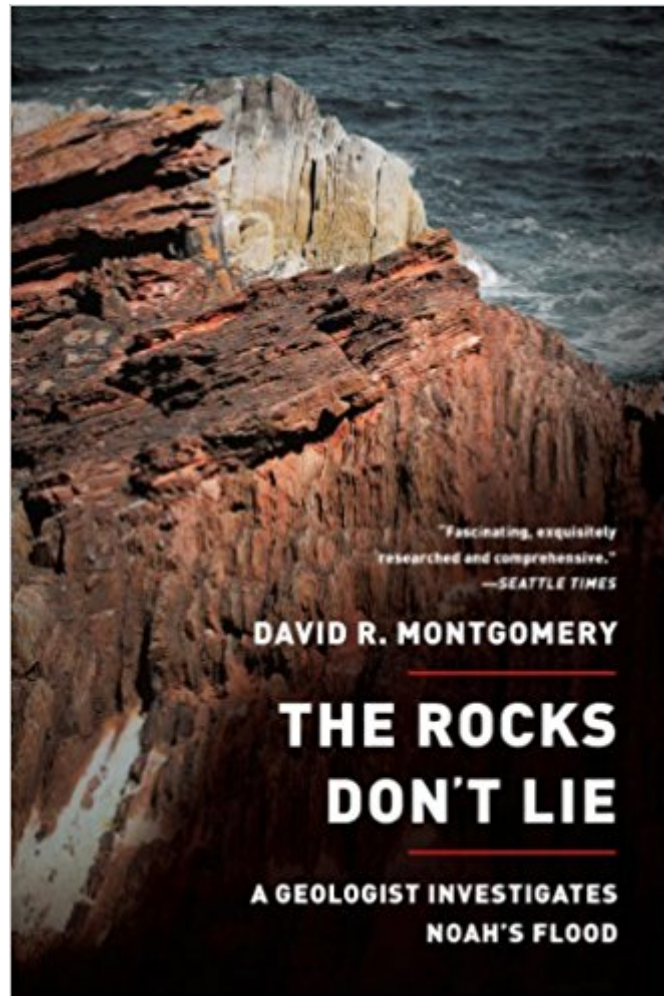




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The Rocks Don't Lie: A Geologist Investigates Noah's Flood



Synopsis

How the mystery of the Bible's greatest story shaped geology: a MacArthur Fellow presents a surprising perspective on Noah's Flood. In Tibet, geologist David R. Montgomery heard a local story about a great flood that bore a striking similarity to Noah's Flood. Intrigued, Montgomery began investigating the world's flood stories and drawing from historic works by theologians, natural philosophers, and scientists discovered the counterintuitive role Noah's Flood played in the development of both geology and creationism. Steno, the grandfather of geology, even invoked the Flood in laying geology's founding principles based on his observations of northern Italian landscapes. Centuries later, the founders of modern creationism based their irrational view of a global flood on a perceptive critique of geology. With an explorer's eye and a refreshing approach to both faith and science, Montgomery takes readers on a journey across landscapes and cultures. In the process we discover the illusive nature of truth, whether viewed through the lens of science or religion, and how it changed through history and continues changing, even today. 12 illustrations; 4 maps

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An excellent example of how a serious, even sympathetic, engagement with religion need not threaten reason or compromise scientific integrity." - Daily Beast
"The Rocks Don't Lie traces the history of the field of geology through the thinking that progressively debunked the great-flood myth and left behind, temporarily, what would be resurrected 150 years

later as Creationism. . . . The Rocks Don't Lie intertwines geologic history and the author's own field trips in an engrossing way. . . . Montgomery also shows flashes of considerable wit. . . . That's just a taste of what's in store for readers of this delightful volume. I came away far more enriched than I had expected to be.

• American Scientist
 "Montgomery's arguments are spirited and compelling, but his most novel conceit is to frame this intellectual history of geology by giving special attention to Noah's Flood."

• Wall Street Journal
 "We can only hope that [Montgomery's] book will be received with the same open-mindedness with which it was written."

• Martin Rudwick, New Scientist
 "Thought-provoking."

• Scientific American
 "Fascinating, exquisitely researched and comprehensive."

• Seattle Times
 "Examining a wide variety of flood and creation stories across centuries, Montgomery provides an enthusiastic and valuable recounting of the history of geology and how the advances in science have consistently faced opposition from the guardians of so-called religious authority, based on a literal reading of the Bible."

• Kirkus Reviews
 "Montgomery... offers a thorough critique of creationist worldviews... while treating his opponents with respect, reflecting on both ancient and modern debates and demonstrating that Christians have been arguing among themselves about these subjects for millennia. ...The combination of historical study and humility on behalf of geology makes for an extremely persuasive work. Highly recommended."

• John M. Kistler, Library Journal

David R. Montgomery is a professor of geomorphology at the University of Washington. He lives in Seattle with his wife, Anne Bikl, and Loki, their guide-dog dropout.

I've read this book about three times now, and find something exciting that I overlooked every time. It's a lot more fun to read than it is to try to give an idea of what's in it. Is it about Noah's Flood, the great flood that covered the earth, the flood that people have been trying to find traces of since who knows when? Well, kind of. Who'd have thunk that looking for the Noah flood jump-started the science of geology as we know it? And changed the course of many religions in the process? And how many cultures in how many continents have been talking and singing and writing about the Noah flood, the Great Flood, for how many years? (Pretty near all of them, since forever, it seems--)

The events and theories discussed are made fascinating by the lively Montgomery writing, and their interconnections even more so. If the thickness of the book (or the number of pages in the Kindle edition) seems daunting, don't panic. There are many pages of footnotes/ endnotes. These

are also fun and interesting to read, but you can enjoy the text without them. I've been reading them almost as a stand-alone book. "Dirt" was the first Montgomery book I came across, and I recommend it also, even though it's inevitably saddening to follow the course of declining fertility and diversity through history. "Rocks Don't Lie" is a much more lighthearted and cheering book -- take note, if you've read "Dirt" and are not sure you can stand another dose of gloom!

A very good book. The writing is straight-forward and clear. The authorial tone is calm and reasonable, and very knowledgeable. The book explains some of the basic ideas of geology by giving us an easy-to-read short introduction to the history of geology and the development of the science. It gives very nice pocket portraits of all of the important people and ideas in the history of geology (except for Louis Agassiz and his discoveries about glacial activity, whose omission sort of surprised me). It is very respectful of religious beliefs about The Flood, and shows how early Christian investigators, eager to discover and understand more about the Biblical Flood, provided the energy and imagination behind the early advances in the science of geology. At the same time, without going into a polemical rant, it shows how the evidence (the rocks) simply does not support Creationist "flood geology". I think that this book would be a good purchase for someone who is genuinely open-minded, and interested in learning about the light that geology can shed on the subject of the Biblical Flood.

"How is it that fossil sharks' teeth are found on mountaintops?" That's a damn good question that couldn't be answered for thousands of years. The answer is identical to the answer to a seemingly different and more recent question: "How did the mountains get there?" It took hundreds of years to get that answer. To me, this is the story of the development of the science of modern geology.

When I began, being a Christian, I became concerned that I picked to read another book that would rip and tear at my faith, but I was wrong. David Montgomery sums up for me his thesis in this work (He just took an entire book of geological and archeological explanations to get there): "Like most geologists, I had come to see Noah's Flood as a fairy tale -- an ancient attempt to explain the mystery of how marine fossils ended up in rocks high in the mountains. Now I've come to see the story of Noah's Flood like so many other flood stories -- as rooted in truth. The discoveries of science have revealed the world and our universe to be far more spectacular than could have been imagined by Mesopotamian minds. To still see the world through their eyes is to minimize the wonder of creation.

Our interpretation of the world around us fundamentally shapes our outlook. We will only look for evidence that confirms our beliefs if we have already decided how and what to think about something. But if we keep our minds open, we may be surprised at what we discover."

As someone completely unversed in geology in general, this book gave me an insightful look into how the discipline was formed and evolved over several centuries--all with the backdrop the "cross pollination" between the two fields of geology and religion. I really appreciated the readability of this book. The author seemed to be solving a grand mystery throughout, and for most of the book, I was on the edge of my seat waiting for the next unfolding of the story. As a conservative Christian, I especially appreciated the adeptness Montgomery showed in outlining the birth of the modern creationist movement; and while I may not agree with all of his conclusions, and still have many unanswered questions, his spirit seemed level and even at times generous enough that I felt I had a much better understanding of both the creationists viewpoint and his own. Would highly recommend this book!

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