



*"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)*

# REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

SEPTEMBER 2010

## What's Happening?

### Introducing Sound Reasons!

The Seattle-Puget Sound chapter of Reasons to Believe is excited to announce a number of special events coming up. We plan to have three scheduled indoor events; one in the Fall, one in the Winter and one in the Spring. They will occur on Saturday mornings at Highlands Community Church in Renton. We will have fellowship and food (a continental breakfast) from 8:30-9:00. From 9-11 there will be a meeting and special presentation, followed by a time to peruse educational materials and speak with the presenter(s) from 11-11:30.

The first Sound Reasons titled "RTB Resources" will be October 16 and will provide a comprehensive introduction to all the resources available from RTB, plus a guided tour of the website. We will also address resources available through our chapter.

Mark Saturday, October 16 on your calendar. If you plan to attend, please RSVP Mike Brown at [apologist2@comcast.net](mailto:apologist2@comcast.net) so we have a headcount for food.

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## The Water Vapor Canopy Theory

RICH DEEM

One of the most common theories among young earth creationists is that the original earth possessed a water canopy consisting of vapor (most common interpretation) or ice that surrounded the earth above the troposphere and potentially up through the stratosphere. The canopy is used to explain the long lifespans of pre-flood humanity, along with the source of all the water required to explain a global flood. This paper will examine what the Bible says about the possible existence of such a canopy, along with some simple scientific rebuttals to the theory.

Isaac Vail (1840 –1912) first proposed the canopy theory in 1874.<sup>1</sup> He believed a canopy formed millions of years ago as the earth evolved from a molten state. Vail supported his case primarily by ancient Babylonian mythology.



Although the idea of a canopy is not directly stated in the Bible, the proponents of such theories must claim to derive their ideas from the Bible, since they insist that their source of information about creation is solely biblical. The biblical source for the existence of a canopy is said to derive from Genesis 1 (the main biblical creation account) and Genesis 7 (the flood account). If one were to examine only these two accounts, one could make a case for the canopy theory. Here is what the Bible says:

Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. And God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. (Genesis 1:6-8: NASB)<sup>2</sup>

The claim is made that this "expanse" or "firmament" (KJV) is a description of the canopy. The theory seems to hold up in the description of the Genesis flood:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. (Genesis 7:11: NASB)

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## Meet Our Members

This is the second in a series of articles that highlight our members and help you get to know them by having them answer a few questions. Let us know what you think. This month's member is Dave Ouellette, promotion coordinator for the chapter.

*What do you do for a living?*

Well, my college degrees say I am a Fisheries Biologist, but the past 20 years I have been employed as a Software Developer. I discovered early in my career that I had a knack for programming and the company I worked for needed someone to develop Windows based applications. My "shift" in careers has worked out well since I develop software for systems used in monitoring fish behavior.

*How and when did you become a Christian?*

My family was raised in the Roman Catholic Church where I attended church every week, went to Catholic grade school (yes I was an altar boy) and to CCD classes when I was in high school. Our family was not overly serious about our faith, but mom and dad made sure we kids knew where we were going Sunday morning? Having an uncle who was a priest also helped.



*How and when did you discover RTB?*

I started reading the *Left Behind* series. After reading the entire set, I began asking myself is that what the Bible really says about the End Times? It was then that I started to take my faith seriously and coincidentally heard on the radio that Hugh Ross was giving a talk at a local church, which I attended. After that, I read everything I could from RTB.

*When and why did you become a part of the Seattle Chapter?*

I wanted to do more in helping people know and understand the Christian faith, especially in the area of science/faith issues. So, shortly after hearing Dr. Ross' talk I contacted the Seattle Chapter and signed up for the apologetics training course which I completed in 2001.

*What is your role in the chapter?*

I have done several presentations at churches and conferences. Currently, I am on the leadership team and I am in charge of ordering, storing and transporting all the material we have for the chapter tables we set up at various events.

*What is your favorite pastime?*

It's a toss-up between biking and painting! I commute to work on bicycle pretty much every day year round, but on the weekends when I find the time I like to dabble in painting landscapes, mostly in watercolor. When you have made something with your own hands, you truly understand what it means to be made in the image of God since he is the ultimate creator.

*What is the most unusual/interesting thing you have ever done?*

Another toss-up between scuba diving in underwater caves found in the freshwater springs in Florida, or the many climbs I have done on Mount Rainier. It is always so inspiring and exhilarating to experience God's creation on a mountain top!

## In the NEWS...

### [What's Special About Jupiter & Saturn?](#)

This RTB article by Hugh Ross discusses how Jupiter and Saturn shield the Earth from incoming asteroids and comets by scattering them gravitationally or absorbing collisions themselves. This is another example of God's fine tuning. Go to [www.reasons.org/whats-so-special-about-jupiter-and-saturn](http://www.reasons.org/whats-so-special-about-jupiter-and-saturn).

### [Chicken Scoop](#)

This Breakpoint article discusses the recent release of a team of scientists that answers the age-old conundrum which came first the chicken or the egg? The answer? The chicken - the same answer the Bible gives! Go to: [www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/15360](http://www.breakpoint.org/features-columns/articles/entry/12/15360).

### [Hawking's Godless Universe](#)

This ToTheSource article responds to Stephen Hawking's latest revelation that we don't need God to explain the universe. Simply put, he can't claim the theories of physics are subjective, then argue that a particular theory disproves the need for God. Go to [www.tothesource.org/9\\_8\\_2010/9\\_8\\_2010.htm](http://www.tothesource.org/9_8_2010/9_8_2010.htm).

### [Soaring Price Panic](#)

This Focus on the Family article discusses how as prices rise, Christians need to combine practical biblical principles and specific assurances from God's word to not become panic stricken. Go to [www.focusonthefamily.com/lifechallenges/managing\\_money/getting\\_along\\_without\\_getting\\_a\\_loan\\_part\\_iii.aspx](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/lifechallenges/managing_money/getting_along_without_getting_a_loan_part_iii.aspx)

### [Is Suicide an Unpardonable Sin?](#)

In this RTB article by Ken Samples examines the issue of suicide from a biblical perspective. He concludes on the basis of Scripture that God can and does forgive his children who commit suicide. Go to: [www.reasons.org/suicide-unpardonable-sin-christians](http://www.reasons.org/suicide-unpardonable-sin-christians).

## THE BIBLICAL EXPANSE AND FLOODGATES

Could the “waters which were above the expanse” and the “floodgates of the sky” be referring to a water canopy? Let’s look at the Hebrew text to determine what these English translations are referring to.

The Hebrew word translated “expanse” is *raqia* (Strong’s # H7549), which occurs 18 times in 15 verses of the Old Testament. The vast majority of these occurrences are found in Genesis 1. Genesis 1:8 actually defines the term *raqia* as being the equivalent to the Hebrew word *shamayim* (Strong’s # H8064), which can be translated as “heaven” or “sky.” Some examples of the use of *raqia* in Genesis 1 include the following:

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse [*raqia*] of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; (Genesis 1:14)

And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse [*raqia*] of the sky.” (Genesis 1:20)

As can be seen by the uses of *raqia*, the term is very broad, encompassing both outer space and the atmosphere of earth. Obviously, *raqia* could not be specifically referring to a water canopy. Other verses state that *raqia* is declaring (present tense) the work of God’s hands. This cannot be referring to a water canopy, since one does not exist at this present time.

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse [*raqia*] is declaring the work of His hands. (Psalm 19:1)

Let’s look at the other phrase, “floodgates of the sky,” and see how this is used in the Old Testament. Here is the verse from the flood account and the corresponding [Hebrew] words.

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky [*arubbah*:H699 *shamayim*:H8064] were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

If this term is never again used in the Old Testament, one could make a case for the idea that the “floodgates of the sky” might refer to a water canopy. However, it can be seen from the verses below (which occur well after the flood) that this term applies to rain in general:

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven [*arubbah*: H699 *shamayim*:H8064], and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. (Malachi 3:10)

The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, “Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens [*arubbah*:H699 *shamayim*:H8064], could this happen?” “You will see it with your own eyes,” answered Elisha, “but you will not eat any of it!” (2 Kings 7:2)

## THE BIBLE DECLARES THERE WAS NO CANOPY

The above verses from the Bible demonstrate that there is no biblical basis or biblical reference to the idea of a water canopy above the earth. Ultimately, the Bible actually states that there was no canopy above the earth from the fourth creation day onward. Any kind of substantial water canopy above the earth would prevent the stars from being seen, which is directly contradicted by Genesis 1:14-18:

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:14-18)

Another biblical problem with the water canopy theory is what the Bible said happened to the waters of the flood. According to Genesis, the water receded (which is impossible if it came from a vapor canopy) and was dried by the wind. Neither method would not significantly affect a global flood, further suggesting that the Genesis flood was local in extent.

## SCIENTIFIC REBUTTAL OF A VAPOR CANOPY

Air can hold, at most, 55 grams of water vapor per cubic meter. In contrast, liquid water is at a density of 1,000,000 grams per cubic meter. The ratio of the two numbers is 1:18,000. Therefore, a flood of 1 mile thickness (which would cover only 1/5 of Mount Everest), would require 18,000 miles of canopy. Besides the problem of gravity (which would bring the whole thing down), such a thick layer of water vapor would completely block any light from the Sun from reaching the earth.

Even a canopy of the equivalent of only 40 feet of liquid water would double the earth’s atmospheric pressure, which would kill many animals, including humans. This pressure would also increase the temperature on the earth to a scorching 220°F. Most animals and plants do not survive long at this temperature.

Another problem is getting the water out of the atmosphere and onto the ground without cooking everything on the earth. Each gram of water vapor that condenses to a liquid releases 539 calories of heat. For a vapor canopy to produce a global water layer of only 40 feet deep, 6.22 x 10<sup>21</sup> grams of water would release 3.35 x 10<sup>24</sup> calories, raising the temperature of the earth to 810°F. Such a scenario would definitely kill all life on earth, but would produce a tremendous air conditioning problem for Noah. And a 40 feet deep flood would certainly not be global.

## CONCLUSION

Neither the Bible nor science support the idea that a water canopy ever

existed above the earth. The Bible teaches that the “expanse” of Genesis 1:6-8 cannot be a canopy, since it encompasses both the atmosphere and interstellar space. The Bible also indicates that the “floodgates of heaven” are nothing more than a reference to clouds and rain (as found in passages after the Genesis flood). Scientifically, any kind of water canopy produces so much heat that it would cook everything on the planet.

*Rich Deem is a volunteer RTB apologist. He has a Masters of Science in microbiology and is a researcher at the Cedar-Sinai Medical Center. This and other articles appear on his website at [www.godandsicence.org](http://www.godandsicence.org).*

## REFERENCES

1. Isaac Newton Vail published many pamphlets on his canopy theory, starting with “Waters Above the Firmament” in 1874. Other titles included: “The Misread Record” (also published under the title “The Deluge and Its Cause”), “Eden’s Flaming Sword”, “Ring of Truth”, “The Heavens and Earth of Prehistoric Man”, “Canopy Skies of Ancient Man”, “A Glance at Comparative Mythology”, and “Annular World Evolution.”
2. And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day. (Genesis 1:6-8: NIV)

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. (Genesis 1:6-8: KJV)



## Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

### Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

### What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

## Questions? Get Answers.

Whether you are looking for scientific support for your faith or answers to questions about God, the Bible, and science, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). You can also call the RTB hotline seven days a week, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at 626-335-5282.