

The Age of the Earth

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The Issue of Literal Interpretation

From the previous two lessons we have come to the conclusion that the literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation is best. Both the Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory are deficient attempts at harmonizing the Bible with the so-called “geologic ages.” We also believe that the Christian should come first to God’s special revelation in the Bible rather than to God’s general revelation as interpreted by science.

- a) Ussher’s Chronology
 - i) Bishop Ussher (Anglican archbishop) 17th century Irishman along with Dr. John Lightfoot
 - a) Creation week Oct. 18-24 in 4004 BC
 - b) The resulting age of earth is currently almost 6000 years old.
- b) Genealogies in Gen. 5 & 11
 - i) One known gap - Luke 3:36, Cainan Cp. Gen. 11:12
 - ii) “Begot” does not always refer to a father-son relationship
 - iii) But note that the age of Arphaxad still recorded with respect to his grandson (?) Salah’s. Thus the absence of a name does not mean the addition of more time.

Conclusion: Ussher’s chronology is *generally* accurate.

The Issue of Apparent Age

One of the critical issues concerning the age of the earth is “Did God create the earth with age?” What does that mean? Note the following questions.

- Did God create the light rays stretched out from the stars to the earth? (Note that it takes millions of years for light to travel from some stars to the earth. It takes light from the sun a little over 8 minutes to reach the earth).
- Did God create all the elements initially or just some elements with natural processes producing the rest? (This has an impact upon radiometric dating - see below).

My response is to affirm that God in some way created the earth with age, i.e., apparent age. The fact that light comes before the sun in Gen. 1 hints at this conclusion. Stronger however is the example of Adam and Eve who were created as mature humans, not as infants.

God has been accused of being deceptive if this is so, since no one could conclusively come up with an age for the earth and universe through scientific means. Using the time it takes for light to travel from the farthest stars would, for example, give misleading results.

My response is to note that God would only be deceptive if He only communicated to us through general revelation (creation). But God has given us the answer via a literal interpretation of his special revelation, the Bible. Those who criticize a young age on this point refuse to include the Bible in their thinking and insist wrongfully that God tell us all things through scientific observation.

Problems with Scientific “Clocks” Giving the Age of the Earth

Before any process occurring in nature (tree rings, radioactive decay, magnetic field of earth, depositing of materials in oceans, salt evaporation, etc.) can be used to measure the age of the earth, there must be an acknowledgment of certain assumptions:

- The process used must always have operated at the same rate at which it functions today. If you assume this, then you advocate uniformitarianism and the present becomes the key to the past. This is hard to maintain in light of 2 Peter 3:4-8. Also, it is certainly not something that scientists can prove.
- The system in which the process operates must always have functioned as a closed system throughout its history. That is, no outside influence can be allowed to change things. For example, if a water canopy surrounded the earth (as Gen. 1:6-7 suggests) but was released in Noah’s Flood (Gen. 6), the amount of cosmic rays entering the earth’s atmosphere is greatly increased. But this in turn drastically affects the radiocarbon dating method. To use radiocarbon dating, one would have to assume no outside influence (such as described above) changed anything.
- The initial condition of the various components of the system, when it first began to function at a constant rate in a closed system, must be known. For example, in radiometric dating (Uranium to lead, for example) one would need to know how much lead in the rock was there before the process started in order to get an accurate age. The assumption is usually made that there was none. But no one has access to the original conditions to know for sure.

These assumptions lead to the following conclusion:

- Time-clocks for the age of the earth are not precision instruments like our watches! In every case, a process involving volume, mass, etc. is being measured and then interpreted based upon time with respect to these assumptions. This is indirect measurement.
- When these assumptions are consistently made the results are inconsistent. If scientific “clocks” are so useful in determining the age of the earth why such a large discrepancy in the results. See the other handout (Appendix 6).

Other Evidences for a Young Earth/Recent Creation

- Population statistics extrapolated backward in time do not yield the first man 1 to 3 million years ago but only 3500 to 4000 BC
- Helium-4 is being released from the earth's crust into the atmosphere at a rate that yields an age for the earth less than 15,000 years.
- The absence of a meteorite dust Should be 200 ft. of it on earth, should be several ft. of it on moon
- The decay of earth's magnetic field implies an earth no older than 7,000 to 10,000 years.
- If the earth were older than 30,000 years C-14 and C-12 (Carbon) would be in equilibrium. But guess what! They aren't. C-14 exceeds C-12 by 50%.
- Polystrate fossils (example - a tree fossil extending through several time periods of the geologic column) indicate a quick formation of the rock layers not a slow gradual process.
- See other handout for many more.