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# Response to Kurt P. Wise and Davis Young

HUGH ROSS, Ph.D.

Kurt Wise, Davis Young, and I agree on at least one key creation issue: Genesis 1 introduces readers to our Creator God. We also consider the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. From here our views diverge somewhat.

Given the strength of the geological evidence and our conviction about biblical truth, neither Young nor I see any basis for denying that the Earth is about 4.57 billion years old. At the same time, I see no compelling reason to separate artistic presentation of truth from factual revelation. On that point, we clearly differ.

Given the strength of exegetical evidence, neither Wise nor I see any basis for denying that Genesis 1-11 provides a literal, historical, and chronological account of natural history. At the same time, we clearly differ in our interpretive approach to science and Scripture.

While God was, indeed, a direct witness to creation's history, astronomers are witnesses, too. Because of light travel time, we can directly observe the past — including the moment when light first separated from darkness. Astronomers can see how God was shaping the universe when it was only 10<sup>-34</sup> seconds old. So the physical world is far from "mute" (see Psalm 19).

If the universe were thousands rather than billions of years old, astronomers' measurements would say so. Instead, they repeatedly and objectively establish an age of 13.76 billion years, with minor adjustments to come as measuring capability advances. To charge this community of scientists (which includes many believers) with collective bias or deception defies logic. Even at 13 or more billion years of age, the cosmos allows vastly insufficient time for natural processes to account for life's existence.

Linguists and Old Testament scholars, including some of the greatest evangelical theologians of our time, have thoroughly considered and debated Wise's arguments for six consecutive 24-hour days based on Hebrew words, grammar, and usage. The lack of consensus among the most ardent spokespersons for biblical inerrancy is significant. With many scholars acknowledging "long days" as a viable, literal translation of the Hebrew word for day — even in conjunction with numbers and markers such as "evening and morning" — no warrant exists for elevating any particular interpretation to the level of Scripture itself.

When Mark and Matthew refer to Adam and Eve's creation as "from the beginning" and Luke associates Abel's death with "the foundation

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of the world,” the context clarifies the time frame. Mark and Matthew refer to the beginning of humans and marriage. Similarly, the “world” in Luke implies the world of humanity, not the entire universe or planet.

Genesis 3:17 says, “Cursed is the ground because of you.” According to Jeremiah 33:25, physical laws did not change at the fall of Adam. Something else changed. Human sin meant inevitable disasters due to mismanagement. The timing of Satan’s fall is not the issue here.

The designation of earthquakes, hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural phenomena as curse-initiated “evils” represents a distortion of reality. All these phenomena occur at levels we now recognize to be fine-tuned for earth’s habitability and for humanity’s benefit. Sadly, human shortsightedness and sinful behavior have amplified the destructiveness of such events.

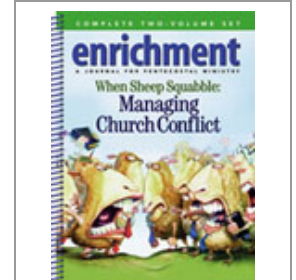
The supernova remnants (SNRs) Wise mentions actually affirm an old, not young, universe. When a supernova explodes, it throws off an expanding shell, the diameter of which divided by its expansion velocity indicates its age. The bigger the shell (and the more dispersed its material), the more difficult to distinguish it from remnants of earlier supernovae and ionized hydrogen clouds.

Only in regions where stars are much less dense than in the Milky Way’s core or disk can we distinguish ancient SNRs from these background remnants. SNR GSH 138-01-94, seen in our galaxy’s far outer edge, has a measured age of 4.3 million years. Astronomer Rosa Williams has discovered several similarly ancient SNRs in the Magellanic Clouds.

As for a supposed shortage of solar system dust, astronomers now see definitive evidence that the Kuiper Belt (beyond Neptune’s orbit) and the much larger Oort Cloud (far beyond that) contain thousands more asteroids and comets than the “main” asteroid belt. The dust-generating mechanisms there easily explain the measured quantity of inner solar system dust.

While an abundance of data confirm the widely accepted figures for the age of the universe and earth, DNA evidence points to a relatively recent origin of our own species, made “in the image of God” (as distinct from earlier primate species). As research continues, we anticipate it will affirm the descent of all humanity from just two people who lived only several tens of thousands of years ago, just as the Bible indicates.

On a more personal note, I believe my own life provides just one among countless examples to refute a false claim that acceptance of earth’s measured age leads to “rejection of the truth of all Scripture” and “of all the doctrines Christians hold dear.” The truthfulness of Scripture and of the historic Christian doctrines remains at the core of my walk with Christ and my decades of evangelistic and equipping ministry.



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