

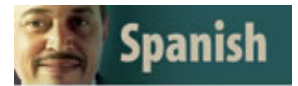
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## The Case for a Young Earth

*Not only does the Genesis account maintain that the creation is young, but a young creation is foundational to the rest of Scripture. Here is why.*

By Kurt P. Wise

I am a paleontologist. This means that I study fossils. Somewhat like a crime scene investigator, a paleontologist tries to figure out what happened in the past by studying evidence found in the present. And, as is true in presenting a criminal case in court, some evidence is better than other evidence. For example, in a murder trial, reliable eyewitness testimony is the best. Other evidence – even such things as DNA fingerprinting – is circumstantial evidence. Circumstantial evidence cannot testify. It is mute. Humans have to infer what happened, and different people can infer different stories of what happened (like the opposing lawyers in the courtroom). In similar manner, scientists are trying to understand the physical world, but the physical world is mute. It does not answer the questions of the scientist. If the scientist uses the physical world alone, he must infer the answers. Different scientists can come up with different answers.

The physical world is not the only place to go to determine what happened in the past. Believers know there is an eyewitness to events in the past. After all, God was there. And, seeing as God is everywhere present, at all times, and that He sees and understands all things perfectly, and that He cannot lie, it would seem that God is the perfect witness of the events of the past. Furthermore, in the Bible, God inspired a true account of what happened. Observations



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- For further reading, see Kurt P. Wise's [\*Faith, Form, and Time: What the Bible Teaches and Science Confirms about Creation and the Age of the Universe\*](#)

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and descriptions from a completely reliable eyewitness should hold much more weight than speculations about mute circumstantial evidence made by fallen and fallible humans. Therefore, as believers, we should look at the eyewitness account from God before we begin inferring the meaning of circumstantial evidence.

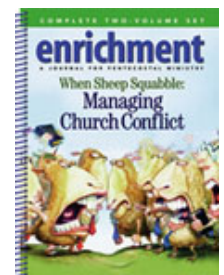
### THE EYEWITNESS CLAIMS CREATION IS YOUNG

The earliest part of creation's history is related in the Book of Genesis. What does Genesis tell about that history? To be careful about this, we need to know how to interpret the Genesis account. After all, not all the Bible is interpreted in the same manner. We interpret history different from poetry, and poetry different from prophecy. But Genesis is written as history. It is most like something literature experts call "historical narrative." Genesis has numerous marks of historical narrative — genealogies, definitions and descriptions, geographic and cultural details, and personal names. It does *not* have the identifying marks of Hebrew poetry or prophecy, and it contrasts with short poetic phrases within the text.

Writers of later Bible books refer to Genesis as if it was true history, and it was understood to be true history by the Hebrews and the Church for thousands of years. Although other parts of Scripture include *non*historical accounts concerning the same period of time, the historical account in Genesis is used to interpret the nonhistorical passages, not the other way around. Finally, although the account is written in a more beautiful style than is true of most histories constructed by humans, with God as its author we should expect such beauty. Anything God says — even an account of true history — would be expected to be beautiful ... an example of great literature. In fact, anything God does — even the guidance of true history — would be expected to be beautiful ... an example of magnificent orchestration. A beautiful>

Not only is the Genesis account history, it is simple history. The Hebrew is simple and straightforward, and the text is readable and understandable by even the young. It makes sense that it should be, because the text was first given to people of the uneducated lower class. After God released the people of Israel from Egypt, He wanted to teach them about himself. He began that reeducation with the Book of Genesis. God may have placed additional truths beneath a surface reading of Genesis, but such truths should only add to (not replace) the meaning gained from the straightforward reading of that account. The straightforward reading, in fact, has been the dominant interpretation of the text for most of Hebrew and Church history. As a friend of mine says: The problem has never been the *interpretation* of Genesis ... it's always been the *re*-interpretations of Genesis — cases where humans *change* the obvious reading of Genesis to fit something believed from *outside* the Bible.

The straightforward reading of Genesis 1 indicates that the creation of *all* things — the heavens, the earth, the seas, and all things in them — occurred in 6 days. Several things indicate these are 24-hour days. First, the days are defined using a cycle of light and dark (Genesis 1:3–5). Second, words and phrases associated with "day" in Genesis 1 — such as numbers and "evening and morning" — refer to 24-hour days elsewhere in Scripture. Third, a weeklong creation is consistent with Jesus' reference to the creation of Adam and Eve "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:6, KJV) and Abel's death "from the foundation of the world" (Luke 11:50,51, KJV). Fourth, the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:10–12) directly compares the 6 days of God's creation with the 6 days of a human workweek. In fact, the most "natural" way for God to have created everything in the universe is to have created it instantly — taking no time at all. God would need to have had a good reason to spread His creation out over a period of time. He chose to create over 6 days as an example to us. This in turn gives us the only known explanation for "week"



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(other time periods such as day, month, season, and year are defined using the sun, moon, and stars).

A straightforward reading of Genesis also indicates that only about 2,000 years elapsed between Creation and the time of Abraham. This is done using the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 — genealogies specially designed to mark time. Most genealogies merely indicate how people are related. The more detailed also tell us when people were born and when they died. For a genealogy to be useful in measuring time, however, the age of parents at the birth of children is needed, and very few genealogies have this information. In fact, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are not only the only genealogies in Scripture with this information; they are the only such genealogies known in all of ancient Near Eastern literature. And, of all the genealogies in Scripture, they are the only two that must be relied upon to create a timeline from Creation to Christ. These genealogies seem to be specially designed to provide a timeline between the Creation and Abraham. And this straightforward reading of these genealogies has been the reading of Hebrews and the Church until late in the 19th century.

Furthermore, a traditional reading of Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies provides a reasonable explanation for why God's word to man was not written down until the time of Moses. The traditional reading suggests about 2,500 years elapsed between Adam and Moses. Yet, if the genealogies are taken straightforwardly, people before Noah's flood lived for more than 900 years and children overlapped with their parents for centuries. Oral information could be confirmed and checked for centuries. Truth could have been reliably transferred for many generations, and God's word to Adam could have been transferred from generation to generation in as few as seven transmissions. By the time of Moses, human lifetimes were close to what they are now and information would not be transferred as reliably. It makes perfect sense why God thought it was necessary to begin recording His word in written form. The more time that is inserted between Adam and Abraham, the harder it is to provide a reasonable explanation for why God's word was not put in written form. As an example, if Adam is an archaic *Homo sapiens* and a radiometric age of 45,000 years is accepted for him, then one must explain why humans lacked the Bible for over 40,000 years (more than 1,000 generations). Similarly, if Adam was an early Neanderthal and an old-age chronology is accepted, one must explain more than 10,000 generations of no Bible. If Adam was an early *Homo erectus*, one must explain more than 40,000 generations of people not having a Bible.

## YOUNG CREATION IS FOUNDATIONAL

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Not only does the Genesis account maintain that the creation is young, but a young creation is foundational to the rest of Scripture. A straightforward reading of the Genesis account suggests:

- Each part of the creation came into existence instantly by the direct command of God over the course of a single week.
- The original creation was perfect.
- Humans and animals did not die before the fall of man.
- All humans who have ever lived are descended from Adam and Eve.
- The fall of man brought a curse upon the whole creation.
- A global flood in the days of Noah destroyed all land organisms on the planet with the exception of those on the ark.
- The diversity of modern languages came as a result of God's intervention at the Tower of Babel incident.

Accepting the timeline given in that same account allows each of

these things to be believed. To believe that the universe and the earth are billions of years old challenges — or rejects — each of these claims. The same methods that lead one to believe in a great age for the earth also suggest that different parts of creation are millions or billions of years apart in age, and that animal death and suffering preceded man's existence by hundreds of millions of years. Such ages would suggest that nothing like a curse came upon the universe at the time of man's fall, that there is no evidence whatsoever for a flood in the days of Noah, and that a variety of languages date back much farther than any reasonable date for the Tower of Babel. In short, if one accepts an earth billions of years old, one must reject the first 11 chapters of Genesis. And, if the events of Genesis 1–11 are wrong, then much of the remainder of Scripture is also wrong, for many passages refer back to these events.

If in fact the events of Genesis 1–11 are wrong, a more serious problem concerns what this implies about God himself. Scripture claims itself to be authored by the Holy Spirit. If Scripture is wrong, even in small part, then the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of Truth. If that is true, how can we believe any part of Scripture? It would also mean that God himself is not a God of truth. Accepting an earth only thousands of years old allows one to accept God's claims about himself; accepting an earth billions of years old undermines the veracity of God's Word and the nature of God himself.

Another problem arises with the problem of evil. Very possibly the most serious philosophical challenge to Christianity is how to explain the existence of evil when a God exists who is perfectly good, knows all things, and has all power. Why does He not eliminate the evil completely? This question applies to both moral evil (for example, why are sadistic people allowed to torture other humans?) and what's called natural evil (for example, why do innocent animals have to suffer?). The traditional response is known as Augustine's free-will defense — that evil is a consequence of the choice of free-will beings (more particularly humans). This is fine if the Genesis account is accepted in a straightforward manner, for all moral evil is due to the choice of free-will beings and all natural evil is a consequence of the curse on creation following Adam's sin (in other words, due to the choice of a free-will being). If, however, the earth is considered to be billions of years old, then natural evil precedes even the creation of humans by hundreds of millions of years. And, since Satan was unfallen in the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:12–15) and the Garden of Eden was not planted until after the creation of man (Genesis 2:7,8), angels did not fall until after the creation of man either, so natural evil cannot be blamed on them. If the earth is billions of years old, Christianity lacks a satisfactory answer to the problem of natural evil.

The events of Genesis 1–11 are also ultimately foundational to all the doctrines of Christianity. The days of creation are the rationale for the Sabbath in Exodus 23:10–12. The details of the creation of Adam and Eve are the rationale for the headship of the man (1 Timothy 2:12–14). Man's creation as described in Genesis 1 and 2 is the basis for capital punishment, and capital punishment is introduced in Genesis 9:6. The reality of one man's (Adam's) disobedience bringing death into the world is the basis for the reality of one man's (Jesus') obedience bringing life into the world (Romans 5:12–15). The curse upon the *entire* creation due to man's sin is the explanation for how it is that the *entire* creation will be relieved of the curse with the glorification of humans (Romans 8:17–23). The condemnation of everyone not on Noah's ark is a picture of the condemnation of everyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:37–39). In fact, I would suggest that if it were carefully worked out, it would become apparent that the theology of the remainder of Scripture — all of theology — is actually based on the truth of the events of the first few chapters of Genesis. It would be more accurate to say that God orchestrated the early history of creation (the events of Genesis 1–



11) in such a way that He could build the rest of human history and the theology of the rest of Scripture upon it. I would suggest that *if a person is consistent*, acceptance of an earth that is billions of years old would lead to the systematic rejection of the truth of all of Scripture and the rejection of all the doctrines Christians hold dear. I firmly believe that only by believing that the earth is thousands of years old can a person *consistently* embrace the doctrines of Christianity.

## CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR YOUTH

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I have not mentioned physical evidence for a young creation. It is not that such evidence is lacking. It is that the biblical account is a greater source of truth, so I go there first. There is evidence that the creation is only thousands of years old (rather than the traditionally understood billions). For example, there are too few supernovae remnants for our galaxy to be old. This portion of our galaxy has many fewer leftovers from the explosions of stars than would be expected if the galaxy is more than tens of thousands of years old. The inner solar system also has more dust than would be expected if it were even as old as 10,000 years. The oceans are less salty than would be expected if salt has been added to them at the present rate for even a hundred million years (let alone billions of years). Organisms seem to carry far fewer mutations than they should be carrying if they are part of a family tree millions of years old. Genetic throwbacks suggest DNA exists that should have been completely destroyed by mutations if a million generations had passed. Successful hybrids — for example, between camels and llamas — suggest that these organisms were separated on different continents only thousands of years ago rather than millions. The similarity of mitochondrial DNA among human females around the world and of Y-chromosome DNA among human males around the world suggest that all humans are descendant from one male-female pair only thousands of years ago, not millions.

Besides the physical evidence for youth, there is also sufficient reason to question the interpretation of the evidence for old age. In the case of radiometric dating, for example, different methods applied to the same rock give different ages. Although those ages are still all very old (millions and billions of years), the fact different methods give different ages — and do so consistently — suggests that we need a new method of interpreting the radiometric evidence.

## CONCLUSION

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Scientists have gathered together a lot of evidence for an old creation. In all honesty, for most of those evidences no one has yet provided an explanation for them in terms of a young creation. Yet, since the evidence of the physical world cannot interpret itself, but must be interpreted by humans, I choose to accept the youth of creation even if I can't yet understand all that evidence.

As a Christian, and as a scientist interested in understanding fossils, I turn first to the most reliable source of information — the eyewitness account of the all-truthful creator God. That account very clearly indicates that creation is young — only thousands of years old. When I stand before God, I cannot see myself explaining how I ignored His Word to accept the claims of man. And there I must stand.

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