

THE BIBLE AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH [PART I]

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

In the current controversy over creation and evolution, it is a rare event indeed to find something on which those in **both** camps agree wholeheartedly. Generally speaking, the two world views are light-years apart from start to finish. There is one thing, however, on which creationists and evolutionists **do** agree: evolution is impossible if the Earth is young (with an age measured in thousands, not billions, of years). R.L. Wysong addressed this point in his book, *The Creation-Evolution Controversy*, when he wrote:

Both evolutionists and creationists believe evolution is an impossibility if the universe is only a few thousand years old. There probably is no statement that could be made on the topic of origins which would meet with so much agreement from both sides. Setting aside the question of whether vast time is competent to propel evolution, we must query if vast time is indeed available (1976, p. 144).

It may be somewhat ironic that so much discussion has resulted from something on which both sides agree, but it should not be at all surprising. Apart from the most basic issue of the controversy itself—i.e., whether creation or evolution is the correct view of origins—the single most serious area of conflict between those who accept the biblical account of creation and those who accept the theory of organic evolution (in whole or in part) is the chronological framework of history—viz., the age of

the Earth. And, of course, this subject is of intense interest not only to those who promulgate atheistic evolution, but to those who are sympathetic with certain portions of that theory as well. While a young Earth/Universe presents no problem whatsoever for creationists who accept the biblical account at face value, it is the death knell to almost every variety of the evolutionary scenario.

A simple, straightforward reading of the biblical record indicates that the Cosmos was created in six days only a few thousand years ago. Standing in firm opposition to that view is the suggestion of atheistic evolutionists, theistic evolutionists, progressive creationists, and so-called “old-Earth creationists” that the current age of the Universe can be set at roughly 8-12 billion years, and that the Earth itself is almost 5 billion years old. Further complicating matters is the fact that the biblical record plainly indicates that living things were placed on the newly created Earth even before the end of the six-day creative process (e.g., plant life came on day three). The evolutionary scenario, however, postulates that early life evolved from nonliving chemicals roughly 3.5-4.0 billion years ago, and that all other life forms gradually developed during the alleged “geologic ages” (with man arriving on the scene, in one form or another, approximately 1-2 million years ago).

Even to a casual observer, it is apparent that the time difference involved in the two models of origins is significant. Much of the controversy today between creation-

ists, atheistic evolutionists, theistic evolutionists, progressive creationists, and old-Earth creationists centers on the age of the Earth. The magnitude of the controversy is multiplied by three factors. First, atheistic evolution itself is impossible to defend if the Earth is young. Second, the concepts mentioned above that are its “theistic cousins” likewise are impossible to defend if the Bible is correct in its straightforward teachings and obvious implications about the age of the Earth. Third, there is no possible compromise that will permit the old-Earth/young-Earth scenarios to coexist; the gulf separating the biblical and evolutionary views in this particular area simply is too large. As Henry Morris correctly observed:

Thus the Biblical chronology is about a million times shorter than the evolutionary chronology. A million-fold mistake is no small matter, and Biblical scholars surely need to give primary attention to resolving this tremendous discrepancy right at the very foundation of our entire Biblical cosmology. This is not a peripheral issue that can be dismissed with some exegetical twist, but is central to the very integrity of scriptural theology (1984, p. 115).

In the earlier quote from Dr. Wysong, it was suggested that “we must query if vast time is indeed available.” That is exactly what I intend to do in this series of articles. Indeed, a million-fold mistake is no small matter. How old is the Earth according to God’s Word?

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THE AGE OF THE EARTH—“WAIT AND SEE”

As I begin this investigation into the Age of the Earth, I first would like to define the scope of the inquiry. The title under which I am writing is “The Bible and the Age of the Earth.” It is not my intention, at present, to examine or refute the scientific evidences that allegedly establish an ancient Earth. There are a number of books available that provide such information (see, for example: Ackerman, 1986; Jackson, 1989; Kautz, 1988; Henry Morris, 1974, 1989; John Morris, 1994; Morris and Parker, 1987; Wysong; 1976). Rather, I intend to limit my discussion to what God’s Word has to say on this subject.

Obviously, then, I am not writing with the atheistic evolutionist in mind. I am well aware that my arguments would carry no weight whatsoever with the person who falls into that category. Rather, this discussion is intended for those who: (a) believe in the God of the Bible; (b) claim to accept the Bible as His inspired, authoritative Word; and (c) are convinced that what God has said can be understood. For such a person, the Bible is the recognized, final authority on any subject that it addresses. The renowned biblical scholar, Edward J. Young, forcefully expressed this point when he wrote:

It is of course true that the Bible is not a textbook of science, but all too often, it would seem, this fact is made a pretext for treating lightly the content of Genesis one. Inasmuch as the Bible is the Word of God, whenever it speaks on any subject, whatever that subject may be, it is accurate in what it says (1964, p. 43).

The question then becomes: “Does the Bible address the age of the Earth?” Yes, it does. But before we delve into what it says, there are two popular, prevailing attitudes that need to be discussed.

First, I acknowledge that some regard this as a question that simply cannot be answered at present. We are urged to “wait and see” or to “reserve judgment.” Jack Wood Sears, former chairman of the biology department at Harding University, wrote:

When conflicts do occur, the part of wisdom is to withhold judgment until the facts are all in. For example, there is difficulty with the age of life on the earth. Science, as I indicated earlier, has seemed to indicate that

the life has been here much longer than we have generally interpreted the Bible to indicate. However, scientific determination of the ages of geological strata is not absolute and is subject to much difficulty and uncertainty. The Bible, as we have shown, does not date creation, and the intimations it seems to present may not be properly understood. Since I hold science to be a valid approach to reality, and since I have concluded upon much and sufficient evidence, that the Bible is inspired and therefore true, the only rational recourse, it seems to me, is to withhold judgment about a seeming contradiction. **Wait and see** (1969, p. 97, emp. added).

Four years later, J. Frank Cassel wrote in a similar vein.

The thoughtful person respects present knowledge in both areas (science and Biblical research) and keeps searching for new information and insight. In the meantime he must **reserve judgment**, saying simply “I don’t know where the proper synthesis lies.” The tension remains as the search continues (1973, pp. 251-252, emp. added).

While at first glance such an attitude may appear laudable, I would like to suggest that it is nothing but a ruse. Authors of such sentiments no doubt want **others** to adhere to their advice, but they themselves have absolutely no intention of doing so.

Cassel, for example, has written frequently about the accuracy of the so-called geologic timetable and is a well-known apologist for the old-Earth world view. Further, in November 1983 I met Dr. Sears in public debate on the topic of the age of the Earth. I affirmed the proposition that the Bible does not allow for an ancient Earth; Dr. Sears affirmed the proposition that it does. The debate occurred some 14 years **after** Dr. Sears penned his “wait and see” statement. Had he discovered information during those years that no longer made it necessary to wait and see? Apparently not, since during the debate he told the audience that he was “still waiting” (an exact quote from the debate transcript) for information that would allow him to make a decision about the age of the Earth. If he was still waiting, **why, then, was he willing to engage in a public debate to defend the proposition that the Bible allows for an ancient Earth?** Where is the consistency in such a position?



In reality, what these writers mean when they say that “we” should “wait and see,” or that “we” should “reserve judgment” is that **all those who believe in a young Earth** should wait and see or reserve judgment. In the meantime, **they** will continue to advocate publicly their position that an ancient Earth is wholly consistent with the biblical record.

Second, there are some in the religious community who suggest that the Bible is conspicuously silent on the topic of the age of the Earth. It is not uncommon to hear statements suggesting that since the Bible does not address this matter, a person is free to believe whatever he or she wishes in this regard. Typical of such a mind-set are these statements by Donald England and John Clayton.

However, nowhere does a Biblical writer give us an age for earth or an age for life on earth.... Inasmuch as Scripture does not state how old the earth is or how long life has existed on earth, one is free to accept, if he wishes, the conclusions of science (England, 1983, pp. 155-156).

Genesis 1:1 is an undated verse. No time element is given and no details of what the Earth looked like are included. It could have taken place in no time at all, or God may have used eons of time to accomplish his objectives (Clayton, 1976, pp. 147-148).

This, of course, is but another ruse. Beware when a writer or speaker suggests that the Bible is “silent” on the topic of the age of the Earth or that a person is free to accept the varied “conclusions of science.” What those who make such statements **really** mean is that **they** are free to accept the conclusions, not of science, but of uniformitarian geology, and in so doing to defend the same old-Earth position as their evolutionist colleagues. Both England and Clayton, for example, are on record as defending an ancient Earth (see: England, 1972, pp. 103-106; Clayton as documented in Jackson and Thompson, 1992, pp. 99-110).

CHRONOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

The truth of the matter is that the Bible, being a book grounded in history, is filled with chronological data that may be used to establish a relative age for

the Earth. It is not “silent” on this topic, and thus there is no need to “wait and see” or to “reserve judgment.” Professor Edwin Thiele, the man who unlocked much of the mystery of Old Testament chronology, declared:

We know that God regards chronology as important, for He has put so much of it into His Word. We find chronology not only in the historical books of the Bible, but also in the prophetic books, in the Gospels, and in the writings of Paul (1977, p. 7).

Those who suggest that we “wait and see” or “reserve judgment” concerning the age of the Earth have no intention of doing so themselves. They fully intend to promote an old Earth.

The Bible, for example, provides exact chronological data from Adam to Solomon. Combining information from the Assyrian Eponym Lists and the Black Obelisk, the death of Ahab has been determined to be 853-852 B.C. (Packer, et al., 1980, p. 48) and therefore the reign of Solomon (some 40 years, 1 Kings 11:42) can be dated at 971-931 B.C. (Merrill, 1978, p. 97; Packer, et al., 1980, p. 50; Brantley, 1993, p. 83). According to 1 Kings 6:1, 480 years before Solomon’s fourth year of reign (967-966 B.C.), Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt. The date of the Exodus is 1446/1445 B.C. (Unger, 1973, pp. 140-152; Archer, 1970, pp. 212-222; Packer, et al., 1980, p. 51; Jackson, 1981, p. 38; 1990, p. 17).

To this date is added the time of the sojourn in Egypt (430 years, Exodus 12:40), thereby producing the date of 1876 B.C. as

the year Jacob went to Egypt (Packer, et al., 1980, p. 50). Interestingly, the Bible records Pharaoh’s query of Jacob’s age (and Jacob’s answer—130 years) in Genesis 47:9, which would make the year of Jacob’s birth 2006 B.C. (Genesis 25:26). Abraham was 100 years old when he begat Isaac, giving the date of 2166 B.C. for Abraham’s birth (Genesis 21:5; Packer, et al., 1980, p. 54). The chronology from Abraham to Adam is recorded very carefully in two separate chronological tables—Genesis 5 and 11. According to Genesis 12:4, Abraham was 75 when he left Haran, presumably after Terah died at 205 years; thus, Abraham was born when Terah was 130 years old, albeit he is mentioned first by importance when Terah began having sons at the age of 70 (Genesis 11:27; 12:4; Acts 7:4).

Having established the birth date of Abraham at 2166 B.C. (Archer, 1970, pp. 203-204), it is possible to work from the time of Adam’s creation to Abraham in order to discern the chronology of “the beginning.” The time from the creation of Adam to Seth was 130 years (Genesis 5:3), the time from Adam to Noah was 1056 years (Packer, et al., 1980, pp. 56-57), and the time from Noah’s birth to the Flood was 600 years (Genesis 7:6), or 1656 A.A. (After Adam). It appears that Shem was about 100 years old at the time of the Flood (Genesis 5:32; 11:10) and begat Arphaxad two years after the Flood (the Earth was not dry for more than a year; cf. Genesis 7:11 with 8:14; see also Genesis 11:10) in approximately 1659 A.A.

Arphaxad begat Salah in his thirty-fifth year; however, Luke 3:36 complements the chronological table of Genesis 11 with the insertion of Cainan between Arphaxad and Salah, which indicates that likely Arphaxad was the father of Cainan. Proceeding forward, one observes that Terah was born in 1879 A.A., and bore Abraham 130 years later (in the year 2009 A.A.). Simple arithmetic—2166 B.C. added to 2009 A.A.—would place the creation date at approximately 4175 B.C. The Great Flood, then, would have occurred around 2519 B.C. (i.e., 1656 A.A.).

Numerous objections have been leveled at the literal and consecutive chronological interpretation of Scripture. For example, some have suggested that the tables of Genesis 5 and 11 are neither literal nor consecutive. Yet five of the Patriarchs clearly

were the **literal** fathers of their respective sons: Adam named Seth (Genesis 4:25), Seth named Enos (4:26), Lamech named Noah (5:29), Noah's sons were Shem, Ham and Japheth (cf. 5:32 with 9:18), and Terah fathered Abraham directly (11:27,31). Jude's record in the New Testament counts Enoch as "the seventh from Adam" (Jude 1:14), thereby acknowledging the genealogical tables as literal and consecutive. Moreover, how better could Moses have expressed a literal and consecutive genealogy than by using the terms "lived...and begat...begat...after he begat...all the days...and he died"? Without question, Moses noted that the first three individuals (Adam, Seth, and Enos) were consecutive, and Jude stated by inspiration that the first seven (to Enoch) were consecutive. Enoch's son, Methuselah, died the year of the Flood, and so by three steps the chronology of Adam to Noah is literal and consecutive, producing a trustworthy genealogy/chronology.

There have been those who have objected to the suggestion that God is concerned with providing information on the age of the Earth and humanity. But the numerous chronological tables permeating the Bible prove that theirs is a groundless objection. God, it seems, **was very concerned** about giving man exact chronological data and, in fact, was so concerned that He provided a precise knowledge of the period back to Abraham, plus two tables—with ages—from Abraham to Adam. The ancient Jewish historians (1 Chronicles 1:1-27) and the New Testament writers (Luke 3:34-48) understood the tables of Genesis 5 and 11 as literal and consecutive. The Bible explains quite explicitly that God created the Sun and Moon to be timekeepers (Genesis 1:16) for Adam and his descendants (notice how Noah logged the beginning and the ending of the Flood using these timekeepers, Genesis 7:11; 9:14).

Still others have suggested that the two tables somehow are symbolic. But the use (or even repetitive use) of a "unique" number does not necessitate a symbolical interpretation. Special numbers (such as 7,10,12,40, etc.) employed in Scripture may be understood as literal despite the frequency with which they are used. Are there not three **literal** members of the Godhead? Did not

Sceva have seven **literal** sons? Were there not ten **literal** commandments? Did Jesus not choose twelve **literal** apostles? Was Christ's fast in the wilderness not forty **literal** days? Moreover, those who study history routinely recognize that it abounds with numerical "coincidences." To say that the tables of Genesis 5 and 11 are "symbolic" of long periods of time flies in the face of the remainder of the biblical record.

Those who believe that the Bible is **unconcerned** with chronology would do well to spend some time studying the lineages of the Hebrew kings in the Old Testament. James Jordan has explained:

Beware when someone suggests that because the Bible is "silent" on the age of the Earth, they are free to accept the "conclusions of science." What they really mean is that they are free to accept uniformitarian geology.

Chronology is of concern to the writers of the Bible. From this perspective we should be **surprised** if the Bible did not include chronological data regarding the period from Creation to Abraham, especially since such data can now be obtained from no other source. That chronology is of concern to the Bible (and to its Author) can also be seen from the often difficult and confusing chronology of the Kings of Israel. Thus, we find that it is the intention of the Bible to provide us with chronology from Abraham to the Exile. Some of that chronology is given in summary statements ...but some is also given interspersed in the histories of the Kings. Is it therefore surprising or unreasonable that some should be given along with genealogies as well? (1979/1980, p. 21, emp. in orig.)

While it is true that genealogies (and chronologies) serve various functions in Scripture, one of their main purposes is to show the historical connection of great men to the unfolding of Jehovah's redemptive plan. These lists, therefore, are a link from the earliest days of humanity to the completion of God's salvation system. **In order to have any evidential value, they must be substantially complete.**

For example, the inspired writer of Hebrews, in contending for the heavenly nature of Christ's priesthood, argued that the Savior could not have functioned as a priest while He was living upon the Earth since God had in place a **levitical** priesthood to accomplish that need (Hebrews 8:4). Jesus did not qualify for the levitical priesthood because "it is **evident** that our Lord hath sprung out of **Judah**" (Hebrews 7:14, emp. added). How could it have been "evident" that Jesus Christ was from the tribe of Judah—**unless there were accurate genealogical records by which such a statement could be verified**? The writer of Hebrews based his argument on the fact that the readers of his epistle would not be able to dispute the ancestry of Christ due to the reliable nature of the Jewish documentation available—i.e., the genealogies.

It has been argued that secular history is considerably older than 4000 B.C. But ponder this. When the studies of various Egyptologists are examined, no two give the same time period for the Old Kingdom (III-VI Dynasties). Aling (1981) dated it at 2800-2200 B.C. Baikie (1929) dated the period as 3190-2631 B.C. Breasted (1912) gave the date as 2980-2475 B.C. White (1970) suggested 2778-2300 B.C. With such variability in the last "sure" period in Egypt's history, how can dogmatism prevail for the **predynastic** period? Scientists and historians influence Christendom with their "established limits" of history. Theologians influence Christianity with evolution-based bias as well. For instance, Gleason Archer has stated:

The problems attending this method of computation are compounded by the quite conclusive archaeological evidence that Egyptian Dynasty I went back to 3100 B.C., with a long period of divided kingdoms in the Nile valley before that. These could hardly have arisen until long after the Flood had occurred and the human

race had multiplied considerably (cf. Genesis 10). It therefore seems necessary to interpret the figures of Genesis 5 and 11 differently, especially in view of the gaps in other biblical genealogical tables (1979, 1:361).

Obviously Archer is completely willing to override Scripture with the “scientific” message of archaeology. This mind-set—which requires the Bible to submit to science (geology, paleontology, etc.)—undermines the authority of the Word of God. In one prominent example from a few years back, the then-editor of *Christianity Today* stated:

But one fact is clear: the genealogies of Genesis will not permit us to set any exact limit on the age of man. Of that we must remain ignorant **unless the sciences of geology and historical anthropology give us data from which we may draw tentative scientific conclusions** (Kantzer, 1982, p. 25, emp. added).

The truth of the matter is that **both** scientists **and** theologians should be concerned with fitting the scientific data to the truth—God’s Word—not with molding God’s Word to fit current scientific theories (which, in a few short years may change—e.g., in Charles Darwin’s day the Earth had been “proven” scientifically to be 20 million years old, while today it has been “proven” scientifically to be 4.6 billion years old).

Furthermore, archaeologists often use speculative (and inaccurate) techniques such as radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology (tree-ring analysis), and pottery dating schemes. Yet each of these methods is beset with serious flaws, not the least of which are the basic assumptions upon which they are constructed. In two timely, well-researched articles (“Dating in Archaeology: Radiocarbon & Tree-Ring Dating,” and “Dating in Archaeology: Challenges to Bib-

lical Credibility”), Trevor J. Major (1993, 13:74-77) and Garry K. Brantley (1993, 13:81-85) explained the workings of these various methods and exposed the faulty assumptions upon which each is based. After listing and discussing five important problem areas associated with carbon-14 dating, and after discussing the problems associated with obtaining accurate tree-ring growth rates, Major wrote:

Radiocarbon dating assumes that the carbon-12/carbon-14 ratio has stayed the same for at least the last hundred thousand years or so. However, the difference between production and decay rates, and the systematic discrepancy between radiocarbon and tree-ring dates, refute this assumption.... Similarly, we should not accept the claims for dendrochronology at face value. Bristlecones may add more than one growth ring per year, and the “art” of cross dating living and dead trees may be a considerable source of error. Both radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology face technical problems, and are loaded with old Earth ideas. They assume that nature works today the same as it has worked for millions of years, yet the facts do not support this contention. **Neither method should give us cause to abandon the facts of biblical history** (1993, 13:77, emp. added).

In his article, Brantley addressed the problems associated with subjectivism in archaeological chronology in general and pottery dating in particular. He then drew the following conclusions:

...we must recognize that archaeological evidence is fragmentary and, therefore, greatly limited. Despite the amount of potsherds, bones, ornaments, or tools collected from a given site, the evidence reflects only a paltry fraction of what existed in an-

tiquity (Brandfon, 1988, 14[1]:54). Unearthed data often are insufficient, inconclusive, and subject to biased interpretation....

...the paucity of archaeological evidence provides fertile soil for imaginative—and often contradictory—conclusions. We must not overlook the matter of subjectivity in interpretations.... Finally, **archaeology is an imprecise science, and should not serve as the judge of biblical historicity**. The pottery dating scheme, for example, has proved to be most helpful in determining relative dates in a tell. But, at best, pottery can place one only within the “chronological ball park.” John Laughlin, a seasoned archaeologist, recognized the importance of potsherds in dating strata, but offered two warnings: (1) a standard pottery type might have had many variants; and (2) similar ceramic types might not date to the same era—some types may have survived longer than others, and different manufacturing techniques and styles might have been introduced at different times in different locales. Further, he mentioned the fact of subjectivity in determining pottery : “...in addition to its observable traits, pottery has a ‘feel’ to it” (1992, 18[5]:72). **Therefore, we must recognize archaeology for what it is—an inexact science with the innate capacity for mistakes** (1993, 13:84-85, emp. added).

Wayne Jackson accurately summarized the importance of biblical chronology when he observed:

The purpose of biblical chronology is to determine the correct dates of events and persons recorded in the Bible as accurately as possible, in order that we may better understand their role in the great plan of Jehovah.... The Bible is the inspired Word of God (II Tim. 3:16). Its testimony is, therefore, always reliable. Whenever it speaks with reference to chronological matters, one may be sure that it is **right!** No chronology is thus to be trusted which contradicts plain historical/chronological data in the sacred text, or which requires a manipulation of factual Bible information (such as is frequently done by compromisers who have been romanced by the chronological absurdities of the theory of evolution) [1981, 1:37, emp. and parentheses in orig.].



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Was chronology of importance to the biblical writers? Indeed it was. Does the Bible speak, then, in any sense, concerning the age of the Earth or the age of humanity on the Earth? Indeed it does. I am not suggesting, of course, that one can settle on an **exact** date for the age of the Earth (as did John Lightfoot [1602-1675], the famed Hebraist and vice-chancellor of Cambridge University who contended that creation occurred the week of October 18 to 24, 4004 B.C., and that Adam and Eve were created on October 23 at 9:00 A.M., forty-fifth meridian time [see Ramm, 1954, p. 121]). I do contend, however, that the Bible gives a **relative** age for the Earth—an age confined to a span of only a few thousand years. The material that follows presents the evidence to substantiate such a conclusion.

WHY DO WE NEED AN OLD EARTH?

In his book, *Creation or Evolution?*, D.D. Riegle observed: “It is amazing that men will accept long, complicated, imaginative theories and reject the truth given to Moses by the Creator Himself” (1962, p. 24). Why is this the case? Even proponents of the old-Earth view admit that a straightforward reading of the biblical text “seems to present” a young Earth. Jack W. Sears, quoted earlier, has admitted concerning the biblical record that “the intimations it **seems to present** may not be properly understood” (1969, p. 97, emp. added). These “intimations” of a young Earth have not escaped those who opt for an old Earth. In 1972, Donald England wrote in *A Christian View of Origins*:

But why do some people insist that the earth is relatively recent in origin? First, I feel that it is because **one gets the general impression from the Bible that the earth is young...** It is true that Biblical chronology leaves one with the general impression of a relatively recent origin for man... (p. 109, emp. added).

Eleven years later, when Dr. England authored *A Scientist Examines Faith and Evidence*, apparently his views had not changed.

A reading of the first few chapters of Genesis **leaves one with the very definite general impression that life has existed on earth for, at the most, a few thousand years** (1983, p. 155, emp. added).

Both Sears and England admit that the Bible “intimates” a young Earth, and that a reading of the first chapters of Genesis “leaves one with the general impression” of a young Earth. Do these two men then accept a youthful planet? They do not. Why? If a simple, plain, straightforward reading of the biblical text indicates a young Earth, what reason(s) do they give for **not** accepting what the Bible says? Here is Dr. England’s 1983 quotation again, but this time reproduced with his introductory and concluding statements:

The truth of the matter is that both scientists and theologians should be concerned with fitting the scientific data to the truth of God’s Word, not with molding God’s Word to fit current scientific theories.

Third, it is not recommended that one should allow a general impression gained from the reading of Scripture to crystallize in his mind as absolute revealed truth. A reading of the first few chapters of Genesis leaves one with the very definite impression that life has existed on earth for, at the most, a few thousand years. **That conclusion is in conflict with the conclusions of modern science that the earth is ancient** (1983, p. 155, emp. added).

In his 1972 volume, England had stated: “**From the many scientific dating methods** one gets the very strong general impression that the earth is quite ancient” (p. 103, emp. added). Dr. Sears wrote: “**Science**, as I indicated earlier, **has seemed to indicate** that life has been here much longer than we have generally interpreted the Bible to indicate” (1969, p. 97, emp. added). The pro-

fessors’ point, explained in detail in their writings, is this: **uniformitarian dating methods take precedence over the Bible!** Thus, scientific theory has become the father of biblical exegesis. The decisive factor no longer is “What does God’s Word say?,” but rather “What do evolutionary dating methods indicate?”

One of the most important questions, then, in the controversy over the age of the Earth is this: If the Earth is ancient, **where in the biblical record** can the time be placed to guarantee such antiquity? There are but three options. The time needed to ensure an old Earth might be placed: (a) **during** the creation week; (b) **before** the creation week; or (c) **after** the creation week. If the time cannot be inserted into one of these three places, then it quickly becomes obvious that an old-Earth view is unscriptural.

In order to force the Bible to accommodate geologic time, defenders of these dating methods do indeed find it necessary to invent “long, complicated, and imaginative” theories. The attempt to place the eons of time necessary for an ancient Earth **during** the creation week is known as the Day-Age Theory—a view which suggests that the days of Genesis 1 were not literal, 24-hour days, but rather lengthy periods or eons of time. I have provided in-depth examinations and refutations of this false concept in past issues of *Reason & Revelation*, and therefore will not repeat that material here. Readers who are interested may refer to those issues (see Thompson, 1982a; 1994a) or to my book, *Creation Compromises* (the longest chapter of which deals with the Day-Age Theory; see Thompson, 1995, pp. 125-155).

The attempt to place the eons of time necessary for an ancient Earth **before** the creation week is known as the Gap Theory—a view which suggests that billions of years of geologic time may be inserted into an alleged “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. I have provided in-depth examinations and refutations of this false concept in past issues of *Reason & Revelation* as well, and therefore will not repeat the material here. Interested readers may refer to those specific issues (see Thompson, 1982b; 1994b), or to my book, *Creation Compromises* (see Thompson, 1995, pp. 157-171).

[to be continued]

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"BUT GOD COULD HAVE..."

Some time ago, I was speaking to students on the campus of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia about creation and evolution. During my lecture on the age of the Earth, I refuted the Day-Age Theory. When I called for questions, one student stood up, shook his fist defiantly in the air, and said (his voice quivering with anger), "I don't like what you've just said. I consider myself a Bible-believing Christian, and there are two important points that you have overlooked. First, God **could have created in any time frame He wanted**, and second, by saying He did it in six literal days **you have limited God!**"

I responded to the student as follows. First, I told him that I agreed with him 100% regarding his suggestion that God **could have created in any time frame He wanted**. No one was there to "dictate" to God what He could, or could not, do, and God, being omnipotent, certainly had the power to do whatever He desired. I then pointed out to the young man that since he had claimed to

be a "Bible-believing Christian," that settled the matter once and for all. It has **nothing** to do with what God **could have done**, and everything to do with what the Word of God, **says God did!** I told him if he intended to treat the Bible's subject matter in such a frivolous manner, saying, "Well, God **could** have done this" or "God **could** have done that," then he simply should toss his Bible into the dumpster and go about living his life the way he wanted because he obviously no longer had any need of the Bible as God's Word on any given subject.

Second, I admitted to the student that indeed, I **had** "limited God." **I limited Him to what He said He did!** The Bible is not **my** word; nor is it **his** word. It is **God's Word** Jesus Himself said it would be that word which would judge mankind (John 12:48). Further, from the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament to the book of Revelation in the New, the prohibitions against altering, adding to, or deleting from God's Word are serious indeed. Through Moses, God warned the people of Israel: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2; cf. 12:32). Through John, he warned:

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18-19).

God said He created the Universe and everything in it in six days. Therefore, I limited Him to six days.

I then asked the young man this question: "You have admitted that God could create in any time frame He wanted, so what is wrong with God having done it in six days as the Bible says?" In his anger, he blurted out: "Yeah, but if the Bible's right there's not enough time for...." Then, realizing what he was about to say publicly, he stopped in mid-thought. Before he could sit down, I finished the sentence for him: "If the Bible's right there's not enough time for...**evolution to have occurred.**"

Exactly my point! Why did the young man need an "old Earth"? Why could he not accept the Bible's account of a literal, six-day creation at face value? Because he was a theistic evolutionist—not the "Bible-believing" Christian he claimed to be. Again, exactly my point. **Bert Thompson**



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

ANNOUNCING: THE NEW A.P. DINOSAUR COLORING BOOK

Let's face it. Kids love dinosaurs! There is something about these "terribly great lizards" (which is what the two Greek root words mean that form our English word "dinosaur") that is absolutely fascinating. And, truth be told, it is not just kids who are enthralled with these captivating creatures. Adults seem equally intrigued by these magnificent monsters from man's distant past.

Dinosaurs make a tremendous teaching tool due, in large part, to the fact that children are so interested in any- and everything having to do with them. Unfortunately, however, in many instances we as Christians and creationists have, for all practical purposes, abandoned dinosaurs as an instructional aid and allowed evolutionists to use them to further their own cause. That needs to change.

And we at Apologetics Press intend to do something to see that it does! To that end, we have been working hard for the past several months in an effort to produce a beautiful new coloring book for children on dinosaurs. I am happy to

announce its availability as of this month.

As we began this important project, we had in mind several objectives. First, it was our goal to produce a coloring book that would reach children roughly between the ages of 2 and 7. What an impressionable age group this is! We want to instill in their minds from their earliest years the fact that men and dinosaurs **did** co-exist on the Earth—exactly as the Bible teaches.

Second, while we want to help kids learn a lot about dinosaurs, we want to teach them

even more about the God Who created these range-romping reptiles. And what better way to do both than to create a coloring book that not only gives them something to do, but holds their attention long enough to teach them the truth about their great God and His colossal creation?

Third, we set out to print a book that was of the highest quality, yet, in keeping with our long-standing goal of making all of our products as affordable as possible, one that did not do any damage to parents' already-strained pocket-books. I think when you see the new coloring book, you will be convinced that we succeeded. Because a web press was used to print the book, we were able to keep the cost per unit extremely low. At the same time, however, we were able to use good quality materials throughout. The end result is a coloring book that truly has been published with children in mind.

It has a beautiful, full-color cover and 32 pages of the neatest dinosaurs you, your children, or your grandchildren ever have seen. Children will spend many an enjoyable hour coloring the pictures and completing the activities (we also included word searches, join-the-dot pictures, mazes, and matching exercises). Plus, we made sure to choose a nice, white, absorbent paper that is user-friendly for kids cavorting with crayons—the perfect combination for 4 or 5 year olds with a box of coloring utensils and some spare time on their hands. Just don't tell them that they actually are **learning** while they are coloring! They will be having such fun, they'll never figure it out on their own.

At only \$2 each, the new *A.P. Dinosaur Coloring Book* is the best of bargains. It is perfect not only for home enjoyment, but also for Sunday school lessons, Vacation Bible School giveaways, birthday presents, etc. Why not order a dozen—or more? If we can be of assistance, give us a call. We are only a (toll-free) phone call away at 800/234-8558.

— Bert Thompson

