

CREATION VERSUS EVOLUTION

The Age of the Earth – Billions or Thousands?

Lesson #4

One of the fierce battlegrounds in the creation versus evolution debate is the age of the earth. On one side are those who believe in biblical creation and a young earth and on the other side, those who believe in the theory of evolution and an old earth. This is a battleground because huge ages of time are needed to protect the theory of evolution from sudden death. In fact, evolutionists, finding no evidence for their theory, have continued to increase what they propose to be the age of the earth.

In 1850 the earth was 25 million years old. Then in 1900 they said the earth was 100 million years old. By 1960 they said it was 2 billion years old. And now they claim the earth is 4.6 billion years old! That is 184 times the original stated age!¹ The age of the earth keeps getting bigger because they have no evidence for evolution taking place. There is no mechanism for evolution, no transitional forms in the fossil record, and they have never yet seen one species turn into another. By claiming the earth is older they hope to increase the probability of life occurring by random chance. Also, the older the earth is, the more their theory is protected from scrutiny since no one can measure or repeat what took billions of years to occur!

However, by asserting the earth is billions of years old, evolutionists must concede that their theory is not based on science, which requires measurability and repeatability, but on faith, a faith that is ever changing and contradicts hard science.

The Bible, on the other hand, if taken literally, teaches us the earth is about 6 thousand years old! A vastly different age than espoused by old earth creationists and evolutionists. Why is this? How can both look at the same data and the same evidence and come up with such radically different views of the earth's age? In this lesson we are going to find out how old earth dates are arrived at, and survey some of the key issues that give rise to the view that the earth is billions of years old. We will also see how young earth creationists arrive at their conclusion that the earth is only 6,000 years old.

Before we begin looking at the issues involved, I want to remind you of some of the truths we covered in previous lessons.

- *First*, evolution is an attack on the authority of the Word of God.
- *Second*, evolution is at its core a religion, a way to get rid of the God of the Bible so one can live like he pleases without feeling guilty in his sin.
- *Third*, evolution is not based on hard science or even soft science, but is based on faith that:

¹John Morris, *The Young Earth* (Green Forrest: Master Books, 1997), 40; also Dennis Gordon Lindsay, *The Dismantling of Evolutionism's Sacred Cow: Radiometric Dating* (Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations, 1999).

- ❖ Matter has always existed (materialism)
- ❖ That life can arise from non-living matter (spontaneous generation)
- ❖ That the 1st and 2nd laws of thermodynamics do not apply to evolution
- ❖ That the law of cause and effect does not apply to evolution
- ❖ That dead matter can produce complex, organized information
- ❖ That mutation is a positive agent of change and is able to change one species into another by adding organized information so that one species or kind can be changed into another that can do everything it did before and something else better

Of course, there is no scientific proof for any of these necessary pillars of evolution. No experiment has ever shown any of these foundational necessities of evolution to be true. Yet evolutionists tenaciously believe and hold to these unproven claims by faith.

Finally, most people who believe in millions and billions of years and an old age of the earth do so because they have been told millions and billions of times that the earth is millions and billions of years old. Virtually every nature program, every geology text book and discussion about the earth or universe alludes to millions and billions of years. So let's see why such a view is scientifically unsupportable and that the hard science better supports the biblical claim of a young earth.

I. AN OVERVIEW OF WHY SOME SCIENTISTS BELIEVE THE EARTH IS BILLIONS OF YEARS OLD

- A. An old age of the earth is necessary for the theory of evolution to survive and if one desires to be accepted by old earth advocates.**
- B. Without millions and billions of years, evolutionists would be forced to agree with the only other alternative, divine creation, something they refuse to do.**
- C. If the Bible is true, God exists and He is going to judge sin, and evolutionists are in trouble. Even Christian evolutionists will have to give an account for denying what the Bible plainly teaches and for leading people astray (Jam. 3:1).**

- D. **Evolutionists claim to approach the age of the earth from a “scientific” perspective and therefore will not accept, discuss or even consider supernatural events – like divine creation.**
- E. **Having ruled out the right answer, evolutionists are desperate to find any scrap of evidence that might allude to an old age of the earth. Therefore, they don’t look and publish all the evidence without bias, but only the evidence that supports their view. Hard scientific evidence that refutes evolution is sidelined or disregarded as flawed, or corrupted data.**
- F. **The widely accepted age of the earth among many old age evolutionists is 4.54 billion years old. This age is derived from radioactive isotopes from outer space! The earth itself isn’t measured, but meteorites from who knows where in the galaxy that have fallen from the sky!²**
- G. G. Brent Dalrymple explains where the great age of the earth comes from saying:

"The best value for the age of the earth is based on the time required for the isotopic composition of lead in the oldest (2.6-3.5 billion years) terrestrial ores, of which there are currently only four [235U to 207Pb to 238U to 206Pb], to evolve from the primordial composition, recorded in meteoritic troilite, to the composition at the time (measured independently) the ores separated from their parent rocks in earth's mantle. These calculations result in ages for the earth of 4.42 to 4.56 billion years with a best value of 4.54 billion years."³

In other words, they measure the radioactive material in meteorites to determine the age of the earth! If that paragraph above was difficult to understand, we will attempt to explain in simpler terms below how old earth advocates arrived at their ever-changing age of the earth.

²<http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-earthage.html>

³G. Brent Dalrymple, "So How Old Is the Earth, Anyway?," NCSE Reports, Volume 11, No. 4 (Winter 1991), pp. 17., also see: G. Brent Dalrymple, The Age of the Earth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). Taken from <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-earthage.html>.

II. **DATING METHODS**

There are a variety of dating methods that can be used. Some are scientifically proven to be accurate and others are scientifically proven to not be accurate. Let's begin by first considering some common dating methods.

A. **Initial Facts to Remember!**

1. Rocks, fossils, and ancient organic matter used in radiometric dating does not come with a label that says, "this sample came into being in 3,000 BC." There is no label. When scientists say with certainty, "This rock or bone is xxx amount of years old" we should ask, "How do you know that it is that old?"
2. What you will discover, as you study this subject, is that some scientists, using faulty dating methods and unproven assumptions, have *supposedly* determined, with relative certainty, the age of various rock layers and strata in the geologic column or the remains of certain bones, fossils, or ancient organic materials. Then they use these predetermined and inaccurate dates to date other samples thereby perpetuating their errors!
3. It must be kept in mind that the many assumptions used for popular dating methods are just that – assumptions. An assumption is an opinion or guess. But even educated unproven opinions and guesses fall outside the realm of hard science. Science requires measurability and repeatability.
4. We must realize that evolutionists, as well as creationists have assumptions and biases. Our assumptions color how we look at and interpret evidence. Though both old earth evolutionists and young earth creationists have the same evidence, they interpret it differently because of their biases and assumptions.
5. It must be understood that old earth evolutionists have purposefully sorted the evidence so that it appears to support an old age of the earth. Let's say a Woolly Mammoth is found in the ice of Siberia and several samples are taken from it so that they can be dated. The tusks date to be 100,000 years, the fur, 18,000 years, and a leg bone to be 10,000 years. Which is correct?

Obviously the mammoth didn't die over 100,000 years! When readings like this are found, instead of stating the obvious "Carbon-

14 dating is not accurate,” the dates that don’t fit the evolutionists preconceived notions are thrown out and labeled as corrupted. And the date that closely represents what they have previously believed to be true is said to be accurate. This is the kind of evidence tampering that has consistently been used by evolutionists.

6. Finally, remember, *science only operates in the present, not the past*. When dealing with the past, unproven assumptions must be made and relied upon. Young earth creationists and old earth evolutionists have different unproven assumptions. The creationist assumes God’s Word is true, the evolutionist assumes that his guesses about the past are true.

B. Radiometric Dating

Radiometric dating is based on some simple principles that are not too hard to understand if you stay away from the jargon. Here is a simplified explanation of how radiometric dating works. There are certain elements that are radio active. They contain what are called *radioactive isotopes*. Isotopes are tiny particles of unstable charged matter. Think of them as little batteries that, when new, are fully charged. These little isotope batteries run down over time and lose their charge. The second law of thermodynamics requires that this happens. They “decay” from an unstable state to a stable uncharged state. When a radio active isotope has lost half of its original charge, it is said to have reached its “half-life.”

Scientists can measure the half-life of radioactive isotopes with a fair degree of accuracy. Common radioactive isotopes used for dating are listed below:

- Carbon-14 has a half life of 5,700 years and decays into Nitrogen-14.
- Potassium-40 has a half life of 1.248 billion years and decays into Argon-40.
- Rubidium-87 has half life of 49 billion years and decays into Strontium-87.
- Uranium-238 has a half life of 4.468 billion years and it decays into Lead-206.

All radiometric dating is calculated on the same basic principle. Measure the sample to be tested and see how much of the *parent isotope* (fully charged and unstable) has decayed into the *daughter isotope* (uncharged and stable). That ratio can then be measured, compared to the known half-life and an age determined – assuming all assumptions are correct!

1. **Carbon-14 Dating:** Carbon-14 is formed when cosmic rays from the sun strike nitrogen in the earth's atmosphere. The Carbon-14 is then absorbed by plants, by animals and people that eat plants or eat other animals that eat plants. Thus Carbon-14 is found in all living things and that is why only organic samples are used for Carbon dating, things like bones, wood, tusks, teeth, etc. Samples to be dated are cleaned with acid to remove all contaminants, then burned, and the ratio of Carbon-14 to Nitrogen-14 is then measured with a mass spectrometer and a date calculated.
 2. **Potassium-Argon Dating:** Potassium occurs in nature from dissolved salts, like sea water. However, in its pure state it oxidizes rapidly when exposed to air and reacts explosively when exposed to water. Certain rocks that contain potassium are dated by melting the rock sample and using a mass spectrometer to calculate the ratio of unstable Potassium-40 in a rock to the amount of stable Argon-40. If more Argon is present they assume the rock is older and that the Potassium has decayed for a longer period of time. If there is little Argon and more potassium, they assume the date is younger.
 3. **Rubidium-Strontium and Uranium-Lead Dating:** The process is basically the same as the methods cited above. A sample is collected, carefully kept from corruption, washed, crushed, melted, or processed and then the ratio of the parent isotopes to the daughter isotopes are determined with a mass spectrometer and an age is calculated.
 4. There are a variety of other radio metric dating methods but the methods listed above are most common. They all work off the same principle and unproven assumptions.
- C. **Dendrochronology:** This is a simple and very reliable method of dating. Every year trees produce growth rings under the bark layer. A 200 year old tree will have 200 rings. On a wet year the rings are thicker and on a drought year thinner. The age of a tree can be determined in two basic

ways, cutting down a tree near the ground, and counting the rings, or by using a special drill bit to extract a core sample from the tree. The rings from the core sample are then counted and the tree's age determined.

Trees can also be used to date old wood found in ancient structures or archeological sites. For instance, a beam in an ancient church might be sampled and a core extracted from it to determine the age of the church. First the rings can be counted, but this isn't much help because it doesn't tell you how old the tree itself is or when it was cut down. However, the rings can be compared with other known tree samples in that area. Since the very wet and drought year tree rings form a kind of patterned code, with certain numbers of years between unique weather years, the sample from the beam can sometimes be placed in the known historical sequence.

- D. **Chronometer Dating:** Chronometers are natural processes that can be measured like the decay of the earth's magnetic field, or the sediments on the ocean floor, or space dust on the moon. Scientists have found many natural processes that have a constant rate of increase or decrease over a specific length of time.

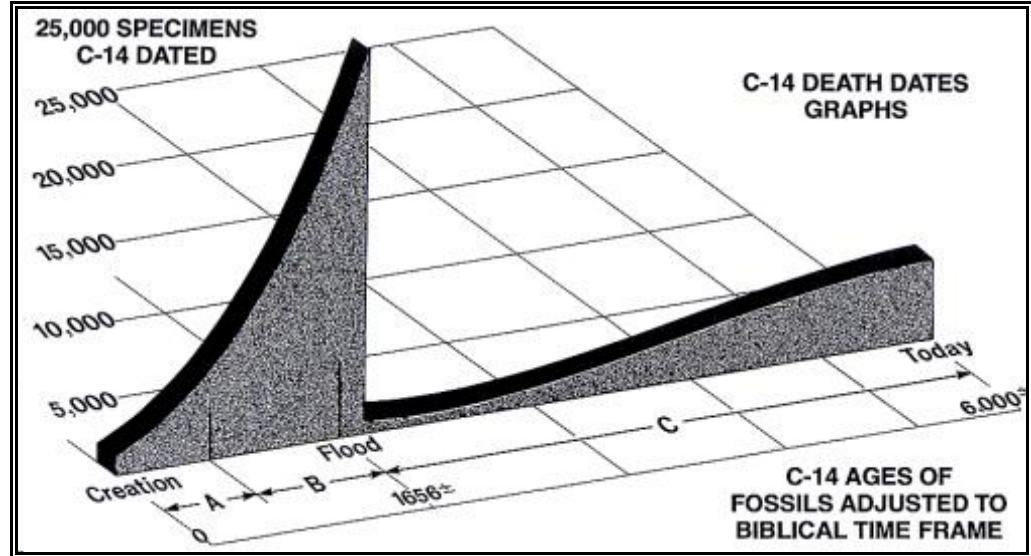
For example, consider the world population. There are almost 7 billion people on earth and we have been measuring the population for some time, so we have a good idea of how the population has increased over the years. But what if, after determining the rate of population increase, we were to go backwards until we got to the first person? Many people have done this. They have considered the average mortality of people, length of generations and many other factors and no matter what you do to adjust and tweak the generations and life spans, you can't make the population of the world back further than 10,000 years!

Though chronometers, like all dating methods, have their assumptions, when we look at all of them together, they argue strongly for a young age of the earth. The following lesson will be devoted exclusively to examining various chronometers, which for the most part are kept out of text books because they argue against evolution's claim of millions and billions of years. More on chronometers in a lesson to follow. But for now let's take a closer look at the assumptions that evolutionists make in order to arrive at millions and billions of years and an old age of the earth.

III. **ASSUMPTIONS OLD EARTH SCIENTISTS MUST MAKE IN ORDER TO COME UP WITH DATES OF MILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF YEARS**

- A. **An overarching assumption scientists make is that their ability to determine truth is greater than the reliability of the Word of God.** Their ever-changing observations and theories are often touted as “truths” and “facts” but are often rejected by the next generation of scientists. Most scientists assume that scientific investigation is more reliable than the inspired and infallible Word of God.
- B. **Scientists do not know the original amount of unstable isotopes, “fully charged batteries,” that were present in any given rock or fossil sample when it was formed.** They assume the original amount of unstable isotopes in a given sample.
- C. **Scientists do not know how much of the daughter material was already in the rock at its formation and how much came from the decay of the unstable isotopes in the rock itself.** Yet they assume all of the daughter material came from the decay of the radioactive isotopes.
- D. **Scientists don’t know how quickly unstable atoms decayed in the past for they can only measure the decay in the present.** There is hard scientific evidence showing that in the past, radioactive isotopes decayed at an accelerated rate.⁴
- E. **Scientists don’t know if Carbon-14 has always entered the atmosphere of the earth at the same rate.** They can only measure the amount of Carbon-14 in the present. They assume the rate has stayed the same. The Bible says that when God created the earth there was water in the expanse or firmament above and below the earth (**Gen. 1:7**). It also says that the floodgates of the sky or the windows of heaven were opened up. There appears to have been a thick vapor canopy around the earth before the flood. If this is what the text means, we would expect that before the flood very little Carbon-14 would be formed. We would expect that anything older than 4,000 years old, the time of the flood, would give a false reading of great age (very little Carbon-14). Thus any pre-flood samples would have significantly less amounts of Carbon-14 in them compared to post-flood samples.

⁴See Dr. Andrew Snelling’s article, “Does Radiometric Dating Prove the Earth Is Old?”
<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/does-radiometric-dating-prove>



Dennis Gordon Lindsay, *The Dismantling of Evolutionism's Sacred Cow : Radiometric Dating*

- F. Dr. Andrew Snelling, research director at Answers In Genesis, makes this important statement about assumptions:

Contrary to Scripture, many geologists claim that radiometric "clocks" show rocks to be millions of years old. However, to read any clock accurately we must know where the clock was set at the beginning. It's like making sure that an hourglass clock was set with all the sand in the top bowl at the beginning. However, no geologists were present when the earth and its many rock layers were formed, so they cannot know where the radiometric clocks were set at the beginning.

Also, we have to be sure that the clock has ticked at the same rate from the beginning until now. No geologists have been observing the radiometric clocks for millions of years to check that the rate of radioactive decay has always been the same as the rate today. To the contrary, we now have impeccable evidence that radioactive decay rates were greatly sped up at some point during the past, for example, during the global catastrophic Genesis Flood.⁵

⁵This comes from a series of articles, originally published in *Creation* magazine, and posted on the Answers in Genesis website at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v5/n2/radiometric-dating>

IV. ASSUMPTIONS YOUNG EARTH SCIENTISTS MAKE TO ARRIVE AT A YOUNG AGE OF THE EARTH

- A. **Young earth creationists assume the Bible is God’s inerrant, infallible authoritative Word.**
- B. **Young earth creationists assume that God can speak with authority on the origins of the universe, world, and all living things because He was there and created everything.**
- C. **Young earth creationists assume that because modern day scientists weren’t around in the past, are biased, and often err because they don’t have all the information, that they must submit whatever so-called fallible evidence they do find, to the infallible Word of God. God, who was there, isn’t biased, never errs, and has all the information.**
- D. **Young earth creationists assume that one must be honest with the data received from hard science and declare it even if it argues against what they believe or know to be true from the Word of God. They may assume it is wrong if it contradicts the Word of God, but they will report their findings regardless and not be dishonest by tampering with the evidence they find.**

V. SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE AGAINST THE RELIABILITY OF DATING METHODS TRUSTED BY EVOLUTIONISTS

If you had a very fine wrist watch that was broken and the hands no longer moved, it would still be accurate twice a day! Yet you would be foolish to rely on a broken wrist watch. Radiometric dating is broken for it is based on many unproven assumptions. Yet even if the unproven assumptions are assumed to all be true, by faith, with no scientific evidence to validate them, there is hard science that proves beyond attestation that radiometric dating is unreliable and not to be trusted. Some examples are given below.

- A. **The Below examples were taken from Dennis Gordon Lindsay’s work, *The Dismantling of Evolutionism’s Sacred Cow: Radiometric Dating*.⁶**

⁶Dennis Gordon Lindsay, *The Dismantling of Evolutionism’s Sacred Cow: Radiometric Dating* (Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations, 1999). Lindsay says of his examples, “Many of the examples listed have been drawn from the *Creation Research Society* quarterly journals (6/74 & 12/83), which provide over 400 instances of radiometric dates out of whack.”

1. Live Penguins from the Antarctic were tested by C-14 and dated at 3,000 years old!
2. Freshly killed seals have been dated at 1,300 years and mummified seals no more than 30 years old have been dated to be 4,600 years.
3. Shells of living mollusks (snails, etc.) have been dated by C-14 at ages of up to 2,300 years.
4. The hair on the Woolly mammoth yielded a carbon-14 age of 26,000 years, but the peaty moss in which it was preserved was dated to be 5,600 years old! Lindsay says, “Even a child can see the “mammoth” mistake made here.” ☺
5. Muscle tissue from beneath the scalp of a mummified musk ox found frozen in Fairbanks, Alaska, yielded a radiocarbon age of 24,000 years, but the radiocarbon age of the hair from that same animal produced an age of 7,200. Lindsay quotes Wayne Jackson as commenting on this, “That would suggest that the ox wandered around bald for some 16,800 years—then finally grew hair. For some of you there is yet hope!” I would add that the ox wandered around dead for 16,800 years and then grew hair!
6. Wood from living trees has been dated at 10,000 years using Carbon-14.
7. Lindsay mentions a very interesting case when Carbon-14 readings were not what scientists expected:

An example of how meteors have affected C-14 readings occurred in Siberia on June 30, 1908. It is documented in the Readers Digest, August 1977, “Riddle of the Great Siberian Explosion.” According to reports, the Carbon-14 measurements of tree rings around the world were greatly altered as a result of the blast.

How can one measure any sample and calculate the age correctly if there were major environmental changes in the past? The C-14 system depends on the idea that there have not been catastrophic events in the past.

8. One particular piece of wood found on Mt. Ararat, and believed possibly to be from Noah’s Ark, was dated by five independent laboratories. Each gave a different C-14 date.
9. Basalt rock, believed to be 2–26 million years old, taken from a lava flow in Nigeria and subjected to different radiometric dating methods yielded these results:

Same Sample Measured With 3 Different Methods	
Method A	By fission tracks analysis: less than 30 million years old
Method B	By potassium/argon: 95 million years old
Method C	By uranium/lead: 750 million years old

10. A historically documented 200-year-old lava flow in Hawaii yielded radiometric dates of 22 million years.
11. Consider the chart below listing examples of known lava flows that have been dated with the Potassium-Argon method (K-Ar).

Potassium Argon Dating of Known Lava Flows		
Lava Flow	Known Age	K-Ar Date
A. Hualalei, Hawaii	81 years	400,000 to 3.3 billion
B. Salt Lake Crater, Oahu	81 years	1.1 million to 2.96 billion
C. Mount Etna, Sicily	171 years	150,000 years
D. Sunset Crater, Arizona	904 years	220,000 years

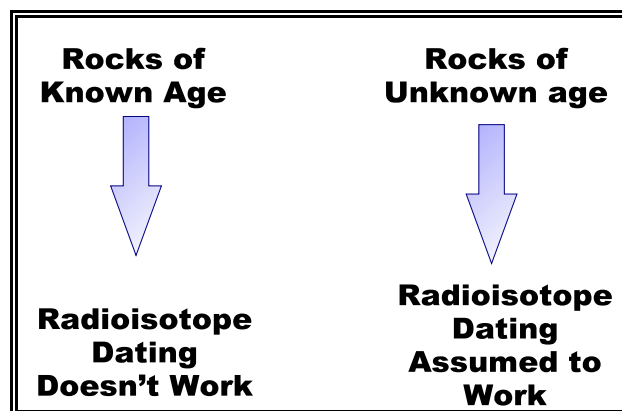
12. Ten rock samples from the Azores Islands known to be of a very young age gave dates from 100 million to 10.5 billion years.

13. Twenty-two rock samples, supposedly from the “Tertiary Age” (supposedly 65 million years by evolutionary reckoning), produced dates from 70 million years to 3.3 billion years.
14. Lindsay describes a classic example of evidence tampering when he writes:

In July of 1969, Richard Leakey (one of the foremost evolutionary anthropologists in the world) sent samples of volcanic ash to London for dating his newest discovery, “Skull 1470.” Using the potassium-argon method of dating, a date of 220 million years came forth. This was immediately regarded as an impossibly high figure for the emergence of man’s ancestors. It simply did not agree with the evolutionary time chart.

So another sample of the soil surrounding Skull 1470 was sent so that it could be submitted for RMD analysis. This time an age of 2.6 million years appeared. Since this was acceptable, it is the age now used for this fossil. In other words, evolutionists just keep trying until their method yields an age somewhere in the ballpark of the age their chart shows. Any date yielded that is outside of the ballpark must be considered contaminated, and thus of no value.⁷

15. John Morris in his book, *The Young Age of Earth*, sums up the problem with radiometric dating in a simple chart:



⁷ All data from this section was taken from Dennis Gordon Lindsay, *The Dismantling of Evolutionism's Sacred Cow: Radiometric Dating* (Dallas, TX: Christ for the Nations, 1999).