

The Age of the Earth

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” 2 Peter 3:3-4

While these introductory Bible verses may not be referring specifically to modern uniformitarian ideas that current rates and processes have been the same throughout history, there are many today who similarly scoff at the Bible’s account of history, denying Noah’s flood, and ascribing vast ages to the earth and universe. Many believe the idea that the earth is around 4.6 billion years old.

Comparison

While many with an evolutionary worldview claim the earth is billions of years old, the Bible’s history seems to indicate otherwise. If you add up genealogies, kings’ reigns, and other dates mentioned in the Bible, it adds up to around 6,000 years, in total, of earth history. These are obviously very different numbers!

This raises a question. Is the Bible’s history at odds with scientific findings? Not at all, but it is indeed at odds with many scientists’ interpretations of scientific findings. Everyone has a worldview through which they interpret scientific evidence. No one is an unbiased seeker of truth. At the same time, we can evaluate whether a worldview can explain the evidence well or not. Let’s look at several examples of evidence that fit especially well with a biblical time scale and a relatively young earth.

Salt in the Oceans

Today’s oceans contain large amounts of salt. The level of salinity, though, is not constant. Salt is continually being added through things like erosion and hydrothermal vents. It is continually being removed through things like sea spray and certain clays and minerals that absorb it, but it is being added much faster than it is being removed.

At the rate the ocean’s salinity is increasing, starting with no salt present, the current salinity could have been reached in 42 million years at today’s rates. This is vastly smaller than the 3 billion years the oceans are often claimed to have existed. Of course, it is also vastly larger than the Bible’s roughly 6,000 years. However, it’s likely that God created the oceans salty in the beginning, and Noah’s flood would have increased the salt addition drastically, perfectly explaining the present-day level of salinity. 1

Continental Erosion

Just from measurements of the yearly amount of sediment carried by rivers to the ocean, the average height of the continents above sea level would erode flat in around 9.6 million years.² At the same time, it is claimed that continental uplift offsets this erosion, but that would only

provide new igneous rock. Yet we still have sedimentary rock layers that are claimed to be hundreds of millions of years old. Why haven't they eroded away if they are that old?

C-14 in Diamonds

Carbon-14 is a radioactive element that decays over time into nitrogen-14, a stable element. It is produced in the atmosphere, some of it being absorbed by plants and consumed by animals and humans. It decays through a process measured in terms of "half-life," which is the amount of time for half of the remaining carbon-14 to decay into nitrogen-14. The half-life of C-14 is 5,730 years. With this half-life, theoretically, after 50,000, or with a very generous estimate, 100,000 years, there should be no detectable C-14 left. This is part of the reason that evolutionary scientists generally do not use the ratio of C-14 to try to date things they think are millions of years old, like dinosaurs. What's fascinating is that detectable amounts of C-14 have been discovered in diamonds. These diamonds are often claimed to be from one to three billion years old.³

Lunar Recession

Our moon is receding from the earth at a rate of around one and a half inches per year. This is caused by tidal friction. Basically, the gravitational pull of the moon on the oceans of the earth causes them to bulge upward, forming tides. Since the earth rotates faster than the moon orbits, the 'bulge' sort of outruns the moon, and the slight gravitational pull it exerts back on the moon causes it to speed up slightly, causing it to orbit progressively farther out.

So, what ramifications does this have on the moon's age? Often evolutionary scientists assign an age of 4.5 billion years to the moon. One question we can ask is, at a rate of one and a half inches per year, how much closer to the earth would the moon have been 4.5 billion years ago? It may be the wrong question, though, because less than 1.5 billion years ago the moon would have been in contact with the earth.⁴ Even before that point, imagine the size the tides would be! To put it mildly, it wouldn't have been very conducive to life evolving. But at the same rate of one and a half inches per year, 6,000 years ago the moon would have been well within a mile of its current distance, with nothing noticeably different in its effect on the tides.

Relevance

So, why does it matter how old the earth is? Isn't it just an unimportant side issue? No. It really comes down to a question of authority. Who is the authority? Is it God and His Word, or fallible scientists? If we don't believe the Bible in one area, why should we believe it in other areas? And conversely, if the Bible is true in the first part, we can trust the rest as well, especially where it tells how we can have a right relationship with our Creator through faith in Jesus Christ.

~Denton Ford

Endnotes

1. Andrew A. Snelling, "Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation & the Flood" (Dallas, Texas: Institute for Creation Research, 2009), p. 879-881
2. Andrew A. Snelling, "Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation & the Flood" (Dallas, Texas: Institute for Creation Research, 2009), p. 881-883
3. L. Vardiman et al., eds., John R. Baumgardner, "RATE II: Radioisotopes and the Age of The Earth: Results of a Young-Earth Creationist Research Initiative, (Volume II)", (San Diego, CA: Institute for Creation Research and the Creation Research Society, 2005)
4. Dr. Jason Lisle, "Taking Back Astronomy: The Heavens Declare Creation" (Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books, 2006), p.55