

# “Young-Earth Creationist View Summarized & Defended”

by Terry Mortenson, MDiv, PhD

## Abstract

There is a great amount of controversy in the church today regarding evolution and the age of the earth. Many competing views attract the attention of Christians producing great confusion and leading many Christians to conclude that it just doesn't matter. In this article, I will explain and give a brief defense of the young-earth creationist view as the only proper understanding of Scripture. All other views are compromise with error. I will also explain some of the reasons why this matters for all Christians.

A longer paper was originally published in *Answers Research Journal* in 2009 as [Systematic Theology Texts and the Age of the Earth](#) and is summarized here with permission and for ease of use. This [pdf](#) of the shorter document may be particularly useful as a class handout.

Young-earth creationists believe that the creation days of *Genesis 1* were six literal (24-hour) days, which occurred 6,000–12,000 years ago.<sup>1</sup> They believe that about 2,300–3,300 years before Christ, the surface of the earth was radically rearranged by Noah's Flood. All land animals and birds not in Noah's ark (along with many sea creatures) perished, many of which were subsequently buried in the Flood sediments. Therefore, creationists believe that the global, catastrophic Flood was responsible for *most* (but not all) of the rock layers and fossils (i.e., some rock layers and possibly some fossils were deposited before the Flood, while other layers and fossils were produced in postdiluvian localized catastrophic sedimentation events or processes).

The biblical arguments in support of this view can be briefly summarized as follows.<sup>2</sup>

1. Genesis is history, not poetry,<sup>3</sup> parable, prophetic vision, or mythology. This is seen in the Hebrew verbs used in Genesis 1,<sup>4</sup> the fact that Genesis 1–11 has the same characteristics of historical narrative as in Genesis 12–50, most of Exodus, much of Numbers, Joshua, 1 and 2 Kings, etc. (which are discernibly distinct from the characteristics of Hebrew poetry, parable, or prophetic vision), and the way the other biblical authors and Jesus treat Genesis 1–11 (as literal history).<sup>5</sup>
2. The very dominant meaning of *yôm* in the Old Testament is a literal day, and the context of Genesis 1 confirms that meaning there.<sup>6</sup> *Yôm* is defined in its two literal senses in verse 5. It is repeatedly used with a number (one day, second day, etc.) and with evening and morning, which elsewhere in the OT always means a literal day. It is defined again literally in verse 14 in relation to the movement of the heavenly bodies.
3. God created the first animate and inanimate things supernaturally and instantly. They were fully formed and fully functioning. For example, plants, animals, and people were mature adults ready to reproduce naturally “after their kinds.” When God said “let there

be . . . ” He did not have to wait millions of years for things to come into existence. He spoke, and things happened immediately (*Psalm 33:6–9*).

4. The order of creation in Genesis 1 contradicts the order of events in the evolution story in at least 30 points. For example, the Bible says the earth was created before the sun and stars, just the opposite of the big bang theory. The Bible says that fruit trees were created before any sea creatures and that birds were created before dinosaurs (which were made on Day 6, since they are land animals), exactly the opposite of the evolution story. The Bible says the earth was covered completely with water before dry land appeared, and then it was covered again at the Flood. Evolution theory says the earth has never been covered with a global ocean, and dry land existed before the first seas.<sup>7</sup>
5. *Exodus 20:8–11* resists all attempts to add millions of years anywhere in or before Genesis 1 because Exodus 20:11 says that God created everything in six days. The day-age view is ruled out because the plural form of the Hebrew word for day (*yôm*) is used in both parts of the commandment. The days of the Jewish work-week are the same as the days of Creation Week. God could have used several other words or phrases here or in Genesis 1, if He meant to say “work six days because I created in six long, indefinite periods.”<sup>8</sup> But He didn’t. These verses also rule out the gap theory or any attempt to add millions of years before Genesis 1:1 because God says He created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and *all that is in them* during the six days described in Genesis 1. He made nothing before those six days. It should also be noted that the fourth commandment is one of only a few of the Ten Commandments that contains a reason for the commandment. If God created over millions of years, He could have not given a reason for Sabbath-keeping or He could have given a theological or redemptive reason as He did elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>
6. In Jesus’ comments about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc., He clearly took the events recorded in Genesis as literal history, just as did all the New Testament writers. Several passages show that Jesus believed that man was created at the beginning of creation, not billions of years after the beginning (as all old-earth views imply), which confirms the young-earth creationist view (*Mark 10:6* and *13:19* and *Luke 11:50–51*).<sup>10</sup> His miracles also confirm the young-earth view. From His first miracle of turning water into wine (which revealed his glory as the Creator, cf. *John 2:11* and *1:1–5*) to all His other miracles (e.g., Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 1:40-42), His spoken word brought an immediate, instantaneous result, just as God’s word did in Creation Week.<sup>11</sup>
7. The Bible teaches that there was no animal or human death before the Fall of Adam and Eve. So the geological record of rock layers and fossils could not have been millions of years before the Fall. See my development of this point below.
8. The nature of God as revealed in Scripture rules out the idea that He created over millions of years. See below.
9. The global catastrophic Flood of Noah was responsible for producing most (but not all) of the geological record of rock layers and fossils.<sup>12</sup> Both a casual reading and careful exegesis show that this was not a local flood in Mesopotamia.<sup>13</sup> It is most unreasonable to

believe in a global, year-long Flood that left no geological evidence (or that it only left evidence in the low lands of the Fertile Crescent, as some suppose<sup>14</sup>). The global evidence of sedimentary rock layers filled with land and marine fossils is exactly the kind of evidence we would expect from Noah's Flood. If most of the rock record is the evidence of the Flood, then there really is no geological evidence for millions of years. But the secular geologists deny the global Flood of Noah's day because they deny that there is any geological evidence for such a flood. So, the fossiliferous rock record is either the evidence of Noah's Flood or the evidence of millions of years of geological change. It cannot be evidence of both. If we do not accept the geological establishment's view of Noah's Flood, then we cannot accept their view of the age of the earth. So, it is logically inconsistent to believe in both a global Noachian Flood and millions of years.

10. The genealogies of *Genesis 5* and 11 give us the years from Adam to Abraham, who virtually all scholars agree lived about 2000 BC. This sets the date of creation at approximately 6,000 years ago. Some young-earth creationists say the creation may be 10,000–12,000 years old, but the arguments for gaps of any length of time in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies are not compelling to this writer and many others. Although there are some biblical genealogies that do have names omitted (e.g., Matthew 1:1-17 or Mark 10:47), Freeman, Jones and Pierce present strong arguments for accepting these Genesis genealogies as tight chronologies with no gaps.<sup>15</sup>
11. For eighteen centuries the almost universal belief of the Church was that the creation began 4,000–5,000 years before Christ.<sup>16</sup> So, young-earth creationism is historic Christian orthodoxy. It was also Jewish orthodoxy at least up to the end of the first century of church history.<sup>17</sup> In light of this fact, it seems inconsistent with the truth-loving nature of God revealed in Scripture to think that for about 3,000 years God let faithful Jews and Christians (especially the writers of Scripture) believe that Genesis teaches a literal six-day creation about 6,000 years ago but that in the early nineteenth century He used godless men (scientists who rejected the Bible as God's inerrant Word) to correct the Church's understanding of Genesis.<sup>18</sup>

Two of the points above require further explanation because they are so important and are overlooked or resisted by nearly all Christians who have advocated the acceptance of millions of years over the past two centuries.

## Death before the Fall?

Simply put, the evolutionary idea of millions of years is diametrically opposed to the Bible's teaching about death.<sup>19</sup>

Evolution says that during the course of millions of years, death, bloodshed, suffering, disease and extinction eventually led to man's existence. The late evolutionary astrophysicist Carl Sagan said, "The secrets of evolution are time and death: time for the slow accumulations of favorable mutations, and death to make room for new species."<sup>20</sup> So when evolutionists talk about millions of years, they are not merely referring to a large number. They are imagining a long period of history in which certain events took place.

The fossils, which the evolutionists say represent millions of years of history, are a record not of life, but of death. And in many places around the world we see evidence of massive and violent carnage in fossil graveyards containing millions of former living creatures packed in high concentrations.

So, whether Christians believe in Neo-Darwinian evolution, or they believe that God supernaturally created different kinds of plants and animals occasionally during the course of millions of years, they are still adopting an evolutionary view of death when they accept millions of years.

But the biblical teaching on death is very clear and consistent from Genesis to Revelation. Genesis 1 says six times that God called the creation “good.” When He finished creation on Day 6, He called everything “very good.” That “very good” state is reflected partially by the fact that man, animals and birds were originally vegetarian, according to [Genesis 1:29–30](#). Plants are not living in the same sense as people, animals, and birds are, according to this and other Scripture passages. Plants are never called “living creatures” (Hebrew: *nephesh chayyah*), as people, land animals, birds and sea creatures are called ([Genesis 1:20–21, 24 and 30](#); [Genesis 2:7](#); [Genesis 6:19–20](#) and [Genesis 9:10–17](#)).<sup>21</sup> So plant “death” is not the same as animal or human death (cf. [Job 14:7–12](#), [John 12:24](#)).

Adam and Eve sinned, resulting in the judgment of God on the whole creation. Instantly Adam and Eve died spiritually, evidenced by their hiding from God. But they also began to die physically and Paul clearly had physical death in mind in [Romans 5:12](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:21–22](#) (as the context shows), when he says that death came into the human race through Adam’s sin. The serpent was cursed, along with other animals, resulting in a physical transformation. It is reasonable to assume that the other cursed animals were also altered physically in some way, either morphologically or at least behaviorally ([Genesis 3:14](#)). Eve was changed physically so as to have increased pain in child-birth ([Genesis 3:16](#)). And the ground itself was cursed ([Genesis 3:17–19](#)), a fact which was still on the minds of people 1,000 years later when Noah was born ([Genesis 5:29](#)).

The whole earth was cursed again at Noah’s Flood ([Genesis 8:22](#)). God also threatened and later executed curses on the land, crops and livestock of the Jews, as well as on the people themselves, on account of their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The whole creation now groans in bondage to corruption (because of the [Genesis 3](#) curse), waiting for the final act in the redemption of Christians—giving them immortal resurrected bodies ([Romans 8:19–25](#)).<sup>22</sup> When that redemptive event happens, we will see the restoration and redemption of all things ([Acts 3:21](#) and [Colossians 1:20](#)) to a state similar to the pre-Fall world. Then there will be no more carnivorous behavior ([Isaiah 11:6–9](#)) and no disease, suffering, or death ([Revelation 21:3–5](#)) because there will be no more Curse ([Revelation 22:3](#)).<sup>23</sup> To accept millions of years of animal death before the Creation and Fall of man contradicts and destroys not only the Bible’s teaching on death but also undermines its teaching on the full redemptive work of Christ.

If God cursed the earth with thorns after Adam sinned (as [Genesis 3:18](#) says, “both thorns and thistles shall grow for you”),<sup>24</sup> then why do we find fossil thorns in rocks that the evolutionists claim are about 350 million years old?<sup>25</sup> If the millions of years are true, then God lied. If

[Genesis 3:18](#) is true, then the evolution claims about millions of years are a lie. Were arthritis and cancer in the “very good” world before man sinned? If the evolutionists’ dating methods are correct, the answer must be “yes.” Many kinds of disease have been found in the fossil record, including arthritis, abscesses, and tumors in dinosaur bones dated to be 110 million years old. A researcher of these bones tells us that “diseases look the same through time ... it makes no difference whether this is now or a hundred million years ago.”<sup>26</sup> There is also considerable evidence of rickets, syphilis, dental disease, etc., in human fossil bones that evolutionists date to be tens or hundreds of thousands of years before any biblically plausible date for Adam.<sup>27</sup> If the Bible is true, then those dates are false and there was no pre-Fall death and disease.

Evolutionists believe that over the course of a half billion years there were five major extinction events/periods,<sup>28</sup> when 65–90 percent of all species living at those particular times went extinct. They also claim many lesser extinction events/periods. If this was the way the creation was for millions of years, then what impact on the creation did the Fall have? None. Contrary to what the Bible says, the Fall would have only caused spiritual death in man. In fact, we can go further and say that if the millions of years of death, disease and extinction really did occur, then that “very good” creation was considerably *worse* than the world we now inhabit where habitats are polluted or destroyed and creatures are brought to extinction due to human sin. We have never seen in human history<sup>29</sup> the kind of mass-kill, extinction events that the evolutionary geologists say occurred before man came into existence (unless, that is, we accept the global Flood of Noah’s day, but that is the very event that old-earth proponents reject).

So, if the millions of years really happened, then the Fall actually improved the world from what it was in the “very good” pre-Fall creation. In this case, the Curse at the Fall would actually be a blessing!

I conclude then that if the Bible’s teaching on death, the Curse and the final redemptive work of Christ is true, as it surely is, then the millions-of-years idea must be a grand myth, really a lie. Conversely, if the millions of years really happened, then the Bible’s teaching on these subjects must be utterly false, which is devastating for the gospel.

## **The Nature of God**

Closely related to this issue of death is the incompatibility of the idea of millions of years with the character of God, as revealed in Scripture.<sup>30</sup>

The events of creation in Genesis 1 were clearly miraculous. God spoke and things immediately came into existence, as both Genesis 1 and [Psalm 33:6–9](#) state. The emphatic repetition of “and it was so” and “God saw that it was good” and “there was evening and there was morning, the Xth day” strongly indicate this. Also, it is difficult to imagine how God could say “let there be light” and then need to wait millions of years for light to appear. Similarly, Adam surely did not sleep for days, weeks, months, years, or millions of years while God made Eve. These facts support the conclusion that all the other divine acts in Genesis 1 were essentially instantaneous or occurred in a miraculously short period of time, on the respective days they are reported to have

occurred. Conversely, there is nothing in the text that indicates that thousands or millions of years would have been required for God to accomplish His objective in each act of creation.

It is also clear in Genesis 1 that God supernaturally created the first plants, sea creatures, birds, land animals and the first human couple because the description of those events is stated in a way that contrasts with the description of how other such creatures would come into existence after the original ones—i.e., by the natural growth of seeds in the fruit of the first plants or by the sexual reproduction of the first animal and human pairs. Also, the nature of all God’s later miracles in the Bible and the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels were instantaneous. So, again the way God created requires no vast stretches of time.

If the gap theory is true, then what kind of God is it who would create the earth and all forms of life, except man, and let them live and die for millions of years and then destroy them all (in a supposed flood associated with Satan’s fall) before He recreated the world with creatures very similar to the ones He had already destroyed?

If the day-age view or framework hypothesis or any other old-earth view is true, then what kind of God is it who would create the earth instantly and then leave it covered with water for millions of years and then create dry land and plants and let them produce for millions of years before He made the sun? And what kind of God would make the sun, moon, and stars with the purpose of enabling man to measure the passage of time, but then wait billions of years before He made man to measure time periods? That makes God out to be quite foolish.

Or if we reject the order of events in Genesis 1 and say that the evolutionary order of appearance of the different creatures and the time-scale are correct, we have other theological problems. What kind of God would create the earth 4.5 billion years ago and let it exist for one billion years before He made the first microscopic creatures (protozoans<sup>31</sup>) and then waited another 2.875 billion years before He made the first metazoans<sup>32</sup> and then waited another 625 million years before He made Adam, who was the ultimate goal of His creation and was made to rule over all the animals, most of whom lived and died before Adam was created?<sup>33</sup> This is a bizarre, wasteful God, and nothing like the wise and omnipotent Creator revealed in Scripture.

And if God really created in the order and over the long time-scales that evolutionists claim, does this not make God a deceiver or a liar or at least a very incompetent communicator when He inspired Moses to write the Genesis 1 account of the order of His creative acts, which is so contradictory to the evolutionary order of events of history?

Furthermore, as we noted before, at the end of Creation Week God called everything that He had made “very good.” But could the God of Scripture really describe as “very good” a fossil graveyard of thousands of feet of sedimentary rocks covering the whole earth and containing billions of fossils of former living things? Could He really call cancer (as seen in dinosaur bones) “very good”? Could He call thorns and thistles “very good,” when in Genesis 3 He says they are the result of His curse? If God called all this death “very good” and if God told Adam that thorns were a consequence of his sin when in fact they existed long before he was created, then again God lied or He is totally incompetent in His use of language. But the biblical God is the God of

truth, and as the Author of all language He is fully capable of saying exactly what He means. It is Satan who is a liar and a master deceiver.

Additionally, if God created through a process (either progressive creation or theistic evolution) that involved millions of years of death, then He is very different from the God revealed in the post-Fall world. The God of the post-Fall world commanded His people (the Israelites) to take care of their animals and give them a day of rest (*Exodus 20:10* and *23:12*). The post-Fall God commanded them to help lost or trapped animals (*Exodus 23:4–5*). That God told them not to be cruel to their animals (such as muzzling an ox while it was threshing, *Deuteronomy 25:4*). The post-Fall God says that “a righteous man has regard for the life of his beast, but the compassion of the wicked is cruel” (*Proverbs 12:10*). That God says that He cares for the creatures of the earth in His fallen, cursed creation (*Psalms 104:14–16* and *27–28*, *Psalms 145:14–16*, *Psalms 147:9*, *Jonah 4:11*, *Matthew 6:26*, and *Luke 12:24*).<sup>34</sup>

If millions of years of death and extinction and disease really occurred, then God is like the wicked man of *Proverbs 12:10* and He was doing exactly the opposite of what He told the Jews to do. The acceptance of millions of years is an assault on the character of Almighty God.

If God created over those millions of years, then He clearly was not intelligent enough and powerful enough to create a world right in the first place. Either He lacked the sovereign power to control His creation so that it did not destroy most of His previous work or He intentionally created obstacles to hinder Himself from accomplishing His intention of making a very good world. And then all along the way He kept making creatures very similar to the creatures that He had just destroyed by intention or by incompetence and impotence. What a monstrous God this would be! He would be less competent than the most incompetent engineer or construction worker. And He would be grossly unjust and unrighteous compared to the God of Isaiah who said that when the knowledge of Him fills the earth, animals will not hurt or kill each other or people (*Isaiah 11:6–9* and *65:25*).<sup>35</sup> Such a cruel, bumbling, and weak God could not be trusted and would not be worthy of our worship.

And if these millions of years of death really occurred, then God’s Curse on creation really did nothing to the non-human creation, and His promises about the future cannot be trusted. In fact, in this case none of His Word can be trusted.

This point has not escaped the notice of non-Christians. The evolutionist philosopher, David Hull, is one of many who could be cited. He remarks on the implications of Darwinian evolution for the nature of God, but his comments equally apply to all old-earth views, even if we reject Darwinism as the explanation for the origin of the various forms of life. Hull reasons:

The problem that biological evolution poses for natural theologians is the sort of God that a Darwinian version of evolution implies. ... The evolutionary process is rife with happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, death, pain and horror. ... Whatever the God implied by evolutionary theory and the data of natural history may be like, he is not the Protestant God of waste not, want not. He is also not a loving God who cares about his productions. He is not even the awful God portrayed in the book of Job. The God of the Galápagos is careless, wasteful,

indifferent, almost diabolical. He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.<sup>36</sup>

In his opposition to the old-earth geological theories developing in the early nineteenth century, the Anglican minister, George Bugg, reasoned this way:

Hence then, we have arrived at the wanton and wicked notion of the Hindoos, *viz.*, that God has ‘*created and destroyed worlds as if in sport, again and again*’!! But will any Christian Divine who regards his Bible, or will any Philosopher who believes that the Almighty works no ‘superfluous miracles,’ and does nothing in vain, advocate the absurdity that a wise, just and benevolent Deity has, ‘numerous’ times, wrought miracles, and gone out of his usual way for the sole purpose of destroying whole generations of animals, that he might *create others* very like them, but yet differing a little from their predecessors!!<sup>37</sup>

Only young-earth creationism gives us a view that is consistent with the glory, wisdom, power, holiness, truthfulness, and omniscient intelligence of the God revealed through the pages of Scriptures. As the Bible presents them, the doctrines of death and the nature of God are utterly opposed to the millions-of-years view. If we believe the Bible’s teaching on death and the character of God, then we must completely reject all old-earth views being advocated by Christians.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

The Bible clearly teaches the young-earth creationist view of Genesis 1–11. That was the almost universal belief of the church for 1800 years. Progressive Creationism and Theistic Evolutionism in all their various forms (day-age view, gap theory, framework hypothesis, analogical days view, local flood view, etc.) are recent and novel interpretations that will not stand up to scrutiny with an open Bible. A growing body of overwhelming scientific evidence also shows that evolution and millions of years are religiously motivated myths masquerading as scientific fact.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, the literal history of Genesis 1-11 is absolutely foundational to the truth of the rest of the Bible and the gospel itself. Taking these early chapters of Genesis in any other way undermines God’s Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and over the past 200 years such compromises with evolution and millions of years have done incalculable damage to the spiritual health and evangelistic and missionary efforts of the Church. That compromise is one of the greatest, if not the greatest reason that Western Europe is now labeled “post-Christian” and Britain and America are rapidly approaching that spiritual state. Ultimately, the question of the age of the earth is a question of the truth and authority of Scripture. That’s why the age of the earth matters so much and why the church cannot compromise with millions of years (or evolution).