

The Biblical Age of the Earth

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The Calculation of the Age of the Earth According to the Bible

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1. Introduction

I am often being asked about the age of the Earth. The questioner is usually trying to ascertain why we believe in a “young” earth, compared to the traditional old-earth deep-time age of 4.6 billion years old.

A lot of detailed answers have been compiled, giving scientific reasons why we do not believe the traditional old-earth model. Other detailed answers exist, showing scientific evidence to be consistent with the biblical age of the earth. All of these answers are good, but this mini-book does not include them. The bibliography at the end of the book refers you to articles and books that address the scientific issues. This work is designed to address just one issue. There are those who say that the Bible does not give us an age for the earth. The purpose of this book is to show that it does, and to show how the calculation of the biblical age of the earth is done.

The actual calculation of the biblical age of the earth is quite simple. However, before I get to that section, I need to lay down a few ground rules that will explain why I have done the calculation the way that I have. If you are not interested in these ground rules, then skip straight to Chapter 5, which includes the calculations. However, the next three chapters of the book state these ground rules; these are described in brief below.

The label “Young Earth Creationist” is often used for people who disagree with the theory of evolution and who state that the earth must be 10,000 years old or younger. The reason for the figure of 10,000 years is often due to scientific evidence or to allow some slack in the interpretation of certain Bible passages, most notably Genesis chapters 5 and 11. For this reason, Chapter 2 explains why I would rather not use the label “young earth creationist,” preferring the term “biblical creationist,” as the actual issue is not the age of the earth but the authority of Scripture.

The calculation of the age of the earth involves a number of important assumptions, which I am confident are justifiable. The two main assumptions are that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 do not have any gaps in them. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I justify why I do not believe there are gaps in the Genesis 5 genealogy, and I do a similar job for the Genesis 11 genealogy in chapter 4.

Finally, a brief bibliography points the reader towards a number of articles and books that discuss the age of the earth, often using those scientific arguments, which I have deliberately left out of this book.

2. **Young Earth — Not the Issue**

Theistic Evolutionists and Old Earth Creationists will often use Scripture in their attempt to oppose the sort of views that we espouse at Creation Today. For example, they will sometimes quote Daniel 7:9.

*I watched till thrones were put in place, And the **Ancient of Days** was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. (emphasis added)*

The suggestion implied by using this verse is that God could not be described as the Ancient of Days, if we believe in a Young Earth. The fallacy of the argument lies in the understanding of what is young or ancient. When I was a child in primary (elementary) school, a teacher aged 30 would have been ancient. Nowadays, a 30-year-old teacher at my children's school appears very young to me! The perspective has changed.

Young Earth Creationists are called Young Earth Creationists because they believe the Earth is *only* 6,000 years old. Now, suppose I take you to see Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England. Would you be impressed? Even creationists would accept that Stonehenge is more than 3,000 years old. Would you look at it and say "that's young?" Of course not. You'd say that it is ancient.

Young Earth Creationists believe the Earth is 6,000 years old. That's a long time ago. That's very old. That's ancient!

It's not as ancient as 4.6 billion years, you might say. But the point is this: 4.6 billion years is not really best described as ancient. It is best described as inconceivable. Deep time is so vast that our heads cannot really comprehend it. That itself should tell us something important.

For these reasons, I do not like the label "Young Earth Creationist." I do not believe the Earth is young. I believe it is very old. I believe it is ancient, as old as 6,000 years old.

But where do I get that figure? I get it from the Bible. There are some creationists who try to use dating methods to produce an age of about 10,000 years. Don't get me wrong: True science is always consistent with the Bible. But science does not **prove** the Bible. We do not use science to interpret the Bible. If we do so, we are behaving exactly the same as the theistic evolutionist, merely using a different timescale. Instead, we use the Bible to interpret science, because we should use the Bible to influence our views on every subject.

So, instead of the term "Young Earth Creationist" I use the term Biblical Creationist. The YEC label refers to the relative age of the Earth—relative, that is, to an old evolutionary view. In other words, the definition of YEC only makes sense in the light of an evolutionary worldview. It is therefore a negative reaction to evolutionism, rather than a positive statement of what we believe and why we believe it. We do not believe in a world of about 10,000 years old or less, because we have found some science that appears to verify the Bible. We believe in a world of 6,000 years or so, because that's what the Bible teaches, and we are confident that genuine scientific evidence, properly interpreted, is in line with that.

3. No Gaps in Genesis 5

It is my assertion that there are no gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. Not every creationist has taken this position. My old friend, Monty White, for example, has suggested that the genealogies must contain gaps, though he concedes that the gaps cannot be stretched very far, as this would render the genealogies worthless¹. However, he stretches the genealogies far enough so that the patriarchs Shem and Peleg would not have been contemporary with Abraham. He offers this 'proof,' even though it is clear that the amount of time required to place the deaths of Shem and Peleg significantly before the birth of Abraham would add far too much time to the genealogies, and stretch them to limits that even he does not really want to accept. It would seem to me to be preferable to accept the contemporaneity of Shem and Peleg with Abraham than to stretch the genealogies.

There are, however, stronger exegetical reasons why there should be no gaps in either of these genealogies. These reasons differ for the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, so they will be treated separately. However, one general point can be made of both genealogies.

It has often been argued that there must be gaps in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies, because there are clearly gaps in the Matthew genealogy (Matthew 10). However, that is not to compare like with like. One feature that is special with Genesis 5 and 11 is that these genealogies contain numbers. We are told how old each father is when the relevant son is born, and how old they were when they died. Therefore, these genealogies can be rightly referred to as "chrono-genealogies." They contain not only genealogical descent, but also dates.

Gaps in the Genesis 5 chrono-genealogy would imply that some names of some generations are missing. However, we need to remember that the names have meanings. There are ten patriarchs in the Messianic Line in Genesis 5 from Adam to Noah. These names also appear in the first three verses of 1 Chronicles 1.

Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. (1 Chronicles 1:1-4)

The position of 1 Chronicles in the Jewish Old Testament is important. In the Jewish Bible, Chronicles comprises a single book, and it is the last book written and positioned in the Jewish canon. As such, the history that it contains can be seen to be an overview and almost a commentary on the rest of the Old Testament, and this distinguishes its purpose as somewhat different from the more traditionally historical books of Samuel and Kings. That might lead us to expect something remarkable from the opening words of Chronicles, yet all we get is this baldly stated list of names. However, I would argue that the meanings of the names are significant:

If we put these meanings together then the first three verses of 1 Chronicles 1 reads:

Man is appointed mortal sorrow, but the God who is to be praised shall come down, teaching that His death shall bring the weary rest.

This reads like a statement of the Gospel in the names of these patriarchs, but it clearly does not work unless the Genesis 5 chrono-genealogy contains no gaps.

¹ White, A.J.M. (1985), *How Old Is the Earth?*, (Welwyn, England: Evangelical Press), pages 21 – 30.

Jonathan Sarfati tackles the issue of the chrono-genealogies in his book, *Refuting Compromise*, which is a refutation of Christians who want to adopt “Old Earth” millions-of-years dates for creation. He takes a couple of pages, addressing the issue of where in Genesis 5 gaps could be inserted, if we believed in such gaps, and shows that there is actually no practical place where such gaps could be inserted¹.

Name	Meaning
Adam	Man
Seth	Appointed
Enosh	Mortal
Cainan	Sorrow
Mahalalel	God who is praised
Jared	Shall come down
Enoch	Teacher
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lamech	Weary
Noah	Rest

¹ Sarfati, J. (2004), *Refuting Compromise*, (Green Forest, AR: Master Books), pages 291–295. This reference refers to the first edition of the book, published by Master Books. The second edition is published by Creation Book Publishers, and the page numbers may be different from my copy.

4. No Gaps in Genesis 11

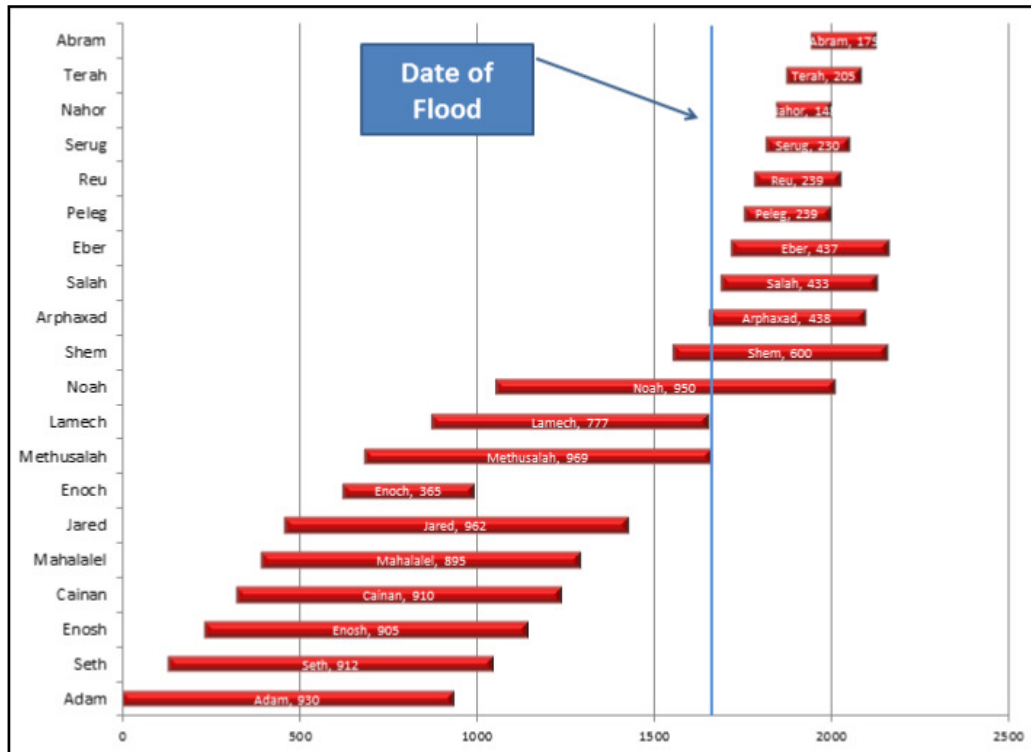
We have discussed the chrono-genealogies in general, and examined why there can be no gaps in the Genesis 5 genealogy. The first issue that strikes one when reading the Genesis 11 genealogy is that the ages are getting gradually smaller. For that reason, it seems to make sense to plot graphs of the genealogies. To do this, I have used Microsoft Excel 2010.

In the table below, the information from the genealogies has been arranged, so that ages and dates of birth and death can be calculated. The dates of birth are in years since creation. This is often referred to as years *Anno Mundi*—i.e., the year of the world.

	Gen	Name	Age when child born	Lived	Age at death	Birth
Genesis 5	1	Adam	130	930	930	0
	2	Seth	105	912	912	130
	3	Enosh	90	905	905	235
	4	Cainan	70	910	910	325
	5	Mahalalel	65	895	895	395
	6	Jared	162	962	962	460
	7	Enoch	65	365	365	622
	8	Methusalah	187	969	969	687
	9	Lamech	182	777	777	874
	10	Noah	502	950	950	1056
Genesis	11	Shem	100	500	600	1558
	12	Arphaxad	35	403	438	1658
	13	Salah	30	403	433	1693
	14	Eber	34	403	437	1723
	15	Peleg	30	209	239	1757
	16	Reu	32	207	239	1787
	17	Serug	30	200	230	1819
	18	Nahor	29	119	148	1849

These figures enable us to construct two charts that will help us better to understand the figures.

The first chart below shows the lives of each patriarch as bars, illustrating how they overlap. This illustrates the difficulty that some people have, as the patriarch Shem clearly outlives Abraham. Other creationists, among whom I count myself, do not see this as a problem, but rather a realistic statement of the events.

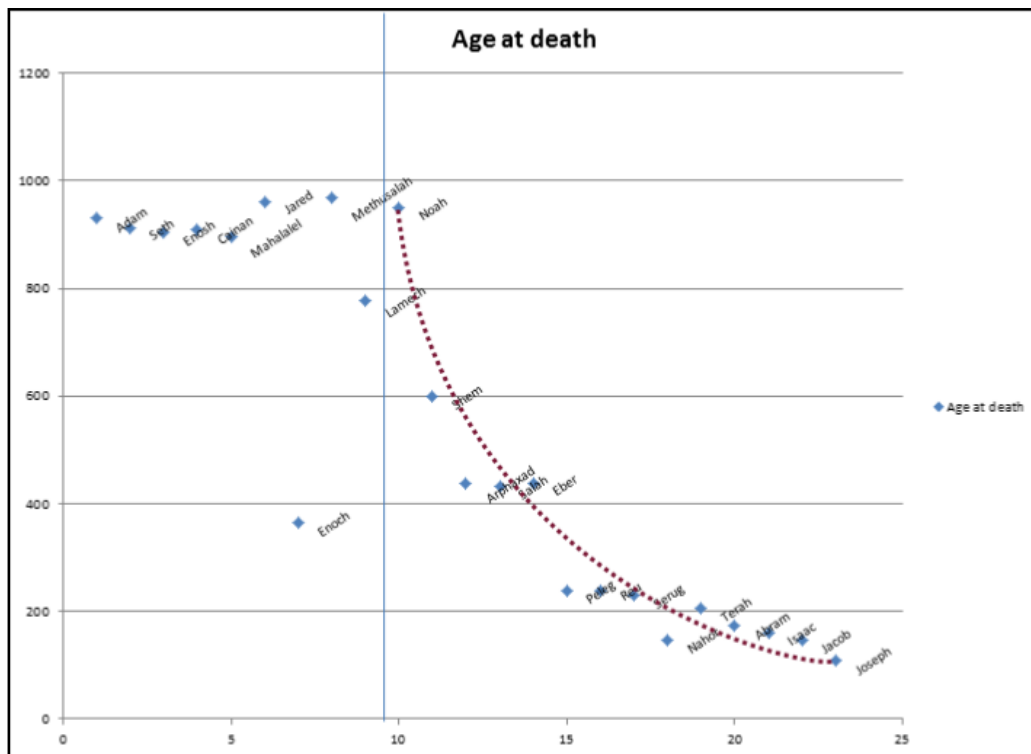


The vertical blue line represents the date of the Flood. Notice that the death of Methusaleh occurred in the same year that the Flood came in 1656AM. Arphaxad was born two years after the Flood.

In the next chart, I have arranged ages against generation. It can be noted that the pre-Flood ages are fairly constant. There are two exceptions to this. Enoch did not die, but was translated by God at the age of 365. Lamech, Noah's father, died just 5 years before the Flood, and his name means "weary." By a piece of pure conjecture on my part, I imagine that this could represent a lack of faith on Lamech's part, resulting in his early death at the comparatively young age of 777! However, I cannot prove that point, and I am not offering it as a theological point—merely an unsubstantiated opinion.

Much more significant to our present argument is the decay in ages after the Flood. If changed conditions after the Flood enabled the more rapid, and randomized, generation of age-reducing genetic mutations, we would expect a decay curve of this sort. The curve seems to resolve at around 70, which is, according to Psalm 90:10, the average expected lifespan today; an average that is confirmed by our current experience.

The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. (Psalms 90:10)



This decay curve has implications for the veracity and completeness of the Genesis 11 chrono-genealogy. If this chrono-genealogy had gaps in it, then this decay curve would not work. Consider, for example, the implication of this curve on the lifespan of Abraham. Abraham died at the age of 175.

Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. (Genesis 25:8)

Moses comments on Abraham's age. Compared to Noah and Shem, of earlier generations, Abraham had died early. Yet Moses says that Abraham died in "a good old age" and "full of years." This phrase implies that he was perhaps a little older than should have been normal. Yet, his age was far too old for today's 70–80 year average. If Abraham was 75 when he left Haran, do we suppose that he was already an old man, and that he remained an old man for another 100 years? I don't think so. An age of 175 was just about the right age for him to die, and this fits with the decay curve shown. This fit for his age would not be possible if the Genesis 11 chrono-genealogy had gaps in it. I have written before about the implications of Abraham's age, and how this helps us to understand his life in the context of the whole book of Genesis.¹ Suffice to say, in summary, that I have related everything we believe about Abraham's example of faith, used in the New Testament, to the truthfulness of Genesis 1 through 11. Many New Testament commentators rightly point out that the doctrines of faith all go back to Genesis 12 and the life of Abraham. My argument is that Abraham's life, and hence its relevance to the doctrines of faith, cannot be understood correctly outside of the context of Genesis 1 through 11 being true, and, in particular, the way that Abraham's life statistics fit into the pattern of the chrono-genealogy of Genesis 11.

¹ Taylor, P.F. (2012), *No Time for Itching Ears*, (Noble, OK: Icon Publishing Group), pages 164–183.

5. *The Biblical Age Calculation*

Now that we have done all the preliminary work, we are in a position to see how the actual biblical calculation of the age of the earth is done.

The calculation will be performed in three sections. First, we will use the Genesis 5 chrono-genealogy, and related passages. Second, we will use the Genesis 11 chrono-genealogy and related passages. Third, we will use other passages to make further calculations.

5.1. Adam to Noah (Genesis 5)

Passage	Event	Date
Genesis 1:1	Creation	0
5:3	Adam 130, Seth born	130
5:6	Seth 105, Enosh born	235
5:9	Enosh 90, Cainan born	325
5:12	Cainan 70, Mahalalel born	395
5:15	Mahalalel 65, Jared born	460
5:18	Jared 162, Enoch born	622
5:21	Enoch 65, Methuselah born	687
5:25	Methuselah 187, Lamech born	874
5:28	Lamech 182, Noah born	1056
11:10	Noah 502, Shem born	1558
7:6	Flood when Noah was 600	1656

This table brings us to the well-known event—the Flood. This occurred in the year 1656 AM.

5.2. Shem to Abraham (Genesis 11)

The important event here is Abraham leaving Haran. This happened after Terah had died, which means that Terah, who died at the age of 205, could not have been only 75 when Abraham was born, which is the initial implication of Genesis 11:26. However, Genesis 11:26 merely states that Terah was 75 when he started having children. The three brothers were not triplets, so 11:26 is merely stating that the oldest of them was born when Terah was 75—probably Haran. The first named brother in a Jewish genealogy is not necessarily the oldest, but the pre-eminent one, in terms of what the genealogy is concentrating on. Abraham is obviously the focus of the genealogy, not his brothers. Likewise, in every other generation, there is no evidence that the

Passage	Event	Date
Genesis 11:10	Shem 100, Arphaxad born	1658
11:12	Arphaxad 35, Salah born	1693
11:14	Salah 30, Eber born	1723
11:16	Eber 34, Peleg born	1757
11:18	Peleg 30, Reu born	1787
11:20	Reu 32, Serug born	1819
11:22	Serug 30, Nahor born	1849
11:24	Nahor 29, Terah born	1878
11:32, 12:4	Terah 130, Abraham born	2008
12:4	Abraham leaves Haran, aged 75	2083

named son is the oldest son, and indeed it is likely that he was not; after all, Seth certainly wasn't the oldest son of Adam.

Passage	Event	Date
Genesis 12:10, Exodus 12:40, Galatians 3:17	Israelites live in Egypt for 430 years	2513
1 Kings 6:1	Solomon builds the temple, 479 full years after the Exodus	2992
1 Kings 11:42	Solomon dies, the kingdom is divided, 37 years later	3029
Ezekiel 4:4-6	Ruled by kings, Jerusalem was destroyed 390 years later	3419

5.3. Abraham to the Destruction of Jerusalem

We know that the Law was given very shortly after the Exodus began. Within a few weeks of the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites were eating manna, learning about the seven-day weekly cycle, and then this was followed by Moses going up Sinai to get the Ten Commandments. According to Galatians 3:17, this happened 430 years after the covenant was given. This covenant refers to that covenant mentioned in Genesis 12, when God promised to bless Abraham. So, the Exodus began 430 years after Abraham left Haran, in 2083 AM. This brings us to the year 2513 AM.

1 Kings 6:1 tells us that 480 years had elapsed when Solomon was able to build the temple. This means that the beginning of this work was 479 years after the Exodus. Since Solomon was in his fourth year of his reign, three years had passed.

1 Kings 11:42 tells us that that Solomon reigned for 40 years, then he died. So his death was 37 years after the temple was begun, as that had happened when he had been reigning three years.

Ezekiel 4:4-6 tells us that the destruction of Jerusalem was 390 years after the division of the Kingdom. This date is therefore 3419 AM. But, from other sources, we know that this was 584 BC. So we can calculate the approximate date of creation.

$$3419 + 584 = 4003$$

Therefore, we have a date of about 4003 BC for the creation week. As this year, at the time of writing is 2012, it means that the world is 6,015 years old.

Archbishop Ussher carried out this calculation many years ago¹. His answer was that the world was created in 4,004 BC. His value is out by a year, as he assumed that there was one whole year (OAD) between 1 BC and 1 AD. There was not.

Of course, there is scope for a little error. For example, if Seth was 105 when Enosh was born, we do not know whether the birth of Enosh happened on Seth's 105th birthday, or if his birthday was to be the very next day (or anything in between). Therefore, each event could have an error of a year. If one was generous and allowed for 100 years of error, it can be seen that it would not be possible to push the age of the Earth back significantly further than 4100 BC.

It is often said that the Bible does not state that the Earth was created about 6,000 years ago. It is understandable that the Bible does not state this. After all, the dates given needed to be able to work at the time of Jesus, 2000 years ago, and in 1000 AD, as much as today. Hopefully, this short ebook demonstrates that the Bible is, in fact, very clear about when the Earth was created. It is not possible to believe the Bible and accept an age of millions of years. Nor is it possible to believe the Bible and accept an age of 10,000 years, as some that call themselves Young Earth Creationists do. These dates have been calculated assuming the Bible to be true. This is the logical position, because God, and those whom He inspired, were the eyewitnesses to the events.

1

Ussher, J., ed. Pierce, L. (1654, ed. 2006), *The Annals of the World*, (Green Forest, AR: Master Books).

6. *Bibliography*

This short, and definitely not comprehensive, bibliography will enable the reader to find the information on the age of the Earth, including referencing the scientific evidence, presented in the context of biblical truth. The biblical context is always the correct one, as this is our presupposition; that without the Bible, it is impossible to prove anything.

6.1. Web Articles

Name	Title	Address
Hodge, B. (2007)	How Old Is the Earth?	http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/05/30/how-old-is-earth
Humphreys, D.R. (2005)	Evidence for a Young World	http://www.icr.org/articles/view/1842/264/
Morris, J.D.	Is Belief in the Young Earth Necessary to Be a Christian?	http://www.icr.org/article/belief-young-earth-necessary-be-christian/
Mortenson, T. (2009)	Systematic Theology Texts and the Age of the Earth	http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/arj/v2/n1/systematic-theology-age-of-earth
Vardiman, L.	Evidence for a Young Earth from the Ocean and Atmosphere	http://www.icr.org/articles/view/2978/264/
Vardiman, L. Et. Al. (2011)	Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth	http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/aid/v6/n1/radioisotopes-and-age-earth

6.2. Books

Name	Title	Publisher
Ashton, J. (2012)	Evolution Impossible	Master Books
DeYoung, D. (2005)	Thousands... Not Billions	Master Books
Sarfati, J. (2011)	Refuting Compromise: Updated	Creation Book Publishers
Snelling, A.A. (2009)	Earth's Catastrophic Past	ICR
Vardiman, L. Et. Al. (2000)	Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth (volume 1)	ICR
Vardiman, L. Et. Al. (2005)	Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth (volume 2)	ICR