Lesson 4

The Geologic Timetable and the Age of the Earth

Apologetics Press Advanced Christian Evidences Correspondence Course

THE GEOLOGIC TIMETABLE AND THE AGE OF THE EARTH

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Canyon frequently is described as one of the most awe-inspiring and spectacular natural features on the face of the Earth. Listed as one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, it became a national park in 1919, and in 1979 was named a World Heritage Site—a designation reserved only for those places that are considered to have universal value for all humankind. Because of its sheer size, the origin of this natural beauty has been the object of a great deal of speculation. Theories regarding the geological events that led to the present canyon are as abundant as visitors to the South Rim.

To the "man on the street," one of the most impressive arguments for an ancient Earth is the testimony of sedimentary-rock layers (many of which are thousands of feet thick) strewn around the planet. Scientists (and park rangers) subject us to examples like the Grand Canyon, and present their spiel so effectively that—as we observe those layers of sedimentary rocks piled one on top of another—the only explanation seems to be that vast amounts of time must have been involved. Each section of the rocks, we are told, represents a time eons ago and an ancient world that long since has ceased to exist.

Evolutionists contend that the Earth is 4.6 billion years old. Further, they allege that for the past three billion years or so, life has evolved gradually from simple organisms to those that are increasingly complex. One of the methods of presenting this idea is by means of the so-called "geologic timetable." While it may sound surprising, the standard geologic column actually was devised prior to 1860 by catastrophists who considered themselves creationists (Ritland, 1982). The timetable is a common feature in most textbooks dealing with geology, biology, paleontology, etc., and proposes to show the development of living creatures, in ascending order from the simple to the complex, from the ancient past to the present. While it certainly looks good on paper, the actual evidence tells a completely different story.

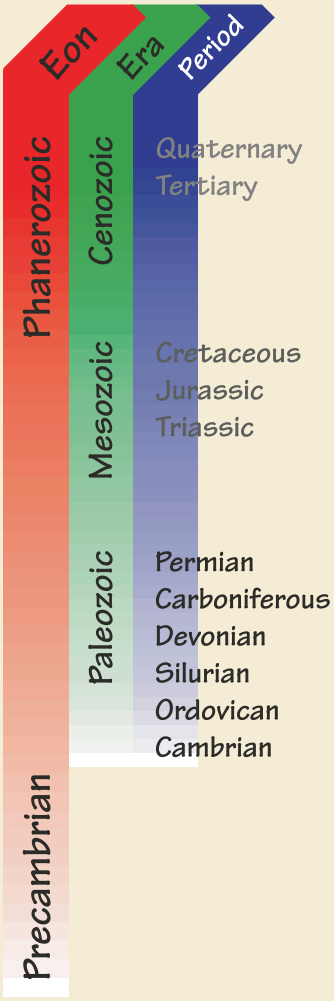
OLD EARTH/YOUNG EARTH

Much of the controversy today between creationists and evolutionists centers on the age of the Earth. A large part of that controversy has to do with the fact that there is no compromise that will permit the old-Earth/young-Earth scenarios to coexist; the gulf separating the biblical and evolutionary views on the topic of the age of the Earth is just too large. Marshall and Sandra Hall recognized this fact when they observed: "It is not easy to overthrow a belief, however absurd and harmful it may be, which your civilization has promulgated as the scientific truth for the better part of a century." The Halls continued by saying:

> Time, as poets and insurance salesmen remind us, is the enemy of life. But time has its friends, too. Without great, incomprehensible, im-

> measurable stretches of time to fall back on, the evolutionists would be sitting ducks for the barbed queries of even high school students. Time is the evolutionists' refuge from the slings and arrows of logic, scientific evidence, common sense, and the multiplication table (1974, pp. 74,69,71,75, emp. in orig.).

The point is well made. It is difficult to overthrow a belief that has been taught as the "scientific truth" for so long. And it is especially difficult to overthrow such a concept when an entire world view is based upon it. Yet when all the evidence is considered, it does not bode well for the evolutionists' claims of an ancient Earth/Universe. The actual evidence, however, firmly supports the concept of a young Earth. We would like to consider some of that evidence here.



EVIDENCE FROM THE EARTH

Evolutionists have divided the geologic column into a hierarchical system of eons, eras, periods, and epochs. The two major eon divisions are the Precambrian (590 million to 4.5 billion years ago) and the Phanerozoic (590 million years to the present). The three major eras of the Phanerozoic are the Paleozoic—referred to as the age of the trilobites (which includes the Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, and Permian periods), the Mesozoic—referred to as the age of the dinosaurs—(which includes the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods), and Cenozoic—referred to as the age of the mammals— (which includes the Tertiary and Quaternary periods). Many of us have been taught that the geologic column "proves" that evolution is true and that the Earth is extremely old. Actually, the geologic column provides extraordinary evidence which demonstrates that evolution is not true and that the Earth is not ancient. Consider the following.

Out-of-Place Fossils

According to the evolutionary hypothesis, man (Homo sapiens) appears near the top of the geologic column. Man's history, therefore, represents but a tiny fraction (approximately 1/1000th) of the geologic record. To an evolutionist, it is inconceivable that evidence of human habitation could exist in earlier periods. Yet there are many such examples of "out-of-place" fossils that undermine the theory of evolution. For example, several years ago, evolutionist Albert G. Ingalls (the state geologist of Kentucky) was

working in the coal veins in Kentucky and nearby states. Dr. Ingalls stumbled across "human-like" footprints embedded in the coal veins of those states. Coal, of course, is supposed to have been laid down during the so-called Carboniferous period, which allegedly is separated from mankind by 250 million years according to the standard geologic timetable. How, then, could a human footprint possibly occur in coal? Dr. Ingalls did not discover these footprints just in Kentucky. He also found them in Missouri, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and even westward toward the Rocky Mountains (Ingalls, 1940, 162:14). A.E. Wilder-Smith, of the United Nations, examined the tracks and reported:

> The tracks are in formations considered to be in Upper Carboniferous (250 millions years old) and show five toes and an arch, which is unquestionably human. The tracks are 9½ inches long and 4.1 inches broad at the heel. The width at the forward end of the track by the toes was 6 inches. The being that left the tracks was a biped that walked upright like a human (1970, p. 300).

Dr. Ingalls was invited by the editors of Scientific American to write an article to explain (away!) these tracks. He accepted, and in the January 1940 issue, under the title of "The Carboniferous Mystery," he wrote:

> If man, or even his ape ancestor, or even the ape ancestor's early mammal ancestor, existed as far back as in the carboniferous period in any shape, then the whole science of geology is so completely wrong that all geologists will resign their jobs and take up truck driving. Hence, for the present at least, science rejects the attractive explanation that man made these mysterious prints in the mud of the carboniferous period with his feet (162:14).

"Science rejects the attractive explanation"—since when? Science is systematized knowledge derived from observation and collection of data. Scientists do not "reject" the data simply because they do not fit the currently reigning theory. Rather, they reject the theory and abandon it, or modify it so it fits with the new, incoming data. And it works like that in every area of science except one—where evolution is concerned.

Further, in 1936, a metal hammer with a wooden handle was dug out of Cretaceous limestone (dated by evolutionists at 135 million years old) in the area near London, Texas. The hammer's broken handle is 6¾ inches long, and the hammer itself is made of a very strong metal. When the surface oxidation was removed, the metal was still shiny. [Details of this remarkable discovery (including photographs) may be found in Helfinstine and Roth (1994, pp. 83,91-92), and the February 1984 issue of Creation Ex Nihilo magazine (see "Ordovician Hammer Report," 2[3]:16-17).]

The trilobite, a small, marine arthropod with a hard exoskeleton, is considered so important as to be classified as an "index fossil" for the earliest period of the Paleozoic Era, the Cambrian. Evolutionist J.E. O'Rourke, in a paper in the American Journal of Science titled "Pragmatism versus Material-

ism in Stratigraphy," discussed the use of index fossils to determine the geologic age of a formation. He noted that the methodology involved starts

> ...from a chronology of index fossils, and imposes them on the rocks. Each taxon represents a definite time unit and so provides an accurate, even "infallible" date. If you doubt it, bring in a suite of good index fossils, and the specialist without asking where or in what order they were collected, will lay them out on the table in chronological order (1976, 276:51, emp. added).

In other words, the assumption that evolution is true is used to place the index fossils in the appropriate order from simple to complex. The index fossils then are used to "date" the layers in order to "prove" that evolution is true. If this sounds like "circular reasoning" to you, congratulations. It most certainly is! As O'Rourke went on to admit:

> The intelligent layman has long suspected circular reasoning in the use of rocks to date fossils and fossils to date rocks. The geologist has never bothered to think of a good reply, feeling the explanations are not worth the trouble as long as the work brings results. This is supposed to be hardheaded pragmatism.... The rocks do date the fossils, but the fossils date the rocks more accurately. Stratigraphy cannot avoid this kind of reasoning if it insists on using only temporal concepts, because circularity is inherent in the derivation of time scales (276:47,53, emp. added).

As one scientist noted: "The dating of the rocks depends on the evolutionary sequence of the fossils, but the evolutionary interpretation of the fossils depends on the dating of the rocks. No wonder the evolutionary system, to outsiders, implies circular reasoning" (Morris, 1977, p. ii). No wonder indeed!

Trilobites allegedly flourished a half-billion years before man ever arrived on the scene. On June 1, 1968, however, evolutionist William J. Meister, an amateur fossilologist, was working near Antelope Springs, Utah, and made a discovery that was destined to dispel that incorrect evolutionary supposition. Working his way up the side of a mountain some 2,000 feet to a ledge above, he broke open a slab of rock with his hammer to investigate it for fossils. Imagine his astonishment when he "saw on one side the footprint of a human with trilobites right in the footprint itself. The other half of the rock slab showed an almost perfect mold of the footprint and fossils. Amazingly the human was wearing a sandal" (as quoted in Lammerts, 1976, pp. 186-187). Numerous other fossilized human footprints, from both adults and children, have since been found in the area, as well as dinosaur prints. The contemporaneousness of man and the trilobite effectively collapses a half-billion years of the geologic column.

Additionally, fossilized animals, including chordate fish, appear in the fossil record fully formed and distinct. No ancestral forms can be found in deeper layers for animals such as the protozoans, arthropods, brachiopods, mollusks, bryozoans, coelenterates, sponges, annelids, echinoderms, or chordates—suggesting an abrupt beginning (creation) rather than descent from a common ancestor (evolution). If space permitted, we could present much additional information on such "anomalies" to show that much of the geologic column

is a figment of the evolutionists' imagination. Consider, if you will, this abbreviated listing of such contradictions composed by Erich von Fange:

(a) Fossil leather sole imprint, with a double line of sewed stitches found in "Triassic" rock estimated to be 225 million years old.
(b) Fossil sole imprint with visible sewed thread in coal estimated at 15 million years old.
(c) Flint carvings on extinct saurian (reptilian) bones estimated to be 180 million years old (1974, 11:19ff.).

Polystrate Fossils

Embedded in sedimentary rocks all over the globe are what are known as "polystrate" fossils. Polystrate means "many layers," and refers to fossils that cut through at least two sedimentary-rock layers. Probably the most widely recognized of the polystrate fossils are tree trunks that extend vertically through two, three, or more sections of rock that supposedly were laid down in epochs covering millions of years. However, organic material (such as wood) that is exposed to the elements will rot, not fossilize. Thus, the entire length of these tree trunks must have been preserved quickly, which suggests that the sedimentary layers surrounding them must have been deposited rapidly—possibly (and likely) during a single catastrophe. As Paul Ackerman has suggested: "They constitute a sort of frozen time clock from the past, indicating that terrible things occurred—not over millions of years but very quickly" (1986, p. 84).

Further, tree trunks are not the only representatives of polystrate fossils. In the state of Oklahoma, geologist John Morris studied limestone layers containing fossilized reed-like creatures known as Calamites that ranged from one to six inches in diameter. Dr. Morris noted: "These segmented 'stems' were evidently quite fragile once dead, for they are usually found in tiny fragments. Obviously, the limestones couldn't have accumulated slowly and gradually around a still-growing organism, but must have been quite rapidly deposited in a series of underwater events" (1994, p. 101).

At times, even animals' bodies form polystrate fossils (like catfish in the Green River Formation in Wyoming—*see* Morris, 1994, p. 102). Probably the most famous is the fossilized skeleton of a whale discovered in 1976 near Lompoc, California. The whale is covered in "diatomaceous earth." Diatoms are microscopic algae. As they die, their skeletons form deposits—a process that evolutionists say is extremely slow. But the whale (which is more than 7 feet thick) is lieing on its back and is completely covered by the diatomaceous earth. The simply is no way the whale could have remained on its back for hundreds of years while diatoms covered it, because it would have decayed or been eaten by scavengers. [For a complete discussion of the baleen whale fossil, *see* Snelling, 1995.]

Trees, reeds, catfish, and the other organisms with which the fossil record abounds did not die and lie around for hundreds, thousands, or millions of years while slowly being turned into polystrate fossils. Truth be told, poly-

strate fossils testify loudly to a young Earth whose layers formed rapidly—and not very long ago!

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE FOR A YOUNG EARTH

Evolutionists contend that things happen now just like they happened in the past—an idea known as "uniformitarianism." The catch phrase is: "The present is the key to the past." In looking at the Earth around us, some of the numbers that evolutionists have given us just do not "add up." Evolutionists proclaim that the Earth is 4.6 billion years old. However, consider these three simple illustrations.

(1) Niagara Falls is a waterfall located on the border of New York and Ontario, Canada. Erosion has been slowly pushing the waterfall about 7 miles upstream, forming the Niagara Gorge. Before large water-diversion projects were built in the 1950s and 1960s, the falls were receding at a rate of more than 3 feet per year. If the Earth were 4.6 billion years old, and the falls have been eroding at a rate of 3 feet per year, that means the original location of the waterfall would have been 13.5 billion feet further upstream! (The circumference of the Earth, however, is only 132 million feet!)

(2) As the Mississippi River flows down towards the Gulf of Mexico, it picks up dirt and sediment from the riverbank along the way. Approximately 300 million cubic yards of sediment are deposited into the Gulf of Mexico by the Mississippi River each year. If the Earth really has been around as long as evolutionists say it has, then the sediments deposited from the Mississippi River would have filled the Gulf of Mexico long ago! American humorist Mark Twain commented on this type of reasoning in his classic work, Life on the Mississippi:

> In the space of one hundred and seventy six years the Lower Mississippi has shortened itself two hundred and forty-two miles. That is an average of a trifle over a mile and a third per year. Therefore, any calm person, who is not blind or idiotic, can see that in the Old Oölitic Silurian Period, just a million years ago next November, the Lower Mississippi was upwards of one million three hundred thousand miles long, and stuck out over the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing-pole. And by the same token, any person can see that seven hundred and forty-two years from now the Lower Mississippi will be only a mile and three- quarters long, and Cairo [Illinois] and New Orleans will have joined their streets together and be plodding comfortably along under a single mayor and a mutual board of aldermen. There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact (1883, p. 156, emp. added).

(3) Evolutionists believe that the Grand Canyon was formed by the Colorado River (a small amount of water) over a long period of time. The problem with this theory is that there are over 900 cubic miles of dirt missing from the end of the river. If the small Colorado River formed the canyon, what happened to the 900 cubic miles of dirt? Could this have been the result of a catastrophe like the Flood? Clearly the evolutionary timescale prescribed for the Earth does not fit the facts.

While evolutionists frequently appeal to the geologic column in their attempts to document an old Earth, and to substantiate the theory of evolution, the actual facts of that column do not support either an ancient Earth or an evolutionary interpretation of life on the Earth.

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Questions—Lesson 4

TRUE OR FALSE

Write TRUE or FALSE in the blanks before the following statements.

_____ 1. The Mississippi River dumps 300 million cubic yards of sediment from its riverbank into the Gulf of Mexico each year.

_____ 2. The geologic column "proves" the Earth is old.

_____ 3. Coal is supposed to have been laid down during the Cretaceous Period.

_____ 4. The trilobite is considered to be an "index fossil."

_____ 5. Often, fossils are dated according to the rocks in which they are found, and occasionally rocks are dated according to the fossils found in them.

_____ 6. A fossilized whale has been discovered at an angle (almost on its tail) in diatomaceous earth.

_____ 7. The term for "very straight" fossils is polystrate.

_____ 8. Prior to water diversion projects, Niagra Falls was eroding at 3 inches per year.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer(s).

1. If the rocks "date" the fossils, and the fossils "date" the rocks,
   (a) this is circular reasoning (b) this is of little concern
   (c) this is good science (d) this is acceptable
2. According to evolutionists, man's history represents approximately what fraction of the geologic record?
   (a) 1/2 (b) 1/1000 (c) 1/10 (d) 1/100
3. Human footprints in coal have been found in which state(s):
   (a) Kentucky (b) Missouri (c) Virginia (d) Pennsylvania
4. All of the following have been found as polystrate fossils except which of the following organisms:
   (a) Reeds (b) Sharks (c) Trees (d) Catfish

5. "The present is the key to the past" is the catch phrase describing:
   (a) Uniformitarianism (b) Biology (c) Physics (d) Virology

MATCHING

Match the related concepts (place the correct letter in the space provided by each number).

1. ____ Current age of Earth according to evolutionists
2. ____ We are living in which geologic period?
3. ____ The scientist who stated: "Science rejects the attractive explanation that man made these mysterious footprints... with his feet."
4. ____ Time evolutionists believe humans have been on the Earth
5. ____ The scientist who said: "The intelligent layman has long suspected circular reasoning in the use of rocks to date fossils to date rocks."
6. ____ These fossils were found in the Green River Formation in Wyoming.
7. ____ Stated: "There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact."
8. ____ Often referred to as the "age of the dinosaurs."

A. O'Rourke

B. Mesozoic

C. 4.6 billion years

D. Mark Twain

E. 3-5 million years

F. Catfish

G. Quarternary

H. Albert G. Ingalls

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. In 1936, a metal hammer with a wooden handle was dug out of _____ limestone.
2. William J. Meister found a fossil of a trilobite embedded in the _____ of a human.
3. A fossilized leather sole imprint, with a double line of sewed stitches, was found in _____ rock estimated to be around 225 million years old.
4. Fossilized _____ have been found spanning two or three sedimentary layers.
5. _____ are microscopic algae.

NOTES

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