

Are Dating Techniques Accurate?
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www.answersincreation.org/dating.htm

So, can we rely on radiometric dating techniques? How accurate are they? First, I'll start by referring you to an extensive article on the Answers in Genesis website, titled "What About Carbon Dating?"¹ While Carbon-14 is in the title, the article talks about many forms of dating.

Admission

Are the dating techniques used by geologists 100% accurate? No, they are not. (Yes, I agreed with the young-earthier on this one. But that doesn't mean the earth is young). I can look in my science journals and see apparent discrepancies in dating techniques. Some may be discrepancies...some may just need a bit further explanation. If there are possible discrepancies, how can I accept these dates as reliable?

The young-earth believer thinks that all we are relying on is the radiometric techniques. This is like the common phrase that Christians like to use when studying the Bible, when we say, "He pulled that out of context." When considering the date of the world, and the universe, you have to consider all the evidence, not just one portion.

We take the radiometric dates, along with stratigraphy (I know, dated radiometrically), the specific fossil species in a rock (I know, dated radiometrically) and come up with a date. Why do we do this? Because although not perfect, it is the best tool we have. Even looking at geology alone, it is evident from the Grand Canyon² that you can't produce the rock layers using the Noah's Flood model, and you can't produce ANY chalk layers using a young earth (see www.answersincreation.org/nochalk.htm). Stratigraphy alone implies an old earth. And, although you can come up with gross errors using radiometric dating, by and large, the millions of dates that have been accomplished lend support to their accuracy, granting, of course, a large margin of error. These "millions" of semi-accurate dates have correlated throughout the stratigraphic layers of the earth. Are they perfect...no. Are they usable for giving a rough estimate of age...yes.

Can we rely on the radiometric dates alone...no, we can't. Geologists know that the dates are not perfect, that's why you will see research articles trying to determine the age of a rock, and there will be ten, twenty, or more samples that were dated. This is to get the average, or, most accurate date possible, within the margin of error that you allow.

Are there scientists out there that will swear up and down that their dates are completely accurate? Sure, they exist, but are probably in the minority. Unfortunately, these are the ones that the young-earth creationist will single out and attack, because of

their assumptions that the techniques are perfect. Most geologists understand the dating techniques, and accept their limitations.

Article

Okay, on with the article. The author gives a very good description of Carbon-14, except the flood part. He assumes the coal beds were all laid down during the Flood, but I have already disproved that theory (see www.answersincreation.org/floating.htm). In his conclusion, he states "*It (Carbon-14) does not give dates of millions of years.*" Correct, and there isn't a geologist out there who would claim Carbon-14 to establish a date of millions of years. We know the limitations of Carbon-14...of course, this doesn't prevent the author from doing a little mud-slinging at the old-earth geologist!

The next section is Other Radiometric Dating Methods. Yes, its true, the person using these dates must make unprovable assumptions, such as the three listed. But, the young-earth creation scientist also makes unprovable assumptions, when he starts with the false assumption that the earth is only 6,000 years old, which is unprovable. Okay, we are both guilty of assumptions.

Let's move down the article to "Bad Dates." Yes, these are bad dates. Does that mean the earth is young...of course not. It means the geologist has to do the best he can with the tools available to date the objects.

I'm not going to try to defend these bad date examples. I can't without the original articles. The author is correct in calling this the "dating game." Where the young and old-earth scientist differs is this...at least the old-earth scientist is playing the game...we are trying to figure out this puzzle, whereas the young-earth scientist starts with the false, unprovable assumption of a 6,000 year old earth, one which flies in the face of the radiometric "dating game," and one that falls flat on its face in light of astronomical dating and stratigraphic evidence.

The author uses the verse from Job, 'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?' (Job 38:4) to admonish the old-ager. To the author I say, "Where were you when God laid the foundations of the earth?" You were not there either! So you can't "assume" a 6,000-year-old earth, just like we can't "assume" a 13.7 billion year old universe. What we have to decide this issue is the evidence from God's creation, and not our assumptions. Job 12:8 says "speak to the earth, and it will teach thee." Secular and Christian scientists, outside of a religious framework, have examined God's creation, and it says, "I'm 13.7 billion years old."

How Long is a Day

Nowhere in the Bible does it state that the days of creation are 24-hour days. Young earth creationists will argue over the correct translation of "day." The translation of "day" is irrelevant. If you are in the middle of space, what is a "day." If you are eternal, what meaning does time have? Are we going to have clocks in heaven? Wow, there

goes another million years! Only human arrogance would insist on limiting God, an infinite being, to a finite 24-hour day.

Before we go on...keep thinking "context." We can't only rest on radiometric dating. Keep considering the rock layers, which can't be laid down in a global flood. Keep thinking about starlight, which traveling at the speed of light, took millions of years to get here. It could not be created with the "appearance of age". Appearance of age means that the created object lies about its true age, and since God is Truth, He cannot lie. Remember, context, context, context.

The next section is Testing Radiometric Dating Methods. For example, the author gives examples of lava flows that were less than 50 years old, but dated radiometrically from 270,000 to 3.5 million years old. After a short argument, the author gives another example, that of lava from the Grand Canyon, giving an error of 270 million years. This is an excellent example. Geologists say the lava in question is 1.2 million years old...in other words, they know when to ignore the radiometric dates. To us, this means be careful when dating lava! It doesn't mean "all dates are wrong." Remember, context.

Coal is used next as an example. They claim no source of coal has been found that completely lacks C-14. I can buy that, after all, what is coal? It is made of carbon...given the amount of carbon in coal, I would expect to see a trace amount of carbon-14 even in samples that are millions of years old. Why was supposed 230 million year old coal dated at 33,720 years? I haven't a clue. Supposedly, "accompanying checks" showed it was not due to contamination...I'd have to see the documentation. After all, to say that the lab did not contaminate the specimen proves nothing. You would have to prove it was not contaminated from the moment it was excavated. In fact, you would have to excavate it in a vacuum to be 100% sure, because once it is exposed to the atmosphere, it is exposed to more Carbon-14. In fact, I don't mind if you ignore all Carbon-14 evidence. It doesn't matter...remember context, context, context.

Other Evidence

The next section, Many Physical Evidences Contradict the 'Billions of Years', presents other examples used by young-earthers. Since my specialty is geology, I won't try to argue against items outside of geology...I have to leave that to other experts. Within geology, one argument used is evidence for the rapid formation of geological strata (disproved²), and evidence of red blood cells in dinosaur bones (disproved, see www.answersincreation.org/trexblood.htm).

Conclusion

The rest of the article is interesting, but not critical. Simply stated, can I be certain about the EXACT old-age of the earth? No I can't. But looking at God's creation, I'm certain that it is a lot older than 6,000 years. The young-earth creationist cannot be certain either. In fact, I want to be first in line when I get to heaven, to attend God's version of Geology 101. Only then will I know for certain.

Whereas the old-earther relies on observed scientific principles from God's creation, the young-earther relies solely on his assumption of the 24-hour day of creation. I believe in an inerrant Bible, and can interpret it as "millions of years" without any doctrinal implications.

¹ answersingenesis.org/docs2002/carbon_dating.asp

² www.answersincreation.org/stratigraphy.htm