

# *Young Earth vs. Old Earth*



Examining scriptural support for both views

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Contents

The Majors vs. the Minors.....3

The Young Earth View .....3

    Key Points.....3

    Supporting Bible Verses .....4

The Old Earth View .....5

    Key Points.....5

    Supporting Bible Verses .....5

Comparing the Views.....6

Key Differences.....6

Common Ground.....6

Summary.....7

My .02 Cents.....7

## The Majors vs. the Minors

In Christianity, "majors" refer to the core beliefs and doctrines that are essential to the faith, such as the nature of God, the Gospel, and salvation through Jesus Christ. "Minors" are less critical issues that do not affect one's standing with God, such as specific interpretations of scripture or practices, and are not salvation-related. These frequently include topics like eschatology, baptism methods and interpretations of creation. While they may be important, they do not affect one's standing with God.

It's perfectly fine for Christians to debate "the minors", but at some point they should be prepared to "agree to disagree" and move on. They are not critical to what's really important to Christians, i.e. salvation, and thus an exorbitant amount of time should not be devoted to them. Doing so can lead to unnecessary conflicts and divisions within the church, as minor disagreements can escalate into major confrontations.

In my personal opinion, I don't feel I even need to select a side. My main objective is to understand all sides of a debate, be it the age of the earth, end times timing, etc. and to be able to explain to someone what they are. And if they choose to, select a side.

So in this paper, which tackles the basics without going into great detail, we'll discuss the age of the earth. Some Christians, referred to as "young earth" Christians, believe that the book of Genesis is literal, and that God created earth and everything on it approximately 6,000 years ago. Others called "old earth" side with scientists and believe the earth is millions of years old. Does Biblical scripture supports one over the other? Let's take a look.

## The Young Earth View

### Key Points

- **Age of the Earth:** The Young Earth View (YEC) holds that the Earth is young, typically 6,000–12,000 years old, based on a literal interpretation of the creation account in Genesis 1, and the biblical genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. This view takes the Bible's creation account as straightforward, historical fact and not as being symbolic.
- **Creation Process:** YEC believes God created the universe, Earth, and all life in six literal 24-hour days, as described in Genesis 1. They accept microevolution but reject macroevolution and most mainstream geological and cosmological timelines. They also believe that the Earth was created in perfect form and that death, suffering, and disease only entered the world after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. This is based on verses like Romans 5:12, which says, "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin." Therefore, any evidence of death—like fossils—must come after the Fall, not before.
- **Science and Scripture:** YEC prioritizes a literal reading of Scripture over scientific consensus, arguing that scientific methods like radiometric dating are unreliable or based on flawed assumptions. They often propose alternative scientific models (e.g., flood geology) to explain geological features.

## Supporting Bible Verses

- **Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, etc.:** "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day" (repeated for each day).

*Interpretation:* The phrase "evening and morning" defines a literal 24-hour day, as *yom* typically means a day when paired with numerical qualifiers.

- **Exodus 20:11:** "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day."

*Interpretation:* This verse, part of the Ten Commandments, explicitly states God created in six days, reinforcing a literal interpretation and setting a pattern for the human workweek.

- **Genesis 5:1-32, 11:10-26 and Luke 3:23-38** (Genealogies): The Genesis chapters list the ages of patriarchs from Adam to Noah and beyond, while Luke traces Jesus' ancestry all the way back to Adam.

*Interpretation:* By adding the ages (e.g., Adam lived 930 years, Genesis 5:5), YECs calculate the Earth's age as ~6,000–10,000 years.

- **Mark 10:6:** Jesus says, "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'"

*Interpretation:* Jesus implies humans were created at the "beginning" of creation, not billions of years later, supporting a young Earth.

## The Old Earth View

### Key Points

- **Age of the Earth:** The Old Earth View (OEC) holds that the Earth is very old, typically aligning with scientific estimates of 4.5 billion years. They believe the creation "days" in Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour periods but represent long periods of time (e.g., ages or epochs) or are a literary framework.
- **Creation Process:** OEC believes that God created the heavens, the Earth, and all life on it, but that this creation happened over a long span of time. Many hold that God guided this process in stages, directly creating life forms such as animals and humans at different points in history. Some OECs propose a gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, allowing for an old Earth before the creation week. Others, like those who hold to the "Framework Hypothesis," view Genesis 1 as a poetic or theological account, not a strict chronology.
- **Science and Scripture:** OEC seeks to harmonize Genesis with scientific findings, such as the fossil record, radiometric dating, and cosmology, while maintaining that God is the creator.

### Supporting Bible Verses

- **Genesis 1:1-2:** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep..."

*Interpretation:* The Gap Theory suggests a long period between verses 1 and 2, during which the Earth could have existed for billions of years before the creation week began. The Day-Age view sees the subsequent "days" as long periods.

- **Psalms 90:4:** "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night."

*Interpretation:* This verse supports the idea that God operates on a different timescale than humans, so a "day" in Genesis could represent a vast period.

- **2 Peter 3:8:** "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

*Interpretation:* This verse is cited to support the idea that God's perspective on time is different from ours, and that "day" in Genesis may not mean a literal 24-hour period.

- **Job 38:4-7:** "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? ... Who marked off its dimensions? ... while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

*Interpretation:* This poetic passage highlights God's role as Creator without specifying a time frame, leaving room for a long creation process.

## Comparing the Views

Topic	Young Earth	Old Earth
<b>Age of Earth</b>	~6,000–10,000 years	Billions of years
<b>Length of Creation Days</b>	Literal 24-hour days (Gen. 1:5)	Long ages or eras (2 Pet. 3:8)
<b>Death Before the Fall</b>	No death before sin (Rom. 5:12)	Human death began with sin; animals may have died before
<b>Use of Genealogies</b>	Chronological and historical	Not necessarily complete or exhaustive
<b>Science and Faith</b>	Scripture overrides science	Scripture and nature both reveal truth (Rom. 1:20)

## Key Differences

### 1. Age of the Earth:

- OEC: Billions of years, aligning with mainstream science.
- YEC: 6,000–12,000 years, based on literal genealogies.

### 2. Interpretation of “Day”:

- OEC: *Yom* can mean a long period or be symbolic.
- YEC: *Yom* means a literal 24-hour day in Genesis 1.

### 3. View of Science:

- OEC: Seeks harmony with scientific findings, interpreting Genesis flexibly.
- YEC: Prioritizes literal Scripture, challenging scientific claims that contradict a young Earth.

### 4. Theological Emphasis:

- OEC: Emphasizes God’s sovereignty and the theological message of Genesis.
- YEC: Emphasizes the historical accuracy of Genesis as foundational to Christian doctrine (e.g., original sin, the Fall).

## Common Ground

Both OEC and YEC affirm:

- God as the creator of the universe and all life.
- The Bible as inspired and authoritative.
- The special creation of humans in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27).
- The reality of the Fall and original sin (Genesis 3).

## Summary

OEC and YEC represent different approaches to reconciling Genesis with the physical world. OEC uses a flexible interpretation of “day” and integrates scientific findings, citing verses like Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 to support an old Earth. YEC insists on a literal six-day creation and a young Earth, relying on Genesis 1, Exodus 20:11, and biblical genealogies. Both groups aim to uphold God’s role as creator but differ on how to interpret the timing and process described in Scripture.

## My .02 Cents

I think it’s important to take a little closer look at the Hebrew word “yō-wm,” that is used in Genesis 1 to refer to “day”, as well as in 238 other places in the Bible. This interpretation appears to be the key to both views.

As mentioned earlier, the word first appears in Genesis 1:5, and then is repeated throughout the rest of the chapter:

“And there was evening and there was morning—the first day.”

Then there’s:

- **Exodus 12:18:** “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening...”
- **1 Kings 12:32:** “Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month...”

On the other side of the coin, we get:

- **Zephaniah 2:2:** “The day of the Lord”
- **2 Peter 3:8:** “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”

The Hebrew word “yō-wm” is used for each mention of the word “day” in each of the above scriptures. So does this reference to “day” mean a literal 24 hours, or possibly a longer amount of time? That’s the big question. My hunch? Both. And in relation to the creation story? Again, probably both. But specifically how or in what way, we just don’t know, because God has obviously decided not to reveal it to us. Why? Because it’s simply not that important. I think God is making it clear that there are many more aspects to Christianity that deserves more of our time.

However, I do have a couple of thoughts. I think it’s pretty safe to say that the concept of “time” as we know it didn’t exist at the time of creation, but sometime after it. So the term “day” certainly could mean either interpretation. Could God create everything in seven 24 hour days? Of course. Genesis 2:2 says that “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” So did God literally rest for just a 24 hour period? Maybe. If that is even to be taken literally. So how’s that for a definitive “maybe”?!

I have to say that I’ve always found the forementioned “gap theory” somewhat intriguing. Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 say “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

This begs the question, “why would God first create the earth “formless, empty, and dark”, and then add light, water, land, animals and people afterwards? Why not skip the “formless, empty and dark” part? Or did he originally create the earth in verse 1, and something undocumented happen to make the earth “formless, empty and dark” requiring him to recreate it? Or did he start with a blank palette (“formless, empty and dark”) before adding everything else? Interesting questions that are fun to debate, but we just have to accept we don’t have the answers to.

So although creation and the age of the earth and universe are fun to discuss and debate, not everyone is going to agree on it, so it’s ok to agree to disagree on it with other Christians. And this topic certainly should not divide believers.

As you can see, there’s pretty good evidence for both views, so personally, I think it’s more important for me to understand them rather than choosing one. Which I’d rather not do. That, by the way, was my primary motivations for writing this!