

Is an Old Earth compatible with Scripture?

What are the consequences of an old earth view compared to the Biblical view of less than 8000 years?

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How do we get to the Biblical age of the Earth?

In our society we use a system of absolute dates, i.e. we start from the date of the birth of Jesus, (there was an error in the calculating though, so it is off by a few years). So now we talk about an event as having happened in 2001 for example. In the ancient world, time was usually based on an event. Frequently this would be from the start of a king's reign or significant event. For example, we read: *"Now it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem."* (1 Kings 14:25 LSB) We also get phrase like the following: *"Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then the king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem."* (2 Kings 8:16-17 LSB). So, in order to place these relative dates onto an absolute timeline, we need to do the calculations. As we read the Scriptures, we can see that chronology was quite important to God. After all, if the events that are recorded are not historically accurate, then the rest of the Scriptures are also subject to the same doubt and are not rooted in actual history.

There are some dates that have been determined to be pretty much set in stone. One is the fall of Jerusalem in 586/587 BC and the other is the start of the building of the temple by Solomon in 967 BC. These dates are pretty much indisputable. From there we can now move back towards creation. In 1 Ki 6:1 it tells us that: *"Now it happened in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh."* (1 Kings 6:1 LSB)

This brings us to the date of the Exodus of the tribes of Israel from Egypt being 1446 BC. In Exodus 12:40-41 we are told that the Israelites were in Egypt 430 years to the day. That brings us to 1876 BC for Israel (Jacob) going into Egypt. From there we need to look at the narratives in Genesis to get the other numbers.

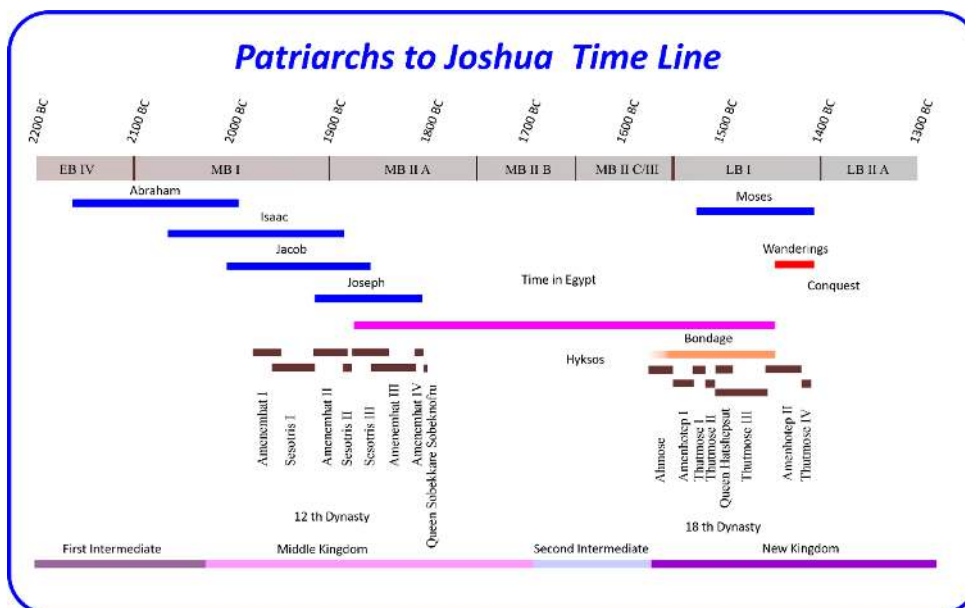
Abraham to Joseph

To get the numbers from Abraham to Joseph we go into a more detailed part of the text and find the references to compile this list.

- Abraham was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac
 - Genesis 17 records Abraham being 99 years old when he was given the promise of a child through Sarah his wife the following year.
 - Genesis 21:5 records Abraham's age as 100 years old when Isaac was born.
- Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Genesis 25:7)
- Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born (Genesis 25:26)
- Isaac was 180 years old when he died (Genesis 35:28)

- Jacob was 147 years old when he died (Genesis 47:28)
- Joseph's numbers need to be calculated a bit differently.
 - Jacob was in Egypt 17 years
 - Jacob entered Egypt when there were 5 years left in the famine (Genesis 45:6, 11)
 - Joseph was 30 years old when he came before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46). At this point the 7 years of plenty were just beginning.
 - Joseph died at 110 years of age (Genesis 50:26)
 - So, to get Jacob's age at Joseph's birth we need to start from the time that Jacob entered Egypt. He was 130 Years old when he came to Egypt (Genesis 47:9). From that, we subtract the 2 years of famine that have already occurred, so that makes him 128 at the start of the famine. From there we subtract the 7 years of plenty, making him 121 at the time of the start of the 7 years of plenty which is when Joseph was 30 years old, making Jacob 91 years old when Joseph was born. Joseph's sons were born prior to the years of famine. (Genesis 41:50)

Name	Age at birth of Son	Lived after birth of son	Total Lifespan
Abraham	100	75	175
Isaac	60	120	180
Jacob	91	56	147
Joseph	31-36	74-79	110



This puts the birth of Abraham at about 2166 BC

There is one other thing to mention here. Someone has deliberately changed some numbers in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogical lists. The discussion primarily centers around whether the Masoretic text is correct or the Greek translation of an earlier Hebrew text is correct. For this discussion, I will use the Septuagint numbers since Josephus and the early church used these and they fit better with the text. The difference amounts to about 1500 years with the Masoretic text having a shorter time line. Just take one instance – Abraham is said to have died in a good old age (Gen 25:8). This could hardly be considered correct since Shem, who was born prior to the flood and lived 600 years was still alive for most of Abraham’s life of 175 years. Not only that, most of his other ancestors to the 8th generation were still alive during Abraham’s lifetime and lived significantly longer than Abraham’s 175 years and Noah had just died 2 years prior to Abraham being born. He lived 950 years! I have other articles that explore this in greater depth as well as links to articles and videos related to it on my [website](#).

Noah to Abraham.

Name	Age at birth of Son	Lived after birth of son	Total Lifespan
Shem	100	500	600
Arpachshad	35	403	438
Shelah	30	403	433
Eber	34	430	464
Peleg	30	209	239
Reu	32	207	239
Serug	30	200	230
Nahor	29	119	148
Terah	130	75	205

For Terah we need to look at the following verses since his first son was not Abraham.

- Genesis 11:32 gives the total lifespan for Terah as 205
- Genesis 12:4 gives the age of Abraham as 75 when he left Haran right after Terah died there
- This makes Terah 130 when Abraham was born. (It also makes him 140 when Sarah was born to him by another woman)

This now puts the birth of Shem at 3396 BC. Now we need to look at the transition from Shem to the Genesis chapter 5 genealogies.

- Genesis 5:32 tells us that Noah was 500 years old when he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth
- Genesis 7:6 tells us that Noah was 600 years old when the flood came
- Genesis 9:28 tells us that Noah lived 350 years after the flood
- Genesis 9:29 tells us that Noah lived a total of 950 years.

- Genesis 11:10 tells us that Shem was 100 years old 2 years after the flood
- From this information, we can tell that Shem was not the first-born, but was born 2 years after either Japheth or Ham or both were born.

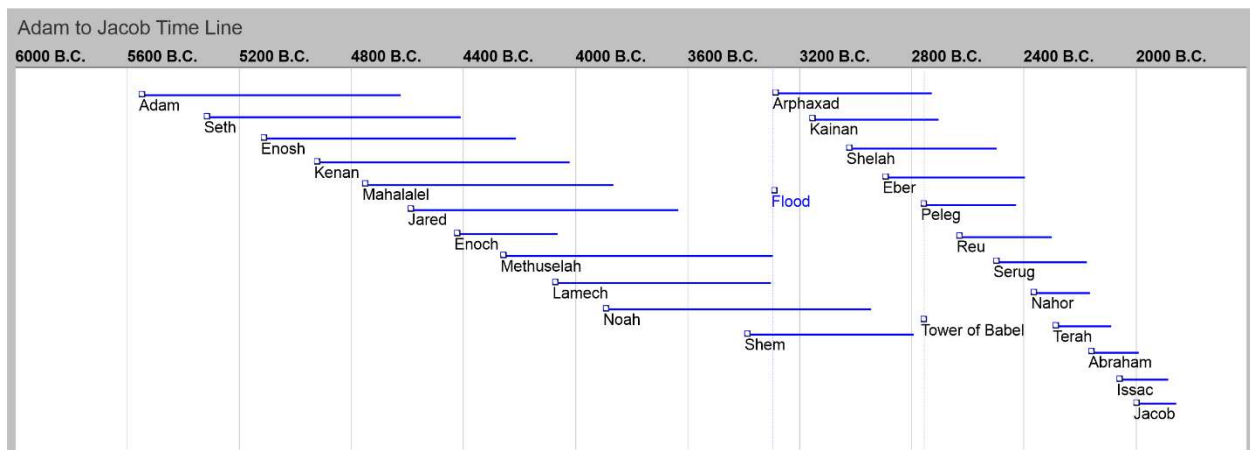
Adam to Noah

Name	Age at birth of Son	Lived after birth of son	Total Lifespan
Adam	130	800	930
Seth	105	807	912
Enosh	90	815	905
Kenan	70	840	910
Mahalalel	65	830	895
Jared	162	800	962
Enoch	65	300	365
Methuselah	187	782	969
Lamech	182	595	777
Noah	502	448	950

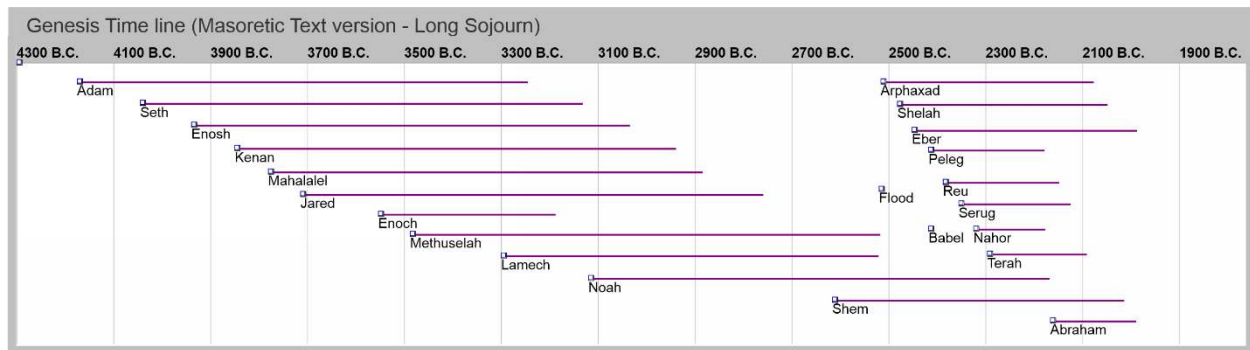
This now puts Noah's birth at 3898 BC. As we work our way back to Adam, we get to Creation being about 5554 BC and the flood at 3298 BC.

If we use the Masoretic numbers we have creation at about 4174 BC, Noah's birth at 3118 BC and the flood at 2518 BC. From Abraham on, the numbers are the same.

Longer Timeline



Shorter Timeline



There really is no place that you can insert time here anywhere. Also, the flood of Noah's day wiped out all land-dwelling animals and flying creatures, so we start fresh with those 8 people and the animals on board the ark.

Creation Week

- In verses one to five of chapter one in Genesis, the definition of a day is explained. There is light and dark, evening and morning and a number – one day (or first day).
- The "Hebrew, Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament has the word "day" in Gen 1:5 listed as "day of twenty-four hours". Brown, Driver Briggs Lexicon also says: *d. day as defined by evening and morning Gn 1:5, 1:8, 1:13, 1:19, 1:23, 1:31*¹ It lists all the days of creation as being normal twenty-four-hour days.
- The context also makes it clear that a normal 24-hour day is described in the creation week.
- *"Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;"* (Gen. 1:14 LSB) Days can not really mean millions or billions of years here.
- Everything was very good at the end of the creation week. (Gen 1:31)
- In Exodus, God wrote on a tablet of stone: *"For in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."* (Ex. 20:11 LSB) Here we have God Himself telling us that He created in six literal days. This verse would make no sense if day could mean anything other than a normal day. *"So the sons of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant.' It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."* (Ex. 31:16-17 LSB) Work for 6 million years and take a million off?

¹Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Accordance electronic edition, version 4.5. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906.

Issues with Old Earth Theology

Bad Hermeneutics (reading or interpreting Scripture)

It appears that the main reason that people try to fit long ages into Scripture is that they take man's word over God's Word. It would seem that some do not want to appear "unscientific" or do not want to lose their standing in intellectual circles. We need to remember one of Satan's primary tools – "did God really say?". He did this with Eve, with Jesus and with the rest of us as well. There are a couple of theological terms to define here. One is **eisegesis**; that is to read your own thoughts and ideas into the Scriptures to make them say what you want them to say. This usually involves taking verses or ideas out of context, proof texting – finding verses that fit your ideas (usually out of context) and leaving others out. It also involves an obvious twisting of the meaning of a text. Since these people have been deceived, even though they may be sincere and well-meaning Christians, they cannot see the truth. Frequently, since none of us likes admitting that we have been deceived or are wrong, we tend to defend those ideas, rather than admitting that we were deceived.

The second term is "**exegesis**". This means going to the Scriptures to see what it means without letting our ideas influence the meaning. Here we look at the plain reading of the text, the context, grammar and the original setting. This is what we should be doing. After we have studied what the text says and what it means, we can then see how other things like geology, biology etc. fit into this. What we will find is that science affirms the Scriptures when properly interpreted.

Death before Sin

This is one of the worst issues with Old Earth creation. At the end of the creation week, God said everything was very good. If you have death, disease and suffering before sin, how is that very good? Claiming that death and disease were prior to sin violates what God said in the book of Romans. Death and sin came from the sin of one man – Adam. (Ro 5:12) Is Christ going to restore things to a place of death, disease and suffering? (Ro 8:18-23, Rev 22:3)

Worldwide Flood

Those trying to put millions and billions of years into the Bible also have another major problem to deal with, and that is the flood of Noah's day. Since that flood wiped out all land-dwelling animals and birds, only those on the ark survived. Even if you could put long ages into the creation account, this puts an end to any benefits from that.

New Testament Writers and Jesus

Jesus

- *Jesus says that from the “beginning of creation” God had made them male and female.* (Mk. 10:6) In other words, Adam and Eve were created at the beginning, not a long time afterwards.
- Jesus accepted all of the Old Testament as being true as plainly read. He talked about Abraham, Noah, Jonah, Abel and others as being historical people, and the events as being real historical events.
- Jesus always used Scripture authoritatively.
- Jesus said: *“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”* (Matt. 5:18 LSB)

Others

- Paul several times refers to Adam being the first man and bases doctrine on that fact. (1 Ti 2:13, 1 Cor 15:45)
- Peter specifically says that only 8 people survived the flood. (1 Pe 3:20, 2 Pe 2:5)
- Jude specifies that Enoch was the seventh from Adam – also taking the genealogy as being accurate.

We do not get to choose what we believe, what is important or to change the meaning of Scripture.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15 LSB)

“All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17 LSB)

“Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Pet. 1:20-21 LSB)

Conclusion

The Scriptures provide us with the information to give us an approximate age of the earth, which is less than 8,000 years. Trying to fit long ages into the Scriptures makes God, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament out to be wrong, and or liars. This undermines the Gospel and even the need for the Gospel. It is the basis of a lot of heretical and bad theology. It provides the foundation for people to pick and choose what they want to believe from the Bible. This has been to cause of so many in the Church, in Bible Colleges and Seminaries and society in general

turning from the truths of God. It essentially provides the basis for “everybody doing what was right in their own eyes”. The only legitimate way to read and understand Genesis 1 -11 is by reading it in the way it plainly reads – creation in six ordinary, approximately 24-hour days and the genealogies being reads in a plain way. We need to understand that days are days and years are years.

Appendix A – New Testament references

This section will focus on reference back to Genesis from Adam to Abraham as the rest is already generally accepted as true.

- There are numerous references to Abraham in the Gospels and the letters referring to him as the historical figure that is described in Genesis. (for example Mk 12:26)
- Matthew and Mark both have Jesus’ reference to God “creating them male and female from the beginning”. Matt 19:4, Mk 10:6
 - There are two aspects to this. The first is that they were created and did not evolve.
 - The second is that it was the beginning of time that they were created not close to the end – which is what it would be if the secular evolutionary hypothesis were correct.
- Jesus in Matt 23:35, Lk 11:51 refers to Abel as being the historical figure in Genesis and the account of his death.
- Jesus affirms the account of the world-wide flood in Matt 24:38-39, Lk 17:26-27. The flood took them all away.
- Jesus affirms the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Lk 17: 28-29)
- Luke gives the genealogy right back to Adam, the son of God. He uses the phrase “son of” for each person. You never get to a place where it becomes allegorical or anything like that.
- Paul says that sin entered through one man – Adam. (Rom 5:12-19, 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-47)
- In Timothy, Paul says that Adam was formed first, then Eve. 1 Tim 2:13-14 (2 Cor 11:3). He affirms the account of creation and the account of the deception of Eve in Genesis chapter 3. In fact, the basis of only men being allowed to be leaders of the church is based on the creation account and the fall in Genesis 3.
- In Hebrews, there are a number of people listed there as historical people and historical events. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others. (Heb 11:1 ff, 12:24)
- John recounts Cain killing his brother. (1 Jn 3:12)

- Jude affirms that Enoch was the seventh from Adam. (Jude 14)
- Jude affirms Cain and his murder of Abel. (Jude 11)
- Peter affirms that only eight people were saved from the flood. (1 Pet 3:20, 2 Pet 2:5, 3:5-6)
- The writer of Hebrews affirms Genesis by saying: “For He has spoken somewhere in this way concerning the seventh day: “*AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS*”,” (Heb. 4:4 LSB)
- In Romans chapter 8, the creation was subjected to futility through the disobedience of Adam. (Rom 8:18ff)
- Revelation 12:9, 20:2 affirm that the serpent in Genesis 3 is Satan.

Appendix B – Genealogies.

People who try and get long ages into the genealogies often try and put time in between the people listed in the genealogies in chapters 5 and 11 of Genesis, so let's have a look.

- The formula in chapter 5 is “Person A lived xxx years and became the father of yyy and lived another xxx years and in total lived xxx years”.
- In chapter 11, the formula is a bit shorter. “Person A lived xxx years and became the father of yyy and lived xxx years after he became the father”.
- Some will say that there are people that are not listed between the father and son as recorded. While not true, even if it were, it would make no difference. Adam would still be the same age when Seth was born even if there were other people in between Adam and Seth, since Adam is listed as being a certain age when Seth is born.

Appendix C – Historical

Historically, until the time of the 17 to 18 hundreds or even later, the numbers in the genealogies were taken literally.

- Moses and the Israelites would certainly have understood the numbers as plainly read. Anything else would have been absurd to them.
- Josephus, writing just after the time of Jesus, in his book “Antiquities of the Jews” – “**1.** *(1) I suppose that, by my books of the Antiquities of the Jews, most excellent Epaphroditus, I have made it evident to those who peruse them, that our Jewish nation is of very great antiquity, and had a distinct subsistence of its own originally; as also I have therein declared how we came to inhabit this country wherein we now live. Those Antiquities contain the history of five thousand years, and are taken out of our sacred*

*books; but are translated by me into the Greek tongue*². Since Malachi was written around 400 BC, it puts creation around 5400 BC in his mind.

- Josephus also specifically considered the days of creation as literal 24-hour days.
- He also specifically accepts the creation of Adam and Eve as written and the murder of Abel by Cain. “**3.** (67) Now Adam, who was the first man, and made out of the earth (for our discourse must now be about him,) after Abel was slain, and Cain fled away on account of his murder, was solicitous for posterity, and had a vehement desire of children, he being two hundred and thirty years old; after which time he lived other seven hundred, and then died”³
- Josephus also takes the longer timeline as preserved in the Septuagint.

Josephus says about the flood: this flood began on the twenty-seventh [seventeenth] day of the forementioned month; (82) and this was two thousand six hundred and fifty-six [one thousand six hundred and fifty-six] years from Adam, the first man; and the time is written down in our sacred books, those who then lived having noted down, with great accuracy, both the births and deaths of illustrious men.⁴

Terry Mortenson in the book “Coming to Grips with Genesis” writes:

- *We have shown that most of the fathers held to the six days as being literal 24-hour days. At the very minimum, they all believed that creation was sudden. In strong contrast to the claims of Hugh Ross, we have demonstrated that no father proposed anything that could be taken as affirming deep time. It does not follow logically that if a father did not specify the exact length of each creation day, or even treated them as purely symbolic, then he would not see the time frame of creation as being important, or that deep time was a viable option. The oft-used counter examples of Clement, Origen, and Augustine, best understood through the lens of Alexandrian allegorical hermeneutics, all held that the creation had been fully completed in an instant.*
- *Regardless of their differing hermeneutical approaches to Genesis 1, the fathers held to the sex/septa-millenary typological eschatology of the six days. The tradition among the fathers was that the creation occurred less than 6,000 years in the past, and the world would end or dramatically change at the Second Advent, which would occur at the end of the 6,000 years.*

² Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 773.

³ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 32.

⁴ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 33.

- *The fathers asserted that the Flood in Genesis 6–8 was worldwide in extent, and some held that the existence of fossils was evidence of this cataclysm.*
- *The fathers were young-earth creationists.*
- *The fathers were not striving for novelty. They merely saw their task as culling from, accentuating, and preserving ancient apostolic orthodoxy.”*

David Hall, in the same book also shows that up to the time of the reformers and beyond, the Biblical age of the earth was the norm:

- *We have provided substantial documentation that key Christian thinkers during the years from Luther to the triumph of Lyellian uniformitarianism (just like Christian thinkers from the Apostles to Luther) took Genesis 1–11 as straightforward literal history.”*

Bishop Ussher published his chronology in 1650 AD, in which he also believed in the plain reading of the text and creation being thousands of years ago, not millions or billions.