



Q&A: The Age of Rubio's Earth

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<https://peacefulscience.org/articles/age-rubios-earth/>



I decided to make this page to include a few parts of this article to include a few key parts that had to be cut from the article to meet space requirements and to answer questions from readers as they come up. Please check in regularly, as I expect to update based on reader questions.

I thought the Earth was 4.5 billion years old; why did you say “a billion-year-old Earth”?

So this is just imprecise phrasing. The editor and I meant 4.5 billion-year-old Earth, but left out the 4.5 assuming it would be clear to the reader. Apparently, a lot of people have been confused by this, so there is going to be a fix in the online version of the article to add in the 4.5. Please be assured, we certainly knew ahead of time that it was 4.5 billion.

What would have been a better answer by Rubio to the question?

“I am not a scientist, and I do not know all the scientific evidence about the age of the Earth and our origins. However, in terms of education policy, we should leave science curriculums to scientists. The quality and depth of our students’ science education is critical for our economic future. At the same time, fueling a culture war between science and faith makes it harder for many religious students to understand and accept scientific knowledge, and it encourages bigotry in our disagreements. Instead, tolerance and patience gives everyone the best chance to learn science, which can only be good for education, the economy, and our culture.”

If God created a fully-grown tree, we cut it down and call it a hundred-years-old by counting its rings, we would be wrong. Isn't it the same thing with the age of the Earth?

In this parable, all the evidence points to the tree being 100 years old. The scientific age of the tree is 100 years. Period. In the same way, the apparent, scientific age of the Earth is 4.5 Billion years. Is it possible that God created Earth to look like it is really old? Is it possible he created humans with chimpanzee DNA outside of evolution? Of course, but there is no scientific evidence to demonstrate this, only theological arguments, supporting this view.

In 2012 I published [an article in the Wall Street Journal](#) about Marc Rubio's comments to GQ Magazine about the age of the Earth. In the midst of the current election season I decided to post this Q&A answering questions about that article.

So, even if God did do this, it doesn't make sense to teach it in science class. We should teach that to which the evidence points. Just as I wrote in the article, “all evidence points to a 4.5-billion-year-old Earth”.

I don't agree with you that there is good evidence to support evolution and an old earth!

Many Christians found my statements about the strength of evidence for evolution to be disagreeable. Let me clarify a key point. You are free to reject evolution and believe in a 6,000 year old earth if you choose. There is certainly space for this view in the Bible and that is what freedom of religion is all about. But we have to accept that there is no scientific evidence that *clearly* supports this view over theistic evolution in an old earth. Perhaps there is theological evidence in scripture, but there is certainly no clear cut scientific evidence that proves the Earth is young or evolution is impossible. Which gets to the main point of the article, believe what you will about creation, but don't expect science class to teach anything other than the scientific account. *Leave science curriculums to scientists.* This shouldn't threaten us as Christians, because we are called to preach the Good News about salvation, not about creation. Let's keep our focus there.

Where is a safe place for Christians to learn about the scientific evidence behind an old Earth and Evolution?

I recommend two organizations, both of which have extensive, informative websites that are designed to enrich, not undermine, your faith. The first is [Peaceful Science](#). The second is the [American Scientific Affiliation \(ASA\)](#), a association of Scientist-Christians that have been wrestling these issues.

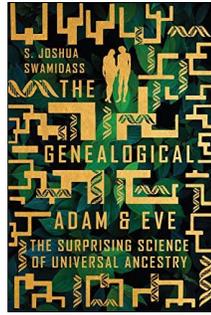
So how does a historical Adam and Eve fit in this? Doesn't that demonstrate that evolution isn't compatible with the Bible?

Human DNA sequences seem to point to a single founding community of about 10,000 humans,¹ which seems like it is conflict with the idea of a historical Adam and Eve. This is important, because somehow we need to trace a connection between the fall of some original Adam and Eve to all of us.

1. This statment, and others in this answer, are not accurate statements of where the science stands. See [Three Stories on Adam and Eve](#) and [Is evolutionary science in conflict with Adam and Eve?](#)

There are several solutions to this.

1. Some, like C.S. Lewis and St Augustine, say things like “*We do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state. But sooner or later they fell.*” Emphasizing the infallible, inspired moral truth in the passage but being flexible about a strict historical interpretation of the account.
2. Perhaps Adam and Eve were a single couple in this group of 10,000 that were the first to be giving a Spirit by the Lord (*Homo divinus* Francis Collins calls them). They would be not the sole progenitors of humans,² but all of us would be their ancestors and share some of their DNA. This is consistent with the fact that there were already villages of people when Cain was cast out.
3. Perhaps the scientific account is not accurate. The evidence that there was 10,000 humans in a founding community isn’t a closed case, and maybe we’ll find out there were fewer.
4. Some theologians have argued against an “inheritance” model of sinful nature and for an “infection” model of sinful nature, where it passed by association rather than strict lineage.



Later, I published this book to more fully answer the question.

Now, we have several possible ways of harmonizing these accounts. Which one is correct? I don’t know, because they all are consistent with both the Bible and the Scientific account.

2. We now know that there are many ways to define the term “sole progenitors,” and it need not preclude interbreeding between Adma and Eve’s lineage and others. For this reason, Adam and Eve could have been “sole progenitors” of all humans, depending on many details beyond the scope of this article.

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So how does the absence of death before the fall fit in? Doesn’t that demonstrate that evolution isn’t compatible with the Bible? Evolution only advances thorough death, but there was no death before fall, right?

Well, this is actually very easy to resolve. I agree with St. Augustine on this one. He argued that a literal interpretation of scripture strongly points to there being no *spiritual* death before the fall, but there being physical death. Augustine argues beautifully that this is in fact a literal interpretation because in God’s eyes, spiritual death is literal. You can find out more here about this view:

Others have different takes on this. I would point readers to John Walton’s recent books on the topic too.

From the WSJ comments, “If the Holy Spirit cannot be trusted when He tells of creation, how can He be trusted when He tells of salvation? If the Holy Spirit cannot be trusted in Genesis 1, how can He be trusted in John 3:16?”

The Holy Spirit is entirely trustworthy when He tells us of creation. Lets not confuse our personal interpretations of Genesis with the Holy Spirit. Lets not confuse our specific church upbringing and denominational doctrine with the Holy Spirit. The correct interpretation of Genesis is to be trusted because it is infallible, inspired, and useful. What is at issue is that our interpretations of Genesis need to be more carefully examined in light of historical Christianity. I reccomend Mark Noll’s article to help explain why american evangelicalism has become hung up on this point.