



Below is a copy of the Ankerberg letter to which the Institute for Creation Research has responded due to numerous errors in the letter. ICR's initial response can be found online at www.icr.org/article/4453

January 2009

Dear _____,

This January and February our ministry will present **the latest scientific evidence that reveals God created the universe**. I want you to know this evidence and be able to share it with your children to prepare them for what they will face at school and in the world.

Further, I want to help you **use this evidence to lead your non-Christian friends to believe God exists and is the Creator of everything** so they can believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world. I believe God has given us a wonderful evangelistic tool through a harmony of Genesis 1 and 2 and the record of nature. Science today testifies "that God is there and He is not silent!"

Every day, we as Christians live with the fact that there is no area in which we are more denounced than in the area of science. Television, radio, movies, and professors at our secular universities ridicule those who believe the biblical account of creation in Genesis. But why does the world not believe God exists? The Bible asserts:

The heavens **declare** the glory of God; the skies **proclaim** the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth **speech**; night after night **they display knowledge**. There is no language where **their voice is not heard**. **Their voice** goes out **into all the earth**, **their words** to the ends of the world.

If the heavens really do show that an all-powerful God exists, and if the skies constantly display knowledge that God is the great Designer of the universe, then why don't more students at our universities believe God exists?

This month I will show you that the evidence gathered by astronomers and astrophysicists **verifies that God exists**, testifies that **God is the great Designer**, reveals that **God is personal and loving**, and unveils that **God cares deeply for people**. Unfortunately, many Christians do not know this evidence and can't share the good news about God and creation with their friends.

Over the last six months I have watched one of our top Christian astronomers debate well-known atheistic scientists in front of faculties and student bodies at some of our most prestigious secular universities. Once I watched him address 500 skeptical astronomers and astrophysicists at their own convention. As he courageously walked into the "lion's den" I listened in amazement as he laid out the latest scientific evidence from astronomy and astrophysics that powerfully argues for the existence of God, and unashamedly asserts that this evidence is compatible with Genesis 1 and 2.

I have also watched him present to scientists **the first testable creation model** Christians have ever produced. It invites side-by-side comparison with competing models in science. First, he documents scientific discoveries already known that demonstrate the model's validity. Second, he anticipates scientific discoveries that will be found in the future to further verify the model. In fact, **he has proposed 90 scientific facts he believes science will discover in the future** that will further establish this creation model.

As an evangelist at heart, I envision many Christian students presenting this creation model on campus to prove God exists, and that the Bible comes from God.

This month, I have invited astronomer and astrophysicist Dr. Hugh Ross to come and share what he has been presenting to scientists and students.

This information will be shown in our new series entitled, **"What Scientific Evidence Proves That God Created and Designed the Universe?"** It features gorgeous shots from astronomy that demonstrate God's existence. My staff and I have worked an extremely long time on this series and can't wait for you to see it.

In February, we will present a second science series that deals with the biblical record entitled **"Genesis: A Question of Days."** In it, we will present the evidence that the Bible said it first—that is, the Bible talked about the Big Bang before any astronomer did.

In this series **we will also present and compare the young earth and old earth interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2.** I believe thinking Christians want to know whether a literal interpretation of the words in Genesis can be harmonized with science and the record of nature. **Is science compatible with Scripture?** I think it is. In fact, I believe the Bible is the only holy book in the world that accurately describes the beginning and expansion of the universe, the creation of the stars, the galaxies, our earth, and the special creation of humans.

I realize that some of you reading this letter believe with all of your heart that the Bible teaches God created the heavens and the earth approximately 6,000 years ago. You believe the *only* correct literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 teaches God created in six 24-hour days. Therefore, if anyone suggests otherwise, they are speaking against the clear meaning of the Bible, and this is unacceptable.

Believe me. I completely understand your feelings. I held the exact same viewpoint when I wrote two books arguing for the young earth position years ago. I want you to know I **would not even consider another stance if it required me to deny a literal, inerrant, infallible interpretation of the Bible. Never!** But as I have poured over Scripture, I slowly (it took over 15 years) began to believe the Bible revealed more information than I first understood and was teaching something different than my views.

Now, you have trusted me to teach you many biblical doctrines over the last 28 years, so I would ask that you **please hear me out**, and give me a chance to at least explain to you the reasons **why I came to believe that a literal reading of the biblical text** is teaching the seven creation days are seven long periods of time.

Some of you have been my friends for close to 30 years. In past programs some of you have told me you will not change from your young earth interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, but have been very understanding when I have presented another literal word-by-word view. Not everybody has been so generous, but many of you have. What can I say? I love you and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Furthermore, **I hope you will agree that I've been fair in presenting this issue for everyone in the church.** In the past, you know I have invited leaders from both sides to come on the program. Christians must be able to discuss these issues in a loving manner.

In fact, many in the Christian community turn to *The John Ankerberg Show* to debate controversial questions in a fair setting where both sides can express their opinion. **We just taped the first debate between two Christian astronomers**, one arguing for **the young earth position, the other the old earth position.** These two astronomers approached me and asked if I would be willing to tape their debate. I agreed. They debated the question **“Does**

the Evidence from Astronomy and the Bible Support the Young Earth or the Old Earth View of Creation?"

My guests were astronomer **Dr. Danny Faulkner** who received his PhD in astronomy from Indiana University. He presented the scientific evidence for the young earth view (that the universe, earth, and humans were created about 10,000 years ago). **Dr. Hugh Ross** represented the day age, old earth view (that the universe was created 13.7 billion years ago, the earth 4.5 billion, Adam and Eve about 50,000 years ago).

We held this debate in November and sent it to 15 leading astronomers. The 15 scientists will listen to the debate and write a paper together with their conclusions. I have invited three representatives from this group of scientists to come on our program and give their conclusions to our debaters in person so that you can hear that discussion.

Sometime during the month of February I will make this debate available for you. In the future when the scientists come and give us their conclusions, we will bring you that discussion on television. I'm doing all of this with the goal of allowing people in the church to think through these two biblical interpretations and come to their own conclusions.

This month I'm also making available **a science series for skeptics**. I asked Dr. Hugh Ross to share the same presentation to our television audience that he made to the 500 atheistic and agnostic astronomers and astrophysicists at their convention. We are making it available this month on DVD. It is entitled "**Scientific Evidence for Skeptics.**" If you enjoy science, this is definitely a presentation you will want to see.

Some ask, **John, why don't you just avoid this topic completely?** Well, I want you to know that I am not trying to stir up controversy. The reason I'm not avoiding the topic of science and creation is because I know **it is one of the main reasons Christian students leave their faith at secular universities** (like your children or grandchildren). Christian students who don't have answers to their questions have many times turned away from God, the church, and the Bible.

When I was arguing for the young earth view in the early years of our television ministry, I remember when my friend Dr. John Morris, the President of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) and one of the world's largest young earth organizations, was being interviewed on KKLA radio in Los Angeles. **He was asked, "Had he or any of his associates ever met or heard of a scientist who became persuaded that the universe or earth is only thousands of years old, based on scientific evidence without a reference to a particular interpretation of the Bible?" Morris' answer was no, he had not.**

Later, Duane Gish, also of ICR, was asked the same question. I was interested in his answer as I had invited Dr. Gish to be my guest in the very first debate I held on science and the Bible. I had arranged for him to debate Dr. Vincent Sarich, who was the Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Berkeley and an evolutionist. When Dr. Gish was asked if he knew of any scientist who had ever been persuaded by the scientific evidence that the universe or the earth was 6,000 years old, he also said no. **At the time I thought, it's going to be difficult to defend the young earth position if no scientist has been persuaded by the scientific evidence to accept it.**

Today, I believe God has provided great evidence in the record of nature and science that complements a literal word-for-word interpretation of Genesis. In the past, I could show that evolution was an unproved scientific theory, but I couldn't show how the Genesis account corresponded with science. I think young earth leaders are in the same situation today.

Let me also say this: **During the 28 years I've been on television, I have watched some of my television guests, champions of the young earth position, change their mind.** The first time they were on the program they argued for the young earth position. Later, they embraced the old earth position. They include professors like Dr. Walter Bradley, who received his Ph.D. in Material Science at the University of Texas in Austin and was head of the Mechanical Engineering Department at Texas A & M University, and now is professor of engineering at Baylor University. Charles Thaxton is another example. He received his Ph.D. in chemistry from Iowa State University, did postdoctoral research in the History of Science at Harvard, and worked in the microbiology labs at Brandeis University. I watched this happen to some of our most respected Systematic Theology professors like Dr. Norman Geisler, and preachers like Jack Hayford.

Some scholars came to the old earth position simply by **reading the Bible in the original language.** I studied under two of the greatest Hebrew scholars in evangelical Christianity, Dr. Gleason Archer and Dr. Walter Kaiser. Both of them **were persuaded by the Hebrew text of the Bible, apart from science, that God was literally teaching that the days of Genesis were seven long periods of time.**

I have two Master's degrees and a Doctorate. One of my Master's degrees was in Church History, so I was aware that many prominent Christian leaders and scholars in the past had embraced the old earth view. These include people like St. Augustine, Sir Isaac Newton, B.B. Warfield, C. I. Scofield, William Jennings Bryan, Charles Hodge, C.S. Lewis, Francis Schaeffer, John Walvoord, and Ken Taylor. In our day Christian philosophers William Lane Craig, J.P. Moreland, Paul Copan, as well as Pastor Chuck Smith Jr., Lee Strobel, Chuck Colson, Robert Godfrey, Mark Knoll, and Robert Newman, all hold to the Old Earth view.

In fact, I knew that the majority of scientists who are evangelical Christians believe the old earth view. The same is true of the majority of seminary professors at our leading conservative seminary campuses today. At the highest levels of Christian scholarship the overwhelming position is the day age (old earth) position. Still, for many years I held to my young earth views.

So what happened? It started when I began to realize the Bible itself was disputing my young earth views. Here is one example you can check out for yourself. I believed the standard young earth view **about Noah and the animals on the ark**; that after the flood, many or most of the 30,000 species boards—dinosaurs, trilobites, and others—went extinct. The remaining few thousand species must have evolved by extremely rapid, hyper-efficient natural processes into millions of species in just a few hundred years.

The young earth view teaches that in the beginning all animals ate only plants until Adam and Eve rebelled against God's authority. Carnivores didn't develop until after Adam and Eve sinned. **Therefore, all of the meat-eating creatures alive now and those in the fossil record had to evolve in several hundred years or less, by natural processes alone, from the plant-eating creatures on the ark.**

I agreed with young earth creationists Dr. John Morris and Dr. John Whitcomb that Noah's ark at full capacity could only have carried 30,000 pairs of land animals. So, from that small number of animals on Noah's ark came *the half billion species* found in the fossil record, and all of *the 10 million species* alive today. But could all of the animals found in the fossil record really have evolved by strictly natural processes from the time of the ark in just a short 6000 years?

Since as a young-earther I didn't believe in biological evolution, how could all of the animals get here by natural means? Friends like **Dr. Henry Morris**, founder and president of ICR, criticized **anyone who embraced any form of evolution**, and blamed evolutionary theory for "spawning the vast complex of godless movements." Young earth creationist **Edward Blick** declared, "**Evolutionists are guilty of 'deliberately bluffing,' making 'patently false' statements**, of violating rules of logic through 'circular reasoning,' faulty premises, faulty analogies, wishful thinking and of making a farce of scientific laws." But what were we arguing?

I was strictly against evolution, and I still am. But I realized that **my view of the animals coming off the ark (still taught in young earth literature today) was positing a faster rate of biological evolution than even the most ardent Darwinian evolutionists had ever proposed for one species changing into another.**

Keep in mind that the young earth view correctly holds that after the sixth creation day God rested and stopped creating new life forms on earth. That means that from the time of Adam and Eve there was only natural change. Philip Kitcher, a leading atheist and philosophy of science professor at Columbia University fairly summed it up, “Rates of speciation that young earth creationists would require are truly breathtaking; [they are] **orders of magnitude greater than any that have been dreamed of in evolutionary theory.**”

I then realized that if naturalistic evolutionary processes actually did proceed with such speed as we were saying, the changes would be easily observable in real time—in our time. Most embarrassing of course was the fact that there was a complete lack of evidence for this position. Also, it was ironic to me that **my young earth view was proposing a hyper-efficient biological evolution, while the old earth view proposed no evolution at all.**

But the real question for me was this: **does the Bible allow for this high degree of hyper-efficient, biological evolution?** I discovered that the Bible says no and addressed this question in very specific terms by giving a clear definition of “kind.” In Genesis 1, God says, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their *kinds*: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its *kind*.” Well, Leviticus 19:19 says: “You shall not let your animals breed with different *kinds* of animals. Don’t plant your field with two kinds of seed.” In the Hebrew text the word for “kind” (species) is *miyn*. A species is commonly defined as two animals that are able to reproduce naturally to produce fertile offspring, and recognize one another as potential mates. **In creation, God distinguishes and defines species with boundaries that were not to be confused. It indicates a narrow definition of “kind.” How narrow?**

Comparing biblical passages that use the word *miyn* we can see it *certainly does* not refer to different kinds quickly interbreeding and changing. For example, in Deuteronomy 14:12-18 it lists the different kinds of birds. It lists the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the stork, any kind of heron, and any kind of bat as unclean. The Bible says each of these was a separate *miyn* “kind.” **The Bible is categorically ruling out “kinds” as naturally breeding and changing into other species.** It’s interesting that well known ecologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich remind us that since the appearance of humans, no documentation yet exists for the production of a new animal species.

And notice **the Bible even distinguishes between different “kinds” (species) of vultures and different kinds of kites as separate *miyn*, further narrowing the definition of kind.** Both Leviticus 11:13-19 and Deuteronomy 14:15-17 refer to the horned owl, the

screech owl, the little owl, the great owl, the desert owl and the white owl as separate *miyn*. Now owls would be the genus, and these verses are making it clear that we're talking about individual species within the genus that are separate *miyn*. And so again, the Bible is strictly ruling out "kinds" as naturally breeding and being endowed to quickly change into another species. **The Bible does not support the young earth model that a single horse pair on board the ark after the flood rapidly evolved into donkeys and zebras, or creatures like llamas.**

Now it's not impossible to breed a lion with a tiger and get a "liger," but Leviticus 19 is saying not to do it. It's saying naturally, this wouldn't happen. **It would not be of their kind.** You can breed a horse and donkey. But because the result, a mule, is not fertile, they are clearly separate species. Breeding experiments done in artificial conditions do not reflect what would happen if the same animals encountered each other in the wild naturally.

So, I recognized that the Bible was not supporting rapid, efficient naturalistic evolution and my young earth view was in error. **I was against evolution, but advocating a young earth, hyper-efficient Darwinian evolution that wouldn't happen naturally.**

So if all of the species we know about today *couldn't* have evolved (or quickly changed) and come down to us from the animals on the ark, where did all of the species alive today and all of the species in the fossil record come from? The fossil evidence seemed to indicate they lived long before God created Adam and Eve. **But was there any biblical support for this?** It is here that I discovered young earth scholarship was not paying enough attention to biblical scholarship.

First, the Hebrew word for "day" (*yom*) in the Bible has four literal definitions: 1) a portion of the daylight hours, 2) all of the daylight portion of a 24-hour day, 3) a 24-hour day, and 4) a long but finite time period. So why do I believe the fourth definition of "an age, a long period of time," is the one to be used in defining the length of time of day (*yom*) in the seven creation days?

In the creation story itself, *yom* is used this way to describe a period of time longer than 24 hours. Genesis 2:4 refers back to the entire six "days of creation," when it says: "This is the history of the heavens and earth when they were created, in the day [*yom*] that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." Moses used the word "day" here to refer to an age or period of time without any reference to solar days. It's like saying "in the day of the Romans," or "in my grandfather's day."

Second, according to *other biblical passages*, the seventh "day" continues. It can't be a 24-hour day. It must be thousands of years long. Genesis 2:1 tells us, "By the seventh day

God had finished the work he had been doing; and **so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.** And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” By the way, notice there is no morning or evening stated about this day. The day still continues.

The writer of Hebrews encourages people to believe on Christ and enter into God’s rest today. He writes: “It still remains that some will enter that rest....there remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. **Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...**” (Hebrews 4:1-11). Here we are told God is still resting; and the seventh day continues even now.

Therefore, if God’s Sabbath rest continues today and on into the future, then the seventh day has been going on for thousands of years, “a long period of time,” and could not be 24 hours long. And if the seventh day is not 24 hours long, then it's possible that the other six days must also be long periods of time.

Third, Moses also used *yom* (day) in Psalm 90, the only Psalm he wrote. There he says, “A day is like a thousand years.” Peter referred to what Moses said in 2 Peter 3:8 when he told Christians: “Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord **one day is as a thousand years**, and a thousand years as one day.” Notice in both places Moses and Peter did not say a day is a thousand years, but a day is **like** a thousand years. For God, “a long period of time” (like a thousand years) is like a day.

So in three Bible texts Moses himself used *yom* to mean “an age, a long period of time,” not 24 hours.

Fourth, the Bible says that on the third “day,” God not only created vegetation, but it grew to maturity. Specifically it says, “Then God said, “let the earth **sprout vegetation**, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them. And it was so. And **the land produced vegetation**; plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind.” (Gen. 1:11, 12). This verse uses the word “sprout,” indicating the beginning of growth, not its completion. For trees to grow from seeds to maturity and produce more seeds is a process that takes much longer than a day, a week, or even a month for most plants. **This conclusion represents a problem in the young earth creationism theory.**

Fifth, the events that took place on the sixth “day” of creation would have taken considerably longer than a 24-hour solar day. I will describe these in my next letter. It’s highly unlikely that all of these events were compressed within a 24-hour period or, more precisely, within just a few hours on the sixth day.

There seem to be many other indications within the text of Scripture to support the belief that the creation “days” were literally longer than 24 hours. These are just a few. I will share more in my next letter and in our series in February.

I realize this is a lot of information, but I hope you will hear my heart as I write **and be assured of my commitment to a literal, infallible, inerrant biblical interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2.** I also want you to understand that we are letting **scientists from both sides present their views for you to listen** and make up your own mind. I believe neither viewpoint has proven with scientific finality their assumptions. That’s why we need to be open to listening as different viewpoints are debated.

Now one final word: last year, financial support during the month of January was very low and almost led to our losing many stations. If you want to see us continue presenting and defending the faith on television, bringing the top scholarship in Christianity into your home, then I’d like to ask you to remember the ministry and send a gift to let us know you’re standing with us. If you believe, as I do, that it is vital for us as believers to understand God’s inerrant revelation in Scripture, could I hear from you this month?

I also care about your personal questions on this issue. I encourage you to check out some of our online articles regarding science or to email us your questions at science@johnankerberg.org. I’ve asked my good friend Jim Virkler, a retired science teacher and author of our science blog, to respond on my behalf to as many of your questions as he can through our website.

On the enclosed card, you will also find our special series on science we are making available to you this month. Thank you again for making this ministry possible. We look to the Lord to provide the needs of our ministry through your kind generosity.

Sincerely in Christ,



Dr. John Ankerberg