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METHUSELAH – OVER 4600 YEARS OLD AND STILL HAVING BABIES

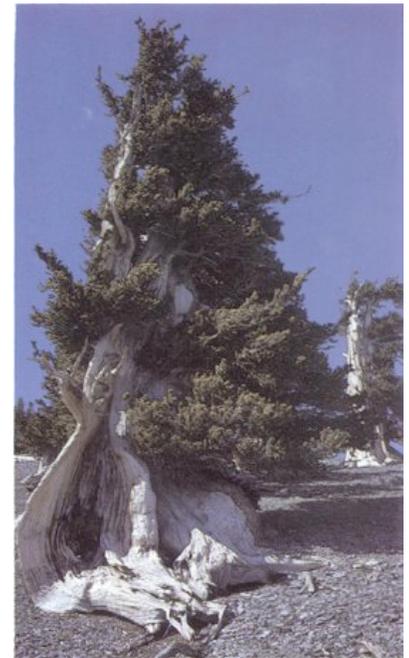
In the lead article of our March, 2003 issue, “Baby Picture,” we focused on satellite pictures of cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB) that NASA scientists claimed were “the best “baby picture” of the Universe ever taken.” In this issue we focus on another “baby,” one of a dozen baby bristlecone pine (*Pinus aristata*) trees that are the subject of a recent, June 16, 2003, New York Times article.¹ This baby is about nine inches long with a green, bushy top and is the offspring of the oldest known living thing, a bristlecone pine tree named Methuselah.”

Because of the remote location of Bristlecone forests (White Mountains of eastern California), you are not likely to have heard of or seen these trees, unless you are a creation scientist. For like the beauty of a flower, the incredible complexity of a living cell, the wonder of harmonious sound, and the perfect fit of the moon over the sun during a solar eclipse, these trees represent another “fingerprint” of God’s wondrous creation.

The Bristlecone pine became famous in scientific circles through the work of Dr. Edmund Schulman (1908-1958) of the University of Arizona. Through his study of their annual growth rings, a fairly precise method of dating has been obtained. During the summer of 1957, his last season of research, he discovered “Methuselah,” a tree dating back 4600 years.² Though scientists continue to search the globe,¹ no older tree (or any other older living thing) has been discovered.

Animals and plants generally lose their ability to reproduce as they age. However, Bristlecone pines seem to be one exception, leading Le Roy Johnson, Forest Service manager of their preserve and for-

mer director of the Institute of Tree Genetics in Placerville, California, to state that they seem “capable of growing forever.”¹ According to Mr. Johnson, the last time Methuselah is known to have reproduced itself (in the 1970’s) “it had a 100 percent germination rate.” “That’s more than we get on most trees, let alone the oldest tree in the world.” All this begs the question, why are there no Bristlecone pines that are older than roughly 4,600 years?



Irish Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) used Genesis chapters 5 and 11 to compile genealogical chronologies that were widely accepted in his day.³ Ussher placed the date of Noah’s flood at 2350 B.C. and creation at 4004 B.C.⁴ Other Biblical scholars have researched dates for the flood ranging from 3398 B.C. to 2348 B.C. and creation between 3760 B.C. and 5555 B.C.² Of course, these dates are scoffed at by “modern” evolutionists, but the Bristlecone pine research may actually verify them.

With “Methuselah” dating back to around 2600 B.C, it seems quite possible that this oldest of Bristlecone pines has been growing since right after the flood. The actual date may be adjusted for extremely wet years which occurred in the past, as shown by the numerous dry lakes in the desert regions of eastern California and Nevada. Experiments have shown that trees can grow an extra ring every one to four years during unusually wet seasons.⁵ These varied conditions could allow a slightly more recent date, which may even closely match Ussher’s date of 2350 B.C.



Some have suggested much older dates for the flood, and ultimately creation based on the record of rings found in dead Bristlecone wood. Flood dates in the range of 10,000 to 15,000 years before present have been suggested.⁶ However, it could be possible that the preserved dead wood grew in the period before the flood. These pre-flood trees could have remained in the same vicinity probably anchored as stumps, for the period of around a year until the flood waters receded. If the dead wood was still viable for sprigs and seeds, this would explain the continued existence of the Bristlecone pine forest in the same location.

The fact that dead wood from both on the trees and on the ground, provide a tree-ring record going back to proposed dates of around 6800 B.C. or earlier⁷ may or may not cause a problem for the Ussher dating. The same argument for multiple ring growth in wet years could hold for the dead wood. In addition, creation had to involve some superficial appearance of earth history. Trees were likely created with tree-rings already in place. Rocks would likely have yielded old dates by the faulty radioisotope methods in use today. Even man and animals did not appear as infants. Nevertheless, even with only minor adjustments in the growth-ring-to-year correlation, most creation scientists would have no problem with a date of creation in the 6000-7000 B.C. range.

This month, a ceremony is being planned to recognize the new Bristlecone offspring, and one will be presented to the United States Botanic Garden on the grounds of the Capitol.¹



While the world admires them for their great age, we should recognize these marvelous and now famous trees as a record of God's relatively recent creation. Dendrochronology is certainly a science that provides facts which should make evolutionists uneasy and bear witness to the truth of Romans 1:20, that we have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing and trusting God and His word. ❧

Jeff Gift, PhD

¹ Kinkead, Gwen. 2003. "At Age 4,600-Plus, Methuselah Pine Tree Begets New Offspring." *New York Times*, June 16, 2003.

² Miller, Brian. 1977. "Bristlecone Discovery Trail." Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, Bishop, CA.

³ Morris, Dr. Henry M., 1976. *The Genesis Record*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI., pp. 42-45, 280-285, 308-310, 675.

⁴ Morris Dr. Henry M. *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science*. Baker Book House Grand Rapids MI., 1984, pp. 449-454.

⁵ Lammerts, Walter E. 1983. "Are the Bristlecone Pine Trees Really So Old?" *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 20, September, pp. 108-115.

⁶ Aardsma, Gerald E. 1993. "Tree-Rings Dating and Multiple Growth Ring Per Year." *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, 29, March, pp. 184-189.

⁷ Beasley, Greg J. 1993. "Long-Lived Trees: Their Possible Testimony to a Global Flood and Recent Creation." *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal*, 7 (1), pp. 43-67.

DARWIN'S SPIRITUAL ENIGMA

There have been conflicting accounts regarding Darwin's spiritual beliefs. We know his wife was a very devout Christian, and we know he studied for the ministry at Cambridge University, but chose not to be ordained.

For over fifty years claims have been made that he accepted Christianity toward the end of his life. One account which was circulated under the title "Darwin's Last Hours" quoted an English evangelist, "Lady Hope," as claiming that he asked her to speak to his servants and some neighbors about "Christ Jesus — and His Salvation." However, in a book edited by Emmett L. Williams, researched carefully and written by Professor Wilbert H. Rusch and John W. Klotz, evidence is cited completely denying the authenticity of this report. In letters Darwin characterized himself as an agnostic. It would appear that Darwin's spiritual belief was caught in the snare of his own theory, a continuing danger for those who accept the teachings of evolution as truth. He was chronically ill in his latter years with abdominal complaints suggestive of psychological distress, and as a doctor I am not surprised. ❧

Isaac Manly, MD

EVIDENCES FOR CREATION OVER EVOLUTION

Editor's Note: The following is arguments No. 14-17 of 21 arguments compiled by various persons who believe that true science and biblical Christianity go hand in hand. Earlier parts in this series covered arguments 1-13.

This was produced jointly by the Creation Research Society, St. Joseph, Missouri, and Skilton House Ministries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Editors: Paul G. Humber and Glen W. Wolfrom. Contributors: Harry Akers, Robert Gentet, Ed Garrett, Lane Lester, Ron Pass, Dave Sack, Curt Sewell, Helen Setterfield, Doug Sharp, and Laurence Tisdall.

14. The long ages of the universe and the earth are often presented as proved by radiometric dating. Radiometric dating depends on three presumptions being true: that the original amounts of both mother and daughter elements are known (and this can often be mathematically determined, so is less challenged than the next two); that the rate of decay has been constant through time; and that there has been no migration of elements into or out of the samples being tested. Both of the second presumptions are false and known to be false. Rates of decay can vary widely for a number of reasons and the migration of elements into and out of rocks is also known. Life forms are often dated by radiocarbon dating, which is beset with even more known false presumptions which invalidate it beyond a short range of dates. In short, radiometric dating, while able to present some evidence for some things, is not the reliable marker of age that evolutionary science would like us to believe it is. (See <http://www.trueorigins.org>.)

15. Science traditionally is the knowledge and study of that which can be discovered and worked with by man—natural phenomena. There is no way around this. The non-natural cannot be tested or worked with. Given this limitation, science had two choices: 1.) To admit that the limitations exist and that science is therefore incapable of making any statements about supernatural events or 2.) to deny the existence of any causes or influences which are not natural. Science today, for the most part, has chosen the second option, denying that there are any supernatural causes or influences outside of nature itself which affect nature. Based upon all human experience, this is irrational. If we see a painting of a flower, we know there was a painter who painted it. And yet, when we see the actual flower in existence, much more detailed and complex than a painting could ever be, evolutionary science denies any supernatural agency could have formed it. Rationality would demand that if the painting had a painter, the actual flower must have had a Creator/Designer. We can play with a gyroscope or examine a globe of the world and recognize that both

these things are the products of intelligent design—but we can then turn to the beauty of the galaxies, the complexity of our solar system, or the design of our earth and declare them all the products of time and evolutionary events without any intelligence being involved at all. This is totally irrational thinking.

16. Some rock strata have tiny layering. When these are found in ancient lake beds, these layerings are often presumed to be “varves.” Varves are seasonal lake deposits that create thin layers of material on the lake bottom. These layers build up year after year, so that by counting the varves, you can tell how old the lake is. In an area such as the Green River deposits in the United States, millions of these tiny layerings are seen and thus evolutionists have often pointed to them as proof of millions of years of age of the area. This claim is made difficult by the presence of animals remains (fossils) which span a great number of these “varves.” In other words, if the long-ages interpretation were true, what we are seeing is that some kind of dead fish did not rot for many, many years while the varves were building up around it seasonally! It is at this point that a new explanation of these layers is needed. (See <http://www.trueorigin.org/walkergeo01.asp> and www.rae.org/Varves2.htm.)

17. Evolutionary geologists see the rock layers as taking long ages to form. The Earth's entire rock sequences thus took millions or even billions of years to form.

Yet it is now increasingly acknowledged that catastrophic events formed much of the Earth's rock layers. Much of geologic time is now reckoned as shown in the bedding planes between the layers! Nevertheless, evolutionists still cling to the idea of an ancient Earth. See Derek Ager's *The New Catastrophism* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, July 10, 7:30 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh

C. Gerald Van Dyke, PhD will present *Lichens: a mutualistic relationship between algae and fungi*. Dr. Van Dyke will discuss the implications of how such relationships could have formed by evolutionary means. Examples will be displayed.

Thursday, August 14, 7:30 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh

Topic to be announced

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