Young Earth and Old Earth Creationism

This document presents the 10 best scientific and 10 best biblical arguments for both Young Earth Creationists and Old Earth Creationists. The purpose is so the reader can see the strengths and weaknesses of each argument and make up their own mind.

Part I: Young Earth Creationism (YEC)

A. Ten Scientific Arguments for YEC

1. Soft tissue and original biomolecules (collagen, blood vessels, possible red blood cells) have been recovered from dinosaur bones, including Tyrannosaurus rex specimens. YEC proponents argue that flexible, unmineralized tissue cannot plausibly survive 65+ million years under any known preservation chemistry, and therefore the bones are far younger.

> ***Response from OEC:*** Soft tissue does not necessarily mean young tissue. For example, iron released from blood may help preserve surrounding tissue by producing chemical reactions that slow the breakdown of proteins. Binding to minerals and other chemical changes may also protect biological remnants. Researchers have tested whether iron-related chemical reactions can help preserve proteins and blood-vessel structures. In a 2019 study, scientists found evidence that chemical bonds formed in a T. rex fossil could have helped stabilize its blood-vessel tissue. These bonds can make proteins harder to break down.

2. Radiometric dating methods sometimes yield discordant or anomalously old/young results for rocks of known age (e.g., 1980s Mount St. Helens dated by K-Ar at hundreds of thousands to millions of years), suggesting the dating methods are unreliable and the underlying decay-rate assumptions are flawed.

> ***Response:*** Geochronologists note that K-Ar dating is known to be unsuitable for young volcanic rocks with excess argon and was never the method recommended for dating that specimen; the more diagnostic isochron and multi-isotope methods (Ar-Ar, U-Pb, Rb-Sr) are cross-checked against each other independent methods (varves, ice cores, dendrochronology) with strong overall concordance. Isolated anomalies are used as an argument against the whole method, while the far larger set of concordant results is set aside. Radiometric dates can be wrong without the entire dating method being wrong. The key question is whether the sample was suitable for that particular dating method and whether the result has been interpreted correctly.

3. The RATE project (Radioisotopes and the Age of The Earth, ICR/CRS, early 2000s) documented helium retention in zircon crystals that, if diffusion rates are extrapolated at present rates, implies the zircons are only thousands of years old, not over a billion.

> ***Response:*** Physicists who reviewed the RATE data (including some sympathetic to an old earth) note the helium-diffusion model depends on assumptions about the zircons' thermal history that are disputed, and the RATE interpretation creates a serious physical problem - enough heat to melt the earth. The accelerated nuclear decay RATE proposes to explain the isotope ratios would release enough heat to melt the earth's crust, a problem the RATE team acknowledged but did not resolve. Helium can behave differently depending on where it sits inside a crystal, including whether it is trapped in defects or other structures. Critics argue that the RATE team did not adequately account for these different behaviors when interpreting some of its laboratory measurements.

4. Polystrate fossils (e.g., tree trunks) that vertically cross multiple sedimentary strata suggest those strata were deposited rapidly around the standing trunk, not gradually over thousands of years, which would have allowed the trunk to decay before burial.

Response: Rapid burial is evidence of rapid burial-not proof that the whole geological record formed in a single short period**.** Geologists point out that rapid local sedimentation (e.g., in deltas, swamps, or volcanic settings) is a well-documented process within uniformitarian geology and does not require a global flood; polystrate trees are found in localized, well-understood depositional environments, not distributed globally in a pattern that requires a single catastrophic event.

Geology shows no consistent worldwide layer of flood deposits from a single recent catastrophe; instead, rock layers record many different environments and events over vast periods, including reefs, deserts, volcanic eruptions, and gradual sediment accumulation. The fossil record, ice cores, tree rings, and annual lake sediments also preserve sequences extending far beyond a few thousand years, with no evidence of a single global flood disrupting all these records simultaneously.

5. The 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption cut a 1/40-scale canyon through hundreds of feet of sediment in a matter of days, demonstrating that features assumed to require vast time (canyons, layered strata) can form rapidly under catastrophic conditions, as YEC models propose for Noah's flood.

Response: Geologists agree that major disasters can carve canyons quickly through loose volcanic ash and pumice, but the Grand Canyon cuts through hard, solid rock that has been cemented together over time. The rock layers also contain evidence of ancient soils, animal burrows, desert sand dunes, and gaps where erosion removed rock over long periods, suggesting a much more complex history than one sudden flood; Mount St. Helens involved much softer, looser material, so it is not a good comparison.

6. The measured decay rate of Earth's magnetic field, extrapolated backward, implies an impossibly strong field only 10,000-20,000 years ago. This points to a young earth.

Response: Geophysicists explain that Earth's magnetic field does not steadily weaken at the same rate over time. Rocks and sediments show that the field has reversed direction hundreds of times over millions of years and naturally fluctuates in strength, so using today's short-term measurements to calculate how strong it was thousands of years ago is not a reliable way to determine the Earth's age.

7. Salt and various minerals are accumulating in the ocean at measurable rates; extrapolated backward, the ocean would not yet be salty enough to account for millions of years of river input, suggesting a young ocean.

Response: Oceanographers explain that the ocean's salt levels depend not just on how much salt rivers bring in, but also on how much is removed through natural processes, such as minerals forming on the seafloor and chemical reactions with ocean rocks. Because salt enters and leaves the ocean at different rates, simply working backward from today's salt levels cannot reliably tell us the ocean's age; the evidence does not show that the oceans must be young.

8. Comets lose mass every orbit and have short lifespans (thousands, not billions, of years); their continued existence requires either a young solar system or an ad hoc, unobserved reservoir (the Oort Cloud) to constantly resupply them.

Response: Astronomers agree that comets lose material as they orbit the Sun, and some eventually break apart or burn out, but this doesn't mean the solar system is young. Scientists have observed that long-period comets can come from the distant Oort Cloud, a region of icy objects whose existence is supported by the paths of incoming comets, while short-period comets can be replenished from regions such as the Kuiper Belt; these populations help explain how comets continue to appear over billions of years.

9. Human population growth, extrapolated backward from present rates, fits a start around a few thousand years ago (consistent with a post-Flood repopulation from eight people) far better than hundreds of thousands of years of anatomically modern humans.

Response: Demographers explain that human population growth has not stayed constant throughout history; it has been affected by disease, famine, wars, migration, and changes in birth and death rates. Working backward from today's population using modern growth rates can be misleading, and

archaeological and genetic evidence indicates that modern humans have existed for hundreds of thousands of years, not just a few thousand, so population calculations alone do not support a recent start from eight people.

10. Some sedimentary rock layers show little evidence of burrowing animals or erosion between them, which suggests that several layers may have formed relatively quickly, one after another, rather than being separated by long periods of time. This pattern fits rapid deposition during a global flood, although geologists note that it can also occur during shorter periods of rapid sediment buildup without a worldwide flood.

Response: Layers with little evidence of burrowing or erosion can indicate that sediment piled up quickly, but that does not mean all the layers formed during one global flood. Floods, storms, underwater landslides, and other events can deposit large amounts of sediment in a short time, and some layers can form one after another without long gaps between them. Geologists also find evidence of ancient environments and long periods of geological change elsewhere in the rock record, so the lack of burrows or erosion at certain boundaries is not enough to establish that a worldwide flood formed the layers.

B. Ten Biblical Arguments for YEC

1. The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, which give ages at the birth of the next named son, form a connected chronology from Adam to Abraham; adding the biblical data (as Ussher and others have done) yields a creation date around 4000 BC.

Response: Biblical genealogies were sometimes written to highlight important people and family lines rather than list every single generation. For example, Matthew 1 deliberately organizes Jesus' genealogy into three groups of 14 generations, meaning some ancestors are left out. In biblical language, a person described as someone's "father" could be a more distant ancestor, and "son" could mean a descendant rather than an immediate child. Genesis 5 and 11 may also contain gaps, meaning the ages listed do not necessarily allow us to calculate the exact age of the Earth.

Consider how this could work in practice: if a genealogy mentions someone who had a child at age 100, but leaves out two generations between that person and the next named descendant, those missing generations could add another 50–100 years or more, depending on when each generation had children. If several generations were omitted across the genealogies, the total time could increase by hundreds or even thousands of years. The key point is that if Genesis 5 and 11 are selective genealogies, their numbers cannot establish a precise creation date unless we can demonstrate that every generation is included and that the time spans are intended to be added consecutively.

2. Genesis 1 pairs 'day' (yom) with a number and the phrase 'evening and morning' in every instance; throughout the Old Testament this combination of numbered yom plus evening/morning always denotes a literal 24-hour day, which is the most natural grammatical-historical reading.

Response: although yom (the Hebrew word for "day") often means a normal 24-hour day, it has four uses in Genesis: daylight hours (Genesis 1:5), a 24-hour day (Genesis 1:14), the entire six-day creation period (Genesis 2:4, "in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens"), and a more general period of time. OEC scholars argue that the numbered days and "evening and morning" may describe an ordered sequence of creation stages without necessarily requiring each stage to be 24 hours long. They understand "evening and morning" as marking the completion and progression of each stage, rather than actual days – they note it is poetic language.

3. Exodus 20:11 grounds the Sabbath commandment in a six-day creation followed by a day of rest, treating the Genesis 1 days as parallel in kind to the ordinary days of the Israelite work week, which argues strongly for literal, sequential 24-hour days.

Response: Exodus 20:11 certainly connects Israel's six-day work week and Sabbath rest to God's creation week, but that does not necessarily prove that God's creative activity took six ordinary 24-hour days. The passage establishes a pattern for Israel to follow-six periods of work followed by rest-without necessarily requiring every detail of God's creation to match the human work week in duration. Scripture sometimes uses creation language to teach theological truths through patterns and analogies, so the emphasis may be on God as Creator and the model of work and rest rather than on specifying the precise length of each creation day. (e.g., God's 'rest' in Hebrews 4 is not a literal day).

4. Romans 5:12 and Romans 8:20-22 teach that death and the futility of creation entered through Adam's sin; an old-earth timeline requires animal death, disease, and predation for hundreds of millions of years before Adam, which would contradict Paul's theology of the Fall.

Response: Romans 5:12 teaches that human death entered the world through Adam's sin, but it does not necessarily say that no animals died before the Fall. Paul's focus is on human sin, condemnation, and death, while Romans 8 describes creation suffering under the consequences of humanity's fall and looking forward to restoration. Animal death and predation could have existed before Adam, while human death and humanity's separation from God resulted from sin. The effects of the Fall bring corruption and suffering into the human experience and affects creation's relationship with humanity, rather than necessarily introducing every form of biological death for the first time.

5. Jesus refers to Adam and Eve as existing 'from the beginning of creation' (Mark 10:6) rather than billions of years after the universe's origin, implying a young, recently created earth consistent with a straightforward reading of Genesis.

Response: Jesus' statement in Mark 10:6-"from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'"-does not necessarily mean Adam and Eve appeared just days after the universe was created. Jesus was teaching about marriage and grounding it in God's original design for humanity, not giving a timeline for the age of the Earth. The phrase "from the beginning" can refer to the beginning of human history or God's establishment of marriage, rather than the beginning of the universe itself..

6. The global, catastrophic Flood of Genesis 6-9 (the 'fountains of the great deep' breaking open, waters covering 'all the high mountains under the entire heavens') is presented as a real, worldwide, geology-shaping event, providing a mechanism for most of the fossil-bearing sedimentary rock record within a single year rather than millions of years.

Response: The Flood in Genesis was a real and devastating judgment, but the biblical language does not necessarily require that water covered every mountain on Earth or that the entire fossil record formed during that one event. Phrases like "all the high mountains under the entire heavens" can be understood as describing the known world from the perspective of the biblical author, although Christians disagree about whether the text intends a truly global flood. In the bible when they speak of the "world" it does not mean globally, but where people were found.

Scientifically, the rock record contains evidence of many different environments and processes—including ancient reefs, desert dunes, volcanic deposits, and soils-that formed at different times, not in one year. A major flood can rapidly deposit sediment and bury organisms, but the evidence does not support the claim that a single worldwide flood produced most of Earth's sedimentary rocks and fossils.

7. The genealogy of Luke 3:23-38 traces Jesus's lineage back through Adam, treating Adam as a real, historical individual in an unbroken chain with other historical figures like David and Abraham, which grounds the young-earth reading of Genesis in the New Testament's own historical framework.

Response: Luke's genealogy shows that Adam was important to Jesus' identity and humanity, but it does not prove that every generation listed is consecutive or that the Earth is young. Biblical genealogies sometimes skip generations, as Matthew's genealogy of Jesus demonstrates, while still tracing a genuine family line. We therefore can believe Adam was a real historical person without concluding that the genealogies establish a date only a few thousand years ago.

8. Applying ordinary grammatical-historical hermeneutics (the same method used to interpret the rest of Scripture as historical narrative) to Genesis 1-11 yields a straightforward young-earth reading; departing from that reading only because of external scientific pressure is eisegesis rather than exegesis.

Response: They would also affirm grammatical-historical hermeneutics respond that correctly identifying the genre of a text is itself part of grammatical-historical method, not a departure from it, and that recognizing Ancient Near Eastern literary conventions (e.g., in Genesis 1's structured, formulaic style, or Job 38-41's poetic cosmology) is standard exegetical practice elsewhere in Scripture, not a concession to outside pressure.

9. 2 Peter 3:3-6 warns that 'scoffers' in the last days will deliberately overlook the catastrophic, world-reshaping Flood while assuming 'all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation,' – this is a direct rebuke of uniformitarian geology's assumptions about deep time.

Response: 2 Peter 3 is warning people not to dismiss God's judgment or assume that history will continue forever without divine intervention. The passage affirms the reality and significance of the Flood, but it does not say that the Flood formed most of the geological record or that Earth is only thousands of years old. Modern geology also recognizes catastrophic events, such as massive floods, volcanic eruptions, and asteroid impacts; it simply finds evidence that Earth's history includes both sudden disasters and gradual processes over millions of years.

10. No verse in Scripture suggests gaps of millions of years anywhere in the Genesis 1 creation account or the subsequent genealogies; inserting such gaps to accommodate secular science reverses the proper order of authority, letting extrabiblical data reinterpret the text rather than the text critiquing the data.

Response: The Bible does not explicitly state that millions of years passed between creation events, but it also does not give a direct statement that rules out an ancient Earth. The question is whether Genesis was intended to provide a detailed scientific timeline or to teach who created the world and why. OEC Christians argue that taking Scripture seriously includes understanding its language, literary structure, and ancient context, while also considering what God's creation reveals through scientific evidence. They are not necessarily inserting gaps into the text; they believe the text may not be intended to answer the question of Earth's age in the first place.

Part II: Old Earth Creationism (OEC)

A. Ten Scientific Arguments for OEC

1. Multiple independent radiometric methods (U-Pb, Rb-Sr, K-Ar, Sm-Nd), based on different parent isotopes with vastly different half-lives and different chemistries, converge on similar ages for the same rock formations and for meteorites (~4.54 billion years), a similarity that would be an extraordinary coincidence if the underlying decay rates were not constant.

> ***Response:*** Agreement between different dating methods is impressive, but it does not automatically prove that radioactive decay rates have always remained constant or that every assumption behind the methods is correct. OEC Christians argue that the methods can share assumptions about how rocks formed and whether elements entered or left the samples, so agreement alone does not rule out a common problem.
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> Some YEC researchers propose that radioactive decay accelerated during Creation week or the Flood.

2. Light from galaxies, supernovae, and quasars billions of light-years away has been traveling to reach us; the observed 1987 supernova (SN 1987A) light echo and ring geometry are consistent with light and physical events occurring roughly 168,000 years ago in a self-consistent way, which is difficult to reconcile with a universe only thousands of years old. It seems as if we observe a coherent history of events and not that God is just making stars look old.

> ***Response:*** YEC argue God 'created light in transit' or created star light as immediately present with creation. They may argue for relativistic time dilation near a cosmic center allowed billions of years to pass in deep space while only days passed on Earth.

3. Antarctic and Greenland ice cores contain visually and chemically distinct annual layers (like tree rings), counted directly to over 100,000 years in some cores, cross-validated against known volcanic eruption ash layers and beryllium-10 solar cycle records. This is cross checked with known volcanic eruption dates and it matches.

> ***Response:*** YEC scientists argue that under post-Flood conditions of unusually warm oceans and volcanic activity, multiple thin snow/ice layers could form within a single year (from seasonal storms, not annual cycles), inflating the apparent count.

4.Tree ring dating, especially from bristlecone pines and cross-matched with subfossil oak and pine sequences in Germany, produces a continuous, overlapping tree-ring record extending beyond 13,000 years, well past a c. 6,000-year young-earth timeframe, without gaps or gluts that a single global flood would be expected to leave. Specialists in the field say that the cross-matching statistics (using multiple independent ring-width and isotopic signatures) are rigorously tested and that false matches of this length and consistency are considered statistically implausible.

> ***Response:*** YEC dendrochronologists (tree ring dating specialists) argue that cross-matching between disconnected tree-ring sequences (rather than one continuously living tree) involves pattern-matching assumptions that could compress or misalign true chronology, and that some trees may produce multiple rings per year under certain stress conditions.

5. Annually banded lake sediments) such as at the Green River Formation, show fine, regular laminations correlated with seasonal changes and counted into the millions, which even YEC flood geology struggles to explain as anything other than genuine annual deposits. Geologists point out that Green River lake band sediments show fine internal structure (pollen seasonality, biological content, and chemical banding) matching known present-day annual lake processes in a way rapid deposition models do not match.

Response: YEC geologists argue that these laminations can also form rapidly from repeated turning water currents or pulses or seasonal flood surges unrelated to annual cycles, and point to some experimentally produced multi-layered deposits in a single storm event.

6. Measured plate tectonic movement rates (a few centimeters per year, directly measured by GPS) are consistent with the current positions of continents having drifted apart from a single landmass over roughly 200 million years, matching seafloor magnetic striping and the ages of oceanic crust. If YEC were correct in saying this was a sudden event caused by the flood, this would release enormous, life-exterminating heat into the oceans and atmosphere within that single year, a problem YEC proponents have acknowledged without a resolution that avoids boiling the oceans.

Response: YEC geologists (the 'catastrophic plate tectonics' model associated with the RATE project) propose that plate motion was briefly and catastrophically accelerated during the Flood year, then decelerated to present slow rates.

7. The observed constancy of radioactive decay rates under all tested conditions (extreme pressure, temperature, chemical bonding, and gravitational fields, including tests on Earth and via astronomical observation of decay in distant supernova light curves) provides strong physical grounds for assuming decay rates were also constant in the deep past. Mainstream physicists respond to YEC argues by pointing out that the documented variations are minuscule (fractions of a percent) compared to the many-orders-of-magnitude acceleration YEC models require, and that supernova light-curve decay observed in ancient starlight independently confirms constant decay far outside the solar system.

Response: YEC physicists argue known small variations in some decay modes (e.g., electron-capture decay, marginally affected by chemical environment) show decay rates are not absolutely fixed in principle, leaving room for larger past variation under unknown past conditions;

8. The light we see from distant galaxies, the leftover radiation from the early universe, and the amounts of hydrogen and helium in space all point to a universe that has been expanding for about 13.8 billion years. These different lines of evidence largely agree with one another and support the conclusion that the universe is ancient and had a beginning. OEC argues that this evidence fits modern astronomy. The YEC model that claims varying the speed of light enough to compress 13.8 billion years into thousands would have detectable effects on atomic spectra and fine-structure constants that are not observed in distant starlight and that YEC predictions have not been shown.

Response: YEC cosmologists dispute standard Big Bang cosmology's assumptions (e.g., about the constancy of the speed of light, or about cosmic expansion itself) and propose alternative young-universe cosmological models; mainstream cosmologists respond that

9. Coral reef growth rates, measured directly today (a few millimeters to centimeters per year depending on species), are consistent with the observed thickness of large reef structures (hundreds of meters in places like Enewetak Atoll) only if those reefs grew over tens of thousands of years or more, not within a single post-Flood period.

Response: YEC geologists argue reef growth rates could have been substantially faster in immediate post-Flood conditions (warmer, nutrient-rich oceans), and that some reef thickness may include non-biological sediment infill rather than pure coral growth.

B. Ten Biblical Arguments for OEC

1. The Hebrew word yom ('day') has a demonstrably wide semantic range even within Genesis itself: Genesis 2:4 uses 'day' (beyom) to summarize the entire creation week, showing the author was comfortable using yom non-literally in the immediate context of the creation account. Yom is used to mean a 24 hour day, just the daylight period, the creation week, and for long epochs of time.

Response: YEC scholars respond that Genesis 2:4's use of beyom is an idiomatic construction ('in the day that...', meaning simply 'when') common throughout the Old Testament as a temporal marker, not a claim that 'day' there means a long era; they argue this is a different grammatical usage from the numbered, evening-and-morning 'day' of Genesis 1 and cannot be used to reinterpret those verses.

2. 2 Peter 3:8 states that 'with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day,' showing Scripture itself teaches that God's relationship to time is not bound to ordinary human day-length, which OEC 'day-age' proponents take as warrant for reading the creation days as long periods.

Response: YEC scholars respond that 2 Peter 3:8 is explicitly about God's patience in relation to the timing of judgment, not a hermeneutical key for reinterpreting Genesis 1's grammatically distinct 'evening and morning, the Nth day' formula, and that using it this way risks proof-texting a verse about God's eternality to settle an unrelated exegetical question.

3. Genesis 1 describes God's work of creation in six stages – rather than literal days. The account has a clear pattern: God prepares the different parts of the world and then describes the lights, birds, fish, animals, and people that occupy it. This pattern shows how orderly and purposeful God's creation was. These stages describe real events in history, unfolding in sequence over long periods of time, rather than simply being a literary arrangement with no chronological order. The evening and morning clause is a literary device to indicate the beginning and ending of that creation period. It is not trying to suggest a 24 hour day.

Response: Genesis 1 describes six ordinary days of creation, not long periods of time. The repeated phrase “there was evening and there was morning” (ESV) supports the understanding of normal days, especially when combined with the numbered days and the command to work six days and rest on the seventh in Exodus 20:11. The literary structure of Genesis does not require abandoning its chronological sequence or the plain meaning of the text. God created the world purposefully and in an orderly way, but Scripture gives us reason to understand those creation days as six consecutive 24-hour days.

4. Old Testament genealogies elsewhere are demonstrably selective and can compress generations (e.g., Ezra 7:1-5 skips at least six generations found in 1 Chronicles 6; Matthew 1 deliberately telescopes Israel's kings into three sets of fourteen), showing that 'begat' language in a Hebrew genealogy does not require an unbroken, gapless father-to-son chain, which undercuts using Genesis 5 and 11 to compute a precise creation date.

Response: YEC scholars respond that Genesis 5 and 11 differ in form from other biblical genealogies by including the father's age at the birth of the named son and his total lifespan, a chronologically-loaded formula not present in genealogies known to have gaps (like Matthew 1), so the comparison to admittedly telescoped genealogies elsewhere does not transfer to this specific genre of text.

OEC rebuttal*:* The ages in Genesis 5 and 11 do make these genealogies more detailed than many others in the Bible, but that doesn't automatically prove they include every generation. Giving a father's age when his named descendant was born tells us when that person was born, not necessarily whether an unlisted generation came between the two names. The Bible uses genealogies to trace family lines and highlight important people, and genealogies can still leave out generations even when they include specific details. So, while the ages are important evidence for the YEC position, they don't conclusively prove that the genealogies are complete or establish the Earth's age beyond debate.

5. Genesis 1:1 describes God bringing the entire universe into existence, including space, time, matter, and energy. Genesis 1:2 shifts the focus to the early Earth, which was dark, covered with water, and not yet ready to support life. The Hebrew wording allows time to pass between the initial creation of the universe and the beginning of the six creation days (periods). They understand the creation days as long periods during which God prepared Earth for life and brought life into existence.

Response: YEC scholars respond that Hebrew syntax favors reading Genesis 1:1 as a summary title or the first act of the six-day sequence itself rather than a separate prior event, and that this reading (historically associated with the 'gap theory') was developed partly to accommodate geological ages and has been criticized even by many OEC scholars as exegetically strained, since it requires inserting a judgment or catastrophe (e.g., relating to a prior angelic fall) that the text does not mention.

6. The 'analogical days' view holds that the days of Genesis 1 are God's days, structuring his creative work on the pattern of a human workweek for the reader's benefit, in the same way Scripture elsewhere uses anthropomorphic and analogical language for God's actions (e.g., describing his 'hand,' 'eyes,' or 'repenting') without those descriptions being univocal with human experience.

Response: YEC scholars respond that anthropomorphism is typically used for God's non-physical attributes (emotions, body parts) where a literal reading is obviously impossible, whereas Genesis 1's days are given a concrete, measurable literary marker (evening and morning) that functions the same way it does throughout the rest of the Old Testament, making the analogy to clearer instances of anthropomorphic language weaker.

7. Psalm 90:4 ('a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night') reflects a broader biblical theme that God's experience of time differs from human experience, reinforcing the plausibility of non-literal 'days' in the creation account.

Response: YEC scholars respond that Psalm 90 is a wisdom/worship reflection on human transience and mortality relative to God's eternality, a common ancient Near Eastern poetic theme, not an exegetical statement about how to interpret a separate narrative text (Genesis 1) written in a different genre with a different grammatical structure.

8. Genesis nowhere states a total number of years for the age of the earth or universe, and the text's own purpose (as stated by its content and structure) is theological - establishing who created, why, and humanity's place and purpose - rather than providing a scientific chronology, so using it to compute a precise date may impose a genre expectation the text does not share.

Response: YEC scholars agree Genesis does not state a total age directly but argue the genealogical data, taken as intended chronological information (per argument 4's rebuttal), constrains the timeframe indirectly and reliably even without an explicit 'the earth is X years old' statement, so the absence of an explicit total does not by itself support an old-earth reading.

9. God's speech to Job (Job 38-39) describes creation in terms of long, ongoing processes - the sea's boundaries being set, ice forming from water, wild animals' habits and gestation periods - using language that some OEC readers see as more compatible with an unhurried, developmental creation than an instantaneous, one-week fiat model .

Response: YEC scholars respond that Job 38-39 is poetic wisdom literature describing God's ongoing sovereign governance of the natural world in the present and does not claim to describe the original creation week's timeframe at all, so the passage's tone about present natural processes cannot be used as direct evidence about how long Genesis 1's creation days were.

Part III: Non-Historical Readings of Genesis 1-11

Important distinction: the mainstream evangelical Old Earth Creationist scholars covered in Part II (Hugh Ross/Reasons to Believe, C. John Collins, John Lennox, and similar) affirm that Genesis 1-11 records real history — a historical Adam and Eve, a real Fall, a real judgment-Flood. Their disagreement with YEC is about timeframe and interpretive method (the length of the 'days,' possible gaps in the genealogies, the geographic scope of the Flood), not about whether the events happened. OEC is not the same position as what follows.

The arguments below come from a different camp: scholars (typically theistic evolutionists, BioLogos-associated writers, or historical-critical Old Testament scholarship more broadly) who read Genesis 1-11 as theological narrative or myth in the technical literary sense — a true-in-its-message but not necessarily historically-referential account, comparable in genre to other Ancient Near Eastern origin narratives. This is a minority position among theologically conservative evangelicals and is rejected by both YEC and mainstream evangelical OEC, but it appears often enough in the wider scholarly conversation that it is worth having on hand, with the standard conservative response to each point.

Six Arguments for a Non-Historical Reading, with Responses

1. Genesis 1 and the Genesis 6-9 Flood narrative closely parallel other Ancient Near Eastern texts — the Enuma Elish (creation by conflict, ordering of chaos waters), and the Atrahasis Epic and Gilgamesh's flood tablet (a divine decision to destroy humanity by flood, a favored survivor building a boat, birds sent out to find land, a post-flood sacrifice). This close structural overlap suggests Genesis shares a common mythological genre with its neighbors rather than reporting independent history.

> ***Response:*** Conservative Old Testament scholars (e.g., Kenneth Kitchen, John Currid) argue the parallels are real but point the opposite direction: Genesis appears to polemically subvert the polytheistic, capricious portrayal of the gods in these other accounts (one sovereign God rather than warring deities; the flood as righteous judgment rather than divine annoyance at noise) rather than borrowing their fictional content. They also argue that widespread flood traditions across unrelated cultures worldwide are better explained as fragmented memories of a real ancestral catastrophe than as independent literary invention, and that shared genre conventions do not by themselves settle historicity any more than two historical war memoirs sharing narrative conventions makes either one fictional.

2. Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 present two difficult-to-harmonize creation sequences — in Genesis 1, plants, then animals, then man and woman together; in Genesis 2, man is formed first, then plants, then animals (brought to Adam for naming), then woman. Source critics read this as evidence of two originally separate accounts (commonly labeled P and J) later combined by an editor, rather than one unified historical report.

> ***Response:*** Conservative scholars respond that Genesis 2 is commonly read as a topical zoom-in on day six's events (the creation of humanity and Eden) rather than a second, competing chronological sequence, a recognized ANE and biblical narrative technique (recapitulation with added detail, as in Judges 1 after Joshua, or the two Passion-narrative timelines in the Gospels). They also note the Hebrew of Genesis 2:19 can be read as a pluperfect ('had formed'), removing the apparent order conflict, and that the two chapters share enough vocabulary and theology to function as a deliberately unified two-part composition rather than a seam between sources. John Lennox argues that the creation account does fit modern science and that the point of view switches from the heavens in Genesis 1:1-2 to a view from the earth following in the creation account – from that perspective everything described is sequentially correct with day four – the earth's atmosphere and canopy clearing enough to see clearly the stars.

3. The Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP), based on differing divine names (Elohim vs. YHWH), vocabulary, and theological emphasis across Genesis 1-11, argues the text is a composite of separate

literary sources written centuries apart and later redacted together, which weighs against reading it as a single, unified historical account.

Response: Conservative Old Testament scholars (Kenneth Kitchen, Gordon Wenham, R. N. Whybray, and others, some writing from within mainstream academic biblical studies) have argued the classical JEDP source divisions rest on criteria increasingly regarded as underdetermined even among non-evangelical scholars, that the alternating divine names often track deliberate theological emphasis rather than separate sources (Elohim as Creator-God language, YHWH as covenant-God language), and that the toledot ('these are the generations of') formula running through all of Genesis functions as a single, coherent structural device suggesting one authorial or editorial design rather than a rough patchwork.

4. The strikingly large ages and round-number patterns in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies resemble the stylized, symbolically inflated numbers found in Sumerian king lists (which record antediluvian kings reigning tens of thousands of years), suggesting the Genesis numbers are a literary convention signaling symbolic significance rather than literal, reportable ages.

Response: Conservative scholars note the numerical resemblance is often overstated (the Sumerian king-list figures are orders of magnitude larger than Genesis's, and use a different base-60 numbering convention), and argue that even granting some ANE numerical conventions carry secondary symbolic weight, this does not require the underlying persons or genealogical sequence to be fictional — ANE king lists with symbolically rounded reign lengths are still generally treated by historians as referring to real rulers, not invented ones.

5. Several Genesis 1-11 narratives serve an evident etiological function — the Tower of Babel explains the diversity of languages and nations, Cain's line explains the origins of various crafts and tent-dwelling, the naming of Eve explains her role as 'mother of all living' — a storytelling pattern common in ANE myth used to explain present realities, which is taken as a signal that these are literary explanations rather than historical reports.

Response: Conservative scholars respond that explaining a present reality and reporting a real past event are not mutually exclusive categories; historical events are frequently invoked etiologically elsewhere in Scripture without anyone treating that as evidence against their historicity (e.g., the Passover explaining Israel's yearly commemoration, or a memorial stone in Joshua 4 explaining why it stands where it does). An etiological function is a use of an event, not proof about its ontological status.

6. Genesis 1-11 contains elements read as more characteristic of myth than history by genre-comparison standards — a talking serpent, trees with metaphysical properties (of life, of the knowledge of good and evil), a lifespan of 969 years for Methuselah, and a Flood covering 'all the high mountains' with no corresponding global sedimentary or ice-core signature anywhere in the geologic record.

Response: Conservative scholars respond that the presence of supernatural or extraordinary elements is not, on its own, a reliable genre marker within a biblical worldview that treats other supernatural events (the Resurrection, the Exodus plagues) as real history reported using ordinary historical narrative conventions; the relevant question is whether the text presents itself with historical markers (genealogical anchoring, geographic specificity, connection to later historical figures) rather than whether it contains the miraculous. On the Flood's missing global geological signature specifically, they note this is also the central objection mainstream OEC raises against a literal global flood, and argue it is better answered by reconsidering the flood's geographic scope (a real, catastrophic, regional judgment) than by concluding the event itself is fictional.