

Ussher: A Lot of Fuss about Nothing
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For hundreds of years Christians have appealed to the dates formulated by the 17th century bishop, James Ussher. Using biblical genealogies from Genesis 5 and 11, and other supporting Biblical passages, he pieced together a timeline for Biblical events. Many Bibles have this timeline in the margins, indicating the estimated year that the events on that page occurred. (a general overview of Ussher's work can be found at this Answers in Genesis article (answersingenesis.org/creation/v20/i2/archbishop.asp)).

Many people still swear by these dates, especially the one indicated for Genesis Chapter One, 4,004 B.C. Many young-earth creationists claim that the creation week started in this year. Is it a reliable assumption that 4,004 B.C. is the beginning point for the earth? How did Ussher arrive at the 4,004 date?

Ussher and Old-Earth Belief

Ussher took a known point in Biblical history, namely, the fall of Jerusalem in 588 B.C. Counting back from there, with the Bible's genealogies and the known number of years that these people lived, he simply added up the dates to get back to the 4,004 B.C. date for Adam's birthday.

If you are an old-earth believer, there is no need to lose any sleep over Ussher and his dates, because his dates have no impact upon the events of the creation week. This is because his dates, if you choose to believe them, confirm the year of Adam's creation. Adam's creation was the last event of God's creation, the crowning achievement of God's creation, at the end of Day Six. Ussher's methods of calculation does not go beyond Adam's creation, because the genealogies he used stop with Adam, so they do not accurately account for the first five days of creation, nor do they account for most of Day Six.

Ussher claims that 23 October 4004 BC is the date of the creation of the world. While Ussher does add the six 24-hour days for the creation to his calculations, we have ample evidence today to show that the days of creation were long periods of time. All we can say for certain, if you believe Ussher, is that Adam was created on 28 October 4004 BC, which is Ussher's sixth day of creation.

Therefore, it is possible to fully believe in Ussher's dates, and also believe that the days of creation were billions of years long. The only thing to ignore is the six literal days he adds, which we know were not 24-hour days.

Many old-earth creationists, including the most prominent one today, Dr. Hugh Ross, have criticized Ussher's dates, in an attempt to discredit them and give support to their own old-earth theories. They incorrectly claim that Ussher's dates are inconsistent with the evidence from geology. However, all that is inconsistent is Ussher's addition of the 24-hour days of creation. They are mistaken in the belief that Ussher's dates threaten

old-earth belief. Again, since Ussher's dates are based on genealogies, they only go back to the creation of Adam, and have no impact upon the preceding events of God's creation, which were billions of years long.

Conclusion

Ussher has almost reached the point of sainthood among fundamental Baptist believers. His dates have long been used as proof of a young earth. However, they have nothing to do with the length of God's creation days, since his method only goes back to the beginning of Adam's life. Young-earth creationists have no basis for arguing the age of the earth based on Ussher's dates. Old-earth creationists can even believe in the dates if they wish. If Ussher had been an old-earth creationist, his dates would have been the same, except for the six added 24-hour days of creation. The bottom line...Ussher has no impact upon the age of the earth debate, and does not support a young earth.