

Dating Methods

The topic for this article, “Dating Methods,” ties in closely with the article on the “[Age of the Earth.](#)” Due to space limitations, that article was shortened in a couple of places creating a little ambiguity. My point was that you can categorize dating methods into two classes:

- 1) There were nine methods with entirely different unrelated mechanisms that indicate a young earth.
- 2) There are a few “radiometric” methods (that all work on the same principle) that indicate an old earth.

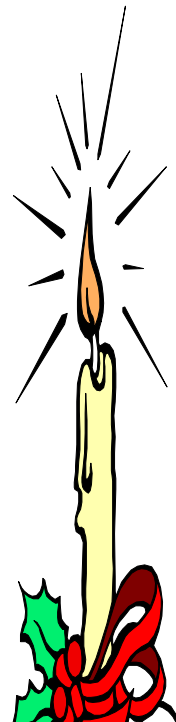
Which is more likely to be in error? Nine unrelated methods with nine unrelated errors? Or the radiometric methods with one error? The choice is clear. This month’s article will address these radiometric methods, often referred to as the “Atomic clock.”

To add credibility to the millions of years theory, scientists have invented this time piece called the “atomic clock”. It is an excellent time piece to hide behind because very few people have any understanding of how it works.

Carbon 14 can only be used to measure the age of substances that were once living; eg. bones, wood, etc. It cannot be used to determine the age of fossils. Fossils are, by definition, rocks that have taken on the shape of once living materials. However, not all fossil rocks have fully “fossilized” and still have organic material present. Is the Carbon 14 test applicable in this case? The answer to that question depends on who you ask! An evolutionist will refuse to date a million year old fossil with Carbon 14. Carbon 14 has a very short half life and is only used dating the last few thousand years. After that, there is no measurable amount of Carbon 14 left and no measurements can be taken. Therefore, Carbon 14 cannot support any *millions of years* theories. So - an evolutionist will refuse to use Carbon 14 dating methods. Truth be known though, there is no such thing as a fully “Carbon 14 dead” organic substance! All organic carbon still contains Carbon 14. Since Carbon 14 is so rare, and has such a short half life, this alone indicates that the earth must be **very** young!

The other atomic dating methods can only be used to measure igneous rocks, not sedimentary rocks. Fossils can only be found in sedimentary rocks. Thus, fossils can only be dated by a guess based on the ages of igneous rocks above and below the sedimentary rock containing the fossil. This combination rarely occurs, and even when it does, the dating methods are so riddled with potential errors that the lower igneous rock could erroneously be dated younger than the igneous rock above the sediment!

So how is the atomic clock supposed to work? Some atoms naturally decay into smaller atoms. These are called isotopes. This process is a function of the atom’s nucleus, and ordinary chemical processes do not affect this rate of decay. Therefore, it could potentially be an accurate dating method. However, it has numerous significant potential error factors.



The burning candle is a perfect analogy. Suppose you walk into a room and notice a lit candle sitting on a table. You could watch the candle for a while, measure its height, then measure the height again after an hour, and ultimately determine the rate at which it is burning. For example, 1 inch per hour. According to *atomic clock* scientists, you can now determine how long this candle has been burning. Or can you? You do not know how tall the candle was when it was lit. You could assume that it was 4 feet tall. After all, it couldn't have been any taller or it would have scorched the ceiling. You could also assume that no one has ever added or removed wax from the candle. But you don't even know that for sure. Never the less, you have to give it an age, so you use these limited assumptions and make your calculations. Let me ask a very awkward practical question. You watched it burn for 1 hour. Right? Would you dare to assume that the burn rate for this one hour would be identical for three thousand years? Of course not. Yet - radiometric dating assumes that our observations for the past 50 years apply over the past 1.5 billion years! Preposterous!

The *atomic clock* is practically identical. *Atomic clock* scientists have no idea what original quantities of isotopes were present when the rock was formed. They also have no idea if isotopes have been washed into or out of the rock. The only credible evidence of the *atomic clock* is the life span of the *daughter isotopes*. For example, if our candle left a drip along its side that we could also measure, and assume this drip was produced at a constant rate, then we would have a secondary affect to support the measurement. If it weren't for these daughter isotopes, the *atomic clock* would have no credibility at all.

Well - in this article, we have perhaps raised more questions than we have answered. The Institute for Creation Research has studied radiometric dating for many years. There are answers to many of these questions. Ah - great material for subsequent articles!

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