

“Why Are Dating Methods Unreliable?”

I'm a Christian who believes in a six day literal creation and I have been looking at lots of material on the Grand Canyon to see if it can shed any light on how it was formed and how old it is, and in my search I come across your report which to me seems a very honest and an unbiased report.

Could you help me by telling why dating methods of rocks are unreliable and sometimes come into contradiction? As since I have been doing my own research into how old some things are, I keep getting different answers from different scientists, whether they be young earth or old earth scientists.

Also, I have been informed that only a geologist with a Ph.D can tell the age of rocks and no one else in any other field; is this true?

Your confusion is reasonable. There are many conflicting messages on this topic from people who ought to know what they are talking about. This is one of the reasons why I am undecided about the age question. I simply am unable to discern the reason for these conflicting views. Is it because of prior assumptions? Is it because of truly conflicting data? Is it because of incomplete knowledge of the facts? Is it because of a deep-seated prejudice against a particular position? As a biologist, I find myself unable to follow the technical critiques that go back and forth and so I am unable to truly answer the above questions for myself.

The conflicting age estimates can be due to a number of problems. The dating methods themselves can be unsound, based on faulty presuppositions (the position of young earth creationists). They can be due to local anomalous conditions that do not apply to most great age estimates (position of

most old age creationists and evolutionists). Old earth creationists maintain that the preponderance of the evidence should hold sway over the few exceptions that young earth creationists have found. Yet some young age research is being submitted to the scientific community for scrutiny and is holding up well. But is it a local exception or something more significant?

Your last statement about only geologists being able to tell the age of something should be treated suspiciously. While it is reasonable to say that they have a better grasp of the details of geological dating methods, it is also an unveiled appeal to authority: "Only I know what I am talking about therefore you should trust me and me only." Scientists shouldn't communicate this way. Science has always been marked by humility before nature and openness to new information and theories. This view is not very open. It sounds like they have something to hide.

ICR has come up with some new data on dating methods and some of the information is online at <http://www.icr.org/research/>. Articles 3-10 in the first list all relate to your concern. These papers were all presented at the 2003 International Conference on Creationism here in the US. They might help to clarify some things for you.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, Ph.D.
Probe Ministries