We appear to be living in an age where science no longer matters. As you may know, the English word “science” comes from the Latin term “scientia,” which means “knowledge.” People who reject “science,” well, what is it they’re rejecting? We live in dangerous times.

Apart from the more obvious examples of this rejection that you can find in the newspaper every day (involving a human-induced apocalypse of biblical proportions), there are still, of course, a large number of “creationists” out there, who not only deny evolution (as a student now then will always tell me, with passion in his voice, “Hey, it’s ONLY a theory!!”) but who also subscribe to a young earth theory. The earth has just been around for about 6000 years. Really. (When I was a fundamentalist I knew people who seriously claimed not only that dinosaurs and humans were walking around the earth together, but that fossils that appear to date to millions of years earlier were put into the geological record by Satan, who wanted to lead the world astray so they would all go to hell. They were serious.)

But why 6000 years? Why not, say, 7000 or 5000? Turns out there’s a reason for it. In fact, as you also may know, in the traditional King James Bible, where there are dates given in the margins for various key events, Genesis 1, the creation of the world, is given as 6004 BCE. Now *that’s* strange. Why not just round it off a bit? What’s with the precision?

I deal with this in a sidebox in my college-level textbook on the Bible, as I posted years ago on the blog. Here is the original post:

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In my Bible Intro, I am including a number of “boxes” that deal with issues that are somewhat tangential to the main discussion, but of related interest or importance. Here’s one of the ones in my chapter on Genesis, in connection with interpretations that want to take the book as science or history. For a lot of you, this will be old news. But then again, so is Genesis.

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In 1650 CE, an Irish archbishop and scholar, James Ussher, engaged in a detailed study of when the world began. Ussher based his calculations on the genealogies of the Bible, starting with those in the book of Genesis (which state not only who begat whom, but also indicate, in many instances, how long each of the people thus begotten lived) and a detailed study of other ancient sources, such as Babylonian and Roman history. On these grounds, he argued that the world was created in 4004 BCE — in fact, at noon on October 23. This chronology became dominant throughout Western Christendom. It was printed widely in King James Bibles and continues to be believed by non-evolutionarily minded Christians today.

This has been a useful dating for many Christians since that time. For many centuries – going back in fact to the early second century of the Common Era – there have been Christians who thought that the world would last for 6000 years. The reason is a bit complicated. According to a passage in the New Testament...

To see the rest of this post you will need to be a blog member. If you’re not, you better join up fast. If we’ve only been here 6000 years, there’s not much time left!
When Christians Went on the Attack Against Jews
Flat-out Lies or Willful Ignorance. How Do They Get Away With It?