

Smoky Mountain Bible Institute

Geology 108 Fossils

Welcome back, class. Please get settled in and take hold of your pick point rock hammer and hand lens so that we can continue our study of geology. Let's have a look at fossils. We will examine how they form and what we can learn from them. This is a massive data base of collected evidence consisting of millions, if not billions, of specimens that are clear evidence of the existence of hundreds of thousands of species of plant and animal life, many of which have become extinct, while an even greater number still exist today.

So how do we get fossils? Most fossils are from the rapid burial of a plant or animal which protects the specimen from disturbance. Oxygen deprivation limits the decay and biological activity such as things feeding on the carcass. The sediment layer must remain intact long enough for the buried creature to be replaced over time by minerals in the sediment. It is also important that the biomass of the creature not be exposed to excessive heating or compression because this would destroy the structure needed to form a fossil. That all being said, one can see how a world-wide flood would provide nicely for a vast collection of fossilized plant and animal life. Or in the words of Ken Ham, "billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water all over the Earth."

When we speak of fossils, many assume and assert that vast amounts of time are required, but science has proven otherwise. Decades or centuries are all that is required. There are images online of common everyday items that have become "fossilized." (Simply Google for images of fossilized ham, hat, car keys, bells, or even a clock mechanism!) Now, some of these things are not fossilized, but are encased in solid rock that did not take millennia to form. In 1994, scientists studied the fossils of shrimp that were in the stomach of a fossil fish found in Brazil. They found a way to create similar fossil shrimp in only 4-6 weeks. The article reporting this research said that in only a few weeks, they managed to mimic a mineralization process that takes millions of years in nature. If they can do it, why can't nature do it? The point is that permineralization (the process that creates fossils) does not need millions or even thousands of years to happen.

Most of the fossil evidence for life appears in the Cambrian explosion. It is called this because life suddenly appears in the Cambrian layer which is dated at 580 million years by popular science. (see Biology lessons 107-107) It follows clear logic that if the world were covered by a catastrophic world-wide flood, you would expect to find "billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water all over the Earth." A possible connection with the Cambrian explosion??? Makes sense to me.

This mass of evidence for millions of species is lacking something if we all have a common ancestor. This tree has no trunk, and not branches, but only leaves. If you have evidence in the fossil record of hundreds of thousands of species, and not a single example of a theoretical ancestor, would it not make more sense to conclude that all the variety in life that we see in the fossil record, and current life, is the result of instant appearance on the Earth? This is what you would expect to find if a Creator spoke all that is into existence.

I would like to wrap up our fossil discussion with one more point that this mass of evidence makes very clear: While many of the species in the fossil record are extinct, the bulk of them are not. The fossils are given different names, but they are identical in every way to their modern counterpart. Here is a brief summary of fossils that have living counterparts today: **Vertebrates** contain living fossils in all three fish groups, both major amphibian groups, all four reptile orders, most bird orders, and all three mammal types. **Five-sided animals** contain living fossils in all five major classes. **Exoskeleton** species contain living fossils in all major aquatic arthropods, all major insect orders, all major arachnid orders, and all major myriapod (centipede and millipede) classes. **Shellfish** contain living fossils in all five major shellfish classes. The same can be said for both major classes of **Segmented worms**, all three classes of **Sponges** and both hard and soft **Corals**. I only went through that long list to point out that we have fossils of every major class of living thing today. This shows that the attempt in the scientific community to separate the living creatures from their fossilized ancestors is designed to foster an evolutionary view of life. However, a biblical world view would expect to see evidence of all current life to be reflected in the fossil record with all things looking the same as when they were created 6000 years ago.