

Neanderthal Species Distinct from Humans

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For many years young earth ministries have claimed that Neanderthals were modern humans. However, new evidence shows that they were should in fact be a separate species, which died out, and did not contribute to the gene pool of present-day humanity.

In a story reported in late January 2004, scientists did a detailed computer analysis of human and Neanderthal skulls, comparing the variations with the variations of sub-species of apes.¹ The computer analysis showed that the differences measured between modern humans and Neanderthals were significantly greater than those found between subspecies of living monkeys and apes. According to the scientists, this makes the case that Neanderthals should be considered as a separate species.

Implications for Creation Theory

If Neanderthals are a separate species from humans, and not just a sub-species, what are the implications for the various forms of creationist thought? Here is a summary.

Progressive Creationists – Progressive creationists believe in an old earth, but do not believe in evolution. Each species was a specific creation of God, and did not subsequently evolve into other species. Neanderthals can be considered a separate, created species, which did not evolve from previous species, and became extinct 30,000 years ago. As such, they were not created in the image of God (Adam being the first some 6,000 to 10,000 years ago), and did not have a soul.

Theistic Evolutionists – Theistic evolutionists believe in an old earth, and claim that God used evolutionary processes to finally arrive at today's species. Neanderthals can be considered one of the branches of hominids that evolved, but due to natural selection died out about 30,000 years ago.

Gap Theorists – Gap theorists believe that there was an older, created world, in between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This old world was replaced by God during the creation week account of Genesis. Acceptance of evolutionary principles varies. Neanderthals can be considered created by either evolution or special creation, which died out 30,000 years ago, or before the old world was replaced with the new one.

For the three main forms of old earth belief, Neanderthal presents no problems. However, it presents problems for young earth creationists.

The fact that Neanderthals died out 30,000 years ago, 24,000 years before they claim the earth was created, cannot be reconciled with the Genesis account of creation. They tell their followers that the dating evidence for Neanderthal is flawed; however it is only young-earth creationists who dispute this...no reputable scientist disputes this age. This is not to say that many young-earth scientists are not reputable in other fields, it only means that they are blinded to the truth by their presupposition that the earth is young.

A separate Neanderthal species, not an ancestor to modern man, destroys the young earth claims that Neanderthal was a human with an eternal soul. Even more damaging, analysis of Neanderthal and modern man DNA concludes that Neanderthal did not contribute to the DNA of modern man.²

Conclusion

More research needs to be done to separate Neanderthal to a species distinct from Homo Sapiens. However, enough evidence is available to disprove young-earth claims that Neanderthal was human.

¹ CNN Article

(<http://www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/science/01/26/neanderthals.ancestor.reut/index.html>)

² Nature.com Article (<http://www.nature.com/nature/fow/000330.html>)

Young-Earth Neanderthal Articles

Answers In Genesis Anthropology Q&A
(answersingenesis.org/home/area/faq/Anthropology.asp)

Institute for Creation Research Article (icr.org/pubs/imp/imp-323.htm)

ICR Article (icr.org/pubs/btg-b/btg-105b.htm)