Oldest Whole Fossil Tree

Written by Administrator Tuesday, 28 May 2013 06:16 -

Oldest whole fossil tree found, as reported in *New Scientist*, 18 April 2007, p17, news@nature, *Nature*

, vol 446, p904, 19 April 2007 and BBC News 19 April 2007. Palaeontologists have found an eight metre specimen of fossil tree that had been previously known only from its trunk and its crown in separate pieces. The tree, named

Eospermatopteris

has been known from a large number of fossil stumps found in the 1870's in a rock quarry at Gilboa in New York State. Specimens of the crown of the tree have also been found previously but had been classified as a separate plant named

Wattieza

, rather that the tops of Eospermatopteris plants.

The new specimen has the crown attached to the trunk so palaeontologists can see the structure of the whole tree. Reconstructing fossil trees is not always easy, according to palaeontologist Brigitte Meyer-Berthaud, a palaeontologist at the Agricultural Research Centre for International Development in Montpellier, France, because the aerial portions of trees are often broken off and transported away. She commented: "We can find many different parts of the tree, but generally they are not connected." The newly discovered tree is dated as being 385 million years old, and was similar in structure to tree ferns, cycads and palm trees, having a crown of fronds which they gradually shed and replaced as they grew, leaving a characteristic pattern on the trunk. The researchers commented in their article in *Nature*: "It is therefore interesting to see how instantly recognizable and, in a significant sense, 'modern' the tree-like architecture of Wattieza seems to be. Indeed, phylogenetically divergent modern forms including tree-ferns, cycads and palms are fundamentally similar in structure." The new specimen is eight metres (26 ft) tall, but some of the stumps that had been previously found are twice the diameter of this specimen, indicating the tree could grow to a much greater height.

BBC

Editorial Comment: The usually unmentioned fact that many of the original Gilboa trees were found as polystrate fossils is evidence of rapid burial and strata formation. The data that many of the trees have been broken up and the pieces carried way separately indicates the trees have been subject to destructive and large catastrophic forces involving moving water that was deep enough to cover the trees. The fact that it is now extinct, whilst cycads, tree ferns and palm trees are still here, shows that there were once more kinds of trees than there are now. The fact that it was so large indicates that the world was once a better place for tree-fern-like

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plants to grow. Its "modern" architecture simply shows that it is made with a design that works, and has been used in other plants. All of this fits the Biblical history of the world. Genesis tells us that God made a good world full of separately created living things, but because of human rebellion God has judged it by subjecting it to decay and by rapid catastrophic processes, commencing at the time of Noah's flood. (Ref. fossilisation, catastrophe, plants)

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