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RESEARCH ARTICLE

## **The Famous Missing Link**

Has the Lucy debate been settled?

By Donny Budinsky

Dr. Chris Rupe of “Back2Genesis” has presented “the pygmy human hypothesis” (1). This is an alternative model to what has been previously offered to explain Lucy (*Australopithecus afarensis*), designated AI 288-1, by both Creationists and Evolutionists. This article examines this interesting hypothesis in a professional and informative manner. You can also find these arguments (and more) presented by Dr. Peter Line in video format. Dr. Line leaves no stone unturned in his presentation on this issue. I highly encourage anybody reading this to check out this educational video. The reader can view this on YouTube (2). This article also examines the evolutionary explanation for Lucy (and other australopithecines). By the end of this, the reader will see clearly that the best model in explaining these so-called hominins is something other than “the pygmy human hypothesis” and human evolution.

## Is Lucy Human?

If Lucy is human, what does this mean for other australopithecines? This is an important question that needs to be adequately addressed if “the pygmy human hypothesis” is to be accepted and argued for by Biblical Creationists. There are several examples of creatures labeled as australopithecines that would appear to contradict this model. Little Foot (Australopithecus prometheus), designated StW 573, serves as one such example.

Little Foot has a pelvis very similar to Lucy’s (more on this later). Both species exhibit features suggesting a degree of bipedalism (walking upright). Little Foot is found largely intact with fewer gaps in its fossil record compared to Lucy. Little Foot is 90% complete, while Lucy’s skeleton is only about 40% complete. Little Foot has a skull that is clearly ape (3). Its skull is connected to its body. It cannot be argued that Little Foot is a mixed species. Since Little Foot is clearly ape, and its pelvis looks very similar to Lucy’s, is Little Foot human? To be consistent, Chris, and other advocates of “the pygmy human hypothesis” will have to argue Little Foot is human. But this will be a hard pill to swallow (see picture below of Little Foot’s ape skull).



Close up of the skull and upper trunk of StW 573, highlighting the cervical vertebral canal (white arrow) and first rib (orange arrow). Original photo credit: AP//Themba Hadebe.

**Source:** [lawchairanthropology.com](http://lawchairanthropology.com), 2025, [lawchairanthropology.com/category/south-africa/](http://lawchairanthropology.com/category/south-africa/). Accessed 21 May 2025.

## **Anterior Inferior Iliac Spine (AIIS)**

Chris has argued that the anterior inferior iliac spine (a bony projection on the anterior border of the ilium) is characteristic of human pelves. It turns out that the Little Foot fossil has an anterior inferior iliac spine. The problem for “the pygmy human hypothesis” is that Little Foot is clearly a non-human primate.

Another example of a non-human primate that has an anterior inferior iliac spine is *Ardipithecus ramidus*. Since this is a key trait that Chris encourages people to consider to distinguish humans from non-human apes, does this also mean Ardi is human—even though Ardi is clearly an extinct ape-like primate?

To address one of Chris’ responses to the Ardi point (4)—Ardi’s pelvis may have been “roadkill”, but even Lucy’s pelvis was severely damaged. It appeared to be crushed or broken when discovered. Regardless of the state of Ardi’s pelvis, we can still make out its features, and they closely match that of Lucy’s pelvis. Does this now mean Ardi is also human?

There are still too many challenges and inconsistencies to “the pygmy human hypothesis” for it to be adopted by Creationists. I’ve argued for this hypothesis in the past in debates (which can be found online), but there are still too many holes to argue for it successfully, especially in discussions with informed evolutionists (such as Erika/Gutsick Gibbon). For this hypothesis to be defended properly, these challenges need to be thoroughly addressed. Until these challenges are addressed, this hypothesis must be rejected.



Little Foot (red) compared with other australopithecine skeletons. Images not to scale!

(Photo credit: The Internet!)

**Source:** [Lawchairanthropology.com](http://Lawchairanthropology.com), 2025, [lawchairanthropology.com/category/south-africa/](http://lawchairanthropology.com/category/south-africa/). Accessed 21 May 2025.

If you compare Little Foot's (StW 573) pelvis to Lucy's (AL 288-1), you can see the similarities. Little Foot is also considered the most complete australopithecine individual ever discovered. Once again, we must ask the question: if Lucy is a human based on its pelvis, is Little Foot (which is clearly a non-human primate), also human? Are advocates of "the pygmy human hypothesis" (a minority view) forced to acknowledge the non-human designation of Little Foot? If so, then why is it necessary to argue Lucy is human? Once it is acknowledged that Little Foot (and Ardi) is an extinct ape-like primate (unrelated to humans), the argument from Lucy's pelvis is no longer persuasive.

It is my understanding that Chris Rupe, the leading voice of "the pygmy human hypothesis", wants a model to explain the so-called hominin fossil record that does not consist of non-human apes with pelvises similar to human pelvises. This is to avoid having non-human primates with a degree or form of bipedalism. This means Chris Rupe, and others who hold to this view, must address these examples of non-human ape-like primates that have nearly identical features to Lucy.

## The Most Consistent Explanation

The australopithecines were a unique ape-like primate group. Their bones tell us a story. They are different from both African apes and humans. They are a separate group. There exist discontinuities in their anatomy and morphology from both extant apes and humans. I predict we would also find significant genetic level discontinuities (if we ever obtain intact DNA from an australopithecine specimen).

An example of a trait dissimilar enough in humans, chimpanzees, and australopithecines, to separate them into different groups is the hyoid bone. This impressively designed bone plays a crucial role in speech. It functions as a foundational structure for the tongue and the larynx. This enables the specific movements required for speech production. Chimpanzees have a hyoid bone with a distinctive bulge (called a bulla) that is not seen in humans. This bulge attaches to air sacs in the larynx. Humans do not have a hyoid bone with a bulla. The only known hyoid bone in extinct australopithecines differs from the hyoid bone of humans. This bone shows an extension for laryngeal air sacs—suggesting they vocalized more like chimpanzees than humans.

The fact that the hyoid bone in australopithecines (based on this single find) is more similar in shape to those found in chimpanzees and gorillas is a major challenge for those who believe in human evolution. Where is the evolutionary progression from a non-human primate hyoid bone to what we see in humans (that gives us the ability to talk)? This sequence doesn't exist. Guardians of common descent lack evidence for this important transition. These fossil record discontinuities are exactly what Biblical Creationists would expect to find if separate ancestry were true.

We, as humans, are unique in the biological world in terms of our amazing ability to talk. We are also unique in the design of our hyoid bone. It is dissimilarities such as these that help in our understanding of what is and what isn't related in biology.

For a comprehensive examination of the hominin fossil record, please see this information-packed series with Dr. Peter Line (hosted by Standing For Truth Ministries):

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeROpayG6Sh2Szt3htIf\\_s4lV0tLoVdeb](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeROpayG6Sh2Szt3htIf_s4lV0tLoVdeb)

## Bipedalism

The features of australopithecines such as Lucy and Little Foot are a non-issue. They are agnostic to the overall debate on ancestry. The traits suggesting a form of bipedalism do not provide supporters of human evolution with discriminatory evidence. We have bipedal apes today. For example: gibbons (a lesser ape) are bipedal primarily due to adaptations for arboreal feeding and locomotion within their forest habitat.

Apparently, gibbons are more bipedal than any of the great apes. This means that humans and gibbons have more in common in terms of upright walking than either does with the great apes (such as chimpanzees). This is exceptionally interesting since humans and chimpanzees are said to be more closely related than humans and gibbons (they're further apart on the purported evolutionary phylogenetic tree). It is not surprising that there may have been other bipedal ape and ape-like primates in the past.

Since the Bible is completely silent on bipedalism in non-humans, Biblical Creationists are free to interpret the evidence the way they feel is most accurate. There should be no commitment to maintaining bipedalism (or a form of it) as being exclusive to humans. There are enough differences in the pelvis (and other features) of humans and non-human primates (including australopithecines) to separate them as different Biblical kinds.

In the same way gibbons have a form of bipedalism different from humans, the australopithecines had a form of bipedalism that was also dissimilar from humans. This point is supported by the conventional literature (5):

The cross-sectional area of [Lucy's] lower back vertebrae, particularly the lumbar and sacral [fig. 2] vertebrae, are also extraordinarily small, suggesting that they were not adapted for the bearing of heavy loads associated with fully upright postures.

**Source:** Conroy, G.C. and Pontzer, H., *Reconstructing Human Origins* (Third Edn), W.W. Norton & Company, New York, p. 283, 2012.

With so many animals designed to walk on two legs, one might find it odd if humans were isolated in God's creation as having the ability to walk bipedally on two legs. It makes more

sense that other creatures in the designed biological world would have the complex ability to walk with a form of bipedalism.

## **Conclusion**

The best response to Lucy and other australopithecines is not “the pygmy human hypothesis”. In the future, it may be worth revisiting this model as the superior view of Lucy if and when these major challenges to it are addressed and not ignored. When putting forth a scientific model, it is of utmost importance that major challenges are addressed. All it takes is a single experiment or observation to prove us wrong on a position we may be putting forth as a valid model to explain data. If we fail to address those observations, we have not done our due diligence to defend our position in a convincing manner.

The best explanation is also not the evolutionary one. There are far too many problems (such as fossil record discontinuities) with the human evolution explanation for the australopithecines. It is truly the Biblical Creation model of ancestry that offers the superior explanation for these extinct, but interesting creatures.

### **Author’s note:**

There are numerous arguments that powerfully challenge both “the pygmy human hypothesis” and the evolutionary model of explaining Lucy and its associated kinds (australopithecines) that were not offered in this article. Several of these consist of points that anticipate potential responses to the material in this article. These arguments will be presented in future articles if the material of this article results in ongoing debate. Until then, the arguments published here are sufficient in countering the Lucy pygmy view as well as the argument in favor of hominin transitional fossils.

## References

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