

WHICH CAME FIRST, THE PYRAMIDS OR THE FLOOD?

Alden Bass

Apologists throughout the centuries have recognized the significance of historical details in the biblical record and their impact on biblical claims of ultimate truth and divine origin. It has been famously remarked that “chronology is the backbone of history” (Thiele, 1983, p. 33). If this maxim is true, then the Christian apologist must understand that attacks on biblical chronology undermine both the historicity and the veracity of the Holy Book, and strike at the very heart of the Gospel message. Fortunately, this subject has long occupied defenders of The Faith, who have effectively vindicated the Bible again and again. Theophilus of Antioch, the “father of Christian chronology” (1971, pp. 118ff.), systematically dated the major events of sacred history in the early second century, using only the Scriptures, and, by comparing biblical chronology to secular history, declared the chronology of the Bible to be more ancient and more accurate than that found in any profane work. Similarly, in the third century, Julius Africanus authored five volumes (of which only fragments remain) on the subject, giving special attention to objections regarding the antiquity of Egyptian civilization. Indeed, as long as men have studied biblical chronology, a primary obstacle in the pursuit of defending God’s Word has been the antiquity of other civilizations, especially that of the Egyptians.

The sacred chronology, as given in the Bible and endorsed by scholars, was wholly accepted for centuries, until fairly recent times. James Barr unabashedly remarked: “Though biblical chronology may in modern times seem to be an area for cranks and crackpots, in older times it occupied some

of the greatest minds” (1999, p. 379). The “church fathers” accepted it, the Scholastics endorsed it, and Enlightenment scholars were perhaps its staunchest allies. These researchers did not rely on the Bible alone for information, though it was their primary source; they also compared the genealogies and king lists of the Old Testament to other ancient works of historiography. Using the Bible as the framework, all the additional secular history was successively fleshed onto that skeleton, resulting in the creation of a comprehensive body of world history. This rich heritage of scholarship included Augustine in the fifth century, Isidore of Seville (the great Catholic theologian) in the seventh century, the English scholar Bede in the eighth century, and rabbi Moses Maimonides in the twelfth.

Men who would have burned each other at the stake for their differences on other points, agreed on this: Melancthon and Tostatus, Lightfoot and Jansen, Salmeron and Scaliger, Petavius and Kepler, inquisitors and reformers, Jesuits and Jansenists, priests and rabbis, stood together in the belief that the creation of man was proved by Scripture to have taken place between 3900 and 4004 years before Christ (White, 1896, pp. 197-198).

Though countless words have been devoted to this matter over the centuries, one man’s work overshadows them all—James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland.

Now the subject of much popular ridicule, Ussher (1581-1656) was unrivaled in his scholarship, and was known during his lifetime for much more than his expertise in chronology. A bit of a prodigy, he entered Trinity College at age 13, was ordained a priest at 20, and eventually became head

of the Anglo-Irish church in 1625. After decades of careful study in his extensive personal library (one of the largest collections of books in Western Europe), plus 2,000 pages of research (in Latin), Ussher declared that the world was created in 4004 B.C. It was this decisive conclusion, and its canonization in the center-column reference of the King James Bible, that resulted in the bishop’s current infamy. Ussher’s work was continued by the famed Hebraist of Cambridge, John Lightfoot, who further specified that the Creation week lasted from October 18-23, 4004 B.C., and that Adam was created on October 23 at 9 a.m. forty-fifth meridian time. Concerning this, one scholar sarcastically remarked: “Closer than this, as a cautious scholar, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University did not venture to commit himself” (see Ramm, 1954, p. 121).

Ussher’s work, though derided by many, has received some respect: the eminent biologist Stephen Jay Gould deemed him a subject worthy of an essay, wherein he adequately defended the esteemed scholar’s work, and cautioned would-be critics not to judge the seventeenth-century theologian by twentieth-century scientific standards (1993, pp. 181 ff.). Likewise, Vanderbilt professor James Barr regularly exonerates Ussher, depicting him as an able intellectual in his time (1985; 1999). Despite the archbishop’s impeccable credentials and modest return to academic favor, his strict biblical chronology continues to be rejected because “the cardinal premise of that methodology” is a “belief in biblical inerrancy”—a belief that is repugnant and unacceptable to modern academics (Gould, p. 186).

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- Which Came First, the Pyramids or the Flood?*
Alden Bass 97

DEPARTMENTS

Note from the Editor

- Discovery Magazine—Just for Kids
Bert Thompson 104

RESOURCES

- Is Muhammad Mentioned in the Bible?* 41-R
Question & Answer 44-R
In the News 44-R

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The accepted biblical chronology began to be questioned, even as early as the sixteenth century, when the recovery of a Byzantine summary of the writings of Manetho led to the resurfacing of the problem of Egypt's antiquity. Using that document, French classical scholar Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) calculated that the first Egyptian dynasty began in 5285 B.C.—some 1,336 years before the date he reckoned for the Creation (3949 B.C.). Scaliger, a devout Protestant, was distressed over this apparent discrepancy between the biblical record and secular sources, and contrived a theory of "proleptic time," which allowed for pre-biblical civilizations (see James 1991, p. 7). While his scholarship was welcome, the paradox between the sacred and the profane chronologies was effectively ignored for two hundred years (White, 1896, p. 198).

Although voices of doubt were occasionally heard in Scaliger's day, chronologies extending beyond 4000 B.C. were not seriously considered until the nineteenth century, and were not popularly accepted until the twentieth. For the average man, dusty manuscripts and dry dissertations failed to provoke a reevaluation of the commonly held belief in a young Earth. Popular opinion changed when scholarship started down a new path: intellectuals left their libraries, donned their pith helmets, and systematically began excavating the ancient sites and artifacts of which they previously had only read. Archaeology began as a treasure hunt, but evolved into a more scientific venture as greater and more magnificent wonders were lifted from the shifting sands. In 1738, Johann Winckelmann and Ennio Visconti unearthed the ash-laden cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1799 revealed the Rosetta stone, which was translated partly by Jean François Champollion in the 1820s and partly by Henry Rawlinson between 1846 and 1855. Rawlinson's decipherment of Old Persian script

resulted in the translation of thousands of stone inscriptions and cuneiform tablets throughout the Middle East. Solid evidence from the ancient world continued to mount as interest shifted to a new branch of archaeology—Egyptology. The fascination increased with each new find, and the land of the pyramids was set firmly in the popular mind by the 1920s when Howard Carter and Lord Carverton discovered the incredible treasures of King Tutankhamun.

Modern archaeology employs sophisticated techniques and equipment in its quest for information; the science gradually has filled many gaps in earlier theories, shedding light in the darkness and dispelling much of the mystery surrounding the ancients. Under the guise of these advanced methods, some scientists begin the story of man 250,000 years ago (although the documented history of humanity dates back only to about 3000 B.C.). The "evidence" proffered by archaeologists appears thoroughly scientific, and is used to construct a world where archaic man first used fire about 460,000 B.P. [before the present], first built artificial shelters about 380,000 B.P., began farming in 9000 B.C., developed metallurgy in 6500 B.C., and finally invented writing in 3700 B.C. (see Scarre, 1993, pp. 1 ff.). Nomads settled the Mesopotamian city of Uruk, billed as "the world's first metropolis," in 2500 B.C. The Harappan culture formed around 2600 B.C., as cities grew along the banks of the Indus River, approximately the same time as the temple platforms of Peru were erected (see "The History of Mankind," 1997, p. 344). Thus, according to some authorities, the study of antiquity (and especially Egyptology) furnishes "one more convincing proof that, precious as are the moral and religious truths in our sacred books, and the historical indications which they give us, these truths and indications are necessarily inclosed [sic] in a setting of myth and legend" (White, 1896, p. 208).

| Egyptian History | | Bible History | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---|------|------------------------------|
| Predynastic | 3150-2686 | Creation | 4004 | Genesis 5,11 (per Ussher) |
| Old Kingdom —Pyramids Built | 2686-2181 | Flood | 2349 | |
| First Intermediate | 2181-2040 | Abrahamic Covenant | 1877 | Galatians 3:15-18 |
| Middle Kingdom | 2040-1782 | Exodus | 1447 | 1 Kings 6:1 |
| Second Intermediate | 1782-1570 | Dedication of Solomon's Temple | 967 | 1 Kings 11:42 |
| New Kingdom | 1570-1070 | Ascension of Rehoboam | 930 | (Thiele) |
| Third Intermediate* | 1069-525 | *James, et al., shortened this period by 300 years. | | |

Table 1 — Comparison of Egyptian history versus Bible history

This conclusion, believed by many to be inevitable, erodes the credibility of the Bible, and must be thoughtfully examined and tested. Most of the milestones discussed above, together with their dates, are speculative, are based on a humanistic philosophy, and are open to debate even among professionals (see Brantley, 1993). No written record exists before about 3000 B.C.; any object dated prior to that must therefore be chronologically situated by tree-ring dating, pottery comparisons, or radiocarbon dating. All of these methods, which are rooted in evolutionary presuppositions of an old Earth, have proven to be highly subjective and inaccurate (see Major, 1993). This is not to dismiss a century of scientific inquiry with a wave of the hand, because each situation must be examined individually, yet few of these ancient findings present a bona fide argument for the great antiquity of humanity.

Though the dating of shards of ancient pottery and stone tools may be subjective and somewhat readily accounted for, gargantuan stone structures are not so easily overlooked. The solemn pyramids of Giza bear silent witness to ages long since past, and to the great antiquity of a civilization. Sir Walter Raleigh suggested this as far back as 1603.

For in Abraham's time all the then-known parts of the world were developed.... Egypt had many magnificent cities...and these not built with sticks, but of hewn stone...which magnificence needed a parent of more antiquity than these other men have supposed (as quoted in White, 1896, p. 198).

These colossal monuments—their images so readily conjured in association with Egypt—were built in the Old Kingdom, which began in 2686 B.C. and lasted for 500 years [all dates taken from Clayton, 1994]. Egyptian history is divided into four Kingdoms—the Old, the Middle, the New and the Late. Between each Kingdom lies an Intermediate Period, which represents an interval characterized by political instability and confusion. These six periods are further subdivided into approximately thirty dynasties—a series of seemingly arbitrary divisions handed down from the third-century Egyptian historian Manetho. It generally is agreed that first pyramid was built by Djoser in 2630 B.C. in Saqqara, and other works soon followed: the Bent pyramid and Red pyramid of Snefru at Dahshur in 2600 B.C., Khufu's Great Pyramid at Giza in 2550 B.C., and the Great Sphinx of Khafre shortly afterward (see Roberts, 1995, p. 2). Each of these monuments, and many more, still stand(s).

Incredibly, Egyptian society predates these ancient monoliths and the Old Kingdom Period in which they were built. The first king of Egypt is thought to be Narmer, an enigmatic fellow whose name meant “catfish.” A well-preserved artifact made of dark green slate, the Narmer Palette, tells the story of the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by Narmer before the first dynasty—the genesis of the world's first nation-state; Egyptologists calculate this to have occurred about 3150 B.C.

Under “normal” circumstances, there would be nothing in this information to trouble the Christian; it is the result of over 200 years of accumulated evidence and careful research. The evidence of Egypt's antiquity is not circumstantial, but literally is carved in stone (as well as papyrus and clay). Most useful of all, however, is a source with no medium of its own—the king list of Manetho. His work is the very foundation of Egyptian chronology, and although the

| | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Manetho (3rd century B.C.) | c. 5700 |
| Wilkinson (1836) | 2320 |
| Unger (1867) | 5613 |
| Breasted (1906) | 3400 |
| Scharff (1920) | 2700 |
| Mener (1887) | 3180 |
| Mener (1904-1908) | 3315 |
| Petrie (1894) | 4777 |
| Petrie (1906) | 5510 |
| Petrie (1929) | 4553 |

Table 2 — Dates Egyptologists have offered over the years for the first Egyptian Dynasty (after Macnaughton)

document no longer is extant, it is possible to piece it together from references scattered throughout the ancient world in the existing works of Josephus, Julius Africanus, Eusebius, and George the Monk. The chronology of Egypt appears to be fixed firmly by evidence from historiography, archaeology, and astronomy, **yet the currently accepted chronology of Egypt overshoots the Biblical timetable by nearly one thousand years!**

While a straightforward reading of the Bible reveals a date for the creation of the world of around 4000 B.C. (thus leaving plenty of time for Egyptian civilization to be established in 3100 B.C.), the Flood of Noah is conservatively dated at about 2300 B.C. Were the Flood only a local event, there would be no difficulty, but we know from Genesis 7 that it was not. The waters of the Flood “prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and **all** the high mountains

that were under the **whole** heaven were covered...and **all** flesh died that moved upon the earth” (7:19,21, emp. added). It is foolish to suppose that the pyramids could have survived the Flood—an event so fierce that “all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis 7:11)—and that the civilization of Egypt then “picked up where it left off” before the Deluge. That the Flood was an actual event is beyond question; not only does Moses record it in Genesis as a fact, but Peter, the writer of Hebrews, and even our Lord testified to its veracity (cf. Matthew 24:37-39; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:7). Gleason Archer concluded:

The problems attending this method of [literal—AB] computation are compounded by the quite conclusive evidence that Egyptian Dynasty I went back to 3100 B.C., with a long period of divided kingdoms in the Nile valley before that. These could hardly have arisen until long after the Flood had occurred and the human race had multiplied considerably (cf. Genesis 10) [1979, 1:361].

Such a blatant discrepancy between the biblical and scientific records can have devastating consequences to the faith of the honest seeker. Because of the sheer volume of material available on the subject, and the obvious lack of respect for the Bible by modern archeologists, even a thorough investigation of these matters may yield nothing but frustration. Though the situation seems hopeless, there are solutions to this greatest of chronological quandaries.

If indeed all the facts are certain, if the Flood occurred just as described, and if the history of Egypt is undisputable, any possible solution must be sought in the dating of the events. Biblical archaeologist David Down agrees: “If the Bible is historically accurate...then there must be a mistake in the usual interpretation of the Egyptian chronology which needs to be reduced by centuries” (2001, 15[1]:57). The archaeologists and the philologists discover artifacts and translate ancient scripts, but it is the chronologist who situates them on a timeline and assigns them their place in history. Secular chronology, much as the biblical chronology previously described, is a difficult and convoluted subject: opinion and speculation abound. As with any other scientific endeavor, chronological conclusions often are based on inherent assumptions such as uniformitarianism and the theory of evolution. This bias applies more to those who are dating ancient “prehistorical” items, but it also influences scientists working within the historical era (3000 B.C.-present).

The backbone of Egyptian chronology is the regnal lists, the most prominent of which was composed by Manetho, who was a “priestly advisor” to Ptolemy I (323-282 B.C.), Manetho authored a comprehensive history of Egypt that contained the names of all the pharaohs and the lengths of their reigns. Although there is no known full-text manuscript of his work, Egyptologists rely heavily on Manetho, a fact that Clayton calls “curious” (1994, p. 9). Petroglyphic inventories, chiseled into various stone monuments throughout the country, supplement Manetho’s list; these include the Palermo stone and the Royal Lists of Karnak, Abydos, and Saqqara. These lists are invaluable to chronographers, though most are damaged and not entirely legible.

The king lists are useful for counting backward in history, by adding the regal years of one king to the next; but because of co-regencies, parallel dynasties, and interregna, this method alone is inexact. One of the lists might record a reign as being four years long, when in actuality it was only three years and three months. This results in a seven-month error. Over a period of 3,000 years and nearly 200 kings, the overlap results in significant discrepancies. Consequently, Egyptologists use certain astronomical phenomena as “anchor points” for the king lists. Eclipses of the Sun and Moon occasionally are mentioned in the ancient records, and can be retro-dated, though researchers rarely are fortunate enough to discover intelligible hints in the literature. More valuable by far for chronologists of Egypt is Sirius, the “dog star.”

Ancient Egyptians used three calendars: a civil calendar of 365 days, a solar calendar of slightly fewer than 365.25 days, and a Sothic calendar of exactly 365.25 days designed for calculating the Feast of the Rising Sirius. The astronomers responsible for these calculations never realized the slight discrepancy between the Sothic and the solar year (essentially, they did not include a leap year into their calendar). The difference was only of a matter of hours, and only over the course of centuries did this add up—one day every four years. The Feast of Sothis (another name for Sirius), normally celebrated on July 19 in the heat of the summer, gradually shifted because of the slight discrepancy, eventually being celebrated in autumn, in winter, and then in the spring. It took 1,460 years for it to fall on the correct day (July 19) again (the Egyptians always celebrated the holiday on **their** July 19; however, since their calendar was miscalculated, **their** July 19 might be our August 5, or December 15, and so

on). Using this knowledge, and clues from the historical literature, these Sothic cycles serve as anchor points in Egyptian history, allowing scientists to date 2,000 years of history using only six major astronomical events (Breasted, 1927, 1:29).

Despite the many advances in the field of Egyptian chronology, there remain uncertainties and questions. James H. Breasted, one of Egypt’s greatest chronologists, characterized the chronology as “confused” (1927, 1:25), and Peter Clayton remarked that “it may come as a surprise to realize that **it is extremely difficult to fix true or absolute dates in Egyptian chronology**” (1994, p. 12, emp. added). Sir Alan Gardiner, the foremost Egyptologist of the twentieth century, spoke of “lamentable gaps” and “many a doubtful attribution,” finally exclaiming: “What is proudly advertised as Egyptian history is **merely a collection of rags and tatters**” (1961, p. 48, emp. added). Noting that our present knowledge of Egyptian chronology is “far from satisfactory,” Olaf Toffteen, curator of the Hibbard Egyptian Library in Chicago, explained that the deficiency can be attributed “not to the scarcity of material, but rather to its abundance. This material ...exhibits so many contradictions that Egyptologists and historians differ radically in their theories on Egyptian chronology” (1907, 1:149). This indefiniteness does not remove all validity from the chronology, but it must be recognized that the ancient chronology of Egypt, though well established, is far from infallible.

The uncertainty to which these scholars refer, results from the shaky foundation upon which Egyptian chronology is built. Manetho, the source of “the basic structure or skeleton of Egyptian chronology that we use today” (Clayton, p. 9), is unreliable and inaccurate. In the introduction to his translation of that historian, W.G. Waddell suggested “there were many errors in Manetho’s work from the very beginning” (1997, p. xxv). Further indicting this ancient source, Breasted confessed: “Wherever he can be controlled, Manetho is generally wrong in his figures, and any chronology based on his data is hopelessly astray” (1927, 1:32). Whatever the reason for Manetho’s untrustworthiness, one immediately sees the unreliability of a system whose “basic structure” is “hopelessly astray.”

Likewise, the astronomical dating that at first seems so authoritative, is riddled with ambiguities. “Absolute dates from ancient Egypt rely on astronomical dating,” states Clayton (p. 12). Jack Finegan confirms this, calling the heliacal rising of

Sirius a “fixed point of reference” (1999, p. 20). Therefore, if astronomical dating is proved unreliable, the “absolute dates” of ancient Egypt are called into question. Sothic dating (based on the rising of the star Sirius) is indispensable for Egyptian chronologists, and James names the validity of such dating as “the fundamental axiom of Egyptian chronology” (1991, p. 225). As usual however, a closer look at this dating system reveals several shortcomings.

James criticizes Sothic dating at length, referring to it as “a web of interlocking assumptions” based on “meager grounds” (1991, p. 227). One assumption made by Egyptologists regards the fixedness of the Egyptian calendar; they conjecture that it was not altered, or updated, for over a thousand years. Later documents record corrections made to the imperfect calendar after this period, not only by the Egyptians, but also by the Greeks and Romans. The Ptolemies (c. 305-30 B.C.) made several major changes in the course of only three centuries, making it **highly** unlikely that no changes whatsoever were enacted between 2781 and 1381 B.C. (the period of one Sothic cycle). Thus, the abrogation of one assumption (and the system actually consists of several) nullifies the entire theory. James concluded that “**a single calendrical adjustment**” in the period before the Ptolemies would “**completely invalidate the Sothic calculation for any prior period**” (p. 228, emp. in orig.).

In the 1940s, H.H. Rowley warned that “undue weight should not be given to archeologists’ estimates of dates, since they depend in part, at any rate, on subjective factors, as the wide differences between them sufficiently prove” (as quoted in Unger, 1954, p. 152). This “wide difference” is clearly manifested in the dating of Egypt’s first dynasty over the past century and a half. Jean François Champollion, translator of the Rosetta stone, reckoned the first dynasty at 5867 B.C. in 1839; Unger figured it to be 5613 B.C. in 1867; and Breasted at 3400 B.C. in 1906 (see Macnaughton, 1932, p. 6). The dates steadily dropped until around the turn of the nineteenth century, prompting Breasted to remark in the 1930s that it is “highly improbable that future discovery will shift these dates more than a century in either direction” (1927, 1:39). Time has not vindicated professor Breasted, however; the date for the first dynasty has continued to drop, and the current consensus (3100 B.C.) is 300 years lower than he predicted.

Even within a scientist’s own lifetime, the dates show a great variability. Eduard Meyer, upon whose work much chronology

is based today, estimated a date of 3180 B.C. in 1887, and then increased it in 1904 to 3315 B.C. Sir Flinders Petrie, considered the first scientific excavator of Egypt, proposed a date of 4777 B.C. in 1894, lowered the date to 5510 B.C. in 1906, and raised it again in 1929 to 4553 B.C. (Macnaughton, 1932, p. 6). The divergence of dates between individual chronographers may be explained partially by the different methods they have employed, some primarily using Manetho, others turning to clues on the monuments, with the majority today using both sources (as well as others). These early dates are completely speculative, however, and cannot be firmly established. Gardiner said in this regard: "It is obviously best to accept 1872 B.C. as the earliest relatively certain fixed date in Egyptian history" (1961, p. 61). Toffen observed that these various schools of chronographers differ by about 2,000 years just in their calculation of the first dynasty alone (1907, 1:150).

Although in 2003 a consensus on the date of the first dynasty has been reached, the figures above demonstrate the uncertainty of the Egyptian chronology both between individuals and over time. There is general agreement on 3100 B.C. at the present, but there was also general agreement for 5000 B.C. in the late nineteenth century. Despite this prevailing consensus on the beginnings of Egyptian civilization, there are those on whom the malleability of dates has not passed unnoticed—those who depart from the status quo. These scholars generally are scorned by the scientific community for their blatant disregard of orthodoxy. The utter contempt these men receive goes well beyond academic disapproval, however; in two of the cases mentioned, books were banned or refused publication. Clayton has characterized such dissidents as "fringe" chronologists who suggest what he referred to as "outlandish and unacceptable" changes to the established chronology (1994, p. 13). These peripheral archaeologists, though rarely agreeing among themselves, tenaciously contend that the mainstream has miscalculated—in fact, overcalculated—the ancient chronology. The arguments and conclusions offered by these men are diverse and disparate, yet often logical. Their reasoning is complex, and their presentations are sophisticated (many of their works occupy multiple volumes). It is impossible in the limited space here even to begin to outline the evidence given for each position; however, I will attempt to state fairly their conclusions and the effect they have on the conflict between the Bible and Egyptian chronology.

One of these ill-treated iconoclasts is the notorious Immanuel Velikovsky. An evolutionary catastrophist, Velikovsky tried to prove to the world that the myths and legends of ancient societies were actually eyewitness accounts of real astronomic phenomena. In the process of "proving" that the planet Venus began as a comet that had brushed past Mars and nearly collided with Earth, Velikovsky explained and dated many Old Testament events. For example, the ten plagues of the Exodus are explained as the effects of the comet (which would become Venus) streaking too close to Earth. Likewise, the events of Sinai, the manna in the wilderness, Joshua's long day, and a host of other stories—not only from the Old Testament, but also from Greek, Mayan, and Indian traditions—are explained as the aftermath of this astral crisis.

Despite his rather dubious astronomical theories, Velikovsky did offer some compelling arguments regarding ancient chronology. In his seminal work, *Ages in Chaos*, he argued for the removal of 600 years from the Middle Kingdom period of Egyptian history. He claimed that the 600 years were redundant, and as a result, other chronologies that are anchored to, and rely upon, Egyptian chronology (such as Hebrew, Hittite, Assyrian, and Babylonian), contain a 600-year "dark age" when nothing (historically speaking) happened. The foundation for his theory is that the discussion of the ten plagues of Moses is **not** a fairy tale, but is instead an actual historical event that must be linked to a similar event in Egyptian history. From there, he went on to claim that the Exodus of the Hebrews occurred about the same time as the entrance into Egypt of the Hyksos, a people identified with the Amalekites of the Old Testament. Velikovsky pointed to Exodus 17:8 as proof that the Israelites passed the Amalekites, who were at that moment on their way to sack Egypt. He then argued that Queen Hatshepsut of the New Kingdom was one and the same person as the Queen of Sheba described in 1 Kings 10. Other less important parallels were offered, which will not be discussed here.

There is some truth to Dr. Velikovsky's research, as there is to almost any endeavor, no matter how outlandish. The Hyksos people were indeed Asiatic, and there are "dark ages" in those histories dated by using Egyptian parallels. Even though he was not a Bible believer, Velikovsky's strict adherence to the Bible is commendable.

Taking his lead from Velikovsky, Donovan Courville, a minister by profession, also subtracted 600 years from the standard Egyptian chronology. Although he agreed

with his predecessor in many respects, Courville removed the 600 years by presenting parallelisms in Manetho's list of kings, using the Sothic list as his primary source of information (1971, p. 128). Writings from the second-century scholar Eusebius also lend credence to his theory. Courville named the pharaoh of the Exodus as 18th Dynasty King Koncharis (recorded, not in the Manetho list, but only in the Sothic list), although some of his supporting arguments were rather contrived (he also named Shishak of 2 Chronicles 12:2 as Thutmose III). For the most part, however, Courville argued strongly for the accuracy of the biblical record.

The most recent "new chronology" challenging the traditional chronology of Egyptologists has been proposed by one of their own. Neither Courville (a minister) nor Velikovsky (a medical doctor) was trained in the science of archaeology, but David Rohl, a British Egyptologist, is dedicated to nothing else. His now-famous book, *A Test of Time*, was banned from the British Museum in 1995 because of its "heretical" new chronology. Rohl's primary purpose was to correlate biblical characters and places with Egyptian history. Most interesting is his identification of Joseph as a 12th Dynasty vizier (a sort of "minister of state") to Amenemhat III (1995, p. 452), although he made other similar comparisons. A little more worrisome is his claim to have discovered Noah's landing place at the end of the Flood, as well as the Garden of Eden. On a somewhat more positive note, however, Rohl reduced the Third Intermediate Period by about 140 years, and placed the Flood (which he incorrectly views as a local inundation) at 3100 B.C. Unlike chronologies previously discussed, Rohl's system **extends** Bible genealogies and **compresses** Egyptian dates, compromising between the two.

Rohl has not been the only archaeologist to come forward with the claim that Egyptian chronology has been artificially lengthened. One respected group of scientists—headed by British archaeologist Peter James—also has joined the fray. In his landmark book, *Centuries of Darkness*, Dr. James noted that the chronologies of other civilizations—especially Greek, Hittite, Cyprian, and Nubian—seem to be stretched in order to provide historical anchor points for Egyptian chronology. This, he argued, is unnecessary if the Third Intermediate Period is compressed. While James removed only about 200 years from the established chronology, he provided further testimony to the fluidity of Egyptian chronology.

Numerous other biblical and secular chronologists could be cited, but only repetition would result. Some men, like Velikovsky, Courville, and Crombette (not discussed here), take the Bible literally, and adjust the Egyptian chronology from there. Others begin with secular sources (e.g., Kenneth Kitchen of the University of Liverpool), and then attempt to mold the Bible to fit. While the Bible must be maintained as the strict standard and source of Truth, not a single reputable scholar has been able to abbreviate Egyptian chronology enough to crunch all of the civilization's activities into a time frame prior to 2300 B.C. Even using the maximum compression (i.e., the 600 years proposed by Courville and Velikovsky), a date of 2500 B.C. for the beginning of Egypt ensues—a date that is still 200 years before the Flood, and thus allows no time between the deluge and the beginning of Egyptian civilization. These alternative **secular** chronologies may reduce the margin of conflict to a minimum of 250 years. Now we must turn to the **biblical** chronology.

In any chronology, there must be anchor points. Egyptologists use the Sothic cycle to establish three points from which all other chronology is constructed. Biblical chronologists similarly identify anchor points representing events recorded in the Bible that can be correlated to dated, extra-biblical events. Fortunately, the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel interacted frequently with Assyria, their well-documented neighbor to the north. The chronology of this country is confirmed, at least until the tenth century B.C.; using Assyrian dates and references, certain biblical dates can be established with surety. The annals of Shalmaneser III, a ninth-century-B.C. ruler of Assyria, mention King Ahab's presence in the battle of Qarqar, which occurred in 853 B.C. This same king records that tribute was received from King Jehu sometime in 841. Using these two established dates and the regnal lists of the books of Kings and Chronicles, a firm date of 930 B.C. is set for the ascension of Rehoboam and the division of Israel (Thiele, 1983, p. 78).

From that secure date (930 B.C.), the chronologist must calculate backward using genealogical information and other clues located in the text. An obvious hint is given in 1 Kings 6:1, upon the occasion of the dedication of Solomon's temple. There, the writer inserts a precise chronological marker for the reader:

And it came to pass in the **four hundred and eightieth year** after the children of Israel were come out of the land

of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv [April/May—AB], which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Jehovah (emp. added).

Solomon reigned forty years (1 Kings 11:42), and was succeeded by Rehoboam in 930 B.C.; the fourth year of Solomon's reign, therefore, would have been 967 B.C. Adding the 480 years to this, results in a date of 1447 B.C. for the Exodus. Paul explained that the covenant was given at Sinai (two months after the Exodus), 430 years after the promise was made to Abraham (Galatians 3:15-18; see Bass, et. al., 2001), which would have been 1877 B.C., when Abraham was 75 years old (Genesis 12:1-4). From there, the genealogy of Genesis 11 gives the ancestry of Abraham back to Noah, at which point the Flood date of 2349 B.C. (Ussher) may be ascertained. Those who wish to date the Creation simply add to that figure the numbers in the genealogies of Genesis 5 (Ussher calculated that 1656 years passed between Creation and the Flood).

| Masoretic Text vs. Septuagint | | |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Period | Masoretic | Septuagint |
| From Creation to Flood | 1656 | 2262 |
| From Flood to Birth of Abraham | 352 | 1232 |
| Total: Creation to Birth of Abraham | 2008 | 3494 |

Table 3 — Comparison of dates from Creation to the birth of Abraham, as presented in the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint

Ussher used the Masoretic text, upon which our English Bibles are based, to calculate these numbers, yet some arrive at larger figures using the Septuagint. The Septuagint, or LXX as it sometimes is designated, is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, composed around 250 B.C. by a panel of 72 Alexandrian Jews at the behest of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt. Their version is virtually identical to the Hebrew, or Masoretic, text, with the notable exception of the genealogical data in the early chapters of Genesis. The Septuagint significantly increases the ages of the patriarchs, adding some 780 years between Terah (Abraham's father) and the Flood. These extra centuries push the date of the Flood back considerably, past 3000 B.C., to a date that fits comfortably with an adjusted Egyptian chronology.

Unfortunately, these inflated dates are thought to be contrived—inserted by the Jewish translators in an attempt to better correlate the history of the Jews to the antiquity of Egypt. Sir Lancelot Brenton, a translator of the Septuagint, warned:

In estimating the general character of the version, it must be remembered that the translators were Jews, full of traditional thoughts of their own as to the meaning of Scripture; and thus **nothing short of a miracle** could have prevented them from infusing into their version the thoughts which were current in their own minds (2001, p. iii, emp. added).

More recent scholarship agrees with this conclusion, and suggests that changes in the LXX were "later adaptations [sic]" (Larsson, 1983, p. 409). In a comparison of the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch (another version of the Pentateuch that reports shorter spans of time in the generations between Adam and Noah), Alfred Edersheim wrote: "The most learned critics are now almost unanimous in concluding, as indeed we might have expected, that the Hebrew text contains the true chronology" (1890, 1:69). The Septuagint presents an easy solution to the chronological quandary, yet in this case it is unwise to accept this highly questionable source.

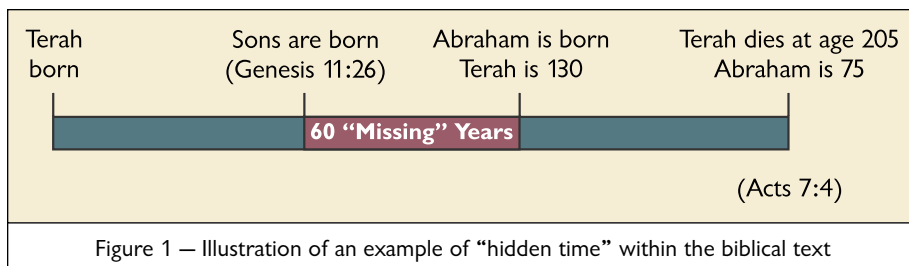
Though various theories fall short, there must be a solution to the dating problem in the Bible. The flexibility of the Egyptian chronology has been demonstrated; it reasonably can be pushed back to about 2600 B.C. What was once a thousand-year difference in biblical and secular dates, has shrunk to only about 250 years because of the adjusted chronology. These few years are all that is needed to solve this mystery. But can they be found in the recesses of the biblical chronology? A few examples of "hidden time" might suffice. Genesis 5:32 records that Noah was 500 when his three sons were born, making Shem 101 years old the year after the Flood. Yet Genesis 11:10-11 indicates that Shem was only 99 when the Flood ended. The reasonable explanation is that Noah **began** having sons in his 500th year, but he did not have all three of them the same year. Because Shem was not the first son, but evidently the third, two years may be added to the chronology. Also, in Genesis 11:11, Arphaxad is listed as Shem's son, yet it appears that he was not the firstborn son either (Genesis 10:22).

Often in the genealogies, sons are mentioned together, with only one date given for the group, such as in the case of Noah's offspring. A similar, yet larger, gap is found in Genesis 11:26, in the chronicle

of the sons of Terah. According to this passage, Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran in his 70th year. The boys were not triplets however, and other passages reveal that there were quite a few years between them. Abraham was 75 years old when he left his home (Genesis 12:4), but he did not leave until his father, Terah, passed away (Acts 7:4). No problem so far, until Genesis 11:32 is examined: "And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran." Terah had Abraham when he was 130 years old, but he **began** having children when he was 70. A thorough inquisition of this section of the genealogies reveals sixty years that otherwise would have been known only to God. As Whitcomb and Morris observed: "Thus we have clear evidence for the possible addition of a **limited** number of years from the lives of some of these patriarchs to the total of years from the Flood to Abraham" (1961, p. 480, emp. added). Only a few such increments are necessary to amass the 250 years needed to stretch biblical time back before the Egyptians. Taken together, there is some flexibility in the biblical record (see Lyons, 2002), just as there is some flexibility in the Egyptian record.

This apocryphal time in no way compromises the integrity of the Genesis record, nor does it indicate the possibility of large gaps. Some have proposed an allegorical or theological meaning for Genesis 5 and 11 in order to accommodate the secular chronologies, but this is unnecessary. The genealogies of Genesis are certainly theological in purpose, but not exclusively so. Information contained within them is sound and accurate, though not always as chronologically precise as we might wish. The sixty-year gap of Terah or the two-year gap of Shem represents an **imprecision**, not an **inaccuracy**. The Christian may accept a literal, straightforward interpretation of these passages, while recognizing the possibility that there may be more years than are recorded. God has written all we **need** to know, not all we **want** to know.

There are no definitive answers to the "Egyptian paradox." Several possibilities have been presented here, and I encourage the reader to investigate each of them more thoroughly. The biblical and historical evidence points to a young Earth, and a recent history for humanity. Archeologists may speculate, but there is no solid proof for man's existence beyond about 3000 B.C. It is then that history emerges forcefully, not unlike the so-called "Cambrian explosion" with which evolutionists are so familiar. Whitcomb and Morris noted: "It is remarkable how many different lines of evidence of a historical nature point



back to a time around 3000 B.C. as dating the beginning of true civilization" (p. 394). Indeed it is!

Truth has nothing to fear, and neither does the Christian. God made the Earth, the sea, and "all that in them is," and He just as certainly has guided the history of this world, giving us His thoughts on the matter throughout the Bible. The question of biblical chronology can be resolved in several ways, but the point to remember is that **it can be resolved**. Secular archaeologists always will have presuppositions of an ancient Earth, yet the facts speak for themselves. The evidence allows for a young Earth and a recent Flood, and more important, God says it is so.

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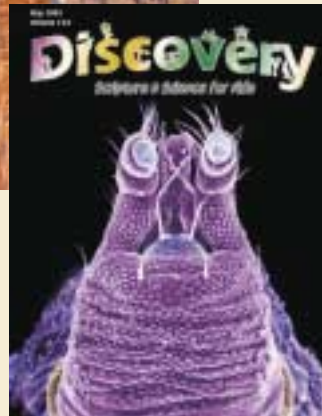
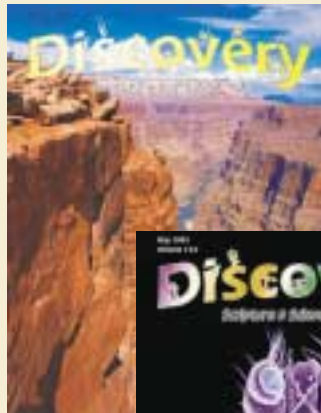
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