

BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES AND HUMAN HISTORY

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Are biblical genealogies of any value in determining the length of human history upon the Earth? Some contend they are not. It is alleged that there is no necessary conflict between the Old Testament view of man's origin and the modern anthropological theory that human history reaches back several millions of years. One author stated: "Any attempt to ascribe a specific or even a general age to either man or the Earth from a Biblical standpoint is a grievous error."¹ (emp. added—WJ). Again: "The time of man's beginning is not even hinted at in the Bible. There is no possible way of determining when Adam was created."² The same writer then discussed the so-called "geologic timetable" (without any hint that he disagreed with it) which, according to many modern geologists, chronicles the history of Earth over a span of some 4.6 to 5 billion years. He concluded: "If geologists are correct in their dating methods, man is a very recent new-comer to this planet." It might be well to observe that for years anthropologists have asserted that man is approximately 1 million years old; evolutionary scientists, however, are now claiming that man (*Homo sapiens*) reaches back two to three million years.

The Bible unquestionably teaches that Adam was "the first man" (1 Corinthians 15:45). In Luke 3:23-38, the inspired historian traced the human lineage of Jesus Christ (who lived less than 2,000 years ago) all of the way back to Adam. If it is true that the Bible gives no hint as to when Adam was created, and if it is possible to harmonize the biblical record with the assertions of anthropology, then it is clear that several million years must be squeezed into the genealogical record of Luke's account.

GAPS IN THE GENEALOGIES

Every diligent Bible student is well aware of the fact that the biblical genealogies do not always necessarily reflect strict father-son relationships. There is no question that these records do contain some gaps; but here is the question: are these gaps sufficiently vast to accommodate millions of years? Note the following illustrative examples.

(1) In Ezra 7:3,4, from Zerariah to Amariah involves only four names, while in 1 Chronicles 6:6-10, from Zerariah to Amariah there is a total of ten names. There is thus a gap of six names in Ezra's list. This gap of a half-dozen generations obviously involves but a few years relatively speaking, but certainly not hundreds of thousands of years.

(2) A brief genealogy from Levi to Moses mentions only four names (Exodus 6:16-20), while a lineage of the same general time span, from Joseph to Joshua (1 Chronicles 7:20-27), involves eleven names. Thus, there could thus be some seven generations deleted between Kohath and Amram in Exodus, but this gap omits only about three hundred years, not thousands.³

(3) In 1 Chronicles 26:24, Shebuel, "a ruler over the treasures" during the administration of David, is said to be the "son of Gershom, the son of Moses." The term "son" in one instance, is used in the sense of **descendant**, for about four hundred years separated Gershom from David's time. Again, though, this has no **genealogical** time significance whatsoever.

THE GENEALOGIES OF CHRIST

There are two genealogies of Christ in the New Testament, Matthew 1:2-16 and Luke 3:23-38. Matthew's account, designed for the Jews, was intended to establish Christ as a descendant of Abraham and David (1:1), and thus the illustrious **seed** promised of those Old Testament worthies. Matthew's genealogy is arranged artistically into three sets of fourteen generations (perhaps to facilitate memorization), hence, between Joram and Uzziah (1:8) he omits three names. There may also be other names omitted since Matthew lists fourteen generations between David and the Babylonian captivity, and fourteen between the captivity and the birth of Jesus; yet in Luke's list these same two spans chronicle twenty or twenty-one generations respectively. Luke's record, written especially for Gentiles to emphasize the Lord's solidarity with mankind, is clearly more exhaustive.

Even though, therefore, there are plainly some gaps in the genealogical lists, they are of necessity relatively minor. And this can be factually demonstrated! According to Luke's record, there are fifty-five generations from Abraham to Jo-

seph (the "supposed" father of Jesus⁴). Archaeologists have established that the era between Abraham and Jesus covers, at the most, some two millennia.⁵ Simple mathematics will quickly reveal that fifty-five generations spanning two thousand years allows for an average of only about forty years per generation (including any gaps). There simply cannot be, therefore, any huge gaps from Abraham to Jesus.

Furthermore, Luke's list mentions only twenty names from Abraham back to Adam (a number of whom were renowned for their longevity). The historian even included Cainan between Arphaxad and Shelah (3:35-36)—a fact not mentioned in the genealogies of the Hebrew O.T. (though included in the Septuagint). If we grant the possibility of some omissions in this record, why should we assume that a drastically **different type** of genealogy is employed from Adam to Abraham than from Abraham to Jesus? In other words, does it seem like a reasonable approach to the Scriptures to recognize that the slightly more than fifty generations from Abraham to Christ bridge only about two thousand years, while nearly 2,000,000 years are pressed into the approximately twenty generations preceding Abraham? If this is the case, then the genealogy from Abraham to Adam is the epitome of irrelevancy and a rational attempt to interpret the Scriptures is hopeless!

While allowing some elasticity within the biblical lineages, J. Barton Payne declared that drastic links leave "the Bible's detailed lists of figures as generally pointless and also posits an unusually high proportion of omitted links."⁶ In discussing the purpose of the Bible's genealogical records, John Klotz cautioned against trying to construct a strict chronological calendar to determine the **exact** time of creation. He nevertheless conceded: "God apparently did want to show us that the earth is not billions of years old."⁷

In conclusion, let us emphasize that there is but one motive underlying the attempt to stretch the genealogies back for hundreds of thousands of years—to accommodate the geologic/anthropologic time scale so essential for the evolutionary hypothesis. Time is desperately needed if evolution occurred; miraculous creation does not need it, and the Bible does not indicate it. Let us, therefore, not be stampeded into accepting compromising and ridiculous views of the Bible simply to facilitate the baseless theories of those who are dead set on being infidels anyway!

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