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FROM CREATION TO SOLOMON

Studies in Biblical Chronology No. 2

by James B. Jordan

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Introductory Note

These chapters continue from the first paper in this series, *The Theology of Biblical Chronology*. Also, a more detailed investigation of the chronology of Genesis through Joshua is found in the third paper in this series, *A Chronological and Calendrical Commentary on the Pentateuch* (formerly Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper No. 22), which goes into calendrical, theological, and symbolic issues as well as providing detailed analyses of the Flood Year and the Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings.

The Chronologies of Genesis 5 & 11

And Qenan lived seventy years and begot Mehalalel.
 And Qenan lived after he begot Mahalalel forty years and eight hundred years.
 And he begot sons and daughters.
 And all the days of Qenan were ten years and nine hundred years.
 And he died.

And Mehalalel lived five years and sixty years and begot Yared.
 And Mehalalel lived after he begot Yared thirty years and eight hundred years.
 And he begot sons and daughters.
 And all the days of Mehalalel were five and ninety years and eight hundred years.
 And he died. (Genesis 5:12-17).

These paragraphs from Genesis 5 rather obviously present us with a chronology interwoven with a genealogy. Mehalalel was born when his father Qenan was 70 years old, and Yared was born when his father Mehalalel was 65 years old. Thus, anyone who can add can see that Qenan was 135 years old when his grandson Yared was born.

This chronological scheme begins with Adam and carries down to Noah in Genesis 5. In Genesis 11, it begins with Noah's son Shem and carries down to Abram's father Terah. The result is as clear chronology from creation to Terah.

Genesis 5 and 11 are among the clearest, simplest, and most obvious passages in the Bible to read and understand. Before the 19th century, nobody in the history of the world ever entertained so much as a shadow of a doubt regarding the interpretation of these two passages. As we have seen in previous chapters, it was in the late 19th century that some Biblical exegetes introduced the idea that there is no chronology in these passages. It is time to examine their arguments carefully.

Our procedure will be to examine the arguments against chronology presented by three eminent evangelical theologians, distinguished for their advocacy of the inerrancy of Scripture: Francis A. Schaeffer, Benjamin B. Warfield, and William H. Green. We shall be looking to see if their arguments succeed in refuting the *prima facie* case for Biblical chronology.¹

Francis A. Schaeffer

¹An earlier form of this chapter appeared as James B. Jordan, "The Biblical Chronology Question: An Analysis," *Creation Social Sciences and Humanities Quarterly* 2:2 (Winter, 1979) & 2:3 (Spring, 1980). A photocopy of the original essay can be obtained from Biblical Horizons, Box 1096, Niceville, FL 32588.

Francis Schaeffer devotes a full chapter in his booklet *No Final Conflict* to the matter of “Genealogy and Chronology,” in which he attempts to demonstrate that ultimately there is no final conflict between Scripture and scientific truth at this point of apparent contradiction. His first paragraph prejudices his entire discussion:

The question of whether the genealogies should be taken as chronologies is important and must be dealt with at some length.²

By this opening statement Schaeffer subsumes the question of chronology under the question of genealogy. This is a common error, but one which can and must be refuted. First of all, there are many chronological statements in Scripture that are in no way tied to genealogies. Second, as will be demonstrated, even if there were gaps in the *genealogies* of Genesis 5 and 11, there would still not necessarily be gaps in the *chronologies* therein recorded. Thus, the question of chronology is not the same as that of genealogy.

Schaeffer enumerates three arguments, but in reality he presents six distinguishable lines of argument. First, he notes that “the relationship between the sequence of names and chronology is not always a straight line.”³ Thus, in Genesis 5:32 the names of Noah's sons are not given in chronological order. This argument, however, is not relevant to the discussion. The fact that not all Biblical statements are chronologically precise says nothing about those that rather obviously are. The chronology is not broken with Noah, since Genesis 6:7 and 11:10 establish the necessary link. We can agree with Schaeffer that in Genesis 5:32 and Exodus 7:7 “chronology was not what the authors had in mind,”⁴ but this says nothing about passages where chronology seems definitely to have been in the authors' (and Author's) minds.

Second, he notes that some genealogies in the Bible have gaps in them, as compare 1 Chronicles 6:3-14 with Ezra 7:2. Gaps in genealogies, however, do not prove gaps in chronologies. The known gaps all occur in non-chronological genealogies. Moreover, even if there were gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, this would not affect the chronological information therein recorded, for even if Enosh were the great-grandson of Seth, it would still be the case that Seth was 105 years old when Enosh was born, according to the simple reading of the text. Thus, genealogy and chronology are distinct problems with distinct characteristics. They ought not to be confused.

Schaeffer's third argument, while superficially nugatory, has real relevance for the question of chronology. He notes that if the chronology were correct, Adam, Enoch, and Methuselah would for a short time have been contemporaries. He then writes that this is curious and that we might expect the Bible to say something about it. The situation, however, is only curious to those who approach the Bible with the

² (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 37.

³ *Idem.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

notion that Adam, Enoch, and Methuselah could not have been contemporaries. But we may ask, why could they not have been? What actually is unusual or strange about it? To ask these questions is to answer them: Obviously there is nothing objectively strange or unusual about it at all. After all, the Bible was not written to satisfy our curiosity. We're never told the name of Samson's mother, for instance, despite her prominence in Judges 13. Personally, we should like to know more about Melchizedek, but the Bible says little about him. Shall we for this reason say that he never existed? The fact that a given datum of Scripture seems curious or strange to us is no argument for or against it at all.

More telling psychologically is the fact that Noah and most of his descendants would have been contemporaries of Abraham. In fact, Shem died only shortly before Abraham died, while Eber outlived him. "Eber" is cognate to "Hebrew" (Genesis 14:13). For most 20th century evangelicals this does sound strange, but for over 3000 years no one reading the text thought it odd. The strangeness comes to us because we are not used to thinking in terms of it. Why could these men not have been contemporaries?

Additionally, the regions of Ur, Padan-aram, Egypt, and Canaan are sufficiently far removed from Ararat so that no contact among these men would necessarily have transpired.

Moreover, even if such contact had taken place, there is no reason for Scripture to satisfy our curiosity with respect to it. It may be, however, that the *Gilgamesh Epic* could help satisfy our curiosity. Gilgamesh takes a long trip to visit Utnapishtim, the man who survived the Flood. When he finally meets Utnapishtim, this man tells him about the Flood in detail. Though the account is greatly garbled, as compared with Scriptural clarity, it is not at all inconceivable that there might be an historical basis for this "legend." Who is to say whether or not, perhaps 300 years after the Flood, some local chieftain decided to search for the legendary old man who survived the Flood?

Finally we note that Melchizedek possessed a full knowledge of God from some source, apparently not from Abram. If the long period of time often assumed between the Flood and Abram were actually the case, we may wonder how knowledge of God survived. It is often assumed that knowledge of the true God had disappeared by the time of the call of Abram, and that the family of Abram came to be the only bearers of the knowledge of the true God in the earth. For this to have been the case, a long period of time is needed between the Flood and the call of Abram. Is this scenario correct? Against it stands the knowledge of God on the part of both Melchizedek and Balaam. Thus, this scenario (that knowledge of God disappeared) does not stand up very well. There were many who knew God during the patriarchal era. The fact that Abraham was from a pagan city does not indicate that all cities were pagan, as the Salem ruled by Melchizedek certainly would not have been. The fact that Abraham was called to service does not imply that he alone was called to salvation during his age. The seed people were not the only saved people.

Schaeffer's fourth argument is that in Genesis 10:4 a man (Javan) is said to bring forth not individual sons but peoples (Kittim, Dodanim). In 10:7, Cush, Seba, and Havilah are place names, he says, not the names of individuals. The point is that some genealogies are concerned only to give general relationships among peoples,

not exact father-son delineations. We grant this point with no difficulty. That Genesis 10 is a “Table of Nations” is nowhere questioned. That Genesis 5 and 11 are “Tables of Nations” is nowhere asserted, however. Schaeffer knows that peoples are intended by 10:4 because of the Hebrew plural (*im*). This plural does not occur in chapters 5 and 11. The place names in 10:7 are not necessarily place names at all, since places are often named for famous people, especially for patriarchs (cf. Genesis 4:17). The names in 10:7 may just as easily be those of individual men. Finally, even if we granted that the names in Genesis 5 and 11 are peoples instead of individuals, it would still be the case that Enosh came from Seth when Seth was 105 years old. If these are two groups rather than two individuals, the chronology still stands.

Fifth, Schaeffer notes that the Septuagint adds a name to this list: Cainan. This, however, need be no more problematic than any other Septuagintal deviations from the Hebrew text. More serious, though Schaeffer does not mention it, is the fact that Cainan is included in Luke's genealogy of Christ (3:36). Here again, however, is not a problem for the principle and concept of Biblical chronology, but only exegetical and hermeneutical problem relating to the nature of New Testament Septuagintal citations. We shall investigate this matter in depth in chapter 8.

Sixth, Schaeffer comes to grips with the fact that each father's age is given for the time of the birth of his son in this manner:

1. Some genealogies contain gaps.
2. Genesis 5 and 11 are genealogies.
3. Therefore, Genesis 5:6 may contain a gap.
4. Gaps may be paraphrased: “X begot someone who led to Y.”
5. Therefore, Genesis 5:6 may be paraphrased: “And Seth lived 105 years and begot someone who led to Enosh.”

There are four lines of argument against this logically correct argument. First, the question of gaps in the genealogies needs more careful consideration. Custance is of help here:

We are told again and again that some of these genealogies contain gaps: but what is never pointed out by those who lay the emphasis on these gaps, is that they only know of the existence of these gaps because the Bible elsewhere fills them in. How otherwise could one know of them? But if they are filled in, they are not gaps at all! Thus, in the final analysis the argument is completely without foundation.⁵

We can strengthen Custance's argument by pointing out that gaps invariably occur in derivative genealogies, not in the original or foundational ones. Matthew thus is at liberty to arrange his genealogy of Christ in three groups of 14, making some theologically significant omissions, because his genealogy is derived from the complete lists found in the Old Testament and elsewhere. Genesis 5 and 11 are, of course, not derivative but foundational genealogies. Thus, the level of expectation for

⁵Arthur C. Custance, *The Genealogies of the Bible*. Doorway Papers 24 (Ottawa: n.p., 1967), p. 3.

an omission is surely lower in their case. The omissions in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles are to be explained in the same manner: They are derivative from earlier, probably complete sources. Thus, the argument from gaps is weak, and does not take into account the Biblical-historical context of the various genealogical records.

Second, a full paraphrase of Genesis 5:6-7 according to Schaeffer's principles makes clear the exegetical gymnastics his position involves: "And Seth lived 105 years and begot someone who led to Enosh. Then Seth lived 807 years after he begot someone who led to Enosh, and he begot sons and daughters." Note that in the simple reading, the sons and daughters are brothers and sisters of Enosh. Schaeffer's forced reading makes them brothers and sisters of some unknown person who led to Enosh. We must ask whether anyone approaching the text with unjaundiced eye would ever imagine it to mean this. The parallelism of meaning in the text is forcefully against Schaeffer's procrustean interpretation.

Third, there is additional internal evidence against Schaeffer's explanation. Genesis 5:32 and 11:26 have the same form as every other statement in their series, and employ the Hiphil imperfect of *yamad*, yet must be taken, and are taken by all expositors, as detailing a father-son relationship. No one denies that Noah was the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, or that Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Schaeffer's gaps are rendered even more forcibly unlikely by these counter examples.

Fourth, there is strong external evidence against this interpretation. Schaeffer is ignoring the fact that the various genealogical lists are arranged in a variety of literary forms. The very fact that chronological information is included in Genesis 5 and 11 sets them off from other lists. Moreover, Exodus 6:16-19 gives a clear illustration of another form of genealogy that gives the age of the patriarchs at the time of their deaths, but not at the time of their sons' births. The fact that a variety of literary options were available to the writer makes it unlikely that the form chosen for Genesis 5 and 11 was accidental or irrelevant. *The inclusion of the father's age at the time of his son's birth is wholly without meaning or use unless chronology is intended.*

We must conclude then that Schaeffer's alternative, while logically a possibility, is devoid of a solid exegetical base. His arguments can only be sustained by ignoring the established commonsense rules of exegesis and hermeneutics. There is strong internal and strong external evidence against it as well. Thus we conclude that Schaeffer has not defeated the *prima facie* case for Biblical chronology.

We have begun with Schaeffer because he was a well-respected and influential Christian apologist. He was, however, simply rehashing arguments presented two generations earlier by men he respected. To their writings we now turn.

Benjamin B. Warfield

Warfield commences his essay "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race" with the statement that the question of chronology "became acute" with the rise

of the Darwinian hypotheses.⁶ Warfield's arguments, insofar as they differ from what has been discussed already, can be summarized under three heads.

First, Warfield argues that it is not the purpose of the genealogies (N.B.) of Genesis 5 and 11 to give chronological information:

These genealogies must be esteemed trustworthy for the purposes for which they are recorded; but they cannot safely be pressed into use for other purposes for which they were not *intended*, and for which they are not *adapted*. In particular, it is clear that the genealogical purposes for which the genealogies were given, did not require a complete record of all the generations through which the descent of the persons to whom they are assigned runs; but only an adequate indication of the particular line through which the descent in question comes. Accordingly it is found on examination that the genealogies of Scripture are freely compressed for all sorts of purposes; and that it can seldom be confidently affirmed that they contain a complete record of the whole series of generations, while it is often obvious that a *very large number* are omitted.⁷

There are a number of errors in this assertion. First, it simply is not the case that large numbers of generations are omitted from the genealogies. Known gaps are in fact few, and the gaps are not large. Second, it is not true that upon a *prima facie* inspection these genealogies are not for chronology. In fact, the reverse is the case. Finally, we must ask, and here is the heart of the issue, how the purpose of a given text can be ascertained unless the text in all of its specific details be examined. The fact that it is not the purpose of 1 Chronicles to provide a chronology does not prove that it is not the design of Genesis 5 to provide one. It would seem to the simple reader that it most certainly *is* the design of Genesis 5 to provide, among other things, chronological data.

But, second, Warfield does not simply wish to argue the purpose of the text, but he wants to argue that the text can have only one purpose. This reductionism is apparent in his discussion of the fact that the father's age is given for the time of the birth of his son:

There is, in a word, much more information furnished with respect to each link in the chain than merely the age to which each father had attained when his son was begotten; and all this information is of the same order and obviously belongs together. It is clear that a *single motive* has determined the insertion of it all; and we must seek a reason for its insertion which will account for all of it. This reason cannot have been a chronological one: for all

⁶In Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1968) and in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield Vol. 9: Studies in Theology* (New York: Oxford, 1932; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); originally in *The Princeton Theological Review* 9 (1911):1-25.

⁷From *Biblical and Theological Studies*, p. 240f., emphasis added.

the items of information furnished do not serve a chronological purpose. Only the first item in each case can be made to yield a chronological result; and *therefore* not even it was intended to yield a chronological result, since all these items of information are too closely bound together in their common character to be separated in their intention When we are told of any man that he was a hundred and thirty years old when he begot his heir, and lived after that eight hundred years begetting son and daughters, dying only at the age of nine hundred and thirty years, all these items cooperate to make a vivid *impression* on us of the vigor and grandeur of humanity in those old days of the world's prime This is the *impression* they were intended to make on us, as is proved by the simple fact that they are adapted in all their items to make this *impression*, while only a small portion of them can be utilized for the purpose of chronological calculation.⁸

Against this reductionistic argument we have five contraries. First, if the sole purpose of the passage were to make an impression on our minds of the vigor of the patriarchs' humanity, why was the age of the father at the birth of his son even included at all? Exodus 6:16-19 communicates the same impression, without the superfluous information.

Second, these passages also contain other information that cannot be subsumed under the sole purpose of giving an impression of vigor, such as that concerning Enoch (5:24). Other genealogies are replete with such interjections of information. Warfield recognizes this and refers to these as parenthetical insertions. But notice carefully what he has done. First, he arrives at a sole purpose for the text on the basis of ignoring these "parentheses", and then he takes them up again and tells us they are parentheses. This is a logical fallacy: He is assuming what he wishes to prove. The presence of these parentheses can just as easily prove that there is not just one sole purpose for these texts.

Third, even if we grant, which we cannot, that there can only be one purpose for the text, the truth status of the parentheses must still be assessed. Warfield states:

It is quite true that, when brought together in sequence, name after name, these notes assume the appearance of a concatenated chronological scheme. But this is pure illusion, due *wholly* to the nature of the parenthetical insertions which are made. When placed one after the other they seem to play into one another, whereas they are set down here for an entirely different purpose and cannot *without violence* be read with reference to one another.⁹

This is an extraordinary statement. If it were true that a chronology cannot be worked up without doing violence to the passage, how did expositors throughout all the ages of the Jewish and Christian church before Warfield make so ill a mistake? Calvin, as we saw in chapter 3 above, intimates that the matter is so obvious that anyone denying the chronology would have to be perverse. Moreover, note that this argument

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243f., emphasis added.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 246, emphasis added.

stands or falls based on the concept of parenthesis, which concept we have shown to be illusory. (What, by the way, is a “parenthesis” anyway? All parenthetical assertions have *some* relation to the text.) The main point we wish to establish here, however, is that *even if these remarks are parenthetical, they are still either true or false*. The simplest and most helpful definition of a proposition is that a proposition is a statement that is either true or false. “Seth begot Enoch when he was 105 years old” is a proposition. It is either true or false. Warfield seems to be arguing that because the general purpose of this passage is to give an impression of vigor, therefore the specific statements of the passage, especially the “parenthetical” ones, may not be true. He does not state this, but what else are we to make of his remarks? If these “parenthetical remarks” are true, and as a defender of inerrancy Warfield is committed to the idea that they are, then the concatenation of them makes chronology unavoidable.

Fourth, Warfield knows, as a good systematician, that no passage of Scripture has as its broader contextual purpose to teach the full doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit. We do not hesitate, however, to draw from passages referring to the Holy Spirit those inferences that demonstrate His personhood, and systematize these into a whole doctrine. Thus, even if Warfield were right regarding the overall contextual purpose of Genesis 5, it would not invalidate the chronological use of the material contained in that passage. If we may systematize “random” materials pertaining to the Holy Spirit, why may we not do likewise with materials pertaining to chronology, especially as the materials are not actually scattered at all?

Fifth and finally, contrary to Warfield, the purpose of any Scripture passage is to say what it says. There is no reason to assume that the authors of Genesis 5 and 11 were unconcerned about chronology. They may have had numerous concerns, and given the information they set down, they did. If their sole concern had been genealogy, even in a general sense of indicating important personages in the Messianic line, they would not have needed to include any information regarding the lifespans of the patriarchs at all. If their dual purposes were genealogy and an impression of vigor, the inclusion of the age of the father at the birth of the son would be superfluous. The fact that the Bible does contain genealogies of these two types demonstrates that they were not literary impossibilities. It remains the case that the text does contain this chronological information, which cannot soundly be suppressed in the interest of some supposed overarching purpose.

Warfield's third argument is from the symmetry of the texts: “Their symmetrical arrangement in groups of ten is indicative of their compression.”¹⁰ What Warfield has noted is that each genealogical list begins with an “Adam” (Adam himself, and the second Adam, Noah), proceeds through nine other fathers, and issues in three sons from the last named father. It is argued that this symmetry is literary and not historical. Against this we simply note that there is no reason to accept this assertion. There is no reason why Genesis 5 and 11 cannot reflect the actual historical state of affairs; indeed, the inclusion of the father's age at the birth of his son militates against any gaps, as we have seen, and thus favors historical accuracy. Moreover, there is a question of hermeneutics here. True it is that the number ten (and the number seven,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

and others) is used symbolically in Scripture to indicate fullness or totality. What, however, is the origin of this usage? Warfield might want to assert that it was simply a literary convention in use already at the time Genesis was set down, but that there is no foundation for such an assertion. In fact, what seems more plausible is that they are at last part of the source of the literary convention, under what is sometimes called in hermeneutics the Law of First Mention. Genesis 1 would then be the origin of the use of seven for fullness, and thus Genesis 1 would involve a literal use of seven, while some subsequent usages would be reflecting symbolically the meaning of Genesis 1. For instance, Matthew's chronology, arranged in three groups of fourteen, would be using the number seven symbolically to point to Christ as a new creation. Similarly, the use of the number ten in later Scriptures would be based upon Genesis 5 and 11. In short, Warfield's procedure is overly systematic and does not do justice to Biblical-theological hermeneutical considerations.

William H. Green

The classic essay attempting to show that the Bible does not commit the evangelical to a chronological scheme dating from Creation forwards was written by William H. Green in 1890. Most of Green's arguments have been surveyed earlier in this paper as they have been reiterated by Schaeffer and Warfield. At the risk of becoming tedious, however, it will be well for us to examine closely his account of the crucial matter: the fact that the age of the father is given for the birth of his apparent son.

Our method will be to cite Green consecutively and intersperse our own observations on his argument. Basically it is the same as Schaeffer's sixth argument examined previously.

Why should the author be so particular to state, in every case, with unflinching regularity, the age of each patriarch at the birth of his son, unless it was his design thus to construct a chronology of this entire period, and to afford his readers the necessary elements for a computation of the interval from the creation to the deluge and from the deluge to Abraham? And if this was his design, he must, of course, have aimed to make his list complete. The omission of even a single name would create an error.

But are we really justified in supposing that the author of these genealogies entertained such a purpose? It is a noticeable fact that he never puts them to such a use himself. He nowhere sums these numbers, nor suggests their summation. No chronological statement is deduced from these genealogies, either by him or by any inspired writer.¹¹

We must ask whether there is any need for such a summation. It is a simple matter for any person to total up the numbers and figure out the time period for himself. More-

¹¹William Henry Green, "Primeval Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April, 1890, pp. 285-303; cited from Walter C. Kaiser, ed., *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), p. 23.

over, the mere fact that these numbers are not explicitly put to a summary chronological use by the text does not make them untrue and thus unfitted for our use to that end.

There is no computation anywhere in Scripture of the time that elapsed from the creation or from the deluge, as there is from the descent into Egypt to the Exodus (Exod. 12:40), or from the Exodus to the building of the temple (1 Kings 6:1).¹²

These facts we readily grant, with some reservations respecting Green's interpretation of Exodus 12:40 to which we shall return later. Note, however, that the two periods he mentions are not accompanied by genealogies of the sorts found in Genesis 5 and 11. The Scripture clearly *does* intend to give chronological information at these points, and this should not be overlooked. Chronology *is* of concern to the writers of the Bible. From this perspective we should be surprised if the Bible did *not* include chronological data regarding the period from Creation to Abraham, especially since such data can now be obtained from no other source. That chronology is of concern to the Bible (and to its Author) can also be seen from the often difficult and confusing chronology of the Kings of Israel. Thus, we find that it is the *intention* of the Bible to provide us with chronology from Abraham to the Exile. Some of that chronology is given in summary statements, such as the two Green alludes to, but some is also given interspersed in the histories of the Kings. Is it therefore surprising or unreasonable that some should be given along with genealogies as well? We conclude that the fact that the numbers are not totalled or summarized is no argument against their intended chronological use.

Moreover, we may ask if it is somehow problematic to add the 430 years from Abram to the Exodus, and the 480 more years to the Temple. Do we need some special text that adds them up for us? Or may we do it ourselves, and thereby find out the total length of time. Green seems to think we should be reluctant to add the numbers together. This strikes me, frankly, as insane.

And if the numbers in these genealogies are for the sake of constructing a chronology, why are numbers introduced which have no possible relation to such a purpose? Why are we told how long each patriarch lived after the birth of his son, and what was the entire length of his life? These numbers are given with the same regularity as the age of each at the birth of his son and they are of no use in making up a chronology of the period.¹³

There is an implicit reductionism in this line of reasoning, for it is assumed that the passage can have only one purpose and that all information must dovetail fully to that end. This line of thought we reject for the reason that it is indefensible in the light of basic linguistic considerations. The purpose of the book of 1 John is arguably to provide Christian assurance, but in arguing to that end a number of factors are brought into play and a good deal of information is given out that in and of itself

¹² *Idem.*

¹³ *Idem.*

would not tend necessarily toward assurance of salvation. To encapsulate this argument, there are various sizes of Scriptural pericopes that have varying purposes. The Bible itself can be taken as a literary unity with a purpose. The Torah can be taken as a literary unit with a specific emphasis or message. And so it goes. The specific purpose of the book of Genesis may be different from, though not inconsonant with, the specific purpose of the Bible as a whole. The same thing is true within a pericope of smaller size. The purpose of Genesis 11:18 is to tell us two things: (a.) that Peleg begot Reu, and (b.) that Peleg was 30 years old at the time. The overall purpose of Genesis 11:10-26 may simply be to establish a genealogical link between Shem and Abraham, and the specific information given in verse 18 is not altogether essential to that end. The information is, however, given. What do we make of it?

We need to take up the specific details of these two passages to answer Green fully, Genesis 11 gives these pieces of information:

- a. the name of the important son.
- b. the age of the father at this son's birth.
- c. the age to which the father lived after this son's birth.
- d. the fact that there were other children.

Note that the total number of years is not given. It is not needed, since we can figure it out for ourselves. The possible meanings and purposes of this passage are:

- a. to prove that Abraham descended from Shem.
- b. to show the longevity of the patriarchs (from the totals).
- c. to show the declining lifespan of humanity (also from the totals).
- d. to show the fertility of the postdeluvial world.
- e. to provide a chronology.

Are these purposes consonant with one another? The answer is obvious. As regards Genesis 5, we note these items of information:

- a. the name of the important son.
- b. the age of the father at this son's birth.
- c. the age to which the father lived after this son's birth.
- d. the fact that there were other children.
- e. the total number of years the father lived.
- f. the fact that the father died or did not die.

Here the total number of years is given. Although we could deduce it for ourselves, our attention is called to it by its specific inclusion in the text. Why? We believe that the answer is that the text wants us to note that despite the fact that these men lived extraordinarily long lives, and may have seemed immortal, they did in fact eventually die. Then, by contrast, Enoch did not die. Thus the purposes of the passage are:

- a. to show the longevity of the patriarchs.
- b. to show the fertility of the patriarchs.
- c. to call attention to the fulfillment of the curse of death.
- d. to show that Noah, the new Adam, was descended from the first Adam.
- e. to provide chronology.

Note that Warfield only admitted the first two. The emphasis on death is not noticed by him. If his reductionism were correct, all but one of these emphases would have to be rejected. As it is, we feel free to allow the specifics of the text to point us to its comprehensive meanings.

We believe we have answered Green's question as to why all the information provided was actually given. It is true that not all of it tends toward an impression of vigor (longevity and fertility), and not all of it tends toward an emphasis on the fulfillment of the curse. In fact, the information contained in these passages cannot (and need not) all be subsumed under any one satisfactory heading. Green gives as his one purpose:

They merely afford us a conspectus of individual lives, and for this reason doubtless they are recorded. They exhibit in these selected examples the original term of human life. They show what it was in the ages before the Flood. They show how it was afterwards gradually narrowed down. But in order to do this it was not necessary that every individual should be named in the line from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham, nor anything approaching it. A series of specimen lives, with the appropriate numbers attached, this is all that has been furnished us.

Green is correct that for the purpose as he gives it, not every individual would have to have been listed. The point is that his one purpose also renders unnecessary the following items of information included in the text:

- a. the age of the father at the birth of the son.
- b. the fact that the father died.
- c. the fact that there were other children.

If the texts only gave the number of years lived by the patriarch, together with the name of his son, Green would be correct in his assessment of the intention of the passage. This is the case in Exodus 6:16-18, as we have noted. The fact that Genesis 5 and 11 include additional data destroys Green's thesis.

Green concludes by arguing in the same way as Schaeffer's sixth argument, that the text may be paraphrased "X begot someone who led to Y." This hypothesis has been dealt with above.

The only other argument of Green that is not repeated in the later writers we have discussed is that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 bear a similarity with the time of the Egyptian Sojourn in that events are delineated at the beginning and end of the periods, little is said about the middle, and the genealogical tables for the middle are incomplete. There is no need to argue this out, since the comparison is far-fetched, and proves nothing at all either way. We shall, however, make the following points for those who have Green's essay in hand.

1. Careful chronologers agree that the Jews only sojourned in Egypt 215 years. Galatians 3:17 is used to correct Exodus 12:40 for several reasons. We shall take up the proof for this in chapter 11 below.

2. There is no reason, thus, to hold to gaps in Exodus 6:16-22. Considering the comparative ages of Bezalel and Moses, the fact that he was seven generations from

Jacob while Moses was only four is not strange. Moses was already 80 years old when the Exodus occurred.

3. There is no good reason to think that eleven generations passed between Jacob and Joshua. The list in 1 Chronicles 7:23-27 is in the same literary form as 1 Chronicles 6:22-24, which Green himself proves to include brothers as well as sons. No other genealogy is anywhere near that long for the time considered.

4. The confusion created by the view that Israel was in Egypt 430 years is amply illustrated by the tortuous exegesis forced upon Green and Keil¹⁴ to explain the genealogy of Exodus 6. Taking the genealogy at face value, and the Sojourn in Egypt as 215 years, there is no problem.

5. Contrary to Green, there is nothing strange in the fact that the four sons of Kohath could give rise to 8600 male descendants by the time of the Exodus. What Green has forgotten is that far more than 70 persons went down into Egypt. If Abram had 318 men servants (Genesis 14:14), how many would these have been by the time of the Descent? Jacob's many servants are seen in Genesis 32:16-20; 35:6; 36:6-7. Moreover, the Jews were so numerous that they were given the whole land of Goshen (Genesis 47). The enumeration in Numbers included all the men of the tribe, not just the literal descendants of Jacob, which were also very numerous by this time (cf. Genesis 47:27; Exodus 1:7, 10, 12).

6. Finally, though not much is said about it, the Bible actually does give some indications of what the Jews did in Egypt before they were reduced to bondage. 1 Chron. 7:21 and 24 doubtless transpired during the Goshen period.

Thus, there is really no reason to impose the kind of confusion on Exodus 6:16-22 that Green attempts. The argument from analogy with the Sojourn breaks down not only because analogical arguments prove nothing, but also because the analogy is false.

Conclusion

We have seen that the only possible argument against the chronologies of Genesis 5 & 11 that the text should read "X lived n years and begot (someone who led to) Y." We saw that this is exceedingly far-fetched and replete with difficulties. The two most weighty arguments against this reconstruction are that it would never be thought of by anyone approaching the passage with unjaundiced eye, and that it reduces the data regarding the age of the father at the birth of his descendant to a meaningless triviality. An interpretation that trivializes Scripture may safely be discarded.

Thus we conclude that the Bible unquestionably teaches a chronology from Creation to Abraham. Any evangelical holding to the specific and comprehensive inerrancy of Scripture will be forced, if he looks into it, into accepting this chronology.

¹⁴See *Ibid.*, p. 19f.

Was There a Second Cainan?

One of the problems in the study of Biblical chronology is the fact that various ancient translations of the Old Testament give radically different numbers for the ages of the patriarchs in Genesis 5 and 11. There have been in the past, and continue to be today, numerous students of chronology who choose to go with one or another of these alternate schemes, although by far the majority of scholars go with the Hebrew text.

The question boils down to this: Is the Hebrew text that we have today, which was preserved by the Jews during the early centuries of the Christian era, an accurate copy of the original Hebrew Bible? Or does the Jewish Hebrew Old Testament that we have today reflect perversions introduced into the text by post-Christian Jews, so that we should rely on the Greek translation of the Old Testament that the early Church used (because none of them except Jerome knew Hebrew)? For a variety of reasons, the answer to this question in the Protestant churches has always been that the Hebrew Old Testament is accurate, while the Greek translation is filled with problems. This is now the position of scholars in all traditions of the Church (though occasionally one runs into people who prefer the Greek Old Testament).

What is this Greek translation of the Old Testament? It is known as the Septuagint, and commonly designated by the Roman numerals LXX, because the first part of it (the Pentateuch) was produced by seventy (actually seventy-two) Jewish scholars living in the city of Alexandria sometime around 250 BC. It is not known for certain how the translation was made, because there are many myths and legends surrounding its production. Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias can be consulted for more information about this.

Because the LXX already existed as a Greek Old Testament in New Testament times, we find that sometimes the New Testament writers quote from the LXX directly. This has led some to say that the New Testament puts its imprimatur on the LXX, and so we should be using the LXX rather than the Hebrew Old Testament. In fact, however, only about half of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New are found in the wording of the LXX. The rest are the writer's own translations from the Hebrew, or are taken from other sources. Thus, the New Testament cannot be taken as affirming the primacy of the LXX. It seems that the New Testament writers used the LXX when they thought it was accurate, and did not use it when it did not suit their purposes.

The Chronology Problem

The problem before us is that of the chronologies of Genesis 5 and 11. In Genesis 5, the LXX manages to add about 600 years between the creation and the Flood. The Hebrew Bible says that the number of years between creation and Flood was 1656, but the LXX gives either 2242 or 2262, depending on which LXX version you happen to be using. The way it works is this: The Hebrew Bible says that Adam

was 130 when Seth was born; the LXX says 230. The Hebrew says that Seth was 105 when Enosh was born; the LXX says 205. The Hebrew says that Enosh was 90 when Kenan (Cainan) was born; the LXX says 190. And so forth. Not every number is changed, but most are.

The LXX makes the same kind of change in the chronology of Genesis 11. The Hebrew says that Eber was 34 when Peleg was born; the LXX says 134. The Hebrew says that Peleg was 30 when Reu was born; the LXX says 130. And so forth. The LXX also adds a name to the list, Cainan (Kenan), inserting him between Arpachshad and Shelah, and adding an extra 130 years to the list. Thus, while the Hebrew Bible has 352 years from the Flood to the birth of Abram, the LXX has 993.¹

Thus, in the Hebrew Bible, the period between Creation and the birth of Abram is 2008 years, while in the LXX it is 3249 years.

Why make this change? Scholars are pretty much agreed as to why, and we can let Anstey summarize it for us: “The translators of the Hebrew text into the Greek LXX had a very obvious motive for enlarging the Chronology. The history of the Chaldeans by Berosus, and the history of the Egyptians by Manetho were published about this time, and they laid claim to a remote antiquity for the beginning of their respective histories. It was natural that the translators of the LXX should augment the Chronology of the period by centenary additions, and by the insertion of the second Cainan, in order to carry back the epoch of the Creation and the Flood to a respectable antiquity, so that it might compare more favourably with that claimed for Babylon and Egypt.”²

The LXX translators also performed another trick with the chronology of Genesis 11. In the Hebrew Bible, the first three men born after the Flood lived 400+ years (Arpachshad, 438; Shelah, 433; and Eber, 464). Then, with the birth of Peleg we find a sudden drop to 200+ years (Peleg, 239; Reu, 239; Serug, 230). The likely explanation for this is that in Peleg's day “the earth was divided” (Genesis 10:25), probably a reference to the Tower of Babel, and thus there was an intensification of judgment on humanity at that point and a consequent lessening of lifespan. The LXX translators, however, decided to smooth out the decline in years between Shem and Abram, and there is no sudden halving of the human lifespan in the days of Peleg in their chronological revision.

Thus, while it is impossible to give any rational account of the derivation of the Hebrew figures from the LXX, on the supposition that the LXX is the original, it is very easy to account for the manipulation of original Hebrew figures by the LXX. As Anstey puts it, “In the case of the LXX we have unmistakable evidence of a two-fold motive (1) the lengthening of the Chronology and (2) the graduation of the decline in

¹These figures come from Martin Anstey, *Chronology of the Old Testament* [formerly *The Romance of Bible Chronology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1913] 1973), pp. 73ff.

²*Ibid.*, p. 81.

the duration of human life, in order to make the scheme plausible and palatable to the 'Wisdom of the Greeks.'"³

There is one more problem connected with the LXX, and that is the problem of the name "Cainan" in the LXX chronology of Genesis 11. The problem is that Luke includes this name in his genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3.

The Second Cainan Question

Rehearsing the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Luke states that He was "the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arpachshad, the son of Shem" (Luke 3:35-36). The problem that this verse introduces for us is that this second Cainan – the first lived before the Flood – is not found in the Hebrew Old Testament of Genesis 11. Rather, Genesis 11 states that Shelah was the son of Arpachshad, skipping any "Cainan" altogether.

This is a question for Biblical chronology because if the second Cainan really lived, and was omitted in Genesis 11, then the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 may not be complete at other places as well. Of course, that does not necessarily change the question of chronology, since genealogies and chronologies are not the same thing. For instance, Genesis 5:12 says that the first Cainan (Kenan) lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel. Now, maybe Mahalalel was the first Cainan's grandson and there was another generation in between. It still would be true that the first Cainan "begot" Mahalalel when Cainan was seventy years old. The shortest period between father and son (or grandson) in Genesis 5 is sixty-five years, while Noah was 500 when he "begot" Japheth. Thus, there is plenty of room for generations in between. Even if there are other generations in between some of the names in Genesis 5, the chronology is not affected.

<i>Patriarch</i>	<i>Age at Birth of Son</i>
Adam	130
Seth	105
Enosh	90
Cainan (first)	70
Mahalalel	65
Jared	162
Enoch	65
Methusaleh	187
Lamech	182
Noah	500

The problem is much more acute in the case of Genesis 11, because there is little room for an inserted generation or two between the names.

<i>Patriarch</i>	<i>Age at Birth of Son</i>
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³*Ibid.*, p. 84.

Shem		100
Arpachshad		35
Shelah		30
Eber		34
Peleg		30
Reu		32
Serug	30	
Nahor		29

Now it is just barely possible that Cainan could have lived between Arpachshad and Shelah, if Arpachshad begot Cainan when he was seventeen, and then Arpachshad begot Shelah when he was seventeen. We can squeeze it in, but it is not very credible. It is more likely that Cainan never lived at all.

Did Cainan Ever Live?

If it weren't for the apparent testimony of Luke, the question would be easy to resolve. It was the LXX translators who changed the numbers of the Hebrew Bible, not the other way around, and that they did so apparently in order to make the Jewish national heritage seem as ancient as what the Egyptians were claiming for themselves. Why, however, would they make up a new name and insert him into the list?

Some have suggested that they desired to form a second list of ten patriarchs from the Shem to Terah, corresponding to the list of ten patriarchs from Adam to Noah. If so, they overlooked the fact such a list should start with Noah, not Shem, in which case it already has ten names in it (Noah, Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah). Accordingly, this does not seem a likely explanation. If anything, it would seem to be a signal to the judicious reader from the LXX translators that they had tampered with the text for apologetic reasons, and that a true accounting should be sought elsewhere.

For instance, in Judges 17-18 we read about an apostate Levite who helped set up idolatrous worship in the city of Dan. In Judges 18:30 this man is identified as Jonathan the son of Gershom the son of "Manasseh" (M^NSH) The "N" in the name "Manasseh" is written above the word, however, to indicate that the original word was "Moseh" (MSH), which is the Hebrew for "Moses." In other words, later scribes wrote "Maⁿasseh," after the name of the wicked Israelite King, but left a clear indication that the real name of the person was Moses. The apostate Levite was Moses' grandson.

Similarly, it is entirely possible that the LXX translators, having stretched the chronology in order to answer their Egyptian critics, left clues in the text to indicate to the Jewish reader that their chronology was not to be taken seriously as an historical record. That is another possible explanation for the insertion of "Cainan" into the text, destroying the ten-generation symmetry of the passage, and thereby screaming "foul" to the alert reader.

Significantly, some editions of the LXX also has Methusaleh outliving the Flood, an error that cannot be regarded as accidental. We cannot assume that the LXX

translators left such a glaring error in the text by accident. Rather, it seems logical to take this error as a signal that these figures are not the correct ones.⁴

It is pretty clear that Cainan is indeed a later addition to the text. Not only does the Hebrew not have him, but neither does the Samaritan translation of the Pentateuch, which dates from several centuries before Christ. The Samaritan version also plays games with the chronology, but does not add this new name.

Moreover, in 1 Chronicles 1:18 and 24, most copies of the LXX have the name "Cainan" added, since this section recaps the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. But the Hebrew Bible does not have it, and many copies of the LXX do not have it either.

Josephus omits Cainan in his list of the post-deluvian patriarchs, and by implication so does Philo, for he reckons ten generations before the Flood from Adam to Noah, and ten generations after the Flood from Shem to Abraham, leaving no room for Cainan in the second group. Berosus (c. 284 BC) and Eupolemus (c. 174 BC) represent Abraham as living in the tenth generation after the Flood, which again leaves no room for Cainan. Origen marks the name of Cainan with an obelisk in his copy of the LXX, to mark his rejection of it as not genuine. Other Church Fathers, including Irenaeus, Africanus, Eusebius, and Jerome reject it as an interpolation.

All of this evidence points to the fact that no such person as Cainan the son or Arpachshad ever lived. The name and his years have been stuck into the LXX text for reasons we can only guess at.⁵

Why Was Cainan Added?

We cannot say for sure why Cainan the son of Arpachshad was added to the LXX genealogy of Genesis 11, but there are two things we can say that give us a possibility of when and why.

The first is that the only copies we have of the LXX are fairly late, which means that Cainan might not have been added by the original LXX translators, but have been inserted later on. (This contrasts with the explanation mooted above, which was that perhaps the LXX translators deliberately queered the symmetry of Genesis 11 as a sign to the alert reader.) The evidence that Cainan is a late addition to the LXX comes from the fact that so many of the Church Fathers questioned it. "It seems

⁴Considering how the Jews regarded the sacred text, it may be that the LXX translators would have regarded it as sinful to make a completely accurate translation into a gentile tongue. This may be why they made so many changes throughout their translation, providing the gist of the sacred documents, but not an accurate reproduction of them.

⁵Sources for the preceding discussion: Anstey, pp. 83ff.; and McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1967] 1981), articles on "Cainan" and "Genealogy."

that the intrusion of the name even into the LXX is comparatively modern, since Augustine is the first writer who mentions it as found in the O.T. at all.”⁶

If it was added later, then by whom and why? In the late 19th century, John Gregorie, chaplain of Christ Church, Oxford, investigated this matter in depth, and posthumously his research was published as “The Disproof of the Second Cainan.” Anstey summarizes his argument: “The origin and motive of the insertion of the name of Cainan and his 130 years between Arpachshad and Shelah, is amply explained by the enumeration of the years of the period from Adam to Peleg given in the writings of the Christian Chronologer Theophilus (Bishop of Antioch AD 176-186).

“In his days the leading writers of the Christian Church were dominated with the idea of six millenary ages of the world, which they regarded as equally divided into two periods of 3,000 years each at the 130th year of Peleg's life, when he begot his son Reu, Peleg's name signifying `division.’” It was this late interest in a 6000 year scheme of history that made it necessary to bring the period prior to Reu up to 3000 years in length, and to this end the 130 years of Cainan were inserted in the text.⁷

This suggests, of course, that the second Cainan was not present in the LXX originally, and may not even have been present in the text used by St. Luke. “It is believed by many, however, that the name of this second Cainan was not originally in the text even of Luke, but is an addition of inadvertent transcribers, who, remarking it in some copies of the Septuagint, added it.”⁸

Anstey writes, “It is just possible, of course, that Luke never wrote the word Cainan in Luke 3:36, for it is omitted in the Codex Bezae, the great Cambridge Uncial of the 6th Century, but the weight of traditional authority is in favour of his having taken the word from his copy of the LXX, for it occurs in all the great Uncials except the Codex Bezae D.”⁹ It also seems to be absent from the very early papyrus manuscript p⁷⁵ (early 200s AD).

Another possibility is that Luke inserted the name Cainan, based on traditions unknown to us, and that it was from Luke that it found its way into the LXX.¹⁰

Conclusions?

⁶McClintock and Strong, “Cainan.”

⁷Anstey, pp. 83ff.

⁸McClintock and Strong, “Cainan.”

⁹Anstey, p. 86.

¹⁰This viewpoint is mentioned by Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press [1871] 1976) 1:475. Alford refers to Lord A. Hervey's study of the *Genealogies of Our Lord* as presenting this position.

We cannot formulate any sure conclusions to the problem at this time, but as we conclude this present essay, let me present in summary form the three major possibilities:

1. Cainan really lived between Arpachshad and Shelah, being born when Arpachshad was about seventeen, and begetting Shelah when he was about seventeen. The LXX writers used this tradition in expanding the chronology of Genesis 11. Or, Luke used this tradition in writing Luke 3, and from there the name came into the LXX. Why, though, would so many Church Fathers question the name if it had gospel authority in their eyes?

2. Cainan was added by the LXX translators as part of their expansion of the chronology of the Old Testament, and was possibly intended as one of several pointers to the alert reader not to take their text as definitive. Luke, writing to an audience that included more Gentiles, simply quotes the Bible they knew without worrying about it. Or perhaps Luke does not include Cainan, but a later hand added him in, in order to bring Luke into conformity with the LXX.

3. Cainan was added after the New Testament era by persons trying to fit the Biblical chronology into a millennial scheme, and was consistently added not only to the LXX of Genesis 11, but also to the LXX of Chronicles and the Greek text of Luke 3. Luke did not originally include Cainan in his list. This is the most attractive explanation, and would account for the fact that so many late witnesses (Josephus, Origen, etc.) reject the second Cainan.

a). Some other points can be added under this one, that we have not yet mentioned. The first is that Luke's genealogy is in a mess in at least one other place (v. 33), where there are several different textual variants, some with five names, some with six, and some with seven. Bruce M. Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*¹¹ states regarding verse 33 that "faced with a bewildering variety of reading, the Committee adopted what seems to be the least unsatisfactory form of text,"¹² which entails six names. If Luke's genealogy has been tampered with in one place, it is credible to suggest that it has also been tampered with in verse 36.

b). If we omit Cainan, we have 3 x 7 names from God to Abraham, 2 x 7 from Isaac to David, 3 x 7 from Nathan to Salathiel (pre-exilic), and 3 x 7 from Zerubbabel (post-exilic) to Jesus, making a total of 7 x 11 or 77 generations from God to Jesus. We can keep the 77 generations by retaining Cainan and omitting God, but God clearly belongs in the list as the first progenitor.

c). My conclusion is that originally Luke did not have the name Cainan in his list, and that originally verse 33 had six names in it. At some later date, the name Cainan was added to verse 36 in order to square it with the revised LXX, and so a name had to be dropped out of verse 33 to keep a list of 77 including God, though it put 15 names from God to Abraham and only 13 from Isaac to David, wrecking Luke's numerological theology. This in turn led to several versions of verse 33 floating around, with various numerological schemers adding and subtracting several

¹¹ (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971).

¹² Metzger, p. 136.

names, and also caused the Church Fathers to express reservations about the second Cainan.

Of course, this is only a working hypothesis. The bottom line for our purposes is that none of this changes the chronology of Genesis 11.

The Arpachshad Connection

In our survey of Biblical chronology we now come to two disputed places. We have seen that the Bible provides a chronology from creation to the Flood in Genesis 5, and that contrary to the opinions of some, that chronology is seamless. With the close of the first patriarchal era, however, we come to a break in the chronology. The Bible provides information to cross the break caused by the Flood, but we must compare Scripture with Scripture to figure it out.

The fact of this break is of theological significance, for it separates the pre-Flood patriarchal era from the post-Flood era. A similar break in connection with the birth of Abram separates the second (post-Flood) patriarchal era from the third (Hebrew) patriarchal era. We shall find similar chronological breaks at the time of Moses, David, the Restoration, and Jesus. Each new covenant is marked by a chronological break and a new beginning, though in each case it is possible to figure out the overall chronology from Scriptural data.

The Flood occurred 1656 years after the creation of the world, according to Genesis 5. That means that Noah opened the Ark and came out in year 1657 Anno Mundi (“Year of the World,” AM 1657).

Genesis 5:32 says that “Noah was 500 years old, and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” If we did not know better, we should think that Shem was the eldest, and Japheth the youngest. In fact, however, Genesis 10:21 says that Japheth was the oldest, while Genesis 9:24 says that Ham was the youngest. The reason Shem is listed first is that it is he who will carry the redemptive seed and maintain the patriarchal genealogy and chronology.

Genesis 11:10 says that “Shem was 100 years old, and begat Arpachshad two years after the Flood.” This means that Shem was born when Noah was 502, two years after Japheth was born. This is the standard interpretation, and it assumes that “two years after the Flood” means two years after the year in which the Flood began (Genesis 8:13). This puts the birth of Arpachshad at AM 1658.

The only author I've come across who takes the date as AM 1659 is Alonzo T. Jones, *Analysis of Sacred Chronology*.¹ He assumes that “two years after the Flood” means two years after it ended. This is an unnatural reading of the text, however. We should expect the text to say “two years after the Flood ended,” or “two years after Noah left the Ark” if this interpretation were correct.

The Flood began in the second month of AM 1656, but the waters only prevailed for 150 days and the Ark rested in the seventh month, the beginning of 1657 (Genesis 7:24; 8:4). It began on 2/17/1656 and stopped prevailing over the earth on 7/17/1657. Noah did not come out of the Ark until the second month of 1657, but the Flood was long over by that time: The waters had been receding for months, throughout the first part of 1657, and were dried up by the first day of the first month

¹(Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Pub., 1887).

of 1657 (Genesis 8:13). Thus, the Flood began and rose during 1656, after which it abated, and so “two years after the Flood” must mean two years after AM 1656, which means Arpachshad was born in AM 1658.

This raises an interesting question: Why didn't Noah leave the Ark when the land was dry? Why did God have him wait until the 27th day of the second month (Genesis 8:14ff.)? Possibly in order to make up a full year of 365 days in the Ark. The lunar year of 12 months is 354-55 days, and ten more days makes a solar year.

Practically speaking, the extra 47 days allowed the earth to bring forth vegetation to feed Noah and the animals. Although Noah was told to take food on the Ark (Genesis 6:21), it is hard to believe that he had a whole year's worth for himself and his family (though maybe he did). Given the miraculous character of the Flood Year, and the parallels between the Flood and the Exodus later on, some have suggested that God gave manna to Noah and the animals on the Ark, or that the food was miraculously multiplied for them in the way Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus later multiplied food. The day Israel entered Canaan, the manna stopped (Joshua 5:12). Similarly, I imagine the day Noah left the Ark, his provisions (of whatever sort) were exhausted.

At any rate, the Flood itself did not extend into the second year, so that “two years after the Flood” means two years after AM 1656, or AM 1658.

A Fantastic Interpretation

Oliver Blosser and E. W. Faulstich of the Chronology-History Research Institute maintain that Arpachshad was born in AM 1660, four years after the Flood. Blosser explains: “The Genesis Flood lasted for one year and ten days according to the numeric data related to this Great Deluge written in Genesis 7 and 8. The total time span involved here is three years and ten days. However, since Hebrew reasoning considered a part to be a whole; this timescale would be equal to ‘four years.’”²

Blosser's position is wholly implausible. If we assume that Arpachshad's birth “two years after the Flood” means two years *to the day* after the Flood Year ended (not the actual Flood) ended, we come to the 27th day of the 2d month of AM 1659 (i.e., two years after 2/27/1657). Blosser is asserting that “two years after the Flood” means that both of the years during part of which Noah was in the Ark are counted as full Flood years, and that Arpachshad was born two full years later. In other words, “two years after the Flood” means “two full years after the end of the year in which the Flood ended.” The first year after the end of 1657 would be 1658, and the second would be 1659, and after that, in 1660, Arpachshad was born, so Blosser asserts.

This is a wild distortion of the text.

Blosser is followed in this by Faulstich, who adds another argument to it. Faulstich notices that Genesis 10:22 states that “the sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.” From this he draws the conclusion that Arpachshad

²Blosser, “Historical Reliability of Genesis 1-11, Part 3, *It's About Time* (June, 1968), p. 6.

was Shem's third son. In order to allow time for the births of Elam and Asshur, he adopts Blosser's misreading of Genesis 11:10.³

What shall we say to this? First, if Faulstich is right and Arpachshad is the third son, then perhaps the first two were born before the Flood, but not being adults (Numbers 1:3) were not mentioned by name as being on the Ark. Since women nursed for two or more years in the ancient world, and breastfeeding usually acts to prevent conception, it is very unlikely that Mrs. Shem could have had three children between AM 1656 and 1660. Thus, if Elam and Asshur were older than Arpachshad, they were born before the Flood, and there is no problem with reading Genesis 11:10 in the normal way, that Arpachshad was born two years after the Flood, in AM 1658.

Second, however, it is far more likely that Genesis 10:22 is not listing the sons in birth order, but rather in a chiasm, a literary device in which the central item is the most important, a device in which the Scriptures abound. The central of the five sons is Arpachshad, and it is he through whom the seed line is to be traced. We have already seen that the sons of Noah are not listed in birth order. We shall see that the sons of Terah are not listed in birth order either. In 1 Chronicles 1:28, we read of "the sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael," even though Ishmael was the elder.

Thus, there is no support for Blosser and Faulstich's forced interpretation of Genesis 11:10. It is clear that Arpachshad was born two years after the Flood Year, in AM 1658. Most likely, Elam and Asshur were younger than Arpachshad. If they were older, they were born before the Flood.

³E. W. Faulstich, *The Hidden 'Plan'* (Spencer, IA: Chronology Books, 1988), p. 6.

The Abraham Connection

In chapter 9 we looked at the chronological break that comes at the time of the Flood, and we saw how the Bible crosses that break by telling us that Arpachshad was born two years after the Flood. This time we look at a break that comes with the birth of Abram.

Genesis 11:26 says that Terah lived 70 years and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran. If we did not have other evidence to consider, we might think that Abram was the oldest of the three. Given the literary parallel between Genesis 5 and 11, however, we have to compare this to Genesis 5:32, which says that Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth. In both passages, we have a line of generations of single sons, followed by a generation in which three sons are listed (Adam to Noah, then 3 sons; Shem to Terah, then 3 sons).

We know from Genesis 11:10 that Shem was 100 years old two years after the Flood, which came in Noah's 600th year, so that Shem was obviously not the first-born. He was born when Noah was 602, but as patriarchy-bearer he is listed first. By means of parallelism, we can suggest that of Terah's sons, Haran was the eldest, born when Terah was 70 years old, and Nahor the youngest. Haran died well before the other two sons did (Genesis 12:28). In both lists it appears that the second (seed) son is listed first, then the third son, and last the first son:

	<i>Noah</i>	<i>Terah</i>
Oldest	Japheth	Haran
Middle	Shem	Abram
Youngest	Ham	Nahor

Acts 7:4 tells us that Abram did not leave the city of Haran until Terah had died. Genesis 12:4 says that Abram was 75 at that time. Genesis 11:32 says that Terah died at 205. Thus, Abram was born when Terah was 130.

Chronologers who take this view include Bishop Ussher, Martin Anstey's standard work, *Chronology of the Old Testament* [*The Romance of Bible Chronology*], and Philip Mauro's modification of Anstey, *The Wonders of Bible Chronology*. Commentators on Genesis who agree include John Calvin, Matthew Poole, Matthew Henry, George Bush, Adam Clarke, R. S. Candlish, J. G. Murphy, and recently Allen P. Ross.

Objections

Others disagree. These include Keil and Delitzsch, Payne Smith (in Ellicott's Commentary), H. C. Leupold, Henry Morris, Gordon Wenham, Derek Kidner, and G. Ch. Aalders. Quixotic chronologer E. W. Faulstich also rejects this view.

Some have suggested that Terah was not dead when Abram left Haran, and that Acts 7:4 should be taken spiritually: Terah was dead to Abram. This is the view of Morris and Leupold.

Others want to skip out of the Hebrew text and go to the Samaritan Pentateuch, which says Terah died at 145. This is the explanation of Smith and Kidner. Are we prepared to abandon the Hebrew text and use the Samaritan corruption at other places as well? The cure in this case is worse than the disease!

Another view is that the Hebrew text is correct, with Terah dying at 205, but that Stephen was (wrongly) using the Samaritan figure of 145, or else simply making a wrong deduction from the text. It is claimed that Luke is simply recording Stephen's speech, warts and all, and thus that Stephen's statement should not be used to explain the chronology. This is basically the view of Keil & Delitzsch and Aalders. Since Acts emphasizes repeatedly the Stephen was filled with the Spirit, it is extremely unlikely that his recorded speech contains factual errors (Acts 6:8, 10, 15; 7:55).

Curiously, Wenham, though writing within the Calvinistic tradition, takes no notice of the problem, though Calvinistic writers, beginning with Calvin himself, deal with it at length in their works, mentioned above. Neither he nor Faulstich provide any explanation for Acts 7:4.

Most of these commentators call attention to the fact that in Genesis 17:17, Abraham laughed and said, "Shall a child be born to a man who is 100 years old?" If Abraham had been born when Terah was 130, they ask, why would he have a problem believing in a birth at 100? This won't hold up, however. Years later, Abraham married Keturah and had more sons. Clearly Abram's laughter in Genesis 17:17 is not related to any feeling of impotence, but to the humor in the situation: a childless man finally having a son at the age of 100, after trying for 75 or so years! Even today we see examples of men in the nineties marrying young women and begetting children. Thus, Abram's laughter cannot be related to sexual impotency or infertility on his part. His later marriage to Keturah shows that he had no problem with the idea of having children in his old age. Abraham laughed because he was happy.

One other argument occasionally made is that if Haran was born when Terah was 70, and Abram was born when he was 130, that means 60 years for only three sons. But who says these were all of Terah's children? Abram's wife Sarai was his daughter by another wife (Genesis 20:12). He may have had 20 sons and 20 daughters, by several wives. The Bible mentions the three sons who were important, not all the sons there were.

Theological Arguments

We cannot permit literary parallels and theological analogies to carry the day, but since they are brought to the fore by certain writers, and are present in the text one way or another, we need to take notice of them.

Some schematizers will be tempted by a numerological consideration: If we assume Abram was born when Terah was 70, then the arrival of Abram in Canaan at 75 happens 365 years after the birth of Arpachshad. Neat. But, of course, we wind up destroying the literary parallel between the sons of Terah and the sons of Noah. So, the purely aesthetic considerations cancel each other out. In terms of Biblical calculation based on an inerrant text, we should allow Acts 7:4 to carry the day.

Moreover, in terms of numerological considerations, we can propose an interesting alternative, using the chronology established from Acts 7:4. Abram entered Canaan in AM 2083. We are not told how long he dwelt in Canaan before his descent into Egypt, but I suggest two years. My reason is almost purely aesthetic and theological: it means that Abram's exodus from Egypt happened in the third year, as did his separation from Lot. Often in the Bible a preliminary judgment is rendered on the third day or in the third year, and thus it is reasonable to suggest that the same thing happened here. We do read in Genesis 12:4 that Abram was 75 when he left Haran. He spent a little time at Shechem (v. 6). Then he pitched his tent at Bethel (v. 8), a statement that indicates a somewhat longer sojourn. After a time, he moved into the Negev (v. 9). Then there was a famine in the land. Abram moved into Egypt, was celebrated as a sheik, and received many gifts. Then God struck the Egyptians with plagues. All of this indicates to me a time of about 2-3 years.

Now, what is interesting is that if Abram's exodus from Egypt came in the third year, AM 2086, this is 430 years after the Flood. The 430 years of "bondage" in Egypt begin with Abram's arrival in Canaan, as we shall see, so that there would be a three-year overlap of these two 430-year periods.

If I am correct, then most likely the war of the kings recorded in Genesis 14 happened right after Abram's exodus from Egypt, as did God's making covenant with him in Genesis 15 (which followed the war of Genesis 14 immediately).¹ We notice that in Genesis 15 Abram was commanded to slaughter animals that were 3 years old. The death and resurrection of these animals signifies that from that time forth God would tie Abram to the land. This indicates to me that he had been in the land for 3 years.

But the reader should be aware that my suggestion that Abram's exodus from Egypt happened in the third year of his sojourn in Canaan is somewhat speculative (though I think pretty well grounded in the text and in Biblical theology).

A theological analogy that is important, I think, is the parallel between Abram's exodus from Ur and the exodus of Israel from Egypt. The Israelites left Egypt, but then remained in the wilderness for 40 years, because of unfaithfulness. Specifically, they remained in the wilderness until the older generation had died out (Num. 26:64-65). Parallel to this, Stephen tells us in Acts 7:2-3 that God appeared to Abram in Ur and told him to move to Canaan. Abram and his family got as far as Haran, but then stayed there until the older generation (Terah) had died. Then they moved on into Canaan. This moves against the notion that Abram left Haran before Terah died.

¹Compare the attack of Amalek upon Israel immediately after they left Israel, followed immediately by God's making covenant with them at Sinai (Ex. 15-19).

The Replacement of the Firstborn

Those who simply turn to the Bible for chronology, and ignore context, will naturally assume that Abram was the firstborn of Terah, as they will also assume that Shem was the firstborn of Noah. Indeed, some writers have been very bold to criticize traditional Biblical chronology for “ignoring the obvious” fact that Shem and Abram must be firstborn because they are listed first. These writers assert that the Bible is in error saying that Arpachshad was born two years after the Flood when Shem was 500, because Shem would have been 502. They also assert that Stephen was in error in Acts 7:4.

It is, however, these critics who are in error. Their error is the failure to take into account the theology of the book of Genesis. In fact, in every case where information is provided, we find that the firstborn son is set aside for a second or later son, who carries the covenant line. Thus, when we see Shem and Abram listed first, we should expect that they are *not* firstborn.

Consider the evidence: Cain is set aside for Seth. Ishmael is set aside for Isaac. Esau is set aside for Jacob. Reuben, and then Simeon and Levi, are set aside for Judah; indeed, all the older brothers are set aside for Joseph (Judah and Joseph both being inheritors, the former of the rule and the latter of the double portion).

With this in mind, we can suggest that of the two sons of Eber, Joktan was probably older than Peleg, for Joktan apostatized at the Tower of Babel, while Peleg carried the covenant line. Moreover, we can suggest that of the sons of Shem, Elam was older than Arpachshad, since we anticipate that Arpachshad was at least second-born, and thus the events of Genesis 14 would show the seed of Arpachshad replacing that of Elam (Abram overcoming Chedorlaomer). All of this, of course, points to the need for a Second Adam.

How Did Stephen Arrive at His Reconstruction?

For the believing Christian, the date of Abram's birth is established by Acts 7:4. What was it in the text of the Bible, however, that caused Stephen to state that Abram did not leave Haran until Terah's death? The answer is that this is implied by the order of presentation in Genesis 11 & 12. Genesis 11:31 says that Terah removed his family to Haran. Verse 32 says that Terah died at the age of 205. Genesis 12:1-3 records God's command to Abram. Genesis 12:4-5 says that Abram left Haran. Thus, Stephen could figure that Abram left Haran when Terah died. Of course, it is possible that the summary statement of Terah's life in Genesis 11:32 is not in chronological order, and should not be taken as indicating that he died before Abram left Haran; but rather clearly Stephen took it that way.

Possibly also Stephen assumed, as have all Jewish commentators as far back as we know (including Josephus), that Iscah was Sarai's name (Genesis 11:29). The name “Sarai” means “My Princess,” and evidently is a name Abram called her, in which case Iscah would be her original and personal name. The argument for this interpretation is (a) nothing else is ever said about this Iscah, so why was she mentioned in the first place, unless she is Sarai?; and (b) there could easily be a chiasm in verse 29:b, to wit:

The name of Abram's wife was Sarai
 And the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah
 The daughter of Haran
 The father of Milcah
 And Iscah.

Calvin, who takes this interpretation, argues that since Abram married his niece, clearly Haran was much older than Abram. Haran, thus, is firstborn, and much older than both Abram and Nahor, who each married a daughter of Haran.

On this interpretation, when Abram tells Abimelech that Sarah is “my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother” (Genesis 20:12), this is simply the looser way Hebrew uses these terms, for in fact Sarah was Terah's granddaughter. In terms of this interpretation, we have an explanation for the gap in ages between Haran and Abram & Nahor: Haran's mother was Terah's first wife, while Abram & Nahor were sons of a later wife.

We have another problem, however, which is that Stephen takes Genesis 12:1-3 as God's speech to Abram in Ur, before he went to Haran! Thus, Stephen dischronologizes Genesis 12:1-3 from its place in the text of Genesis. On what basis does he do this? I suggest that he does so partially on the basis of Genesis 15:7, where God says to Abram, “I am Yahweh, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to inherit it.” Previously, we have only read in Genesis 11:31 that “Terah took Abram his son . . . and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans.” From this statement, it appears that Terah made the decision to leave Ur and Abram went along. Now in Genesis 15:7, Yahweh says that He brought Abram out of Ur. Of course, again, this might simply refer to God's providence. It seems, though, that Stephen takes it as indicating that God spoke to Abram in Ur.

Another line of evidence that God spoke to Abram in Ur is provided by comparing 11:28 with 12:1. Ur is said to be the country (land) of Haran's birth. Evidently it was also the country (land) of Abram's birth, because Terah and Abram moved from there to Haran. Thus, Ur would be the “your country (land)” in 12:1. Haran was not Abram's country (land); Ur was. Thus, when God says, “Go, go forth from your country (land),” it appears that this was said while Abram was still living in Ur.

Conclusion

The Flood occurred in AM 1656. Two years later, Shem begat Arpachshad, in 1658. The genealogy of Genesis 11 brings us down to the birth of Terah in 1878. There can be little question but that Abraham was born when Terah was 130, which puts the birth of Abram in AM 2008.

The Moses Connection

We can trace the chronology of the patriarchs up to the death of Joseph at age 110. It brings us to the year AM 2369. (Details can be found at the end of this chapter.) At that point, however, we have a break in the chronology, which takes up again with Moses' birth 80 years before the Exodus. Here again, a new covenant means a renewed chronology, another “year zero.”

The Scriptures provide a bridge over this break in Exodus 12:40-41, which states that “the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was 430 years. And it came to pass at the end of the 430 years – on that very same day – it came to pass that all the armies of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt.”

An isolated reading of this verse suggests that from the time Jacob and his sons moved into Egypt (AM 2298) to the exodus was 430 years (AM 2728). A careful reading of Genesis, however, will make this interpretation difficult. First of all, God told Abraham in Genesis 15:13, “Know certainly that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them 400 years.” As we shall see, it matters where you put the commas in this verse. For now, however, we have 400 years of affliction. If we assume that this has to be affliction in the land of Egypt, it must begin when there arose a Pharaoh who did not acknowledge Joseph (Exodus 1:8). This adds about a century more to the chronology, and completely breaks it. In other words, if the 430 years begins with Jacob's descent into Egypt, but the 400 years of affliction don't begin until the anti-Hebrew Pharaoh took over, then we have a contradiction because Joseph ruled in Egypt for 70 years after Jacob's descent. If we add 400 years of affliction, that makes a total of 470 years in Egypt, which casts serious doubt on this interpretive approach.

Moreover, Exodus 1 indicates that Moses was born not too long after the affliction began, which was 80 years before the exodus. Thus, Exodus 1 intimates that the post-Joseph affliction only lasted about a century in all.

Maybe, then, being strangers is what lasts 400 years, and not the actual affliction. We can punctuate Genesis 15:13, “Know certainly that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs – and will serve them, and they will afflict them – 400 years.” The Hebrew punctuation of this verse sets the 400 years off from all the preceding clauses, which goes better with the punctuation we have given in English.

This can fit with a 430 year sojourn in Egypt, but then the question is this: Why didn't God say to Abraham that it would be 430 years? Some have said that 400 is just a round number, and thus equal to 430. This is straining at a gnat. If we are committed to grammatico-historical exegesis, we should make a better effort. It is not likely that 400 is a round number for 430.

Strangers in the Land

Now we move to another consideration. In point of fact, after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham moved his family out of the land of promise into the

land of the Philistines, which was not part of the promised land (Genesis 15:18-21). The first thing that happened to him there was that he was attacked by Abimelech, though peace eventually ensued (Genesis 20). Isaac was born right after this. Abraham dwelt in Philistia for many years (Genesis 21:34). Isaac later had repeated troubles with the Philistines (Genesis 26). Both Abraham and Isaac dwelt around Beersheba, which at that time was part of Philistine territory, and thus not part of Canaan (Genesis 22:19; 26:23; 28:10). After living 77 years in Philistia, Jacob spent 20 more years outside Canaan in Mesopotamia. Jacob returned and lived in Canaan, where his daughter was raped and his sons committed sacrilege (Genesis 34). After 33 years, Jacob moved to Goshen. Thus, God's statement to Abraham that his seed would be strangers in an alien land began to be fulfilled at the time the seed (Isaac) was born. Only for very brief periods of time did any of the patriarchs camp in the lands promised in Genesis 15.

(Later on, these Philistines no longer held Beersheba and its territories, and those areas were taken over by Canaanites. Thus, when Israel conquered the land and took over the lands of the peoples listed in Genesis 15:18-21, they took these areas also. We see from this that the boundaries of the land were not geographical but social. God granted to Israel the lands possessed by the tribes mentioned in Genesis 15, wherever they might be dwelling between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates. God did not grant to Israel *all* the land between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates, as we see from the fact that Israel was forbidden to conquer Moab, Ammon, and Edom.)

If this is true, it puts the beginning of the 400 years back in the time of Isaac. If we assume that the 430 years begins when Jacob descends into Egypt, then the 400 years overlaps the first part of the 430 years, for a total of 605 years. That is remotely possible, but it seems unlikely.

In fact, Hebrews 11:9 says that Abram “lived as an alien in the land of promise, *as in a strange land*.” In other words, the sojourning begins when Abram moved into Canaan. This is a much more likely beginning point for the 430 years of sojourning.

Sojourning in Egypt

Now we move to a third consideration. Genesis 10:13-14 states that “Mizraim [Egypt] begat Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim).” In other words, the Philistines are Egyptians. Scholars debate who the Philistines were, and whether there were more than one branch, and when and how they came to Palestine, etc. For interpretive purposes, however, the book of Genesis states that the Philistines are to be regarded as a sub-group of the Egyptians. Wherever they came from, by whatever route, they were descended from the Egyptians and are regarded as Egyptians.

This is important for Old Testament theology. It means, for instance, that when Saul and David had to defeat Philistia in order to set up the Kingdom, this is parallel to God's defeat of Egypt in order to set up the Hebrew Republic under the Judges. It also means that when Abraham moved into Philistine territory after the destruction of Sodom defiled the land, he was moving into Egyptian territory.

In fact, everything indicates that Egypt exercised hegemony over the promised land from the time Abraham arrived there. The first thing that happened after Abraham's arrival was a famine, and Abraham went to Egypt (Genesis 12). Thus, 430 years of sojourning started when Abram moved to Canaan, out of the shadow of the Mesopotamian kingdoms, and this was also the beginning of 430 years of sojourning under Egypt's shadow. The 400 years of affliction for the *seed* began right after the birth of Isaac.

Only Four Generations in Egypt

Yet another consideration is found in Exodus 6, which provides only four generations from Levi to Moses, and states that Moses' mother was a daughter of Levi. This does not mean granddaughter or extended daughter, as we see from Numbers 26:59, "And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram: Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam." This clinches it completely.¹ There is no time for 430 years here, and the year-figures in Exodus 6:16, 18, 20 can only fit a 215-year Egyptian sojourn.

¹For a more detailed discussion of this verse, see James B. Jordan, *Harold Camping on Genesis 5 and 11*. Studies in Biblical Chronology No. 4 (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 2001).

Here is a plausible reconstruction:

- c. 2256 Birth of Levi (Jacob's third son)
- c. 2286 Birth of Kohath (Levi is 30)
- AM 2298 Descent into Egypt
- c. 2350 Births of Amram (Kohath is 64) and Jochebed (Levi is 94)
- c. 2393 Death of Levi at 137.
- c. 2419 Death of Kohath at 133.
- AM 2433 Birth of Moses (Amram and Jochebed are 83)
- c. 2487 Death of Amram at 137
- AM 2513 Exodus

We can play with these approximations, but several things emerge from this. First, the Hebrews lived long lives in Egypt. Second, they were fruitful for many of their years, and must have had lots of children. Exodus 1 stresses this repeatedly, but when we consider their long lives, we can see that a couple might easily have 30 children each! (We shall consider population statistics below.) The most important thing that emerges from this, for our purposes, is proof positive that the Egyptian sojourn could not have been 430 years. In fact, the traditional figure of 215 years is really the outside limit.

Along these same lines, we see that God told Abraham, “Then in the fourth generation they shall return here” (Genesis 15:16). Some expositors want to equate the four generations with the 400 years, as if each generation were a century. This is absurd. Generations are people, not centuries, regardless of their length. Exodus 6 clearly indicates the fulfillment of this promise, using the family of Levi and Moses as base line. Here again we see evidence that there is a distinction within the 400 years of Genesis 15. The “fourth generation” is clearly not the fourth generation from Abraham. It has to be the fourth generation backwards from the exodus, which according to Exodus 6 is the generation that went into Goshen.

(Of course, other genealogies would have had more than four generations during this period. If we start with the proposed date of Kohath's birth, AM 2286, who was the second generation, and go with simple 30-year generations, we find the ninth generation born in AM 2496, which is still 17 years before the exodus. Thus, God's prophecy to Abraham about the fourth generation had a specific fulfillment in mind, and Exodus 6 gives that fulfillment. This is important to the theology of Exodus 6, which stresses the fact that the God who will deliver Israel from Egypt is the God who made promises to the fathers, and who keeps His promises. After all these years, and many generations, the Hebrews were wondering about this “fourth generation” promise. The genealogy of Moses and Aaron proves that God had kept His word.)

Now all of these factors destroy the “naive” (i.e., seemingly obvious) reading of Exodus 12:40. That verse can be read in any of three ways: (a) that the Israelites lived in Goshen for 430 years; (b) that the sojourn of the Israelites – who lived in Egypt – totalled 430 years; or (c) that the Jews lived under Egyptian domination for 430 years. From what we have seen, (b) and (c) are major possibilities, while (a) is simply impossible.

The Children of Israel

But: Exodus 12:40 says that “the time that the *sons of Israel* lived in Egypt was 430 years.” Surely, Abraham and Isaac were not sons of Israel! Don't we have to assume that this figure begins with Jacob's descent, with his sons, to Goshen?

No, because the expression “sons of Israel” does in fact include Abraham and Isaac and Jacob himself. It is a technical term for the Hebrew covenant line from Abraham forward. I have discussed in my book *Through New Eyes* how each successive covenant in the Old Testament provides a new name for God and a new name for His people.² The name for God's people before the Flood was “sons of God.” The name in the patriarchal era was “Hebrew.” The name in the Mosaic era was “Sons of Israel; Israelite.” The name in the Restoration era was “Jew” (lit. “Judahite”). The name in the New Covenant is “Christian.”

The Hebrews narrow down from Eber to Jacob/Israel. Of the two sons of Eber only Peleg carries the line. Of the three sons of Terah only Abram carries the line. Of the eight sons of Abram only Isaac carries the line. Of the two sons of Isaac only Jacob carries the line. But from Jacob forward there is no longer any filtering out. All the sons of Israel are in the priestly nation. Thus, the name “Israelite” or “children of Israel” is synonymous with “True Hebrew.”

Accordingly, the Mosaic name for God's circumcised people was “sons of Israel,” but this is a technical term, and embraces all from Abraham forward. If this explanation seems a bit strained (and it is not strained at all, I submit), remember that Exodus 6 and Numbers 26 firmly establish that the 430 years cannot begin with the descent into Goshen. This unalterable fact forces us to see the expression “sons of Israel” in Exodus 12:40 as a technical term.

²James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Pub., [1988] 1999).

New Testament Evidence

This entire question seems to be settled by Paul in Galatians 3. Paul quotes Genesis 12:3, the first statement of God's covenant with Abraham, and then says, "the law, which was 430 years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed by God in Christ" (Galatians 3:17). Paul seems quite clear: The exodus happened 430 years after Abram arrived in Canaan at the age of 75.

There are objections to this interpretation also, however. My commentaries on Galatians are split about 50/50 on this, with the older ones preferring the interpretation that we have given, and newer ones expressing either confusion or else advocating alternative views. One alternate view is that Paul is simply saying that there were 430 years before the giving of the law, without saying how many more years there were between Genesis 12 and the giving of the law (on this view the total is 645 years).

Another alternative view is that Galatians 3:17 says that there were 430 years between the time the covenant was *confirmed* and the giving of the law. God confirmed the covenant the last time with Jacob at Bethel in Genesis 35. This was about 30 years before Jacob's descent into Egypt. Thus, it is argued, Paul's 430 years begin in Genesis 35, while the 400 years of Genesis 15 begin when Jacob goes into Egypt. This leaves Exodus 12:40 unaccounted for, however, since this verse says that the Israelites sojourned for 430 years. Jacob does not begin "sojourning" anywhere in Genesis 35. Moreover, the Greek of Galatians 3:17 cannot be pressed to mean confirm in the sense of re-ratify, so as to exclude Genesis 12, especially since Paul quotes Genesis 12 right in the passage.

These interpretations are not impossible if we consider Galatians by itself, but as we have seen, the evidence of Genesis and Exodus is all against such hypotheses, and the clear genealogical statements of Exodus 6 and Numbers 26 make it impossible. The only possible interpretation of the 430 years is the traditional one, which begins the period in Genesis 12, with 215 years of sojourning in or around the promised land, and 215 years in Goshen.

The Commentators

As we have found already, the older commentators are more conscious of the details of chronology than are most of the more recent ones. Calvin, for instance, goes to considerable length to make a case that the 430 years begin with Abraham, not with Jacob. Matthew Poole also discusses the matter in detail, insisting again that the period begins with Abraham, and he is followed in this by Matthew Henry. George Bush and J. G. Murphy agree. Older commentators on Galatians also take the traditional view, such as Alford, Ellicott, and Eadie. Modern evangelical commentaries on Exodus and Galatians usually side-step the question. A few go with the traditional view (presented here), and others say that the Jews lived in Goshen 430 years.

(A word to the wise: Older commentators are much more likely to interpret Scripture by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Modern evangelical commentators tend to interpret without reference to other passages. Thus, modern interpreters tend to ignore Galatians when interpreting Exodus, for instance, and to downplay genea-

logical and chronological statements in the text. Modern evangelical interpreters also, it is clear, do not read older works, because often they do not interact with traditional interpretations at all.)

The Population Question

Those advocating a long oppression, and a stay of 430 years in Goshen, often do so on the basis of population. It is impossible, they say, for 70 people to become 2,000,000 in only 215 years. This is wrong on two counts. First, although only 70 of Jacob's immediate family went down into Egypt (Exodus 1), their servants went along as well. Abraham had 318 trained fighting men in his sheikdom. Estimates range up to 3000 or more for his complete household. These servants multiplied and became those of Isaac and Jacob. It might have been 10,000 people who moved to Goshen.

Ten thousand people may mean 5000 males. If each man had five sons, the next generation would be 25,000. If each son had five sons, the third generation would be 125,000. If each son had five sons, the fourth (exodus) generation would be 625,000, which is roughly the number of males that exited Egypt (625,550; Num. 1:46; 3:39). But that fourth generation was Moses' age, who was 80 at the time of the exodus. Thus, there is room for a fifth, which would be 3,125,000, plus their 625,000 fathers, for a total of 3,650,000 males. Obviously, the population could easily have increased that much in 215 years.

Let's assume that there were 1000 males who went to Goshen. Assume five sons for each mail. Second generation is 5000, third is 25,000, fourth is 125,000, and fifth is 625,000. It still works just fine. And remember, the "four generations" are very stretched out. There were actually more generations in most lines.

But let's assume that only Jacob's immediate family went down to Egypt. J. B. Murphy writes, "As the average of seven generations from Arpachshad to Nahor was 31 years, when men lived from 348 to 148 years, we may safely assume 30 years as a generation, and, therefore, seven generations in 210 years. As Abraham had six sons by Keturah, and Jacob six by Leah, we may also suppose each parent to have four sons on an average, when the divine blessing of fruitfulness was promised (Genesis 35:11), and actually bestowed in Egypt (Exodus 1:7). With 68 males for the first term, 8 for the number of terms, and 4 for the common ratio, the last term, or the number of males at the exodus, would be 1,114,112. This is considerably above the actual number, and therefore allows for a smaller number of generations in particular lines, as that of Moses. With a special promise of fruitfulness, and an exceedingly fertile soil [Goshen], this cannot be regarded as either an impossible or improbable increase."³

Gary North has discussed this question in detail in his book *Moses and Pharaoh*.⁴ North argues conservatively that in terms of biological reproduction we

³J. B. Murphy, *Commentary on Exodus* (Minneapolis: James Pub. [1868] 1976), pp. 131-32.

⁴(Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1985), chap. 1.

can get close, but not close enough, to the 2,000,000 figure. North argues further, however, that there were many circumcised converts that joined the Hebrews, especially in the early years of the sojourn when Joseph was popular. Elsewhere I have argued that Genesis 41-50 consistently presents a picture of a converted Egypt.⁵ Thus, based on Genesis 41-50, I think North has got it right.

Chronological Summary

Jacob went down into Egypt at age 130 (Genesis 47:9). Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (Genesis 25:26). Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born (Genesis 25:1). This comes to 290 years. Subtract 75 years for the age of Abram when the covenant of Genesis 12 was made, and we get 215 years. This means there were 215 years of sojourning in and around Canaan, and 215 years of sojourning and oppression in Goshen and Egypt.

The 400 years of Genesis 15 began when Isaac was five years old. This is approximately the time when Isaac was weaned, and when Ishmael was seen laughing by Sarah and was cast out. Ishmael's mother was an Egyptian, as the text is careful to point out in this context (Genesis 21:9). While there was no direct oppression involved in Ishmael's simple laughter, yet when we remember that the name Isaac means "he laughs," we can understand Sarah's fear that Ishmael would be a counterfeit Isaac. Paul in Galatians 4:29 says that this laughter constituted "persecution," in the sense that it detracted from Isaac's place as heir. Thus, Paul identifies the beginning of the 400 year oppression with the weaning of Isaac.

What about the sojourn in Goshen? Joseph lived to be 110 (Genesis 50:26). Joseph was 39 when Jacob arrived in Goshen at age 130 (Genesis 45:6). This means that Joseph protected the Israelites in Goshen for about 71 years. Moses was born 80 years before the exodus. That accounts for 151 of the 215 years, and means that between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses was 64 years. Sometime during that period, let's say at the center, the oppression began.

AM 2008	Birth of Abraham
AM 2083	Genesis 12 covenant, Abraham 75, beginning of 430 years
AM 2094	Birth of Ishmael, Abraham 86
AM 2108	Birth of Isaac, Abraham 100
AM 2113	Weaning of Isaac, beginning of 400 years
AM 2168	Births of Jacob and Esau
AM 2276	Joseph sold into Egypt, age 17
AM 2289	Joseph becomes viceroy of Egypt, age 30
AM 2298	Jacob moves to Egypt, age 130
AM 2369	Death of Joseph, age 110
c. 2401	Oppression begins
AM 2433	Birth of Moses

⁵James B. Jordan, *Primeval Saints* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001).

AM 2513 Exodus

Summary

We have found a clear and fixed chronology from creation to the exodus. The proof positive for the period of the sojourn in Egypt's being only 215 years is Numbers 26:59, which states unequivocally that Levi was Moses' grandfather.

The Era of the Judges and the Reign of Saul

As we have seen, there is a chronological break each time a new covenant is made, which enables the new covenant to begin with a new “year zero” in a sense. The end of the period of Judges leads to a chronological break, because even though Judges gives a lot of chronological information, there is no way to link the chronology of Judges with that of Samuel directly. The book of Samuel provides chronological details concerning Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David, but does not link these with any of the people in Judges.

The statement that carries us over the break is in 1 Kings 6:1, “Now it came about in the 480th year after the sons of Israel came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh.” The foundations of the Temple were laid 480 years after the Tabernacle was built.

During this era there were three phases: the wilderness wanderings and conquest, the era of the Judges, and the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon (4 years).

The Judges Problem

If we add up the years of judgeships and oppressions in the book of Judges, we come up with far too many years. The simple solution to this problem is to recognize that the judges were somewhat local, and that their periods of office overlapped. Judges 10:7, for instance, indicates rather clearly that the Philistine oppression in the south and the Ammonite oppression in the east commenced at the same time. In the east there were 18 years of oppression, followed by Jephthah (6 years), Ibzan (7 years), Elon (10 years), and Abdon (8 years), for a total of 49 years. In the south there were 20 years of oppression, followed by Samson (20 years), for a total of 40 years.

The Philistine oppression lasted 40 years (Judges 13:1). Samson was born about this time. Samson judged for 20 years, and in his death he killed all five Philistine kings as well as a large number of the Philistine nobility and priesthood (Judges 15:20; 16:27). In the light of Numbers 1:3, it is unlikely if not impossible for Samson to have begun judging before he was 20. Thus, his 40 years seem to be the same as those of the Philistine oppression.

Meanwhile, Samuel was growing up. Samuel had become a young prophet by the Israelites tried to throw off the Philistine yoke (1 Samuel 4; the battle of Aphek), at which time the Ark was captured and the Philistine oppression worsened. 1 Samuel 7:2-3 says that this oppression lasted 20 years, at the end of which Samuel led the people in an overthrow of the Philistines at Mizpah (1 Samuel 7:13).

Now we have a coherent picture. Samson began his guerilla campaign against the Philistines right after the Ark was taken captive, and thus kept the Philistines at bay after Israel's defeat at Aphek. Immediately after Samson destroyed the Philistine leadership, while the Philistines were in confusion, Samuel led Israel in victory over them and the Philistine yoke was broken.

An additional fact arises from Judges 11. Jephthah defeated the Ammonites 18 years after the Ammonite/Philistine oppression began. This was two years before the battle of Aphek and the death of Eli (1 Samuel 4). Before the battle, Jephthah vowed that the first person to come out of the doors of his house to greet him would be sent up as an Ascension and belong to Yahweh (Jud. 11:31). This person proved to be his daughter. Jephthah was grieved because he had hoped to establish a dynasty, and she was his only child. Now she was to be given to Yahweh to serve Him in His palace as part of His dynasty. Thus, after two months, Jephthah's daughter moved to the sanctuary at Shiloh, where she conducted a ministry among the daughters of Israel, who came to visit her for a four-day Bible conference annually (Jud. 11:40).

Since Jephthah's daughter was consigned to perpetual virginity, it is doubtful that she was among the women abused by the sons of Eli (1 Sam. 2:22). What is clear, however, is that her ministry to the women of Israel coincided with the ministries of Samson and Samuel in building up the nation to defeat the Philistines. Jephthah's daughter, thus, was a new Deborah, helping raise up a generation of warriors. In this way, she was a “bride” for Yahweh and a “mother” to Israel, serving Yahweh's dynasty.

All of this shows us that Jephthah, Samson, Samuel, and Jephthah's daughter were contemporaries, though Jephthah was older, since he had a marriageable daughter 18 years after the joint Philistine and Ammonite oppression began, at which time Samson was 18 years old. It is likely that just as Samson and Samuel were born about the same year, so was Jephthah's daughter.

Sadly, a number of good chronological studies are marred by another approach to the problem. This approach says that the 480 years are “spiritual” years, years when Israel ruled the land. The gist of the approach is to add up all the years of all the judges and oppressions consecutively, and then subtract all the “carnal” years of oppressions, in such a way as to come out with 480 years. The actual length of the period, according to this approach, can be as high as 614 years. In order to make the years come out properly, those who follow this approach do some judicious juggling, and Anstey, for instance, comes up with 594 years. It is not my purpose here to refute this approach, since we have already discussed it in the first in this series of studies.¹

There are some other problems and questions concerning the chronology of the period of the Judges, however.

The Acts 13:18-20 Problem

In the Authorized Version (King James Version) we read, “And about the time of 40 years suffered He their manners in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave judges about the space of 450 years, until Samuel the prophet” (Acts 13:18-20).

¹James B. Jordan, *The Theology of Biblical Chronology*. Studies in Biblical Chronology No. 1 (Niceville, FL: Biblical Horizons, 2001).

Paul is speaking here, and as it reads we have him saying that the period from the conquest to Samuel was 450 years. If we add 47 years for wilderness and conquest, we are already at 497 years, and we have not yet added in an unknown number of years for Samuel, 40 for Saul (Acts 13:21), 40 for David, and 4 for Solomon!

One possible resolution of the problem is that Paul was wrong, and Luke simply records his sermon, warts and all. This is very unlikely, an interpretation of last resort!

The proper resolution takes notice of the fact that there is more than one reading for these texts. We have from the early centuries of the Church many manuscripts of the New Testament, and sadly they do not all agree with each other on every point. This necessitates a task called “lower criticism,” which is the study of these various texts to try and determine which reading is correct, or most likely, at a given point of conflict. Happily there are not very many such places, and no doctrine of the faith is in question.

My own opinion regarding this task of lower criticism is that we should use as our base and starting point the text of the New Testament that God has preserved in the life of the Church and given to us, but be open to new evidence from the unearthing of other ancient copies of the text. The Received Text, from which the Authorized Version was made, is clearly corrupt in some places (a whole section of Revelation is missing, for instance, and has to be supplied from the Latin Vulgate), and so we are forced to pay attention to the other texts.

The New American Standard Bible uses a different text (Alexandrian) at this point: “And for about a period of 40 years He put up with them in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance – about 450 years. And after these things [after the 450 years] He gave judges until Samuel the prophet.” According to this reading, the 450 years comes before the era of the judges. It is very easy to interpret the verse read this way, to wit:

AM 2113	Weaning of Isaac, beginning of 400 years of Gen. 15:13.
AM 2513	Exodus
AM 2553	End of 40 years in wilderness
AM 2560	End of Conquest (Josh. 14:7, 10; Num. 10:11-12; 13:17-20)

This is a total of 447 years, or “about 450 years.”

Now, which reading is correct? Bruce M. Metzger's *Textual Commentary on the New Testament*,² indicates that on the basis of sheer textual evidence we can go either way. On the basis of grammar, and also on the basis of comparing this verse to the clear statement of 1 Kings 6:1 (which Paul certainly knew!), there can be little doubt but that the Alexandrian-type reading is correct: that the 450 years extends from Isaac to Joshua.

One evidence of this is the fact that “40 years” occurs twice in this passage, both times in the accusative case, indicating duration of time (Acts 13:18, 21), while

² (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971).

the expression “450 years” is not in the accusative case. A. T. Robertson, in his *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*³, provides two ways of looking at the “450 years.” The first is that the phrase is in the locative case, indicating a block of time considered as a whole. The second is that the phrase is in the “instrumental dative” case, indicating “the time by the lapse of which anything is brought about” (pp. 523, 527). Both the Received-type and the Alexandrian-type texts have the phrase “450 years” in the locative or dative case.

Let me provide a paraphrase of Acts 13:17-20 that brings out the full sense of the numbers involved: “The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and He made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it, and for about a period of 40 years duration He put up with them in the wilderness, and when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance. It took about 450 years to bring this about. [Or: This is a period of 450 years.] And after these things [everything in the preceding sentence] He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.”

Now, if we try to put the locative or instrumental dative sense of the “450 years” into the Received Text (the Authorized Version), we wind up with something that is strange and not very coherent. Compare these three readings and see which makes sense:

“And after these things – it took about 450 years to bring this about: He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet” (dative).

“And after these things – a block of about 450 years – He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet” (locative).

“And after these things – for about 450 years' duration – He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet” (accusative).

It certainly seems that the accusative is what Paul would have used if he had been talking about the period of the judges. Compare verse 18: “for about a period of 40 years' duration He put up with them in the wilderness.” Now verse 21: “And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for 40 years' duration.” In context, you see, Paul has been using accusatives of duration, and that is what he would have used in verse 20 if the Received Text were correct.

But it is not in the accusative in the Received Text. It is in the locative or dative, which makes much less sense. If we take it in the dative sense, Paul would be saying “after these things – it took about 450 years to bring about: He gave them judges until Samuel.” This is a strange circumlocution to use, especially since the accusative was available and much clearer.

If we take the locative sense, Paul would be saying “after these things – for a block of about 450 years – He gave them judges until Samuel.” Again this is a strange way to speak. Why not just use the accusative case and say, “after these things – for about 450 years – He gave them judges until Samuel”?

³ (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934).

The conclusion is that the Received Text reading, preserved in the Authorized Version and the New King James Version, is highly ungrammatical. It does not make much sense. As it stands in context it should be an accusative (duration of time). Instead it is a locative (point of time), or an instrumental dative (culmination of time).

On the other hand, in the Alexandrian-type textual tradition, the grammar is perfectly clear. Paul uses a locative or dative at the end of a long sentence (vv. 17-19) to indicate the entire block of time he has been summarizing; or to indicate the culmination of that period of time.

These considerations make it virtually certain that the King James is in error at this point. The 450 years begin with Isaac and end with Joshua. At some point, a scribe miscopied these two phrases (“450 years” and “after these things”) and switched them.

For the sake of completeness, let me mention the approach of the older commentators. Before the rise of modern archaeology, and the discovery of the Alexandrian-type texts, exegetes had no choice concerning Acts 13:20. In spite of the strange grammar, they had to find a way to associate the 450 years with the period of the Judges. Commentators like Matthew Poole and Matthew Henry proposed that the 450 years began with the exodus and ended with the first year of David's reign over all Israel, when he drove out the Jebusites (2 Sam. 5:4-7). David reigned 33 years as king over all Israel. We add 4 years of Solomon to the Temple. Subtract this 37 years from the total 480, and we get 443 years, which is “about 450 years.”

This interpretation was the best they could do, but it fudges the text. The 40 years in the wilderness (under Judge Moses) have already been taken into account in Acts 13:18, and David's conquest of Jerusalem came several years after Samuel the Prophet (Acts 13:20). We can admire the effort of the older interpreters to deal with this problem, but happily a better solution is now available to the Church.

Acts 13:21 and the Chronology of the Judges

The Exodus took place in 2513. The next year (2514), the spies searched out Canaan and brought back a bad report (Num. 10:11-12; 13:17-20). At this time, Caleb was 40 years old (Josh. 14:7). According to Joshua 14:1 & 10, Caleb was 85 when the conquest of the land came to an end. This would be, then, the year AM 2559. This means that the War of Conquest lasted 6 years, and the land was (sabbatically) divided in the 7th year, AM 2560.

There is no direct chronological link between the Conquest and the time of the Judges. We are told that Israel was faithful all the days of Joshua, who died at the age of 110 but in what year we do not know, and that Israel was also faithful all the years of the elders who outlived Joshua (Josh. 24:29-31). Then Israel sinned and came under the yoke of Cushan-Rishathaim for 8 years (Jud. 3:8).

At this point we have a jig-saw puzzle of data to put together. A clue is found in Acts 13:21, where Paul states that Saul reigned 40 years, saying, “And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for 40 years.” Our question is: How did Paul know this?

One answer is that Paul was simply wrong, and his speech is here recorded “warts and all.” This would be an interpretation born of desperation. Another answer

is that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to know something nowhere found in the Bible. Yet another answer is that Paul had access to records that, while not inspired, were accurate.

The best answer, however, if we can find it, is that Paul figured out Saul's reign from data found in the Bible itself. Our project is to see if we can recover Paul's reasoning (or the reasoning of whoever first figured this out).

The solution requires a careful consideration of Judges 11:26, where Jephthah states to the king of Ammon: "While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why did not you recover them within that time?" There are two points to consider here. First, since Ammon had indeed "recovered" this villages 18 years earlier, it seems reasonable that the 300 years ends not at the time of Jephthah's letter, as is often maintained, but at the time Ammon took the villages. Second, while the Trans-Jordanian tribes conquered this area in 2553, they did not settle in them until all the other tribes had been given their lands. Thus, the beginning of the 300 years would be in 2560.

With 300 of the 480 years accounted for already, we need only account for the rest. We add 40 years for the wilderness wanderings and 7 for the conquest and settlement, to reach 347. We add 4 years to the fourth year of Solomon, and 40 for David's reign, to reach 391. Now we add 18 years of Ammonite oppression, 6 years of Jephthah's judgeship, 7 years of Ibzan's judgeship, 10 years of Elon's judgeship, and 8 years of Abdon's judgeship (total 49 years) to reach 440. That leaves 40 years. If we assume Saul became king the year after Abdon's judgeship ended, and that this was the crisis that provoked the demand for a king, we have 40 years for Saul's reign. This, then, is most likely how Paul (or whoever first figured this out) calculated.

The Rest of the Chronology of the Judges

Now, if we count backwards all the judges preceding Jephthah, we find that it takes us right back to the year 2560. In that year, Israel went home to their settlements. But in that year also, if this scheme is correct, Joshua died, the elders who succeeded him and kept Israel sound also died, Israel fell into sin, and Cushan-Rishathaim conquered Israel and began 8 years of oppression. This is a very unlikely scenario.

The key to interpreting the chronological data in Judges is to recognize that while one sequence of events took place in the North, another took place in central Israel, and another in the South. Sometimes we are told that an oppression followed directly after the death of a particular judge, but sometimes we are not told this. The core history and chronology of Judges tracks the events in the Center, around the tribe of Ephraim. The book of Samuel shifts attention to events in the South, around the tribe of Judah.

We are told that Jabin's oppression (in the North) came after the death of Ehud, and that during this time Shamgar fought Philistines in the south (Jud. 3:31; 4:1). Thus, the sequence of Eglon's 18-year oppression, Ehud's 80-year peace, Jabin's 20-year oppression, and Barak's 40-year peace *seem* to go together (Jud. 3:14, 30; 4:1; 5:31).

But there is a problem with this sequence. Judges 3:30 says that after Ehud defeated Eglon, the land had peace for 80 years. It does *not* say that Ehud lived this whole period of time. Judges 4:1 says that after Ehud *died*, Israel sinned and a new oppression began under Jabin. Now, the Jabin oppression was in the North, while Ehud the Benjamite was a man of central Israel. Possibly, then, the central part of the land continued to enjoy peace while the North was being oppressed by Jabin. The end of Ehud's 80-year peace, for the Center, would have to come when the Center was invaded by Midian (Jud. 6:1). Thus, the end of Barak's peace in the North and the end of Ehud's peace in the Center almost certainly came at the same time, in the year 2766. Since the 60 years of Jabin and Barak began with the death of Ehud, this puts the death of Ehud 60 years before the Midianite oppression in 2766, which was AM 2706. This means Ehud judged for 20 years, beginning in 2686.

Now, before Ehud came Othniel, a man of Ephraim and also a man of central Israel. He judged for 40 years after Cushan had oppressed for 8 years. Moreover, it is implied that the oppression of Eglon began after Othniel died (3:11-12). This indicates that Cushan-Othniel-Eglon-Ehud is one chronological sequence.

Thus, my conclusion is that the oppression of Jabin in the North began while the central part of the land was enjoying the last part of the 80-year peace, and while Philistines were fighting Shamgar in the South.

We have good reason, then, to assume that Ehud lived for 20 years after defeating Eglon. When Ehud died, Jabin arose to oppress the north. Now if we add to this (at the beginning) the 8 years of Cushan, the 40 years of Othniel, and the 18 years of Eglon's oppression, we come to AM 2620, which would be 60 years after the division of the land in 2560.

Judges chart

The Problem of Saul's Reign

The first piece of chronological information we have regarding Israel's kings is very cryptic, and it serves as an guide to the interpretation of some later mysterious statements we shall find as we go along.

1 Samuel 13:1 literally says: "A son of one year was Saul when he became king, and two years he reigned over Israel." There are two obvious problems with this verse. First, how could Saul become king when he was one year old? Second, how can it be said that Saul only reigned two years, when clearly he reigned for many more (including the whole time David was in exile)? As we have seen, the actual number of years Saul reigned was 40, which settles the larger chronological question, but which forces us again to consider what to do with 1 Samuel 13:1.

One solution, which we find in the New International Version, is to assume that 1 Samuel 13:1 has become corrupted in transmission. A few late manuscripts of the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament read that Saul was 30 years old when he began to reign, so that is how the NIV renders the first half of the verse. Then, taking Acts 13:21 into account, the NIV assumes that a number had dropped out of the second half of 1 Samuel 13:1, so that it should read, "and 42 years he reigned over Israel." The NIV footnotes explains that the translators have assumed that Acts 13:21 is giving a round number when it says he only reigned for 40 years.

If, however, there is a way to interpret 1 Samuel 13:1 without changing it, we should do so. Besides, Saul must have been older than thirty at this time because he had a grown son, Jonathan, who was old enough to serve in the army with him. Saul was probably about 40 when he began to reign, reigned 40 years, and died at about 80 years of age.

Martin Anstey points to a better interpretation, but misses the mark.⁴ With many older commentators, he states that Saul's 2-year reign only covers the time when he legitimately ruled Israel. For the remainder of his reign, he says, "are years of the unrecognized and illegitimate tyranny of Saul, the usurper of David's throne, and the rejected of the Lord."⁵

The problem with this interpretation is that David was not yet anointed, so Saul could not be usurping David's throne. In fact, David would not be born for eight more years. Also, David never regarded Saul's reign as illegitimate. In fact, David went out of his way to accord Saul respect as the Lord's anointed and as Israel's proper ruler.

The first half of the verse, Anstey maintains, should not be translated "A son of one year was Saul when he began reigning," but rather "A son of one year was Saul in his reigning." In other words, 1 Samuel 13:1 means that Saul has already reigned one year, and has only two more legitimate years to reign. This is how the translators of the original and new King James versions interpreted the clause, for they rendered it: "Saul reigned one year."

⁴*Chronology of the Old Testament* [formerly *The Romance of Bible Chronology*] (Grand Rapids: Kregel, [1913] 1973), pp. 164f.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 165.

It is true that the phrase translated “when he began reigning,” is literally in Hebrew “in his reigning,” but this is the phrase used everywhere else in the Old Testament to denote the beginning of a man's reign (2 Samuel 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; etc.) Unless it means something else here, which is what Anstey asserts, we shall have to look for another interpretation.

So, then, first of all, what does it mean that Saul was only one year old when he began to reign? The answer is not hard to find. As I have shown elsewhere, Saul was adopted by Samuel as his son when Samuel anointed him king (1 Samuel 10:9). Thus, Saul was said to be in the company of the prophets, “and who is their father?” (1 Samuel 10:12). Their father was Samuel, and so at this point Saul was adopted by Samuel.⁶

After this adoption, Saul was made a judge, and he defeated Nahash (“serpent”) the Ammonite. After that victory, Saul was proclaimed king (1 Samuel 11).

Now we are in a position to understand the meaning of 1 Samuel 13:1a in context. It means that a year after Saul's adoption by Samuel, or within that year, he became king “when he was one year old.” This interpretation does full justice to the grammar of 1 Samuel 13:1a as well as to its context.

Now, what about the second half of 1 Samuel 13:1? What were Saul's two years of reign? Many older expositors link this half of the verse with verse 2, so that it reads: “and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose. . . .” This is also the way the translators of the original and new King James versions took it. The problem with this translation is, again, that the phrase is a formula used everywhere else for the actual length of a king's reign (2 Samuel 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; etc.).

Moreover, the King James translation does not make much sense: “Saul reigned one year. And when Saul had reigned two years. . . .” Why not just write, “And after Saul had reigned two years”? If the writer of Samuel meant to say this, why would he use words identical to a formula he will later use to denote the king's age at the time of his accession, and the length of his reign?

We have seen that in context Saul can properly be said to have been one year old when he became king. Now, the text tells us that he reigned for two years. What happened during these two years? The events are recounted in 1 Samuel 13-15, which record the three falls of Saul. At the end, after Saul's third and final rebellion against the Lord, Samuel announced to him that the kingdom had been taken from him, and that he had been rejected from being king (1 Samuel 15:26-28). Yet, even though Saul was rejected at this point from being king in a spiritual sense, Samuel continued to treat Saul as king in a national sense (1 Samuel 15:30). Saul's kingship was not illegal (contrary to Anstey), but it was assuredly doomed.

What we need to learn from this interpretation is this: Sometimes the chronology will date a king's reign not from his natural birth, but from some other spiritual

⁶For more information on this, and what it means for the king to have the prophet as his father, see James B. Jordan, “King Saul: A Study in Humanity and the Fall,” an essay published by Biblical Horizons.

event in his history, or in Israel's history. Sometimes the length of a king's reign will be given in terms of something other than his literal rule over the nation.

What this means for us is that we cannot simply run through the text of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles and add up years, assuming in every case that they measure the literal age of a man when he begins his reign and the literal number of years he reigns. In most cases, of course, such a procedure is proper, but in every case we have to read the information in context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and make sure that our interpretation is sound before adding up the numbers.

Saul in Context

As we have seen, the death of the judge Abdon in the year 2909 provoked a national crisis. Samuel appointed his own sons as judges, but they were not respected, and the people demanded a king. Thus, in this year Saul was anointed king by Samuel, led the people in a victory over the Ammonites, and was crowned king of Israel. The year 2910 was his first year of reign. Samuel was around 49 years old at this time. Saul was probably around 40, since he had a grown son.

David was 30 when Saul died, so that David was born in the tenth year of Saul's reign (2 Samuel 5:4). Samuel was around 58. Saul had already been rejected for eight years. Since Jonathan was already a member of the army when Saul was rejected, he must have been at least 20 at that time (Numbers 1:3). Thus, Jonathan was about 30 when David was born (a matter worth paying close attention to). If David was anointed by Samuel at the age of 10, this would be at the mid-point of Saul's 40-year reign, and Jonathan would be 40. Samuel would be around 68.

If David was 15 when he slew Goliath, Jonathan would be 45 years old at the time he and David formed their friendship. Samuel was around 73.

David served as Saul's armor bearer for several years, and then joined the army at age 20. He became so popular that Saul drove him out into exile, probably at the age of 23 or so. Samuel was about 81. Jonathan would be about 53 at that time. During David's exile, Samuel died (1 Samuel 25:1), perhaps at the age of 85.

David became king when Saul died at the age of about 80, and Jonathan died at the same time, at about 60 years of age. Saul's youngest son, Ishbosheth, was 40 (1 Samuel 14:49; 31:2; 2 Samuel 2:10).

So to sum up: here is my conclusion of the matter:

2513 - Exodus from Egypt.

2554 - Beginning of Conquest of the land.

2559 - End of Conquest, Division of the land. Caleb 85 years old.

2560 - Israel goes to its lands. Beginning of the 300 years of Judges 11:26.

2585 - Death of Joshua at 110, assuming he was the same age as Caleb.

2620 - Beginning of 8-year oppression of Cushan (Jud. 3:8). Israel had been faithful for the 35 years after the death of Joshua, during the time of the elders who succeeded him.

2628 - Beginning of Othniel's 40-year judgeship (Jud. 3:11).

2668 - Beginning of Eglon's 18-year oppression (Jud. 3:11-12)

- 2686 - Beginning of Ehud's 20-year judgeship and his 80-year peace.
- 2706 - Death of Ehud, beginning of Jabin's 20-year oppression in the North (Jud. 4:3).
- 2726 - Beginning of Barak's 40-year judgeship and peace in the North (Jud. 5:31).
- 2766 - End of Barak's Northern peace and Ehud's Central peace, beginning of Midianite oppression (Jud. 6:1). The Midianite oppression returns us to the Center of the land. From here on, Center and North experience one set of problems, while South struggles with Philistines (Jud. 3:31).
- 2773 - Beginning of Gideon's 40-year judgeship (Jud. 8:28).
- 2811 - Hypothetical birth of Boaz. David was the eighth of Jesse's sons (1 Sam. 16:11), so let us assume that Jesse was 38 years old when David was born. That means Jesse was born when Samuel was 20 years old. We have every reason to believe that Jesse was Obed's firstborn (1 Chron. 2:12; Ruth 4), so Jesse could have been born when Obed was 20 years old. Jesse's father, Obed, thus was born about the same time as Samuel and Samson. Obed's father, Boaz, was a older man at the time of Obed's birth (Ruth 3:10), so let us put his birth 50 years earlier.
- 2813 - Beginning of Abimelech's 3-year oppressive reign (Jud. 9:22).
- 2816 - Beginning of Tola's 23-year judgeship (Jud. 10:1).
- 2839 - Beginning of Jair's 22-year judgeship (Jud. 10:3).
- 2841 - Beginning of Eli's 40-year judgeship in the South (1 Sam. 4:18).
- 2860 - End of the 300 years of Judges 11:26.
- 2861 - Beginning of Philistine oppression in the South and Ammonite oppression in the Center and North (Jud. 10:5-7). Likely births of Samson, Samuel, Obed, and Jephthah's daughter.
- 2879 - Beginning of Jephthah's 6-year judgeship in Center and North (Jud. 11:26; 12:7). Jephthah's daughter moves to Shiloh to serve Yahweh.
- 2881 - Death of Eli, beginning of Samuel's judgeship at Tabernacle and Samson's judgeship in the South. Likely birth of Jesse.
- 2884 - Beginning of Ibzan's 7-year judgeship in the Center and North (Jud. 11:9).
- 2891 - Beginning of Elon's 10-year judgeship in Center and North (Jud. 11:11).
- 2901 - Death of Samson, battle of Mizpah, deliverance from Philistine oppression.
- 2901 - Death of Elon, beginning of Abdon's 8-year judgeship in Center and North (Jud. 11:14).
- 2909 - Death of Abdon; Samuel appoints sons, rejected; anointing of Saul; accession of Saul. Saul is around 40. Jonathan is around 20.
- 2910 - Saul year 1. Samuel is 49.
- 2919 - Birth of David. Samuel is 58.
- 2929 - (Hypothetical) anointing of David at age 10. Samuel is 68.
- 2934 - (Hypothetical) David kills Goliath. Jonathan around 45.
- 2939 - David, age 20, enters army; rapidly becomes famous.
- 2942 - (Hypothetical) David driven out by Saul. Jonathan around 53.
- 2946 - (Hypothetical) Death of Samuel at age 85.
- 2949 - Accession of David. Jonathan dies at around age 60. Saul dies at around age 80.
- 2950 - David year 1.

2989 - Accession of Solomon.

2990 - Solomon year 1.

2993 - Foundation of Temple laid, 480 years after Exodus.

3000 - Completion of Temple.