

The Genesis Genealogies as an Index of Time

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The age of the earth and the antiquity of man are of no particular theological import in and of themselves, though theologians have become interested in the subject because of the purported discrepancy between the biblical view of these periods and that now held by most modern scientists. Is this conflict real or imagined?

One way of approaching the question is to take a careful look at what the Bible does or does not say about the period of man's existence on the earth.

For generations, simple Christians have supposed that the Bible allowed only a 6,000-year period for the duration of human history. There was nothing illogical about that supposition. As long as there was no evidence to the contrary, a 6,000-year history for man based largely on the prima-facie impressions of the Genesis genealogies was eminently reasonable. And this belief was not restricted to the simple. No less a thinker than Sir Isaac Newton accepted it implicitly when in his study of ancient chronology he took the Egyptians to task for their claims that made the pharaohs go back "some thousands of years older than the world."²

It is not surprising, then, that this supposition became fixed in formal chronological schemes, some of which have become so traditional as to be given a place in the margins of our Bibles since 1679. The most influential of these schemes was the one worked out by Archbishop James Ussher in his *Annales Veteri et Novi Testamenti* (1650-54). Bishop John Lightfoot refined Ussher's date and found that Adam was created on October 23, 4004 B.C., at 9:00 a.m., forty-fifth meridian time! This led E. T. Brewster to quip, "Closer than this, as a cautious scholar, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University did not venture to commit himself."³

EARLY SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

Why do most scholars today reject such startlingly exact conclusions of a bygone generation of biblical students? The data that caused a reevaluation came first from the natural and artifactual world of man. During the nineteenth century, for instance, human stone tools were found in association with the remains of extinct animals — certain evidence for the antiquity of man. But how old was old? Without written records, how could these finds be dated?⁴

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The recently developed science of geology offered a ready approach. As a means of ordering their discoveries, geologists followed the principle of stratigraphic succession; that is, when successive strata or layers are observed in position, the underlying ones are the earliest. Using this principle, and the characteristic remains of extinct plants and animals within the strata (the type fossils), geologists established a succession of geological periods or epochs that gradually came to be extended to cover the world as a whole.

Archaeologists soon realized that the layers of deposit on archaeological sites where human habitation had occurred could be studied in the same way. As the centuries would pass, successive occupations followed one another at the same site (usually chosen for its access to fresh water and its defensibility), each marked by its own stratum like the layers of a cake. All the archaeologist had to do, in theory at least, was to peel off these layers in reverse order from the way they were deposited. In this manner, in terms of the successive strata, a coherent sequence of occupation for each site could be worked out. And by allowing these successive layers and the finds in them to be set in chronological order, the archaeologist provided the first requirement for effective dating: a sound sequence. This stratigraphic method remains today the essential basis for all archaeological excavation. So far, however, the method has produced only a relative chronology based on sequence, not an absolute one.

Another complementary approach to dating archaeological finds was worked out as early as 1819 by Christian Thomsen, the keeper of antiquities of the National Museum of Denmark (at Copenhagen). Often called the Three Age System, it at once became the basic method by which museum curators set their collections in order. It proposed the division of the prehistoric past into three ages — Stone, Bronze, and Iron — depending on which material was in dominant use for human tools. This theoretical subdivision, accomplished through the study and classification of museum collections, was demonstrated in practice by Thomsen's successor, J. J. A. Worsaae, who showed stratigraphically that finds of bronze were indeed later than the period when stone alone was used, and so on. This simple system allowed archaeological finds to be placed in the approximate period; and despite subsequent advances and criticisms, Paleolithic, Neolithic,

Bronze Age, and Iron Age are still used today as convenient general terms. Again, however, this was a method effective only in arranging finds in terms of a relative chronology. Dating finds in terms of years now became a central problem for prehistory.

Geological methods of a different kind offered some hope of dating absolutely. For instance, it was possible to observe the present rate of deposition in the sediments at the bottom of lakes and rivers. Assuming that these rates had remained roughly constant, geologists could estimate how long the processes had been in operation in particular cases; and thus they could date the beginning of the formation of various deposits.

7 Sir Arthur Evans, whose excavations brought to light the Minoan civilization of Crete, employed this same principle in estimating the date of the first Neolithic settlement at Knossos in Crete. Since the *duration* of the Bronze Age Minoan period was known through cross-dating with Egypt, he was able to calculate the period's rate of deposition by measuring the depth of the debris that had accumulated there as a result of human occupation. Obtaining a figure of three feet per millennium and assuming the same rate for Neolithic times, Evans used the latter's great depth of deposit to suggest a date between 12,000 and 10,000 B.C. for the first Neolithic settlement. The weakness of this method is readily apparent. It is the untested assumption that the rate of deposition has always been constant.

A more sensitive and ingenious technique was developed in Sweden in 1912 by Baron Gerhard de Geer. He studied the annual deposits of sediment (called *varves*) left by the spring meltwaters of glaciers. There were (and remain) problems of tying in the more recent varves with well-dated historical events so as to give a modern fixed point from which the chronology could be extended earlier and earlier back in time — and of course varves are found only in areas on the fringe of glaciers or ice sheets. But the beauty of the method is that it gives a result directly in years, since varve deposition is an annual event. De Geer's work, therefore, remains of real value today.

Before the development of dating techniques such as radiocarbon dating, these methods based on depth or regularity of debris or sediment deposition were the only ones available for setting absolute dates for the early period of man's occupation of the earth. As I have mentioned, however, there are problems of accuracy with these methods. Furthermore, they appear to be useful only for periods before the Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages.

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CHRONOLOGY

For periods not mentioned, the only really reliable way of dating events was from written records left by the great civilizations of the Mesopotamian and Nile

River Valleys, which in some cases extend as far back as about 3,000 B.C. These records, continually being discovered by archaeologists, are written, of course, in various ancient Near Eastern languages and scripts (each of which has its own inner evolution and development) and have put Mesopotamian and Egyptian chronology on a relatively sound footing. This does not mean that no revision of currently held dates is possible. But it does mean that no drastic revision appears to be possible; ancient Near Eastern chronology, in its broad outline, has reached a stage of relative stabilization.⁵

The current framework for the chronology of ancient Egypt is the system of thirty-one dynasties covering the entire Egyptian Kingdom from its earliest beginnings down to the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.⁶ Passed on to us originally by Manetho, an early third-century B.C. Egyptian priest, it has been revised and corrected in detail, but in general retained for convenience.

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Several important categories of evidence contribute to this framework. Most important are (a) the king lists, among which are the Turin Royal Canon, whose long list of mortal kings begins with Menes, the first king, and extends, with gaps, through the Second Intermediate Period in the sixteenth century B.C. (giving us, however, the summation figure of 955 years for the time-span between the First and Eighth Dynasties, for instance); (b) the Palermo Stone and related fragments, which together list consecutive regnal years and certain of their events grouped under the name of the ruling kings down through the Fifth Dynasty; (c) and the dynastic temple inscriptions, the best known and preserved of which is that of Seti I of the Nineteenth Dynasty in Abydos listing fifty-six kings in order from the First through the Nineteenth Dynasties. To correct mistakes and fill in gaps, Egyptologists use contemporaneous inscriptions, both royal and private. The latter naturally take precedence over the former, since they tend to be straightforward economic documents rather than propagandistic annals.

The framework thus obtained must then be checked against the increasing numbers of synchronisms with Western Asia. For instance, if the pharaoh met a Mesopotamian monarch on the battlefield or wrote him a letter, obviously they were contemporaries.

Then there are also inscriptions which record observed astronomical events that can be used to give highly accurate dates in terms of our own calendar. The earliest and most important of these recorded astronomical events, a heliacal rising of the star Sothis (known today as Sirius), occurred in the seventh year of Sesostris III, who reigned in the Twelfth Dynasty. Enough information is given to enable scholars who are acquainted with the Egyptian solar calendar to date this astronomical phenomenon with some confidence to 1872 B.C. In 1945, Lynn H. Wood, of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, reexamined this

evidence, taking into account new texts containing lunar observations made during this dynasty, and was able to show that the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (or Middle Kingdom) could be pinned down to 1991 B.C.⁷

This, in fact, is the earliest fixed calendrical date in human history. Though some uncertainties of detail make possible an error of a decade or so, it is nevertheless a date which Egyptologists accept with considerable confidence.

As I have already mentioned, the Turin Royal Canon reports a total duration for the Old Kingdom of 955 years. Though certain scholars think this figure may be inaccurate by as much as two centuries, if it is accepted and one adds the 150 years required to account for the events of the First Intermediate Period (intervening between the Old and Middle Kingdoms), the founding of Egypt's first historical dynasty can be set close to 3100 B.C., or about 800 years before the Flood date according to Ussher's chronology. In other words, it now seems impossible to harmonize Ussher's chronology with Egyptian chronological data.

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King lists and other chronologically useful records are also preserved for the various dynasties that flourished in Mesopotamia. Since they are less reliable than the Egyptian evidence for the earliest periods, however, they are not brought into this brief discussion.⁸

Once the chronology of ancient Egypt had been established, naturally it became useful to help date events and artifacts in neighboring countries with which Egypt had direct trade. Thus, for instance, by identifying Cretan pottery in a datable Egyptian context, as well as datable Egyptian material in Greece in association with Aegean finds, Egyptologist Sir Flinders Petrie managed to help date the Bronze Age of Greece.

Since the establishing of Egyptian chronology back to the third millennium B.C. has come the development of radiocarbon dating. With all its problems and assumptions (such as fixed and constant rate of decay), radiocarbon dates — especially when revised by tree-ring dates — have proved to be remarkably accurate and reliable. For the archaeologist, they have been of tremendous help in ordering past events. Much more could be said about new techniques that have been developed by the physical sciences, but I will leave that to others.

THE BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES

So far I have touched briefly on some of the evidence that calls into question Ussher's figure of 6,000 years for the age of man. And since that figure is dependent solely on an interpretation of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, it is important to ask if that interpretation is justified. Were biblical genealogies ever constructed for chronological purposes? Can they now serve accurately as the basis for an absolute chronology?⁹

Even a superficial acquaintance with scriptural genealogies in general shows that they are frequently abbreviated by the omission of certain names. Thus it is clear that the genealogical purposes for which they were given obviously did not require a complete record of *every* generation, but only an adequate sampling of the particular line of descent.

This fact can be seen through the consideration of several examples. One of the best known is the genealogy of our Lord found in Matthew 1. Actually, two genealogies are presented there. The first is in verse 1: "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The second, in verses 2-17, expands the first genealogy into forty-two links divided for purposes of symmetry into three easily remembered sections of fourteen generations each. The divisions come at the two critical points of Israelite history: (*a*) the foundation of the Davidic monarchy and (*b*) the collapse of that monarchy.

TABLE 1

1. Abraham	15. Solomon	29. Shealtiel
2. Isaac	16. Rehoboam	30. Zerubbabel
3. Jacob	17. Abijah	31. Abiud
4. Judah	18. Asa	32. Eliakim
5. Perez	19. Jehoshaphat	33. Azor
6. Hezron	20. Joram	34. Zadok
	[Ahaziah, 2 Kings 8:25]	
	[Joash, 2 Kings 12:1]	
	[Amaziah, 2 Kings 14:1]	
7. Ram	21. Uzziah	35. Achim
8. Amminadab	22. Jotham	36. Eliud
9. Nahshon	23. Ahaz	37. Eleazar
10. Salmon	24. Hezekiah	38. Matthan
11. Boaz	25. Manasseh	39. Jacob
12. Obed	26. Amon	40. Joseph
13. Jesse	27. Josiah	41. Jesus ¹⁰
	[Jehoiakim, 2 Kings 23:34; 1 Chronicles 3:16]	
14. David	28. Jeconiah	

The TABLE 1 listing shows at a glance that not even this second rendering of Christ's descent is complete when it is compared with the Old Testament (after Zerubbabel, there is no independent biblical listing). Between links 20 and 21, three generations are left out and Joram is said to have begotten Uzziah, his great-great-grandson. Not only are there *omissions* in Matthew 1, but also there are *additions* (such as the four women) having nothing to do with chronology.

From the listing of TABLE 2 it is apparent that the genealogy of Ezra has also been abridged by the omission of six consecutive names.

TABLE 2

1 CHRONICLES 6:3-14		EZRA 7:1-5		1 CHRONICLES 6:3-14		EZRA 7:1-5	
1. Aaron	Aaron			13. Azariah	----		
2. Eleazar	Eleazar			14. Johanan	----		
3. Phinehas	Phinehas			15. Azariah	Azariah		
4. Abishua	Abishua			16. Amariah	Amariah		
5. Bukki	Bukki			17. Ahitub	Ahitub		
6. Uzzi	Uzzi			18. Zadok	Zadok		
7. Zerariah	Zerariah			19. Shallum	Shallum		
8. Meraioth	Meraioth			20. Hilkiyah	Hilkiyah		
9. Amariah	----			21. Azariah	Azariah		
10. Ahitub	----			22. Seraiah	Seraiah		
11. Zadok	----			----	Ezra		
12. Ahimaaz	----						

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Another example, from 1 Chronicles 26:24, indicates that in the time of David "Shebuel the son of Gershom, son of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the treasuries." Since Moses died about 1400 B.C., obviously his grandson was not living in the reign of David 400 years later.

Or, take the genealogical data for Moses himself from Exodus 6:16-20, where his line is traced in four links back through Amram, Kohath, and Levi to Jacob. Evidence that some links are left out mounts when one compares such parallel genealogies as Joshua's, where 1 Chronicles 7:23-27 lists eleven generations for the same period. Corroborative evidence for missing links appears to come from Numbers 3:19, 27, 28, where it is stated that one year after the Exodus the males of the families of the four sons of Kohath (including Amram) numbered 8,600. If Kohath was indeed Moses' grandfather, his four sons had been unusually fertile!

Why do these omissions from the biblical genealogical lists occur? Whatever the reason, it is obvious that *not all* the links were needed to serve the biblical authors' purpose. Not only did they often abbreviate genealogies by omissions, but also they threw together persons of differing relationships under a common title descriptive of the majority, without a single word of explanation. Examples of this include 1 Chronicles 1:1-4, where there is a mixture of sons and brothers. If it were not for Genesis, one could conclude from this passage that Japheth was the son of Ham, and Ham the son of Shem.

Or, there is 1 Chronicles 1:36: "The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek." Comparison with Genesis 36:11, 12, however, shows that only the first five were sons according to our usage of the term. Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz who bore him Amalek.

In the TABLE 3 lists of the genealogy of Kohath from 1 Chronicles 6, the first one includes as sons three who are actually brothers.

TABLE 3

1 CHRONICLES 6:22-24	1 CHRONICLES 6:37-38 (cf. EXODUS 6:24)
Kohath	Kohath
Amminadab	Izhar
Korah	Korah
Assir, Elkanah, Ebiasaph	Ebiasaph
Assir	Assir
Tahath, etc.	Tahath, etc.

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Many other examples could be given. A final interesting one is found in Genesis 46:16-18, where the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons of Zilpah are listed with the statement that "these she bore to Jacob"!

One must conclude, from these and other examples, that "to bear," "to beget," "father of," and "son of" are used in a wide sense in Scripture to indicate descent without restriction to the immediate offspring.

THE GENESIS 5 AND 11 GENEALOGIES

But what about the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11? Do they not embrace *all* the links in the line of descent from Adam to Noah, and from Shem to Abraham, since (unlike the genealogies already considered) they regularly attach to each name in the list the age of the father at the birth of his son? This feature appears to provide a continuous series for which one would have only to add up the numbers to get an exact chronological span. As plausible as this approach seems at first, however, it would seem unjustified after consideration of the following points conveniently made by William Henry Green.¹¹

Analogy

As we have already seen, the analogy of other biblical genealogies is decidedly against considering the Genesis genealogies as complete for chronological purposes. Where we have independent evidence to check other biblical genealogies, there is incontrovertible evidence of abridgment. Since these genealogies are obviously not designed to be strictly continuous, we would need some external evidence to suggest that Genesis 5 and 11 are exceptions to that rule. But as far as the Bible goes, not only are we left *without adequate data* for the period between Abel and the Flood, and the period between the Flood and Abraham, but we are left *without any data whatever* that can be compared with these genealogies for

the sake of testing their continuity and completeness. I propose, however, that we now have extrabiblical evidence (such as the archaeological data already mentioned) that *has* provided data (and continues to do so) which suggest there *are* missing links in the Genesis chain of descent from a chronological point of view.

Purpose

It has been suggested by some (*a*) that the argument from analogy just proposed does not apply to Genesis 5 and 11 because their construction is unique and (*b*) that therefore their purpose might be different — maybe even chronological. But we have already seen that the fact that each member of the series is said to have begotten the next one is no evidence in and of itself that no links have been omitted. So what about the number given? Why does the author give each patriarch's age at the birth of his successor if not to give the necessary elements to compute the time from Creation to Abraham? Whatever the reason for the numbers, it cannot have been chronological — because, of all the numbers given with each patriarch, only an addition of the first can be made to yield a chronological result. Surely all the numbers are too closely bound together to be separated in their intention; a reason which would account for the insertion of all the numbers is the author's purpose of giving a conspectus of individual lives.

The numbers emphasize the patriarchs' mortality in spite of their longevity, which decreases markedly after the Flood. In order to demonstrate the original term of human life and how it gradually narrowed, the author did not need *every* individual in the line from Adam to Abraham. All he needed was a series of specimen lives with the appropriate numbers attached. If this hypothesis is correct, it would be a mistake to try to make the numbers serve a chronological purpose.

This conclusion is strengthened when we realize that the initial appearance of a possible chronological scheme in Genesis 5 and 11 is not intrinsic in the data themselves but is purely the effect of the sequential arrangement. And the insertion of the numbers does not change in the least the character of the Genesis genealogies, which must be subject to all the laws that governed the formation of other biblical genealogies, including free compression and the omission of links. The numbers are strictly parenthetical in nature, like the parenthetical insertions in the Matthew 1 genealogy.

Since these additions are parenthetical in nature, they should be read with sole reference to the names to which they are attached. They cannot determine whether or not links have been omitted. It is true (because the parenthetical information is numbers) that their arrangement one after the other produces the illusion of a chronological scheme. But this accident is due to the nature of the parenthetical information, and it must not blind us to the fact that they are nothing more than

ordinary genealogies to be interpreted on the same principles as other biblical genealogies are.¹²

Finally, if the purpose were chronological, the author kept it a secret. Nowhere does he add up the numbers or even suggest that his readers do it. And nowhere in the Bible does any other inspired writer deduce a chronological statement from these genealogies.

Different Numbers

Another consideration is the fact that the texts of the Septuagint version (the earliest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) and the Samaritan recension of the Pentateuch both vary systematically from the Hebrew Massoretic text in both the Genesis 5 and the Genesis 11 genealogies.

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As shown in TABLE 4,¹³ the ages of different patriarchs at the birth of their successors are quite irregular in the Hebrew text. But the Septuagint introduces something like a regular gradation. The table also shows that Luke 3:36, following the Septuagint, adds a patriarch who is completely absent from the Hebrew and Samaritan. This addition, and the alternate numbers, produce a difference of nearly 1,500 years between the Hebrew and the Greek for the interval between Adam and Abraham.

TABLE 4 (Genesis 5 and 11)

	HEBREW	SEPTUAGINT	SAMARITAN
Adam	130	230	130
Seth	105	205	105
Enosh	90	190	90
Kenan	70	170	70
Mahalalel	65	165	65
Jared	162	162	62
Enoch	65	165	65
Methuselah	187	167 or 187	67
Lamech	182	188	53
Noah	500	500	500
Shem	100	100	100
Arphaxad	35	135	135
Cainan (cf. Luke 3:36)		130	
Salah	30	130	130
Eber	34	134	134
Peleg	30	130	130
Reu	32	132	132
Serug	30	130	130
Nahor	29	179	79
Terah	70	70	70
Totals	1,946	3,412 or 3,432	2,247

Which text is superior? On text-critical grounds, it is possible that the Hebrew is the original, the others diverging according to a set principle — that of making the lives of the patriarchs more symmetrical. It is important to note that this principle is *not* to effect a change in the chronological period as a whole; so even the versions seem to have had no interest in chronology at this point.

Structure

The structure of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies may also favor the position that they do not contain all the names in their respective lines of descent. Their regularity seems to indicate intentional arrangement. Each genealogy includes ten names, and each ends with a father having three sons. Just as the genealogy of Matthew 1 is arranged in three periods of fourteen generations each by dropping the requisite number of names, so it seems probable that the symmetry of these primitive genealogies is artificial rather than natural. In other words, that the definite number of names fitting into a regular scheme has been selected as sufficiently representing the periods to which they belong is much more likely than that all these striking numerical coincidences should have happened to occur in these successive instances.

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Historical Problems

If the genealogy in Genesis 11 were complete, Terah would have been a contemporary of *all nine* of the patriarchs that preceded him (including Noah), and Abraham would have been a contemporary of at least *seven* of the patriarchs preceding him (including Shem for a minimum of 150 years).¹⁴ If Cainan is added on the authority of Luke 3:36, then the situation is complicated even further. But the whole impression of the Abraham narrative is that the days of the Flood belong to a geological event long past and that the actors in it had died ages before.

The preceding paragraphs summarize a few internal reasons why Genesis furnishes us with no data for a chronological computation (other than a minimum) before the life of Abraham.¹⁵

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN GENEALOGIES

But the literary genre of “genealogy” is not unique to the Bible. It may be useful to consider several Old World genealogies, many of which have been brought to light by archaeological research. A fairly recent discovery, for instance, is the genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty, a text found in the British Museum. This “shows conclusively that the Semitic tribes west of the Euphrates and of the Upper Euphrates region had evolved an elaborated genealogical tradition at an early age — probably not later than the turn of the Third Millennium B.C.”¹⁶ Since such

texts furnish an ancient Near Eastern context for the biblical genealogies, it would be apropos to ascertain whether *they* were ever constructed for chronological purposes. An example related to the Hammurapi Dynasty just mentioned is the Assyrian King List, which utilizes the same tradition found in the former but employs it for a tendentious purpose: to legitimize and justify the claims of a certain king to the Assyrian throne,¹⁷ not to establish any chronological point.

The Genesis genealogies correspond in structure to the Sumerian-Babylonian King List,¹⁸ which enumerates first the kings who reigned until the Flood and then those who reigned after it. In one of these lists, the seventh king was even carried off to the gods, as was Enoch. Later on, the king list mentions Mes-kiag-Nanna, successor to Mes-Anne-pada. But from contemporary historical inscriptions of his own, we know that Mes-Anne-pada was succeeded by his son A-anne-pada; thus the Sumerian King List, though it records the number of years each king ruled, omits certain links of importance to chronologists.

In the ancient Near East it was a common practice to use "son of" in the sense of "descendant of."¹⁹ A well-known example of this is found on Shalmaneser III's famous Black Obelisk, where Jehu is called the son of Omri, when in fact he was not even of the same dynasty, but merely a successor. An interesting Egyptian example comes from a brief text in which Pharaoh Tirhakah (ca. 670 B.C.) honors his "father" Sesostris III (ca. 1870 B.C.). Not only were these two kings separated by 1,200 years, but they were from entirely different dynasties. Even though one must be careful with modern parallels, a third example may be taken from the genealogical reckonings of the Arabs, which exhibit characteristics similar to those of their ancient Semitic predecessors. The late king of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz, was called Ibn Sa'ud (or "son of Sa'ud"), though he was really the son of Abdur-Rahman. Sa'ud, whose name he bore, died in 1724. Thus, Arabs, too, mention only outstanding links in the chain of descent.

Although examples could be multiplied from the ancient world, perhaps these genealogies suffice to show that their purpose, too, has to do with *not* the reckoning of exact chronology *but rather* the establishment of descent from some particular ancestor — a purpose unaffected by the omission of names.

CONCLUSION

It must be stated, then, that our present knowledge of human civilization in the ancient Near East apparently goes back (at Jericho, for instance)²⁰ to the seventh millennium B.C. This information was not available to earlier generations of Bible students, and they assumed that the Genesis genealogies were unbroken chains. The evidence indicates, however, that this assumption may legitimately be called into question — especially since the Bible nowhere adds up its genealogical fig-

ures nor gives the impression that the lives of the men it names overlapped each other to any unusual extent.

If, instead, the practice was to select ten names from Creation to the Flood, and another ten from the Flood to the calling of Abraham, to serve as outstanding links rather than continuous links, it has genealogical custom both within and without the Bible to support it. Thus Seth, for example, would have produced at age 105 either Enosh himself or a forebear of Enosh (just as in Matthew 1:8, where Joram "begat" his great-great-grandson), and so on. This leaves the total period before Abraham, or from the second millennium B.C. on back, undetermined as far as exact biblical chronology goes.

One easily sees, then, how the purported conflict between the Bible and science on this point proves to be an illusion. The Bible does *not* assign a 6,000-year history to the span of human life on the earth. This is done only by a particular *interpretation* of the Genesis genealogies — an interpretation which we have seen does not rest on very solid ground. As far as the Bible is concerned, we may assign to the interval between Creation and Abraham any length of time that may otherwise appear reasonable. For the kind of data to pursue that task, however, we will have to turn to God's revelation through nature and history.²¹

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1/ This essay (an edited version of an oral presentation made to the Washington, D. C., chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums on April 13, 1974) is included here by request of the Editor of SPECTRUM. Its intent was not originality but the summary of some evidence and opinion that could lead to a constructive discussion on a topic that seems to be of ultimate concern to many within the Adventist church. Though specific credit is not always given (because the presentation was not originally intended for publication), I wish to recognize indebtedness to the following:

Colin Renfrew, The problem of dating, in *Before Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1973), chap. 2.

Benjamin B. Warfield, On the antiquity and the unity of the human race, *The Princeton Theological Review* 9-1:1-25 (January 1911).

William Henry Green, Primeval chronology, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 47:285-303 (April 1890). Now reprinted in:

W. C. Kaiser, Jr. (ed.), *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House 1972), pp. 13-27.

2/ Sir Isaac Newton, *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (Dublin 1928), p. 187.

3/ Quoted in Kaiser, *Classical Evangelical Essays*, p. 12.

4/ The section on dating is heavily dependent on Renfrew's summary of the problem mentioned in note 1.

5/ The evidence for this conclusion was conveniently summarized by Siegfried H. Horn, A revolution in the early chronology of Western Asia, *Ministry*, pp. 4-8 (June 1957); A revolution in the early chronology of Egypt, *Ministry*, pp. 29-33 (June 1959).

6/ This discussion of Egyptian chronology benefits from William Kelly Simpson, Reconstructing the past, in W. W. Hallo and W. K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), pp. 190-196.

7/ Lynn H. Wood, The Kahun Papyrus and the date of the Twelfth Dynasty, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 99:4-9 (October 1945).

8/ Helpful for those interested in pursuing the subject in depth is *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology* (Robert W. Ehrich, ed.) (University of Chicago Press 1965).

9/ The evidence concerning the biblical genealogies is derived primarily from articles first published long ago by the two fundamentalists, War-

field and Green, referred to in note 1. Another useful and more modern discussion is:

J. Liver, The basic principles of the tribal genealogical lists, *The World History of the Jewish People* (B. Mazar, ed.) (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1971), vol. 3, pp. 198-201.

10/ Despite the claim of Matthew 1:17 that there are fourteen generations in the third section of the list also, there are only thirteen unless Mary is counted. Perhaps one was dropped from the list through a copyist's mistake.

11/ Cf. note 1. Note especially pp. 294-303 in his original publication or pp. 21-27 in the reprint.

12/ For a detailed study of this question, cf. Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge University Press 1969).

13/ The figures are derived from Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Don F. Neufeld, ed.) (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1960), p. 204.

14/ These conclusions are based on a chart in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Francis D. Nichol, ed.) (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1953), vol. 1, p. 185.

15/ There are still fundamentalists, however, who would believe the opposite. Representative of them is C. G. Ozanne, *The First 7,000 Years: A Study in Bible Chronology* (New York: Exposition Press 1970).

16/ J. J. Finkelstein, The genealogy of the Hamurapi Dynasty, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 20-1:116 (1966).

17/ Finkelstein, pp. 112-113. The basic publication of the Assyrian King List (both the Khorsabad and Seventh-day Adventist Seminary texts) is by I. J. Gelb, Two Assyrian King Lists, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 13-4:209-230 (October 1954).

18/ For a handy discussion and translation, see *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edition, with supplement (James B. Pritchard, ed.) (Princeton University Press 1969), pp. 265-266.

For a more definitive treatment, see Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago: Oriental Institute 1939).

For its relationship to the Genesis genealogies, see Abraham Malamat, King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and biblical genealogies, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88-1:163-173 (January-March 1968).

19/ Examples from this paragraph are mentioned in T. C. Mitchell, Genealogy, *New Bible Dictionary* (J. D. Douglas, ed.) (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1962), p. 457.

20/ Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Digging Up Jericho* (London: Ernest Benn 1957), p. 74.

For a convenient summary of even earlier evidence of man, see Emmanuel Anati, *Palestine Before the Hebrews* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1963).

21/ As scientists and archaeologists debate the interpretation of their data, however, it seems clear that as yet they can make no definitive estimate of this time period either. Authoritative for Seventh-day Adventists, the Ellen G. White statements pertinent to this question will have to be discussed.