

The Biblical Calendar of History

Harold Camping
Camping Construction Company
Oakland, California 94621

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Rebuttal by [Camping](#)

Introduction

Chapters 5 and 11 of the book of Genesis have long been a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to students of the Bible. Inasmuch as they begin with Adam and end with Abraham, they have their roots in creation and their out-reach into the era of the great civilizations of Babylon and Egypt which flourished during Abraham's day. They, therefore, tantalize the scholar who is trying to reconstruct past history. Unfortunately, because a solution to an understanding of these chapters has not been forthcoming, the events embraced within their scope-creation, the fall of man, the Noachian flood-are likewise often looked upon as accounts impervious to clear understanding.

Bishop Ussher's attempt to understand these chronological notices has only worsened matters. His conclusions that Adam's date was 4004 B.C., the flood date was 2349 B.C. and that the Israelites spent 215 years in Egypt, agree neither with the Biblical nor the secular evidence.

But these chapters of Genesis are a part of the Word of God and, therefore, they must be true and dependable if only they can be rightly understood. I would be so presumptuous as to suggest a solution to these chronologies. This solution will be compared with some of the pertinent archeological evidence.

The Clue Phrase "Called His Name"

In Genesis 4 and 5 we read of the birth of Enosh to Seth. Why did God use different language in describing this event in Genesis 4 than in Genesis 5? In Gen. 4 we read, "Seth.... called his name Enosh" (Gen. 4:26). But in chapter 5 the Bible says, "Seth begat Enosh" (Gen. 5:6). Why did God use the phrase "called his name" (ASV) in connection with Enosh's birth in Gen. 4 when he did not in Gen. 5? It is obvious that the phrase "Seth begat Enosh", or "Methuselah begat Lamech" did not insure that Enosh was the immediate son of Seth or Lamech or Methuselah. Many instances can be found where a father-son relationship appears to be indicated and yet other Scriptural evidence points to a more distant ancestry. Matthew 1:1, where Jesus is referred to as the son of David, and David, the son of Abraham, is illustrative.

A more careful examination of the Scriptures reveals why the phrase "*called his name*" which is the Hebrew *qam'*, was used. In every place where this phrase is employed, there can be no doubt of the existing relationship; invariably it is indicative of parent and child. Thus, the Bible says for example, "Abraham called the name of his son Isaac" (Gen. 21:3), "so they called his name Esau" (Gen. 25:25), "a virgin shall conceive and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). In every instance where this "clue" phrase appears one may be certain that an immediate son is being described and not a more remote descendant.

God's use of this "clue" phrase thus assures one that Seth was the immediate son of Adam (Gen. 4:24), Enosh of Seth (Gen. 4:26), and Noah of his father, Lamech (Gen. 5:29).

But what about the rest of the names appearing in these genealogies under discussion? Two are decipherable. Other Biblical evidence shows clearly that Shem was the immediate son of Noah, even though the phrase "called his name" is not used.¹ The Bible shows, too, by other information that when Terah was 130 he became the father of Abram.² But in the case of all of the other names listed in these chapters there is no Biblical evidence of any kind that points to an immediate father-son relationship. In fact, there is internal evidence within these accounts that points to other than immediate father-son relationships.³

God has given us the key that unlocks the hitherto perplexing genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. These chapters are a calendar.

An Ancient Calendar

In further reflection upon this situation, two Biblical notices should be examined. The first is that of Genesis 7 and 8 where the dates of the flood events are referenced to the age of Noah. Thus, Gen. 8:13 records, "in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters, etc". Gen. 7:6 indicates to us that the six hundred years was the age of Noah when the flood came. Could the calendars of ancient peoples have been tied to the life spans of certain individuals?

The second notice is that of the New Testament where Christ declared "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (Matt. 24:34) In this reference Christ is speaking of events that would take place just before His return. He is therefore, insisting "this generation" would continue at least for almost two thousand years, for this much time has now elapsed and all of the events of which he was prophesying in Matthew 24 have not yet happened. As a matter of fact, this is the generation of Jesus Christ. This is 1970 A.D.-the year of our Lord.⁴ The events of today are dated exactly as they were in Noah's day; by reference to the birth day of a person.

Since this method of dating events was practiced in Noah's day, was suggested by Jesus himself, and is actually the practice used today, could not this have been the method described in Genesis 5 and 11? Isn't it possible that these accounts are a calendar giving the name of the patriarch whose life span was the reference point at his period or generation in history? This would make abundant sense for this would provide for continuity and clarity in historical reckoning.

Calendar Confirmation from Egypt

God gives additional evidence to support this reasoning. In Exodus 6 God gives genealogical information concerning some of the descendants of Jacob. The information given does not appear very meaningful to our present day and age. But hidden amongst these verses are three numbers. The first is found in verse 16 where it is stated that Levi's three sons were Gershon, Knath, and Merari, and the years of Levi's life were 137. The second is in the next verse where it says Knath's four sons were Amram, Ighar, Hebron, and Uzziel, and the years of Kohath's life were 133. The third is in verse 20 where it says Amram was married to Jochebed and she bore him Moses and Aaron, and the years of Amram's life were 137. At first reading, it appears that Levi was the great grandfather, Kohath, the grandfather, Amram, the father, and Moses and Aaron, the sons. But is this so? There is no other Biblical evidence that indicates this is the case, and there is no use anywhere in the Bible of the phrase "called his name" in reference to these men which would point to an immediate father-son

relationship. But why would God give the life spans of only three individuals amongst so many?

To solve this puzzle, let us assume that God is giving us the calendar for the Israelitish sojourn in Egypt. One might recall that Jacob came to Egypt with his sons including Levi, and that the Israelites went out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Both Levi and Aaron are mentioned in Exodus 6 and the age of Aaron at the time of Israel's departure from Egypt is given as 83 (Exodus 7:7). It can be shown from the Biblical references that when Levi entered Egypt he was 60³ years of age with the burden of the evidence pointing to 60 years.¹ Since he died at the age of 137, he lived 77 years in Egypt. If this is a calendar giving the names of the reference patriarchs or generations, we would expect that Kohath was a descendant of Levi and was born the year of Levi's death; that Amram was a descendant of Kohath, and that he was born the year of Kohath's death. Aaron in turn was born the year of Amram's death, and was descended from Amram. Let us add these time spans together:

Levi 77 years in Egypt Kohath 137 years in Egypt Amram 133 years in Egypt Aaron 83 years in Egypt or
430 years -Total Time

Turning now to the Biblical record, we discover the following interesting information. "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:40, 41).

God thus shows us clearly that the calendar used to record the passage of time during the Egyptian sojourn was based on the lives of Levi and his descendants, Kohath, Amram and Aaron. This explains, too, the prophecy given to Abraham in Gen. 15:13-16 where he is told his descendants would be oppressed 400 years in a land that was not theirs, and that they would return to their own land in the fourth generation.

Aaron's was the fourth generation.

I believe that God in His wonderful wisdom has given us the key that unlocks the hitherto perplexing genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. These chapters are a calendar. The time was divided into patriarchal periods or generations even as the New Testament period is the generation of Jesus Christ and as the Egyptian sojourn was so divided. Thus, for example, when Methuselah died bringing to an end his generation, a man who was born in the year of Methuselah's death was selected to be the next reigning patriarch or at least the next man for calendar reference. After Methuselah, this was Lamech. None of the conditions of his selection are given except that he had to be a descendant of Methuselah. The Bible indicates that Methuselah was 187 years old when he begat Lamech; i.e., when he was 187 the forefather of Lamech was born to Methuselah (Gen. 5:25). This notice establishes the certainty of Lamech's blood descent from Methuselah by showing where his forefather tied into the life of Methuselah.

The selection of the next patriarch had to include a birth date coinciding with Methuselah's death date to insure a rational history. Had he been born one or more years earlier an overlap would have occurred which would have blurred history. If Lamech had been born one or more years later than Methuselah's

The chronology of history established by Biblical reckoning agrees rather satisfactorily with the archeological evidence of the earliest civilizations.

death, a gap would have occurred which would have confused history. Therefore, when a citizen of the world of that day spoke of an event occurring in the year Methuselah 950, only one year in history answered to this date.

Again, if he spoke of the year Lamech 2 only one year answered to this date and he knew precisely how many years transpired from Methuselah 950 and Lamech 2.

At the beginning men were comparatively scarce. Thus it seems apparent that when Adam died, there was no one born that year who was qualified to become the next reference patriarch. When Seth died 112 years later the same situation prevailed. But when Enosh, the grandson of Adam died 98 years after Seth, a child who was a descendant of Enosh, was born in the same year and this child was eventually named as the next reference patriarch. This was Kenan. Kenan's life span thus became the calendar reference for that period of history. The calendar was continued in this fashion until Methuselah died and Lamech was born.

When Lamech was born he was the one to whom the calendar was referenced. But his descendant who was born the year of Lamech's death and who should have become the next patriarch died in the flood. This can easily be known for Lamech died 5 years before the flood and only Noah and his immediate family survived the flood. Noah, who was an immediate son of Lamech, of necessity became a substitute calendar reference even though he was not born the year of Lamech's death. Thus, the flood events are all dated by the life span of Noah, (Gen. 7:6. II Gen. 8:4, 5, 13, 14).

When Noah died 350 years after the flood the same situation prevailed that existed when Adam died. Few people lived upon the earth and no one met the conditions required to become the next reference patriarch. When Sham died 152 years after Noah, the child Arpachshad, a descendant of Shem, was born in the same year and he became the next patriarch. The calendar was then continued in this same fashion until Terah was born.

When Terah was born he was the reference patriarch. But during his life span God brought into being the nation of Israel through Terah's immediate son, Abram. Thus, the descendant of Terah who was born the year of Terah's death, was outside the Messianic line and outside of God's chronological purposes. God effectively had narrowed men down to the family of Abram. The normal method of calendar keeping was set aside in the absence of patriarchs who qualified. When Abraham died, no descendant of his was born the year of his death. When Isaac, the immediate son of Abraham, died, the same situation prevailed. This was repeated when Jacob, the immediate son of Isaac, died. But in the year that Levi, the immediate son of Jacob died, a descendant of Levi was born whose name was Kohath and he apparently met the qualifications of a reference patriarch. Thus, he continued the calendar line as we have seen. Amram followed Kohath, and Aaron followed Amram. Interestingly it can be shown that in a real sense Aaron's generation continued until Christ's began 1970 years ago.⁶ God has thus given in His Word a complete calendar from creation to Christ.

A chronology beginning with Adam may now be set forth. To tie this genealogical table to our present calendar, synchronization between the Biblical and secular histories should be found. Because so much work has been done in recent times, particularly in relationship to the dating of the kings of Israel, this can be done rather readily. Edwin R. Thiele, in his book, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* established the date of the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom as 931 B.C.⁷ Since Solomon reigned 40 years (I Kings 11:42) and began building the temple in the fourth year of his reign (I Kings 6:1) this building began in the year 967 B.C.. This date in turn can be related to the Exodus because in at least two places God gives a time bridge from the Exodus to the building of the temple. The first is recorded in I Kings 6:1 where 480 years is indicated as the time span between these events. The second can be shown from the chronology of the Hebrew Judges.⁵ A time span of 480 years brings us to 1447 B.C. as the date of the Exodus. If we work back from this date to Adam, we arrive at the date for Adam as 11013 B.C. The key dates are as follows:

Creation of Adam 11013 B.C., Seth born 10883 B.C., 10778-9873 B.C. Enosh's generation, 9873-8963 B.C. Kenan's generation, 9873-8963 B.C. Mahalel's generation, 9873-8963 B.C., Jared's generation, 8068-7106 B.C. Enoch's generation, 7106-6741 B.C. Methuselah's generation, Lamech born 6741-5772, Noah born 5772 B.C., Flood 5590 B.C., Arpachshad's generation 4990-4989 B.C., Shelah's generation 4488-4050 B.C., Eber's generation 4050-3617 B.C., Peleg's generation 3617-3153 B.C. Ben's generation 3153-2914 B.C., 2914-2675 B.C., Serug's generation 2675-2445 B.C., Nahor's generation 2445-2297 B.C., Torah born 2297 B.C., Abram born 2167 B.C., Isaac born 2067 B.C., Jacob born 2007 B.C., Entrance into

Egypt 1877 B. C. Exodus 1447 B.C., Foundation of temple laid 967 B.C. , Division of Kingdom 931 B. C.

The First Civilization

The development of a Biblical chronology beginning with Adam is interesting, but will it hold up when compared with the known facts of secular history? To ascertain this, the earliest civilization of antiquity will next be examined to determine its location and the time of its emergence.

The threshold of history appears to be located in the area of the present nation of Iraq. Albright writes:⁹

"Archeological research has established that there is no focus of civilization in the earth that can begin to compete in antiquity and activity with the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean and the region immediately to the east of it The Obeidan is the earliest clearly defined culture of Babylonia, where we find its remains underlying nearly all the oldest cities of the country, such as, Ur, Erech, Lagash, Eridu, etc. This proves that the occupation of the marshlands of Babylonia by human settlers came rather late in history of the irrigation culture, probably not far from 3700 B.C."

Thus the archeological evidence shows that the location of the first civilization after the flood was in the Mesopotamia Valley, and this agrees exactly with the Bible for it reports the first cities were Babylon, Erech, Nineveh, etc. (Gen. 10:10, 11).

The date of 3700 B.C. suggested by Albright is apparently satisfactory to most archeologists. M. B. Rowton writes that in Uruk, one of the most ancient Mesopotamia sites, the earliest level of monumental buildings is that of the level known as Uruk V. He concludes⁵⁹ "the beginning of Uruk V can plausibly be dated 3500 B.C." These dates of 3500 or 3700 B.C. are estimates arrived at by starting at a more clearly defined historical point and allowing a reasonable period of time for each level of occupation prior to this. Thus, the archeological evidence appears to indicate that prior to about 3700 B.C. there was no substantial culture anywhere in the world. About 3700-3500 B.C. the first great civilization began to be formed in the plains of Sumer in the land of Babylon, Erech, Ur, etc.

How does this time compare with the Biblical chronology? In Genesis 10 the notice is given that the first building activity after the flood is that of Nimrod the beginning of whose kingdom was Babel, Erech, and Aecad, all of them in the land of Shinar (Genesis 10:10). But when did Nimrod come upon the scene? His genealogical descent is that of Noah, Ham, Cush, Nimrod. (Gen. 10:1, 6, 8). The Bible offers no timetable for this side of the family tree but it does offer precise information regarding another branch, that of Noah, Shem, Arpachshad, and Shelah. If the genealogical statements of the Bible are studied one might note that very often two branches of the tree are offered. One is that of the descendants leading eventually to Christ and about which precise timetables are given as we have seen. The second is the genealogical descent of that side of the family which turned away from God. It can be shown that the timetable of these two lines run roughly parallel." It thus may be assumed that Ham and Shem were contemporaries (they obviously were inasmuch as they were brothers), that Arpachshad and Cush were nearly contemporaries, and that Shelah and Nimrod were probably men of the same period of history. Thus, if Shelah's date is known, it may be surmised that Nimrod's was close to the same date.

Shelah's date by Biblical reckoning was that of 4050 B.C. to 3617 B.C. Nimrod then must have lived about this time. The Bible would thus suggest a date of about 3900 to 3617 for the founding of the great cities of the Mesopotamia Valley. Thus the date suggested by the evidence of archeology (3700-3500) accords very well with the Biblical statement.

It is of more than passing interest in this connection that the name Nimrod has left its mark on the Mesopotamia Valley. The great archeologist George Rawlinson writes:¹²

"The remarkable ruin generally called Ahkerhuf, which lies a little to the south-west of Baghdad, is known to many as the "Tel-Nimrod"; the great dam across the Tigris below Mosul is the 'Sohr-elNimrud'; one of the chief of the buried cities in the same neighborhood is called 'Nimrud' simply; and the name of 'Ilirs.Nimrod' attaches to the grandest mass of ruins in the lower country".

The Confusion of Tongues

The next bit of history that should be interesting to investigate is the event of the tower of Babel. Is there any secular evidence that relates to the account of this confusion of tongues as set forth in Genesis 11? There is, indeed.

It might first of all be noted that the account of Genesis 11 indicates that prior to this time in history all men spoke one language. Moreover, the leading civilization was that of these people who dwelt in the plains of Shinar or Sumer. Their desire to be the one great civilization of the world prompted the building

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of this great tower which in turn brought on God's interference with their plans so that they were forced to separate into various nations.

As has already been shown, the first great civilization of the world as revealed by secular evidence was that which sprang forth in the Mesopotamia Valley. The time of the beginning of the second important civilization of antiquity could be of real significance. Presumably, it would have begun very shortly after the tower of Babel. The event of the tower of Babel can be known to have occurred during the generation of Peleg's for in his days the earth was divided. (Gen. 10:25). Peleg's generation was dated 3153 B.C. to 2914 B.C. Therefore, one would expect no important civilizations other than Babylonia to have an antiquity greater than about 3150 B.C.

Egypt Becomes a Great Civilization

All archeological evidence points to Egypt as the second great civilization to appear. While there was a primitive culture in Egypt prior to the first Dynasty, the uniting of all of Egypt under Pharaoh Menes to form the First Dynasty was the signal for a major burst in the arts of civilization. Albright writes:¹³

"It is now certain that the level of Egyptian culture remained considerably below that of Mesopotamia until the First Dynasty, when under strong indirect influence from the Euphrates valley, it forged ahead of the latter in a breath taking spurt".

Interestingly, the new civilization of Egypt beginning with the First Dynasty was patterned after the Babylonia (Mesopotamia) culture. Albright continues¹⁴

"The close of the predynastic Age and the beginning of the Thinite (period of first two dynasties) period witnessed a sudden burst in the arts of civilization. This seems to have been connected in some way with an increase of cultural influence from Asia, since there are numerous exact parallels between Mesopotamia and Egyptian culture at this time, the former being demonstrably older and more original in nearly every instance."

The date of the beginning of the First Dynasty under Menes is calculated to be somewhere between 2800 B.C. and 3100 B.C. The early archeologists such as Breasted dated his reign at about 3400 B.C. As new archeological evidence was uncovered this date was moved forward to about 3000 B.C. Albright believes 2850 B.C. is a good estimate.¹⁵ William C. Hayes suggests 3100 B.C. is the best date presently available." Considering the above information one is struck by the fact that prior to about 3100 B.C. to 2850 B.C. only one civilization of consequence existed in the world. That was the nation of Babylonia on the plains of Shinar. Then at that time in a sudden burst of progress Egypt grew to become a second great civilization, a civilization

patterned after the first. And these dates are in almost exact agreement with the Biblical date for the Tower of Babel. Surely, the confusion of tongues as recorded in Genesis 11 sent thousands of people skilled in all the arts and crafts of Mesopotamia to Egypt and elsewhere. Thus, accord can be seen between the sacred and the secular records by this indirect evidence of the timetable of the civilizations of antiquity.

Writing and the Tower of Babel

It might be noted, too, that writing had its beginning in Mesopotamia and may be related to the confusion of tongues. Sir Leonard Wooley writes:¹⁷ "All the archeological evidence seems to prove that true writing was first developed in southern Mesopotamia". The timing for this event is given as 3500 to 3000 B.C. Gelb concludes: "the date of the earliest Sumarian writing should be set tentatively at about 3100 B.C."

The confusion of tongues in Sumer some time in the period between 3150-2900 B.C. could well have been the catalyst that produced writing. Before this dramatic civilization-splitting event all was secure. Only one language was spoken in all the world. Verbal communication was adequate and dependable. But then came this fearful event that shook the very foundations of this great civilization. Men could no longer understand each other. There must be a better way. The application of the spoken word to clay tablets would provide insurance that this kind of a happening would never totally destroy a culture again. The clay tablets would always prove to be the reference point. One surely can see the possibility if not the probability of this connection between writing and the Tower of Babel.

Conclusion

We thus see that the chronology of history established by Biblical reckoning agrees rather satisfactorily with the archeological evidence of the earliest civilizations. The Biblical timetable is, of course, the most reliable for it is God's Word. If we have properly interpreted it, it should make possible a far more definitive analysis of the secular evidence than ever before. It should also provide a dependable framework in which to understand dating evidence such as that offered by radiometric isotopes like carbon ¹⁴.

Hopefully, a perspective of history has been set forth that shows that answers are potentially forthcoming when we begin with the Biblical framework. The concept of a 13000 year old world, which began to be repopulated again after the flood some 7000 years ago, and which 1500 years later had grown to a point which allowed the spawning of the first great cities, surely makes much more sense than that of mankind being around for hundreds or even thousands of milleniums, and then becoming a cohesive city civilization only in the last 5500 years. Furthermore, the apparent possibility of the end of the age occurring in our time also accords far better with the shorter timetable.

Admittedly, the first purpose of the Bible is not to be a textbook of science or history. It is fundamentally a presentation of Cod's grace revealed through Jesus Christ, But when the Bible does speak in any field of learning, it does so with great care, accuracy, and authority. Three reasons might be advanced for this: (1) these subjects are often an integral part of the plan of salvation; (2) they are part of God's message to man; and (3) by reason of His very nature God is accurate when He speaks. Therefore, it possibly has much more to offer than many have supposed. I hope that others will be encouraged to build upon the suggestions offered in this presentation.

REFERENCES

¹Compare Genesis 7:13, 9:18 and I Peter 3:20.

²Compare Genesis 11:27 ff, Gen. 12:4 and Acts 7:4

³From example: Con. 10:21 describes Shem as "the father of all children of Eber", though Eber is removed from Shem by several generations. (cf. Gen. 11:10-10)

⁴The fact that Jesus was born a few years earlier (probably 7 B.C.) does not diminish the force of this argument,

for 1970 AD. is in principle related only to Christ's birth date and not to any other.

⁵Camping, Harold. Adam, When (Not yet published) Ch. 3

⁶Ibid., ch. 6

⁷Thiele, Edwin R., *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Eerdmans, Rev. edition 1965, pg. 53, 54. Much additional support can be given to the accuracy of this date from the reigns of three of the greatest of the Egyptian Pharaohs Sesostri III, Tothosis III and Bameses II. A discussion of this is, of course, beyond the scope of this article.

⁸Camping, Harold; eh. 5

⁹Albright, William Foxwell; *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Doubleday & Co. Inc. 1957, pg. 32

¹⁰Rowton, M. B., in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge University Press, 1964, pg. 57, 58.

¹¹Camping, Harold, ch. 7

¹²Rawlinson, George, *Egypt and Babylon*, John W. Lovell Co., pg. 9.

¹³Albright, pg. 142

¹⁴Ibid., pg. 157

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Hayes, William C., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 1964, pg. 4

¹⁷Woolley, Sir Leonard, *The Beginnings of Civilization*, The New York American Library, 1965, pg. 364

¹⁸Gelb, *A Study of Writing*, pg. 63

Science in Christian Perspective

CRITIQUE I of "The Biblical Calendar of History"

Edwin M. Yamiusehi
Miami University

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Mr. Harold Camping, the author of "The Biblical Calendar of History," is to be commended for his attempt to solve some very difficult chronological problems in the early chapters of Genesis. Indeed, the chronological problems of the pre-patriarchal age are so complex that they even deter specialists. Mr. Camping makes some intriguing suggestions. His layman's background, however, has unfortunately resulted in "tunnel vision." That is, in using reference works in support of his thesis, he is unaware of evidence which contradicts his construction.

First of all, it is his contention that whereas the formula "A Begat B" or "B was the son of A" does not necessarily mean a father-son relationship, the formula "A called his name B" does mean this. This certainly must have been the case in some genealogies which are selective rather than comprehensive. His second, more controversial suggestion is that the biblical account used the lives of certain individuals as "ancient calendars."

Mr. Camping's layman's background has unfortunately resulted in "tunnel vision."

According to Camping's reconstruction of Exodus 6:16-20, the passage would not mean, as it would seem to appear, that Levi was the father of Kohath, who was the father of Amram, who was the father of Aaron and Moses. He understands this passage to mean that when Levi died at 137, a descendant who was born that same year, namely Kohath, was chosen to be the next reference person for the assumed biblical calendar. When Kohath died, another descendant who was born in the year of Kohath's death, namely Amram, was then chosen, etc. As a result of some other computations, the author is able to come up with the exact figure of 430 years, which was the duration of Israel's stay in Egypt (Exodus 12:40).

There are several objections to this reconstruction:

(1) His figure of Levi's age as 60 at the time of his entry into Egypt is based on the conjecture that Levi was 21 years older than Joseph.

(2) His system of a "biblical calendar" based on the choice of an individual who was born in the year of a predecessor's death is unattested in any ancient calendaric system.' One may argue, to be sure, that the biblical system was unique, but the later calendaric reckoning of the period of Israelite kings can be coordinated with the regnal systems of the Near East.

(3) His application of the system is not consistent. The assumed mode of dating, according to Camping, does not apply during the period of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

(4) The systematic application of his system yields results which are difficult to integrate with the known archaeological and historical data.

(a) Camping's chronology results in the dating of Adam to 11,013 B.C. This would place Adam in what is the early Mesolithic or Middle Stone Age in the Near East, that is, the period in which men were making the transition from food-gathering tribes to food-raising communities.

The dates for the Mesolithic cultures have been established by radio-carbon dates. Radio-carbon dates may be subject to reappraisal but cannot be dismissed because of minor discrepancies.² Unless one is prepared to dismiss all pre-Mesolithic or even pre-Neolithic individuals, as some are willing to do,³ as pre-Adamic hominids, the late date for Adam of 11,013 B.C. is not acceptable.⁴

(b) Camping's chronology places the Flood at 49904989 B.C. It is well known that Leonard Wolley found a thick deposit of flood-borne sediment at Ur in the Obeid level c. 4,000 B.C. Further investigation, however, demonstrated that there were other flood deposits from Kish, F'ara, and Nineveh, but these did not all come from the same period.⁵ Mallowan has recently suggested that the Flood should be identified with the flood deposit at Tell Fara (ancient Shurupak, home of Ziusudra) which is dated c. 2700 B.C.⁶ Ziusudra was the hero of the Sumerian story of the Flood, as Utnapishtim was the hero of the Babylonian story of the Flood contained in the Gilgamesh Epic.⁷ Since almost all scholars agree that the Babylonian and the biblical accounts are so similar that they must refer to the same deluge, one of the arguments for a date of 2700 B.C. would be the link with Gilgamesh, who was the king of Uruk about this time. The flood episode, however, is not integrally bonded to the Gilgamesh Epic and may have come from a much older period.

The numerous flood stories collected by James Frazer from the Near East, from Greece, from South Asia, from the Pacific, from North and South America, etc. seem to point to a deluge of great antiquity. Albright believes that the Flood story goes back to the last Ice Age. "in one form or another, at least ten or twelve thousand years and, for all we know, much further."⁸

(c) The rest of Camping's chronology which places Abraham in the 21st cent., the entrance into Egypt in the 19th cent., and the Exodus in the 15th cent does not differ from the chronology adopted by most conservative evangelicals in America. There are, however, problems in correlating this scheme with archaeological data. See the article on "Chronology of the Old Testament," by K. A. Kitchen and T. C. Mitchell in the *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids. 1962).

(d) Camping quotes Albright and Rowton to suggest that the first civilization after the Flood was established in Mesopotamia about 3700-3500 B.C. To say, "Thus the archeological evidence appears to indicate that prior to about 3700 B.C. there was no substantial culture anywhere in the world," is to view "culture" in a very narrow sense. The earliest Neolithic settlement in the world at Jericho, dated to 7,000 B.C., yielded various elements of "culture": vessels, ornaments, cult objects, figurines, a defensive wall, a massive tower 9 meters in diameter with an interior staircase, sickles, etc.⁹

The Obeid (or Ubaid) phase c. 4000-3500 and the Uruk (Ereah, Warka) phase c. 3500-3200 were preceded by the Halaf, Samarra, and Hassuna cultures back to 5000 B.C. with considerable continuity.¹⁰

e) Camping would date the confusion of tongues at the building of the tower of Babel c. 3150. As he observes, this is about the date that writing was invented by the Sumerians. He is also correct in noting that scholars believe that Mesopotamia provided the stimulus for the development of writing in Egypt. His assumption that writing was invented only after the confusion of tongues at Babel, since it would not be necessary before this, may appear attractive at first sight, but must be rejected upon examination. The fact that there are over 2,000 tribes today speaking as many dialects, yet without writing, indicates that men may have spoken various languages long before the invention of writing. Place names in Sumerian, the oldest written language, are non-Sumerian and presumably pre-Sumerian (cf. American Indian names for some of our states).¹¹ Glotto-chronological indications which extrapolate differences in related languages back to their common proto-language also indicate a great antiquity for many of our languages.¹²

For those who are interested in a well-informed attempt to deal with the complex chronological problems of the pre-patriarchal period, I would suggest K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago, 1966), pp. 35-41.

Footnotes

¹Richard Parker, *The Calendars of Ancient Egypt* (Chicago, 1950); Richard Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C-AD. 75* (Providence, 1956); Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, 1964); W. C. Hayes, N. B. Rowton, Frank H. Stubbings, *Chronology* [Cambridge Ancient History, revised edition, fascicle I (Cambridge, 1962)]; P. van der Meer, *The Chronology of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt* (Leiden, 1963); Robert W. Ehrich (ed.), *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology* (Chicago, 1965).

²W. F. Libby, "The Accuracy of Radiocarbon Dates," *Antiquity*, 37 (1963). 213-19; H. S. Smith, "Egypt and C-14 Dating," *Antiquity*, 38 (1964), 32-37.

³Cf. Stanley D. Walters, "The Development of Civilization in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JASA*. 17 (1965), 68-73; cf. the letters in *JASA*, 18 (1966), 31-32.

⁴For the earliest possible date of Adam, see James O. Bnswell III, "Homo habilis: Implications for the Creationist," *JASA*, 17 (1965), 88-92.

⁵John Bright "Has Archaeology Found Evidence of the Flood?" *Biblical Archaeologist*, 5 (1942), 55-62.

⁶M. Mallowan, "Noah's Flood Reconsidered," *Iraq*, 26 (1964), 62-82; R. Raikes, "The Physical Evidence for Noah's Flood," *Iraq*, 28 (1966), 52-63, argues that more systematic soundings are necessary to correlate flood deposits from the several Mesopotamian sites. *Christianity Today*, (Sept. 12, 1969), p. 48, reports the recovery of wood dated c. 2,000 B.C. from a glacier on Mount Ararat.

⁷Cf. Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1963).

⁸W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Garden City, N.Y., 1968), p. 99.

⁹Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Digging up Jericho* (N.Y., 1957). Cf. Robert J. Bradwood, *The Near East and the Foundations for Civilization* (Eugene, Ore., 1962).

¹⁰Cf. Ann Perkins, *The Comparative Archeology of Early Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1959); Jacquetsa Hawkes, *Prehistory: The Beginnings of Civilization* (N.Y., 1962); J. Mellaart, *The Earliest Settlements in Western Asia* [Cambridge Ancient History, revised edition, fascicle 59] (Cambridge, 1967); M. E. L. Mallowan, *The Development of Cities* [Cambridge Ancient History, revised edition, fascicle 58, parts 1 and 2] (Cambridge, 1967).

¹¹ N. Kramer, *The Sumerians* (Chicago, 1963).

¹²W F. Albright and T. O. Lambdin, *The Evidence of Language* [Cambridge Ancient History, revised edition, fascicle 54] (Cambridge, 1966).

Science in Christian Perspective

CRITIQUE II of "The Biblical Calendar of History"

Harold C. Stigers
24 Cheyenne Court
St. Louis, Missouri 63122

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Mr. Camping shows commendable effort in his comments relative to the chronology of antiquity as set out in the book of Genesis. That his solution does not settle the vexing problem may be said to be somewhat obvious since he follows in a long succession of those in both the liberal and conservative camps of Biblical scholarship. In my proposed commentary on Genesis, I, too, must acknowledge that the Biblical, archaeological and scientific data do not provide a conclusive answer.

Is chronology important for its own sake? I have concluded that such is not so, that there are other

A priori assumptions ... obstruct and confuse. The chronology of antiquity is still indecisively known.

more important reasons involved for including the time notes. I feel, therefore, that time spent in consideration of Genesis should be put upon other subjects such as the message itself.

But there are certain things contained in Mr. Camping's presentation which can and need be considered.

1. The interpretation of qara' made in the early part of his article, that its use relative to children connotes an actual son, not a distant descendant, cannot be sustained from Scripture. He repudiates the use in Matthew of the designation of son being applied to grandsons. But in the genealogy of Christ, Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah are omitted between Joram and Uzziah, but Joram is said to have "begotten" Uzziah. Now this structuring and use of "begotten" may be objected to because this is in the New Testament and not in chapters 5 and 11 of Genesis under discussion by Camping. But God is the author of the whole Bible, and the word, "beget," whether Old Testament or New Testament, must be understood in the same way. The word does indeed, then, show a usage to which Mr. Camping objects.

But the proof of the New Testament usage may be had from Genesis itself. Gen. 46:12 describes the sons of Judah; these as well as the sons of Levi, Simeon, Reuben, Issachar, and Zehulun are called (v 15) the sons of Leah, but only these six are her actual sons (Geo. 29:32-35; 30:1820). Facts and language seem to be at variance here, but let us remember that cultural and mental images differ from one people to another, yet not so much that one cannot understand what is meant. Gen. 46:15 must mean that descendants (Heb. sons) are designated, actual grandsons, connoted under the designation sons.

The significance of all this for Gen. 5, 11 respecting qara' is that it has nothing at all to do with begetting, only naming a child. To imbue qara' with a technical meaning as Camping does, goes against history and language usage, which appears from any investigation of the use of qara' in any concordance. Exegesis here is quite faulty. In his footnote three there seems to be an admission that qara' cannot be interpreted as Mr. Camping would hold, since non-son descendants are called sons of Shem. The position Camping advances then is to be rejected, as well as the use of it as the basis for constructing a calendar.

2. The use made of dating time by the years of an individual is pressed too far by Mr. Camping. This is his "calendar" based on his special interpretation of qara'. Now it is not denied that dating was done by regnal years of the kings in Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as in Palestine in the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. But what is denied is that the Bible requires us to hold that this is true of the persons of Gen. 5, 11 or chapter 10. Nor can we know that these were kings in any way, or even if any of these are to be included in the Sumerian King List or by Berossos.¹

It cannot be a support to his calendrical view to advance Jesus' words in Matt. 24.34 regarding "this generation." Buswell² has shown that "generation," from the Greek genea, does not in Jesus' vocabulary mean "generation," but "race," "people," so that not chronology but an enduring people is in view. Again, exegesis is not correct.

3. Respecting the construction of his calendar as based on the chronological data of the descendants of Levi in Egypt (Ex. 6), the time of 430 years is artificial, and erroneous in the assumption that the parent died the year the successor was born. For this to happen three times is quite odd indeed! Such a construction likewise does not fit the pattern of chapter 5 of Genesis. Mr. Camping does not explain this switch. His construction indicates only that these years do add up to the total of 430 years. As a variant view, some have held that the 430 years of Ex. 12:4041 include the "sojourn" of the patriarchs in Canaan, and construct it on textual evidence³ including the fact Jochebed would have to be over 250 years old, if the stop in Egypt were 430 years.⁴

It may be said, then, that no such calendar as is proposed exists in Scripture.

4. Mr. Camping proceeds to construct a chronology on this interpretation. Can it be justified on the basis of present Biblical, archaeological, anthropological and scientific knowledge? This writer does not believe it can, on the following criteria:

a. An examination of his time table indicates a creation date of 11,013 B.C. for the origin of Adam, arrived at by adding together the lengths of the lives of the prediluvians of chapter 5 but starting with the

130 years of Adam's age when Seth was born. This is an inconsistency, so his creation date is here in error. But if his idea of "successor" is correct, why does Camping not use the age of the parent at the birth of the child? A gratuitous use of his data gleaned from Ex. 6 has forced him to do so, when it can be shown that such meaning as he derives is not absolute.

b. Archaeological and anthropological data to date do not in any way support so late a date as 4990-4989 B.C. for the Biblical flood. No scholar competent in study of the Mesopotamian flood data will adopt such a view. It is quite common knowledge that Vollev's deep flood strata at LTr came in the course of cultural data existing both before and after it, so that this must be construed as a local flood.

c. Anthropology itself is not conclusive. There must be a definite change in the fauna and flora of the world subsequent to the flood. This writer was informed by a colleague more knowledgeable than he concerning the positing by anthropologists of a significant change around the world in the fauna as occurring c. 40,000 - 38,000 B.C. The thing lacking, he stated, to form a possible, conclusive proof, was citation of a world-wide change in the flora at the same period. But no anthropologist would possibly place Adam's creation as late as is done by Camping.

d. Science itself cannot agree that the flood could occur at the late date suggested. Carbon 14 dates are receiving wide-spread acceptance, and although there is scepticism in some quarters regarding their accuracy, yet there is good harmony for the past which is datable by actual chronology systems of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Therefore, where carbon 14 dates have been obtained for dates earlier than 3000 B.C., which is more or less the beginning of datable history, we may accept with reasonable credibility these dates for earlier happenings not otherwise datable.

e. Archaeological data for the Mesopotamian area show a continuous occupation for that area from before the date posited for the flood by Camping. It is not merely spots here and there but *spots in many areas*, with more coming to light, in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Transcaucasia, India, Egypt and Europe.

f. The correlation with the emergence of civilization can be no proof of his calendar because none of the names of Bible history emerge in a datable historical context of Mesopotamia, where civilization emerged first. Any appeal to authorities establishes only that such civilizations appeared. If one should date the Tower of Babel of Gen. 11 at 3153 B.C., when civilization using writing was already advanced and the Sumerian language was already one of an untold number, this latter fact alone invalidates placing Babel at this time. His usage of archaeological data is contrary to fact, and he is forcing it into an a priori mold. This is not good scholarship.

Regarding Egypt archaeological data do not fit his date of the tower of Babel. Upper Egypt had received Mesopotamian influences earlier than this, as well as Lower Egypt (The Delta) from Palestine. Since Mesopotamia-Iran was the origin of peoples and the diffusion is from there through Palestine to Egypt, and since it can be shown there was a time lag of about a thousand years in the spread of early culture up the Nile, to place the Tower of Babel so late is erroneous. Thus again there is to be seen that there is a forcing of a system into a previous opinion, and thus the calendar of Mr. Camping must be rejected.

In summary one can say that efforts need to be made to correlate all data, to give due weight to each part, but that a priori assumptions and forced constructions do not advance knowledge. Rather they obstruct and confuse. The chronology of antiquity is still indecisively known.

Footnotes

¹Cf. I. Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past* (Princeton: 1963), pp. 29, 30.

²J. O. Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: 1963) Vol. 2, p. 399, 400.

³Jas. Fergusson, *An Exposition of the Epistles of Paul* (Evansville, IN: no date), p. 58.

⁴Chas. J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (London: 1863), p. 61.

HAROLD CAMPING REBUTTAL

Harold Camping
Camping Construction Company
Oakland, California 94621

From: *JASA* 22 (September 1970: 106-107)

To attempt to present in one paper a subject as potentially controversial as a solution to the Biblical chronologies is difficult enough. To do so as a layman makes it well nigh impossible. The comments of the reviewers are deeply appreciated. Their questions, as well as many more, are expected, for it is impossible to analyze all of the implications of this subject in one article. Even in trying to answer the questions which have been so fairly raised, space limitations require much summarizing and will of necessity raise many new questions.

1. The conjecture that Levi was 21 years older than Joseph is not without Biblical warrant. The following timetable is the result of careful analysis of the Biblical evidence. It should satisfy all the requirements of the language of Genesis 29 to 47. It also fits the Biblical Calendar under discussion.

Jacob arrived in Haran when he was 60 years old. He worked 7 years for Rachel and was then married to Rachel and Leah. He was then 67 years old. Reuben was born to Leah the following year when Jacob was 70 years old. Simeon was born next to Leah when Jacob was 69 years old. Levi was born next to Leah when Jacob was 70 years old. Jacob finished his second seven year contract for Rachel when he was 74 years old. He worked for wages for 20 years. In the 17th year of this period Joseph was born. Jacob was 91 years old. At the end of this 20 year period Joseph was weaned and Jacob wished to leave Haran. He was 94 years old. He worked six years longer for his flocks and left Haran when he was 100 years old.

2. Consistency in Biblical Calendar keeping is not to be necessarily looked for in a rigid system but in the provision of adequate truth. The Bible provides the only ancient account of history that has all mankind in view. God tied his timetable to believers, probably because believers (and how to become one) and their relationship to God is the major theme of the Bible. (The historical setting in which the spiritual record is cast is also God's Word and is, therefore, equally trustworthy.)

Therefore, there had to be exceptions in the timekeeping detail to accommodate God's dealings with the believers. This was the situation during the days of the patriarchs. Later on, after the exodus, and especially when Israel became a monarchy, the new nation of Israel adopted customs from other nations which included timekeeping methods. These became a part of the Biblical record. Thus, the need for the earlier method of calendar keeping was no longer required.

God did provide the notice that 480 years transpired from the exodus to the beginning of temple building under Solomon (I Kings 6:1). Thus, the rather chaotic, confused time period of the judges was not allowed to contribute to a breakdown in chronology.

3. Correlating the "Biblical Calendar" with secular evidence of early man appears impossible for the period before the days of written history. This is due to the fact that the Carbon 14 dating method provides the dominant means of dating this early period.

But Carbon 14 dating exists virtually in a vacuum prior to the advent of written history. There is no other

reliable record presently available by which the accuracy of this method can be ascertained prior to the last 5000 years of earth's history. (That is, except for the Biblical record.) And the Carbon 14 method has within it at least one condition that suggests the possibility of serious errors in timekeeping.

The Carbon 14 method assumes that on a worldwide basis the rate at which new C14 atoms are formed equals the rate at which existing C14 atoms disintegrate. Thus, the world-wide inventory of C14 atoms should be relatively constant in quantity. Since it is assumed that C14 production has continued without major change for a duration of time many times longer than the half life of these atoms, it appears reasonable to expect such equilibrium.

But the evidence suggests otherwise. R. E. Liogenfelter sums up this puzzle rather well when he writes that there is a strong indication that the present natural production rate of C14 atoms exceeds the natural decay rate by as much as 25%.² The implications of this conclusion are too complex for this present discussion. It might be pointed out, however, that this could indicate that the present worldwide C14 inventory of C14 atoms is only about 75% full and is still increasing. This in turn could require that radio-carbon dates of apparent great antiquity should be sharply reduced (even though the evidence appears to indicate the reverse is true for the first couple of milleniums prior to 250 BC.³).

It might be noted, too, that other secular information is available that appears to correlate with the Biblical Calendar. For example, nineteen of the elements in ocean solution are found in such minute quantities that it is estimated that they have a residency of less than 1000 years.+ That is, they are found in the oceans in total amounts that would have obtained if presently calculated continental weathering rates had continued for less than 1000 years. This is precisely what might be expected if differential weathering had occurred for a longer period (say, 13000 years).

4. In the light of the worldwide, mountain height, characteristics of the Noachian flood (Genesis 6 & 7) we would hardly be looking for evidence of the flood in the Mesopotamia Valley. Rather, should not far greater correlation be seen between the flood and such evidence as that, for example, which might relate to the sediments found on the continental shelves? K. O. Emery writes that "sediments on about 70% of the world's continental shelves have been laid down in the past 15000 years"⁵ (Shouldn't these radiocarbon years be adjusted to 7000 actual years?) The paucity of sediments on the ocean floor also becomes especially interesting in view of a possible 13000 year timetable. Alhright's suggestion that the flood story goes back to at least ten or twelve thousand years looks quite valid since these are radio-carbon years.

5. The use of the phrase "substantial culture" in this discussion is indeed assuming too restrictive a view of "culture". It would be better to use some other phrase such as "kingdom of cities". In any event, prior to about 3700 B.C. there was no civilization that even approached the Sumerian's ability to build a cohesive nation such as they developed in Mesopotamia.

6. The existence of non-Sumerian place names in the Sumerian language and the existence of more than two thousand languages today without any written language is not contrary to the suggestion of a tower of Babel-induced confusion of languages. If God introduced many languages at that time, probably only the most highly civilized people, those remaining in Mesopotamia (the Sumerians), would have had the ability to invent writing. They surely could have used nonSumerian names as they made contact with peoples speaking other languages.

Footnotes

¹The book of Maceabees (2 Mac. 7:27) suggests the Jewish child was weaned at the age of three years.

²*Review of Geophysics*, 1963, pg. 51 by H. E. Lingenfelter. See also Libby, W. F., 'Radio Carbon Dating', 1955, p. 7. H. E. Suess also writes about this in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*, Vol. 70, 1965, pg. 5946.

³Radiocarbon - Published by the *American Journal of Science*, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Vol. 8.1966, pg. 539.

⁴*Chemical Oceanography*, Edited by J. P. Riley & C Skirruw, Vol. 1, pg. 164 Academic Press, London and New York, 1965.

⁵"The Continental Shelves" by K. O. Emery in *Scientific American*, Sept. 1969, pg. 112.
