

# BIBLE STUDY

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## The Importance of a Sound Biblical Chronology

Answers

This lesson examines the order of events in the Old Testament leading up to the birth of Christ. Having a sound knowledge of these events, and the order in which they occurred, provides a solid foundation for our overall understanding of the Bible and God's eternal plan for mankind.

Similarly, as we begin to get deeper into our study of Genesis, it is necessary that we have a good understanding of the order of these events and that we are aware of the controversies surrounding Biblical Chronology. One additional thing that will help us in this understanding is having some knowledge about world history and the events going on outside of the biblical story as well.

Many believe the Old Testament is mostly—if not all—fiction, and since the vast majority of the Old Testament was written long after the actual time of the events, they believe that the events themselves were primarily "created" in order to teach a moral lesson, or to explain in some way something previously not understood. Our task as believers is to prove otherwise. We can best do this by tying together events in world history with an understanding of cultures, nations, languages, and customs and the archaeology unearthed thus far.

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*Let's begin this task by considering the following questions:*

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1. Define the Usher Chronology, what are its weaknesses and strengths?
  - a. ANSWER: Bishop Usher from Ireland constructed a timeline, a chronology of Biblical events, working backward through time to determine how old the earth is, e.g., what day and date it was created, when Noah's flood occurred, etc.. He concluded that God began creation on a Sunday evening just after sunset, and that the flood occurred in 4004 BC. From there he built a chronology of biblical events leading up the birth of Christ. The Chronology was held in high regard until the late 1800s when mainstream theologians began to realize that there were many errors in the chronology, which put it at odds with historical evidence.
2. Current history can easily document a period of how many years back in time?
  - a. ANSWER: History from 6,000 BC to the present is well documented.
3. What is the Göbekli Tepe?
  - a. ANSWER: It is a temple discovered in Turkey in 2008. Considered to be 12,000 years old, it clearly predates any flood date provided by Usher.
4. What is the significance of the Tel Dan Stele and the Mesha Stele?
  - a. ANSWER: The Mesha Stele is the most extensive inscription ever recovered that refers to the kingdom of Israel, and it is the earliest record of the House of David and the Kingdom of Judah. The Tel Dan Stele, discovered in 1993-94 is the first record of David as King outside of the Bible.
5. Now let's practice, using a combination of world history and the biblical text, to establish a date. Read Luke 3:1-23. From this passage and our knowledge of Roman history, see if you can calculate the year of Christ's birth.
  - a. ANSWER: History tells us that Caesar Augustus died in 14 AD and that Tiberius then became emperor. Therefore, if Christ was 30 in the 14th year of Tiberius' reign, then Christ would have been 30 in 28 AD (i.e., 14 AD plus 14 years of Tiberius' reign). This would mean that Christ was born in 2 BC. However, the Greek translation of Luke's text is more accurately read as "30-something" (vs. "30"), so his likely birth would have probably occurred closer to 6 BC.
6. Read 1 Kings 6:1. What date was the Temple built, and when did Solomon's reign begin?
  - a. ANSWER: The Temple was built 480 years after the Exodus and in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. So, in order to establish a date for this, we need to have a date for the Exodus. Two dates for the Exodus are proposed, since no one has determined with precise certainty when it occurred. The "early" date for the Exodus is 1446 BC, and the "late" date is 1250 BC. I personally hold to the early date. However, using either of these two Exodus dates, we can arrive at the Temple being built in 966 BC. Interestingly, the late date approach arrives at approximately the same date, however, it uses 300 years, not 480 years. The late date approach bases this on the fact that they believe the 480 is symbolic of 40 generations, and that an actual generation was 25 years old. Thus, 300 years after the Exodus, the Temple would be built, based on a 1250 BC Exodus. Again, both agree that the Temple was built in 966 BC. Solomon's reign then is from 4 years prior, 970 BC (to 930 BC, as he ruled for forty years).

7. Using 970 BC as the beginning of Solomon's reign, we can then establish dates for the reign and deaths of Saul and David. What would they be?
- a. ANSWER: Saul reigned for 40 years, from 1050 BC to 1010 BC, and then he died. David followed Saul and reigned for 40 years--38 of them over a united Israel--and then he died, thus reigning from 1010 BC to 970 BC.
8. Continuing back from the reign of Saul covers a period of time referred to as the Time of the Judges, plus additionally the period of time of the occupation led by Joshua, which was preceded further by the forty years of wilderness wanderings--which began with the Exodus. So, what was the length of time from God's promise to Abraham until the time of the Exodus and the giving of the Law? Read Exodus 12:40-41 and Galatians 3:16-17.
- a. ANSWER: We can observe from these two passages that the time from Abraham's promise to the giving of the Law was 430 years. If the Exodus occurred in 1446 BC, then Abraham's promise came in 1776 BC, when he was 75 years old (Hebrews 6:15), thus establishing his year of birth as 1851 BC.
9. 3000 BC is recognized as the beginning of written records. What role did the Sumerian and Egyptian people play in this process?
- a. ANSWER: Almost simultaneously, even though they were geographically widely separated, the Sumerians invented cuneiform writing, and the Egyptians invented Hieroglyphics.
10. The Tower of Babel event is dated at 3600 BC or earlier. Prior to the Tower of Babel, date uncertain, the Great Flood ended, and Noah and his family descended the Ark. Which of his three sons are the Semitic people descended from? See Genesis 10:21-32.
- a. ANSWER: The Semitic people, the Semites, descended from Shem.
11. Order the following events in their proper order, from the earliest to the most recent:
- Solomon builds the Temple
  - Cain slays Abel
  - Methuselah dies
  - Joshua brings down the walls of Jericho
  - Seth is born
  - The Tower of Babel
  - David is King
  - Babylon destroys the Temple
  - Jews are enslaved in Egypt
  - Noah and the Flood
  - Christ is born
- ORDERED ANSWERS
- i. Cain slays Abel
  - ii. Seth is born
  - iii. Methuselah dies
  - iv. Noah and the Flood
  - v. The Tower of Babel
  - vi. Jews enslaved in Egypt
  - vii. Joshua brings down the walls of Jericho
  - viii. David is King
  - ix. Solomon builds the Temple
  - x. Babylon destroys the Temple
  - xi. Christ is born
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In summary, understanding the proper order of the events in biblical history and tying those events to historical dates is possible using a combination of archaeology, the biblical text, and historical "synchronisms" (i.e., tying in the historical events and evidences that confirm the Bible). As students of the Bible, we need to have a fundamental understanding of these events, their order, as well as the evidences that exist outside of the biblical text which point to the accuracy of God's Holy Word.

Praising God for your continued faithfulness in studying His Holy Word.

In Christ,

Wes