

Biblical History and the Ancient World

History is the story of human beings in the past. The word 'history' comes from the Greek word '*historia*', meaning *investigation*. Historians try to analyse why things happened and how events affected people's lives. Historians collect evidence to solve various mysteries from the past.

How do historians find their information? Historians must find objects that people left behind, records of people, and events from the time, and even human remains. These types of evidence are called primary sources. Secondary sources are written after the event we are studying took place, such as history books.

Records

Written records are a good source of evidence for finding out about the past. We can work out historical dates from the Bible, because it records when the people of the Bible were born and died, and we can add up the years.

Two types of History

When speaking about the ancient world, there are two types of history:

1. Biblically- based history, which gives us the true history of the world, from the Creator Himself, as recorded in the Bible.
2. Secular history which ignores the historical record of the Bible and instead uses other methods for dating, such as the dating of artefacts or bones that are dug up through archaeology.

The dates given by secular history will not always match up to dates of biblical history. The actual reason is that secular history uses evolution as its starting point instead of the word of the Creator Himself.

The Hebrews had very good and accurate written records from which dates can be calculated. The first five books of the bible, called 'The Tora' were the words given by God to Moses, including The Ten Commandments. The Tora was carefully copied by scribes and passed on from generation to generation.

Secular historians date the artifacts they find using dating methods such as radiometric dating. Artifacts are dated in the same way that rocks and fossils are dated. These dating methods involve assumptions.

For example, radiometric dating measures how much of a material has decayed or altered over time. The assumption is that the rate of decay is always consistent. But no one really knows. The greatest assumption of secular history is that the universe came into being without the God of the Bible, millions of years ago, and therefore remains of civilizations of

the ancient world are dated being many, many thousands of years old – much more than the Bible tells us. If you Google ‘date of the first human being’, Google will tell you that: ‘Modern human beings (Homo sapiens) first appeared around 315,000 to 300,000 years ago in Africa.’ The Bible tells us otherwise - that the first humans were actually Adam and Eve, created about 6000 years ago.

Record of ages in the Bible

Years from Creation

God created everything.	<i>Genesis 1–2</i>	0
Adam became the father of Seth at 130.	<i>Genesis 5:3</i>	$0 + 130 = 130$
Seth became the father of Enosh at 105.	<i>Genesis 5:6</i>	$130 + 105 = 235$
Enosh became the father of Kenan at 90.	<i>Genesis 5:9</i>	$235 + 90 = 325$
Cainan became the father of Mahalalel at 70.	<i>Genesis 5:12</i>	$325 + 70 = 395$
Mahalalel became the father of Jared at 65.	<i>Genesis 5:15</i>	$395 + 65 = 460$
Jared became the father of Enoch at 162.	<i>Genesis 5:18</i>	$460 + 162 = 622$
Enoch became the father of Methuselah at 65.	<i>Genesis 5:21</i>	$622 + 65 = 687$
Methuselah became the father of Lamech at 187.	<i>Genesis 5:25</i>	$687 + 187 = 874$
Lamech became the father of Noah at 182.	<i>Genesis 5:28</i>	$874 + 182 = 1056$
The Flood started when Noah was 600.	<i>Genesis 7:6</i>	$1056 + 600 = 1656$
Noah died at 950 years old.	<i>Genesis 9:28-29</i>	$1656 + 350 = 2006$
Abraham - alive in the last 58 years of Noah's life	<i>Genesis 11:10-32</i>	$2006 + 117 = 2123$

Adding up the numbers on the right, from Creation to Abraham's death, we can calculate 2123 years.

Then we have to go to the New Testament, Matthew Chapter 1, to find out the generations from Abraham to the birth of Christ. (Read Matthew Chapter 1.) Because the date of the birth of Christ is confirmed by history books, we know it to be approximately 4 BC, lining up with the date for King Herod. Once we know the date for Christ's birth we can work backwards:

- Present day to Christ: approx. 2000 years
- Christ to Abraham: approx. 2000 years
- Abraham to Adam: approx. 2000 years

Timeline

Putting dates and events in order like this is called a time line. Note that BC stands for Before Christ and AD stands for "Anno Domini," which is Latin for "in the year of our Lord," or the years following Christ's birth. Modern-day historians have tried to undermine the Biblical reference to our dating system by replacing it with BCE: Before Common Era and CE: Common Era. **Using the Bible as a history book we can calculate dates for Old Testament Israel. These are the birth years of some of the key Biblical figures, and years for significant events.**

4004 BC - Creation

4004 – 3074 BC - Adam

2948 BC – 1997 BC - Noah

2348 BC – The Great Flood

2242 BC - The Tower of Babel

1922 – 1747 BC - Abram - Abram's name was changed to Abraham.

1896 - 1716 BC – Isaac

1836-1689 - Jacob – name changed to Israel; time of Israel in Egypt

1869 – 1759 BC – Joseph - In 1715 BC Joseph was sold as a slave and taken to Egypt where he became a ruler.

1525 – 1405 BC - Moses - The Ten Commandments; The Tabernacle; God sets His people free from Egyptian rule; The Israelites in the wilderness

1555 – 1245 BC Joshua - In 1451 BC Joshua claimed the land and the Israelites occupied and settled in Canaan

1200 BC - Ruth, Naomi - A time of famine when Israel was ruled by judges

1015-897 BC - Samuel, King Saul, King David, Solomon, Absalom - Israel ruled by kings. King Solomon builds the temple.

782-753 BC - Jonah disobeyed God's call to bring a message to Ninevah.

607-534 BC - Daniel who stands for his faith; first return of Jews to Jerusalem; temple rebuilt; Babylon taken by Cyrus

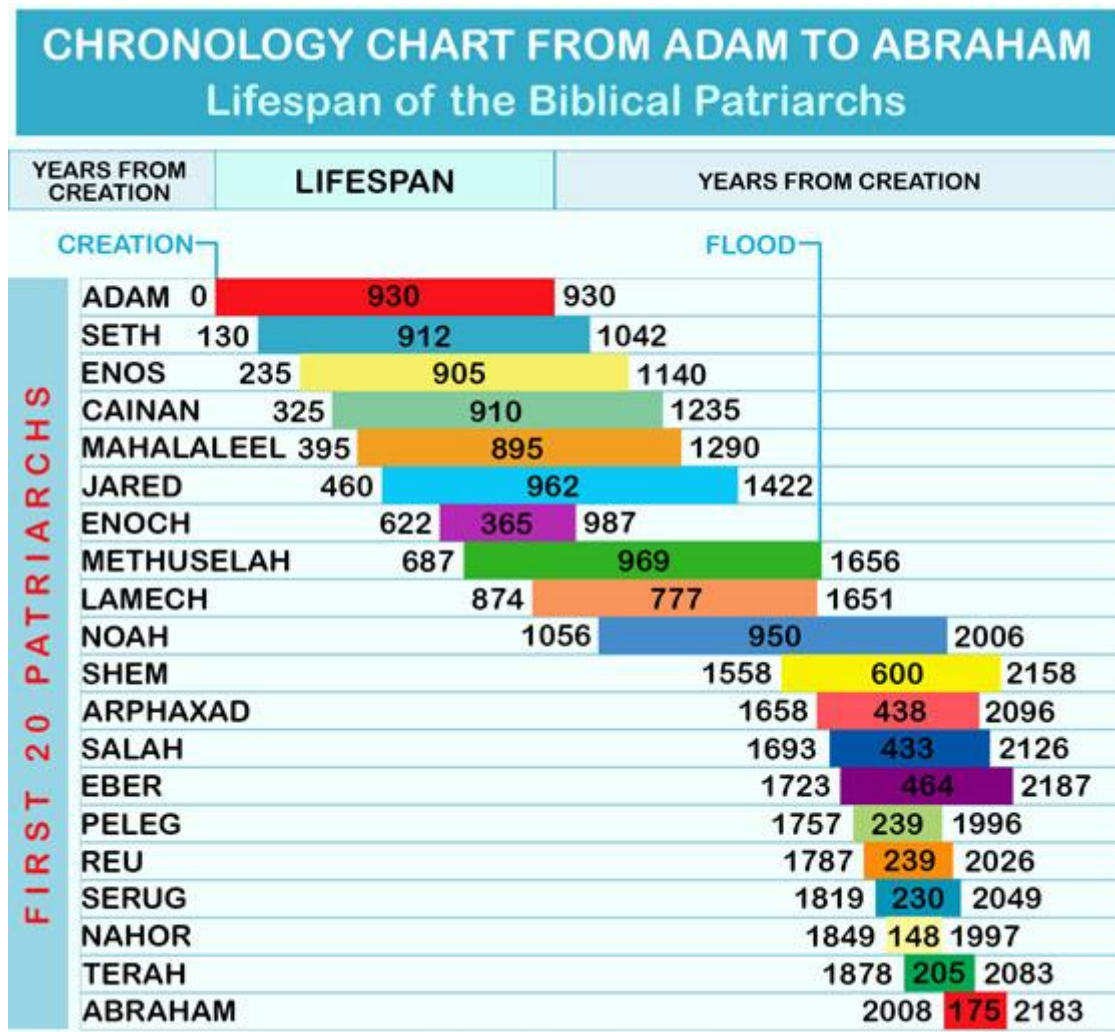
500 – 520 BC - Esther, Queen of Persian King Ahasuerus; return of the Jews under Ezra.

445 BC – Nehemiah - responsible for rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. In 400 BC Nehemiah died.

Note that people lived longer closer to Adam, because they were closer to the perfect Creation. Noah lived to 950 years. The human lifespan gradually became shorter as time went on.

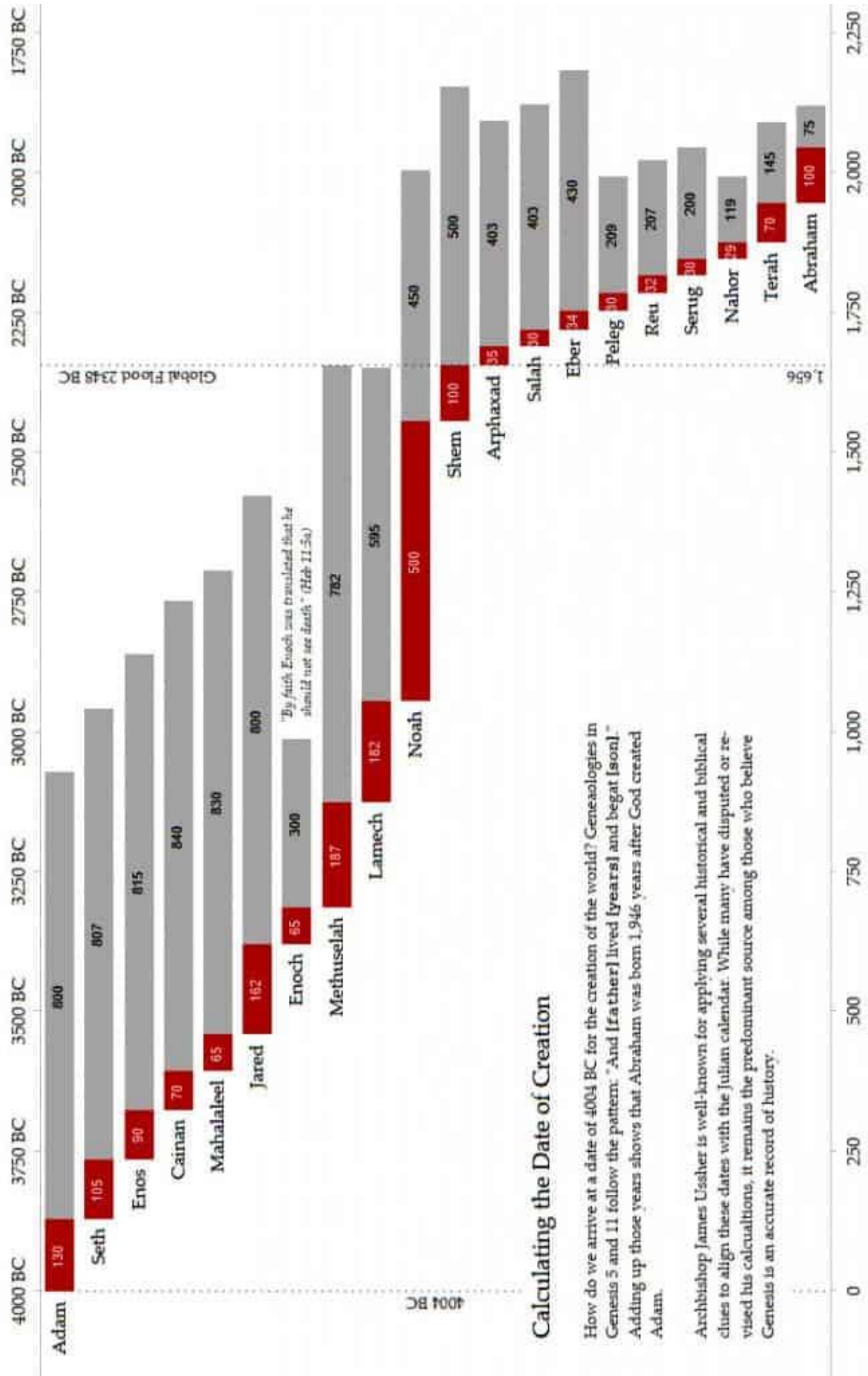
Look at the table on page 6 and you will see how the dates of the Old Testament Patriarchs overlapped. This meant that the older generations knew the younger, and were able to pass on knowledge. For example, Abraham was 58 years old when Noah died. The following table shows the lifespan of these people. Look in the middle section to see how long they lived. Most of the names on the next page you may not have heard of. But keep in mind that these people were the parents, grandparents or great grandparents of the Bible people we are most familiar with, shown in the timeline on page 4.

There is a general understanding in the world today that things are getting better as time goes by. But this is not the case. Adam, the perfect man, had a perfect gene pool. But once sin was introduced into the world, decay and decline followed. The genetics of the once perfect human being, gradually became less perfect.



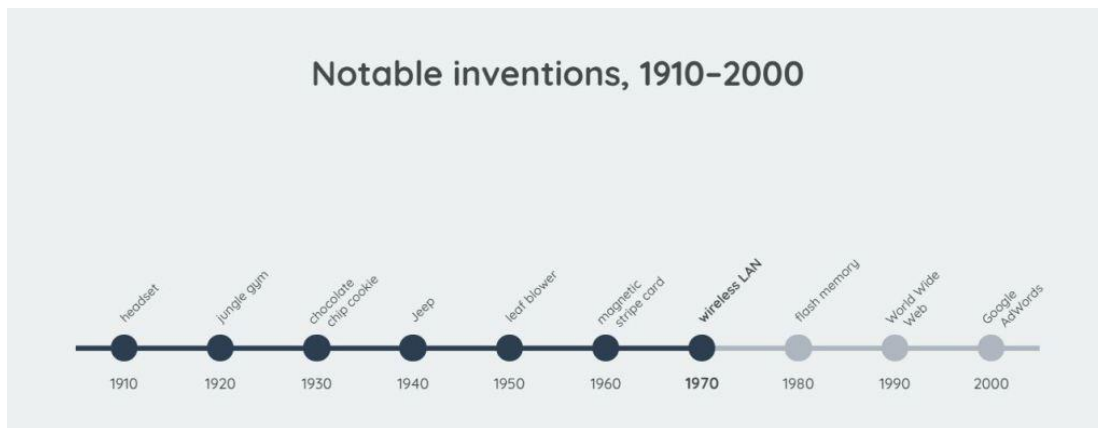
Make a list of the lifespans of the following people: Adam, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Abraham.

Genesis Timeline from Adam to Abraham



Activities

1. What are some differences between biblical history and secular history?
2. What was the world like when God first created it?
3. What changed it and how did it change?
4. Draw a horizontal timeline showing dates and events from creation to Abraham. Here is a timeline for 'notable inventions'. Create something similar to this using the information you have learned about the biblical timeline.



5. Who is the oldest person mentioned in the Bible?
6. Why did people gradually begin to live shorter lifespans?
7. How old was Abraham when he died?
8. Why is it very likely that Noah and Abraham knew one another?
9. What is the significance of the Tower of Babel to world history?
10. What does BC stand for?
11. What is the starting point for BC?
12. Which is the earliest date: 250 BC or 1926 BC?
13. What does AD stand for?
14. Which is the earliest date: 250 AD or 1926 AD?
15. What period of time are we living in at the moment?
16. What does the word 'genealogies' mean?
17. What does Matthew chapter 1 tell us about genealogies?

What about the rest of the world?

Every people-group originated from Adam and Eve, and therefore Noah. All people except for Noah and his family were wiped out by the world-wide global flood. By 2242 BC the population had increased and trouble broke out with the building of the Tower of Babel. From that point, when God confused the languages, people-groups spread out all over the world and developed new civilizations. So the history of civilization for every country begins from 2242 BC or later.

It's not just mainstream science that is influenced by the theory of evolution. It follows that ancient history (BC) also has an evolutionary foundation. Why do some scientists and historians adopt the belief that the earth is millions of years old?

They have to try and convince themselves and others that evolution, (one species evolving into another), would be possible within a framework of millions of years, even though in our present world, no one has ever seen one species evolve into another. As the Bible tells us, living things were created 'after their own kind' (Genesis 1:24). That means that the offspring of cats will always be cats, and the offspring of frogs will always be frogs etc. Evolutionists believe that although we can't see the evolution of species happening today, given millions of years it could have happened.

The Bible tells us the opposite. We can work out from Genesis that the first man and woman were created around 4000 BC. Adam and Eve were fully formed capable and intelligent human beings. Secular historians on the other hand, believe that early man developed from apes and finally evolved into human beings about 300,000 years ago.

So if these dates for the first human beings are not plausible according to the Bible, we can expect that later dates may also be highly inaccurate. For example, Wikipedia will tell you that

'the first civilization, often referred to as Sumer, emerged in southern Mesopotamia between 4000 and 3300 BC. This period marks the beginning of urbanization and the development of writing, cities, and governance in ancient civilizations. Sumer is recognized as a cradle of civilization, laying the foundation for many of the innovations that would shape later societies.'

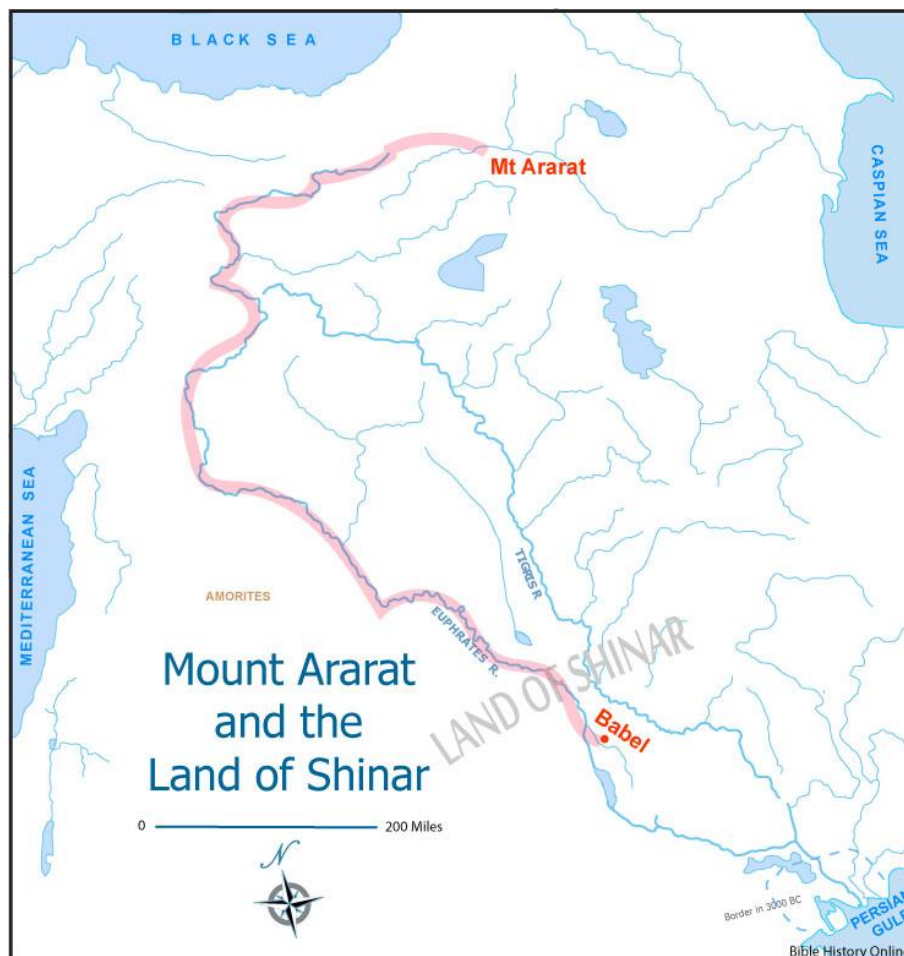
According to the Bible, this information is true, EXCEPT for the dates. These dates cannot be correct because the Bible tells us that the history of civilization began after the Great Flood, followed by the Tower of Babel around 2242 BC, when the languages were confused and different language groups dispersed all over the earth. Therefore, all the artifacts of civilization with which archaeologists examine, must relate to mankind's history after the Great Flood. This means that the starting point for any civilization is 2242 B.C. or later

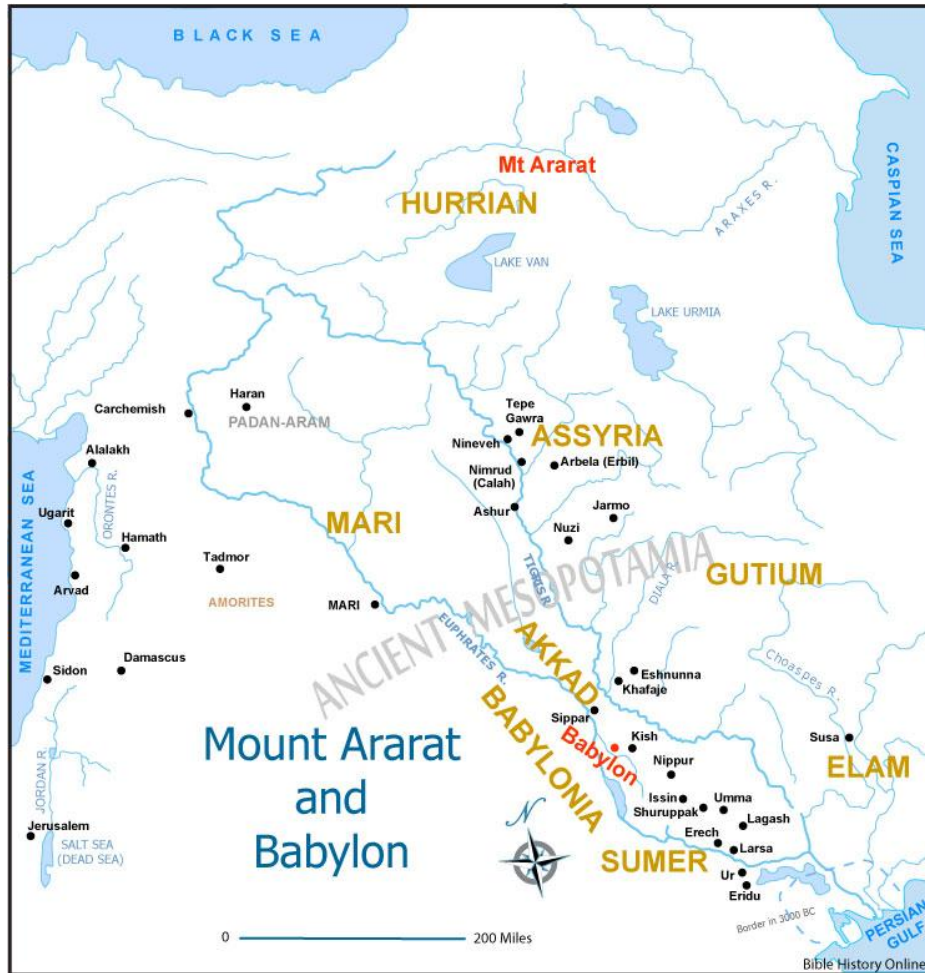
The idea that Sumer, Mesopotamia, is the cradle of civilization is totally correct from a biblical perspective. Mesopotamia is a fertile region located between the Tigris and

Euphrates rivers, corresponding to modern-day Iraq and parts of Syria, Turkey, and Iran. This ancient land is significant in biblical history, particularly as the homeland of Abraham, the patriarch of the Israelites. Ur, Abraham's city of origin, was a prominent Sumerian city-state in ancient Mesopotamia, known for its advanced culture and significant contributions to early human civilization.

Genesis 11:31 states, "Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (son of Haran), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there."

By studying the following maps, you will see how Noah's descendants could have travelled from Mt. Ararat, the landing place of the Ark, to Babel (Babylon). And on the second map, see how Abraham could have travelled from the Tower of Babel to Ur in Sumer. This means that Biblical history confirms the idea of earliest post-Flood civilization around 2000 BC. The third map shows how Abraham travelled to the Promised Land (Canaan), now modern Israel. God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. This meant that Abraham would not just be the father of Israel, but of all those who called the God of the Bible their own, (gentiles).





Facts about the Great Flood

Noah was righteous

Gen 6:1 – 8 and Gen 7:1

Noah born 2,948 BC

The beginning of the world was 4000 BC (approx 6000 years ago)

By the time of Noah, the population of sinners had grown to such an extent that God had to do something drastic.

Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives were the only righteous people on earth, (8 people).

Noah found grace / favour in the eyes of the Lord, (Gen 6:8).

Noah was old when God called him.

Gen 5:31-32

Noah was 600 years old when God chose him to be his servant. His role was to save human and animal life, (Gen 7:6.) He lived to around 900 yrs.

Noah's children

Noah had only three children, (three sons): Japeth, Shem and Ham. Japeth was the eldest and Ham the youngest. Shem, the middle son, was 98 when he entered the ark. His son Arpachshad was born 2 years after the Flood. He also had other sons and daughters after that, (Gen 11:10). Remember that people lived much longer then and the age period for bearing children was much longer.

If Noah's children were of child bearing age when they entered the ark, did they have children, and if so, why didn't they bring their children aboard?

The Bible doesn't tell us the answer to this, but it is clear that there were only 8 people on the ark. Either God chose not to give them children pre-Flood, or, any children they had lived sinful lives and were lost in the Flood.

The Great Flood

Gen 7:6 - 24

Gen 8: 1 – 21

The flood occurred in 2,348 BC, (4,362 years ago).

The period of time from Creation to the Flood was 1,600.

The water came not just from the rain, but from underground springs.

So in 40 days it was possible for the whole earth to be covered with water.

What evidence do we see of a world-wide flood today?

1. The sea – made of water from the flood – salty. The huge upheaval of the earth caused mountains and valleys. As the flood receded it washed the minerals from the land down into the valleys. Sea now covers 70% of the planet. Before the flood most of the world was land.
2. Fossils – caused by the flood and were not formed over millions of years. Fossils require sudden burial. If the animals had died naturally they would have either been

eaten, or decomposed. The fine details we see in fossils don't occur in animals that slowly decompose. There are examples of fossils having lunch and giving birth.

3. Land formations – mountains, valleys, canyons, rock outcrops such as Uluru, Australia

Noah was a faithful obedient servant

The Bible tells us that Noah was obedient:

Gen 6:22 and Gen 7:5 – Noah did according to all that God had commanded.

He listened to God and heard accurately what God was saying.

Noah was chosen by God as His servant to bring about a special event in history.

Noah obeyed.

Noah delivered a prophetic message:

The message that God wanted to tell the world through Noah:

- God judges sin with death.
- God always judges sin with death.
- No one will get away with sin.
- There will be a day of judgment when all sin will be judged with death.
- Only those who escaped into the ark were saved.
- Only those who escape into God's salvation plan will be saved.

Noah was diligent, intelligent and skillful

Making of the ark:

Ch 6:14 – 16 – God's instructions for building the ark

The ark was not a bath tub or a cute little ark depicted in a children's story.

The proportions were for a most stable vessel: 30 x 5 x 3

This formula has proved to be the most stable dimensions for a water going vessel and there are 2 Nordic ferries made to these dimensions.

It was impossible to capsize,

It was massive in volume.

Noah and his sons had the technology. They were not ape-like men with low intelligence.

The size of the ark

A cubit is 1.5 feet, (46 cm). The boat was: 140 metres x 23 m x 13.5 m

Its volume was 43,500 cubic metres.

This is the equivalent of 522 standard railroad stock cars

(One railroad car holds 240 sheep.)

The fact that Noah's ark is plausible shows us that the Bible can be trusted as a historical document.

How did all the animals fit in?

God sent young or baby animals.

Only 11% of animals are bigger than sheep.

God sent only one pair of each kind – e.g. the horse family included zebra and donkey.

The boat had 3 levels.

These levels represent:

Father

Son

Holy Spirit

The door was on the second level.

Jesus says, "I am the door, by Me if any one enters in he shall be saved."

Only 7 people believed Noah.

But he kept on believing even though he was in the minority.

Noah was strong and courageous.

He kept moving ahead with what he knew God had told him to do. He didn't doubt in the face of scoffers.

What similarities are there between God's calling on us and God's calling on Noah?

Noah kept preaching the same message even though people didn't listen.

God wants us to tell people that there is an escape route. It doesn't matter if people don't listen.

What similarities / applications are there to end times?

Matt 24: 37 – 39 As in the days of Noah, so will the world be at the time of His coming. As God saved Noah from the disaster, He will save us.

Noah was blessed for his obedience.

Genesis ch 9 v. 1

Noah was a history maker.

Why could we say that this event was the most important so far in human history?

It's remembered in the history of all cultures.

Before the continental shift, all people in the world knew about the true God.

There are Flood stories in every culture – even in Tibet, which has the highest mountain in the world.

After the Flood, Noah's three sons went in different directions: Japeth to Europe, Ham, to Africa and Shem to Asia.

The history from Adam to Noah was recorded by Moses, and carefully passed on to future generations in the Jewish culture. But other cultures also have evidence of knowing the biblical events.

Flood stories and Creation stories in many cultures

Every country has a history. The descendants of every country in the world originated from Babel (Babylon), soon after the Flood. People groups travelled for huge distances, over long periods of time to reach places all over the world. Many cultures took with them the Biblical stories of Creation and the Flood, although they lost their understanding of the true God. They turned to idols and false gods, with only the Hebrews remaining as true worshippers.

Another way we can gain information about the history of people groups is to discover stories they have to tell. While stories from the past do not give us dates, and details may not always be completely accurate, we can see some resemblance to Biblical accounts in the following:

A Flood story has been told using Chinese writing character

(Eight people in a boat, meaning that there were eight people in Noah's ark – Noah, his wife, Ham, Shem and Japeth and their wives.)



When Wonjuna made the Great Flood (An Australian Aboriginal legend)

There was a medicine man named Tanjilli. He was very proud.

There was another man named Umbirri. He was jealous of Tanjilli, who was a very famous medicine man. Umbirri was a bad man who had been chased away from another tribe for stealing.

Umbirri thought he would make Tanjilli look foolish. There had not been rain for a long time. Umbirri told the tribe that Tanjilli could make it rain. The tribe asked Tanjilli to make it rain. Tanjilli tried to make it rain and soon large drops started to fall. Tanjilli was very proud. He boasted to everyone about what he had done. It rained and rained for 40 days and 40 nights.

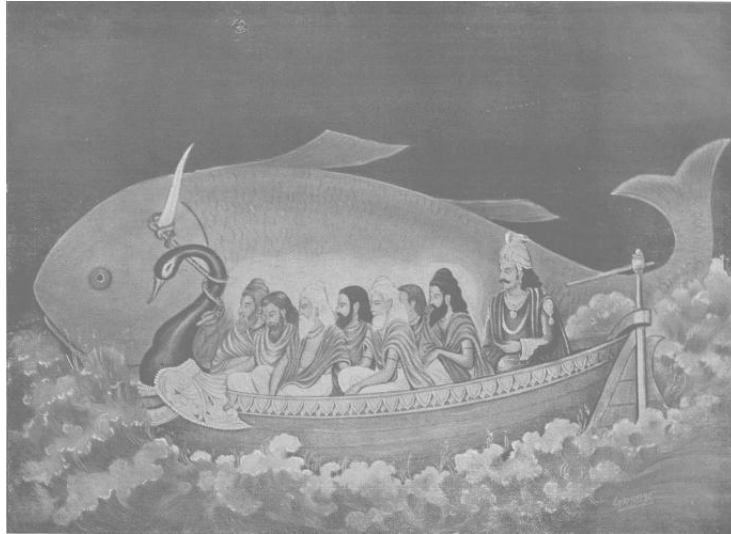
Umbirri and Tanjilli were both washed away in the flood. Then an old man in the tribe called Oolpa asked the Great Spirit to make it stop raining. The rain stopped. The tribe then believed that it was the Great Spirit who had made it rain and not Tanjilli. They believed that Tanjilli and Umbirri did not survive the flood because they were not good men.

A fish called Vishnu (Hindi)

A man called Manu found a fish while washing his hands in the river. The fish said that he was God. He warned Manu that a big flood was coming. He sent Manu a large boat and ordered that two of every living species, plant and animal, to board the boat.

The flood came and covered the whole earth. When the waters receded, the boat landed on a mountain top. Manu took the plants and animals out of the boat. The flood had destroyed everything.

Note that the painting accompanying this story shows 8 people in a boat.



A Creation story told by an American Indian (www.creation.com)

The history of the world as my Blackfeet Elders told it ...

“My name is Percy Bullchild. I’m sixty-seven years of age. I’m from the Blackfeet Indian tribe in Montana, USA. With what little education I have, I am going to try to write the version of our own true ways in our history and in our legends ...

This story is about a lone spirit that lived in this spiritual place before there was a world with any kind of life. The lone spirit has been alive forever and will continue to live forever. Life is given to all of us humans and to all the creatures of the earth.

We call the Creator of everything “Creator Sun”, who made the first living beings.

This is how Creator Sun made the first humans:

From the mud Creator Sun molded a form in his own shape, his own image. This mud figure came to life as Creator Sun blew into his nostrils. He wanted to do for the mudman something to help him overcome that loneliness. Using that strange power, Creator Sun put the mudman into a deep sleep so he wouldn’t know what was going on.

Kneeling down beside him, Creator Sun took out the mudman’s lowest, smallest left rib. With this rib he made an image after the mudman and himself, to bear fruit, to bear offspring.

This woman was looking for food one day when she was tempted by a “snakeman” who told her a half-truth and caused her to betray her husband. The Creator knew what was going on but, as always, he is so forgiving to all his creations. Nevertheless, all of us are to pay for whatever sins we commit.

Activities

Activities

1. What can be the earliest date for a civilization post-Flood?
2. How do we know that the various people groups that moved out from Babel had knowledge of the Creation and the Flood?
4. Give an example of how the theory of evolution is an influence in mainstream science.
5. Give an example of how the theory of evolution is an influence in secular history.
6. Draw maps to show how descendants of Noah may have traveled from the Ark's landing place to the fertile land between the Tigris and Euphrates.
7. What was the name of this region?
8. Read and summarize Abraham's story from Genesis 12 and 13.
9. What evidence from Genesis 19 is there to show that the population soon after the end of the Flood, once again become wicked? Where do you think these cities could have been?
10. How did God punish the cities?
11. What relation was Lot to Abraham?
12. How did God show compassion on Lot's family? (verses 15-16)
13. Why did Lot's wife abuse the Lord's generosity, and what happened to her? (verse 26)
14. Why do you think God chose Abraham to leave his homeland and moved to Canaan? (See Hebrews 11:8)
15. What is the land of Canaan today?
16. What was Abraham's inheritance going to be?
17. What did God mean when he told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations?

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