

Old Earth Creation Science

Dating Biblical Events in an Old Earth Framework

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Several people have asked about the timing of Biblical events within the framework of old earth belief. With this article, I hope to answer some of those questions, although as you will see, we cannot be very accurate with these dates.

As Christians who believe in the Bible, of course we think the events of the Bible happened just as the Bible records them. I cannot speak for all old earth believers, but generally, we accept a literal reading of Genesis, and the existence of the Garden of Eden, the Flood of Noah (local, but universal in effect), and the story of the Tower of Babel, and others that we need not consider.

The Last Common Denominator

Young earth creation science claims that the world is 6,000 years old, therefore they would say the events in Genesis happened less than 6,000 years ago. Unlike young earth creationists, old earth creationists simply don't know exact dates (some YECs believe Adam was created at 9:00 A.M., on October 23, 4004 B.C.!) However, old earth theory requires these events to be older, because of the scientific evidence which must match the Bible's story. We will start with the last common denominator, and work our way back to the Garden of Eden.

There is no way to know for certain what the proper age is for any of these events, but we can make certain speculations about the age. For instance, for many years,

scientists thought that the first humans in North America ventured here via a land bridge between Russia and Alaska about 13,000 years ago.²

Another site, the Meadowcroft site in Pennsylvania, contains artifacts dated to 16,000 years ago. Based on this and other discoveries, many scientists now believe that North Americans also arrived via boat, prior to the Bering Straight land bridge of 13,000 years ago.² Thus, for archaeological evidences, the earliest date we have for North America is about 16,000 years ago.³

Another factor to consider is the Aboriginal peoples of Australia. Most modern scholars place their entrance into Australia between 40,000 and 45,000 years ago. Some estimates range up to 68,000 years, and some are as low as 30,000. The oldest carbon-dating of Aboriginal artifacts is about 40,000 years, whereas other methods (thermoluminescence and mitochondrial DNA analysis) place the date at 50,000 years ago. Thermoluminescence dating can be hit or miss, as this new technique is still being refined, and DNA analysis depends on assumptions of mutation rates.

The most recent event, which would be the last common denominator for all human races, is spoken of in Genesis 11. The Tower of Babel tells the story of how God confused the language of the people, and spread them throughout the world. Thus, these early North Americans must have migrated at some point after the Tower of Babel. Therefore, the only thing we can say with any certainty is that the events of Genesis 11 happened sometime prior to the aboriginal migration to Australia. This gives us a starting point of 30,000 to 45,000 years ago, depending on the Aboriginal dating evidence. This is our starting point for understanding dating of events within our old earth framework, and it is only a rough estimate of the real date for the Tower of Babel. We only know for certain that the Tower of Babel could not be younger than 30,000 years ago.

However, this assumes that the people spread from the Tower within a few years of God confusing their language. Did they come directly from the Tower to North

America...or did they gradually spread in North America's direction. This could greatly add to the time since the Tower of Babel.

The Flood of Noah

The next event prior to that would be the Flood of Noah. We do have a good estimate for the time from Noah's Flood to the Tower of Babel, as you will see.

According to Genesis 9:28, we know that Noah lived 350 years after the flood. Genesis 10 then goes on to list the genealogies of the descendants of Noah's Ark. It is apparent that the genealogies of Genesis 10 are not necessarily in chronological order with Genesis 11. In other words, the Tower of Babel in Chapter 11 occurred sometime in the middle of these genealogies in Chapter 10. I say this because Genesis 11:1 says "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." However, we read in Genesis 10:4, 20, that the clans each had their own language. In fact, Genesis 10:25 actually refers to the events of the Tower of Babel. Right in the middle of Shem's descendants it says "One was named Peleg, because in his time the earth was divided" (NIV). (Other versions say "the inhabitants" of earth were divided up).

Concerning these genealogies, the NIV states that in the original Hebrew, Sons could also mean descendants, successors, or nations. While not significant for the genealogies between the Flood and the Tower, we will come back to this thought later.

The most definitive passage for dating back to Noah's Flood is Genesis 11:10-19. This gives the descendants, from Noah's son Shem, to Peleg, who we previously learned was alive when the Tower of Babel incident occurred. Thus...

Shem is 98 when the flood ended	0
Shem is 100 when Arphaxad is born	2
Arphaxad is 35 when Shelah is born	37
Shelah is 30 when Eber is born	67

Eber is 34 when Pelag is born	101
Pelag is 30 when Reu is born	131
Pelag lived to be 209	310

Using this chart, the Flood must have happened a minimum of 101 years prior to the Tower of Babel. If the split at the Tower was caused by God near the time of Pelag's birth, this would lend support to his father, Eber, naming him after this event. However, we can't be certain of this. The only thing we know with any degree of certainty is that it happened during Peleg's lifetime. Therefore, it could have happened as much as 310 years after the flood. Thus we have a range for the Flood of 101 to 310 years prior to the Tower of Babel. It is interesting to note that since Noah lived 350 years after the flood, he was alive when the Tower of Babel occurred.

Adding this to our minimum age of 30,000 to 45,000 years, and we come up with a range of 30,101 to 45,310 years ago for Noah's Flood.

Eve

Next we must consider mankind's origins. The most favored theory now is the "Out of Africa" theory, which shows that a genetic "Eve" from which we are descended came from Africa about 150,000 years ago. This "genetic" evidence is based on mutation rates of mitochondrial DNA of 1 every 20,000 years. Some research suggests a ratio of 1 to 10,000, thus cutting 150,000 to 75,000 years.^{4,5} Interestingly, the people from this genetic Eve are said to have migrated from Africa to the Middle East, and from there they spread out over the world. Although the African Eve is said to be 150,000 years ago, the migration to the Middle East is said to have occurred around 80,000 years ago. Thus, 80,000 years ago is the last common location for all mankind (using this model).

This brings up an apparent problem. According to the Bible, Eve came from the Garden of Eden, which was located in the Middle East. How could our genetic common ancestor have come from Africa? I believe this problem arises from anthropologist's

assumptions that since most pre-Adamic hominids are found in Africa, that is where our common ancestor would be from. How do they know that Eve was from Africa? Is there “DNA” evidence from human remains in Africa from a 150,000 year old “Eve” that supports this? None that I can find.

It is based on mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). mtDNA is passed down from mother to offspring. Unlike other DNA, mtDNA is passed down without change, without merging with the male mtDNA. It is subject to random mutations, thus over time, minor differences can be shown.

If I have a specific mutation, and someone else also has it, it confirms that sometime in the past we had a common maternal ancestor. This ancestor could be a few generations, or a hundred generations ago.

Using mtDNA extrapolations, and assuming a mutation rate of 1 per 20,000 years, and by examining mtDNA evidence of fossil hominids, they arrive at the conclusion that there was a genetic Eve from Africa 150,000 years ago. This may be true, but it doesn’t affect our conclusions...more on that later.

Now, on to the next piece of the puzzle. We must consider when migration from the Middle East occurred. Archeological and DNA evidence suggests human migration to Europe about 50,000 years ago,⁵ and migration to Australia no later than 30,000 years ago.⁴ With the first migration from the Middle East around 50,000 years ago, where does this leave us? We now have a range of 50,000 to 30,000 years ago for the last common location for our ancestors...the Tower of Babel. This is assuming that we are all descended from these migration peoples. However, this may or may not be the case.

Will the Real Eve Please Stand Up!

How could there be a genetic Eve in Africa 150,000 years ago, and a Biblical Eve in the Middle East? At some point, Adam and Eve (the Biblical ones) were created. Before

Adam and Eve, other non-soulful hominids were created by God. We share similarities in mtDNA with these pre-Adamic hominids. For instance Neanderthal mtDNA differs from ours by 7 percent...enough to show similarities (93 percent), but far enough apart to prove that they did not contribute to our current gene pool.^{4,6} The hominids that existed 50,000 to 150,000 years ago also shared a significant portion of their mtDNA with us.

It gives the appearance of God using each successive pre-Adamic hominid to refine the model. Is this saying God could not create us perfectly in the first place? No, it merely is a record of what God did. We cannot infer anything from this about God's power and abilities...after all, can you create a hominid? No, you can't...you are not God!

Why He did it that way, we don't know. (one possibility is "[Plausible Deniability](#).) We only know that at some point, He created a hominid in His image (with an eternal spirit), and ended the creative process. Therefore, these early hominids from mtDNA evidence, that are said to be our ancestors, may not be at all! They may have spread all over the world, and then when God created Adam and Eve, some 30,000+ years ago, these others went extinct. We share most of our mtDNA with them because they were our "template."

My Proposal for Adam and Eve's Date of Creation

One thing is clear...we now have one hominid species, created in the image of God. Therefore, where in the past can we point to a place in time, when the last non-modern hominid went extinct? This would be a good basis for the maximum dating of the Biblical Eve. This would be the Neanderthal, which went extinct around 29,000 years ago.⁸

Although not conclusive, it may be safe to assume that when God made Adam and Eve, his final creation, there were no previous hominids present. This would put the

Garden of Eden at 29,000 years ago or greater, and is almost in the lower range (30,000 years) of the estimate for the Aboriginal migration to Australia. This would allow plenty of time for the migration to the Americas after the Tower of Babel, which occurred a minimum of 16,000 years ago. With this conclusion, prior dated hominids do not create a problem for us...they were merely non-soulful hominids, not in God's image.

This also matches with evidence of religious practices from anthropology. The earliest dating of religious items/practices is around 26,000 years ago.⁷ It is said that Neanderthal showed evidences of religion, in the burial of their dead, and in their collecting of bear skulls.⁸ This is not conclusive evidence of a religious practice. Burial of the dead has a practical purpose...to remove the remains from predation and insects, and to eliminate the odor of decay, thus burial has a perfectly logical practical application. The inclusion in the burial pits of bison and other animal parts could also be to eliminate odors, predators, and insects. Thought to be included in the grave so the dead could use them in the afterlife is probably not the right conclusion. Also, it is said Neanderthal had some type of bear-worship, because of the abundance of bear skulls and artifacts found in Neanderthal dwellings. However, just because Neanderthal collected bear skulls does not mean they were for religious purposes. I have many collections for non-religious purposes. Maybe the Neanderthal with the most bear skulls was the alpha male.

One final thought for confusion's sake! We still have not reconciled this with the 50,000 year date for migrations to Europe. If this is correct, that pushes Babel back to at least 50,000 years ago, and makes Neanderthal a soul-less animal (of course, he was already considered as one of these).

Hebrew Scholars

Dates for the Garden, as given by some of the best Hebrew scholars, place it between 30,000 and 10,000 years ago, with some scholars placing it as young as 6,000, or as

old as 60,000 years ago.¹⁰ This is within the range of 29,000 years ago or later which I propose as the youngest possible date for the Garden.

Young earth creation science proponents will undoubtedly ask about the genealogies in the Bible, which date the Garden of Eden, in their minds, to around 6,300 years ago. You can see, from the dating range of the Hebrew scholars, that there is disagreement as to the genealogies. Many believe there are demonstratable gaps in them, whereas others do not. The Hebrew language certainly allows for it, as “Joe begat Fred” could mean Joe was the great-grandfather of Fred. This is demonstrated in Matthew 1:8,

And to Asa was born Jehoshaphat; and to Jehoshaphat, Joram; and to Joram, Uzziah
(NASB),

Thus...Asa / Jehoshaphat / Joram / Uzziah

The corresponding Old Testament genealogy given in 1 Chronicles 3:10–12 is different.

*...Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, ¹¹Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son,
¹²Amaziah his son, Azariah (Uzziah) his son,...*

Thus...Asa / Jehoshaphat / Joram / Ahaziah / Joash / Amazia / Uzziah

Asa through Uzziah in Matthew encompasses four generations, but in Chronicles it is seven generations. Which is correct? Both are! The Hebrew language allows this. It would also allow thousands of missing generations. To include them all, with their history, would make the Bible too large...God chose what to include, what He knew we needed to know, and left out the rest.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that we don't know the exact dates for early Biblical events. All we can do is make an educated guess. Since the last non-modern hominid died out 29,000 years ago, it is safe to assume that Biblical history starts at least 29,000+ years ago. Does it matter when it started? Praise the Lord that it does not. Our salvation does not depend upon the timing of God's creation. Thus, you are free to debate these matters and come to your own conclusions. I hope that this article provides you with some food for thought to get you started.

Questions, comments, or suggestions for this article can be emailed to [Greg Neyman](mailto:Greg.Neyman).

FOOTNOTE: To add to the confusion even further, language research into the early history of the Indo-European Languages shows that they can all be tied back to a common ancestor language that existed at least 6,000 years ago in the Middle East.⁹ Therefore, 6,000 years ago would be the minimum age for the Tower of Babel, with a possible range up to 50,000 years ago. A language split from 6,000 years ago is about 2,000 years older than the young earth model for Babel.

¹ [*Creation and Time*](#), by Hugh Ross, page 26

² DNA evidence suggests Americans crossing the land bridge from Asia some 20,000 to 25,000 years ago. For the purpose of this article, we will stick to physical evidence (Archeology), as DNA evidence is based on mutation rates which may/may not be constant

³ Recently, information on a research site in South Carolina claims that evidence of a hominid settlement in North America is dated to about 50,000 years ago (CNN.COM)

[Article](#)). First, you have to deconflict this with evidence of the first religious practices from archaeology, which only date at most to 26,000 years.⁷ What does this mean? The South Carolina site is probably a pre-Adam site, from a Hominid species which was not in the image of God (body, soul, spirit).

⁴ <http://www.duerinck.com/migrate.html>, and

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_Australians#Migration_to_Australia

⁵ <http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/realeve/interactive/interactive.html>

⁶ [That Neanderthal is Not your Grandfather](#)

⁷ Creation and Time, page 141. A range is given of 8,000 to 24,000 years for the oldest religious artifacts. The reason for the range is unclear.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homo_neanderthalensis

⁹ [The Early History of Indo-European Languages](#), by Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov

¹⁰ Creation and Time, page 140