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## Dating Biblical Events In An Old Earth Framework

By Greg Neyman

As Christians who believe in the Bible, of course we think the events of the Bible happened just as the Bible records them. But when did they happen? This article will examine this question. The Last Common Denominator Young earth creationists say 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.

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.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for archaeological evidences, the earliest date we have for North America is about 16,000 years ago.

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 13,000 to 16,000 years ago. 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 13,000 years ago (or could it? More on this later.)

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

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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... 0 Shem is 98 when the flood ended 2 Shem is 100 when Arphaxad is born 37 Arphaxad is 35 when Shelah is born 67 Shelah is 30 when Eber is born 101 Eber is 34 when Pelag is Born 310 Pelag lived to be 209 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. Thus we have a range for the Flood of 101 to 310 years prior to the Tower of Babel.

Adding this to our minimum age of 13,000 to 16,000 years, and we come up with a range of 13,101 to 16,310 years ago for Noah's Flood. This is assuming the migrations to North America involve post-Adamic men...more on this later. 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.

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?

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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, and migration to Australia no later than 40,000 years ago. 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 16,000 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. 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. 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 20-30,000 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. 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.

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 no later than 29,000 years ago, and would allow plenty of time for the migration to the Americas after the Tower of

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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.

To tie up loose ends...remember our Tower of Babel date, which had to be at least 13,000 years ago...not so. I give 29,000 years as the oldest date for Eden, but it could have been younger. These 13,000 year old migrators could have died when Adam and Eve were created. Thus, they could have been pre-Adamic, non-eternal hominids. So, we really have a range of 29,000 years, all the way down to 6,000 years, if you like. 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. This is within the range of 29,000 years ago or later which I propose as the oldest possible date for the Garden. 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 sometime within the last 29,000 years. 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.

This is a condensed article. For a list of references, access the original page on the Answers In Creation website.

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**Bishop Ussher's Dates: No Proof Of A Young Earth**

### By Greg Neyman

For hundreds of years Christians have appealed to the dates formulated by the 17th century bishop, James Ussher. Using biblical genealogies from Genesis 5 and 11, and other supporting Biblical passages, he pieced together a timeline for Biblical events. Many Bibles have this timeline in the margins, indicating the estimated year that the events on that page occurred.

Many people still swear by these dates, especially the one indicated for Genesis Chapter One, 4,004 B.C. Many young-earth creationists claim that the creation week started in this year. Is it a reliable assumption that 4,004 B.C. is the beginning point for the earth? How did Ussher arrive at the 4,004 date? Ussher and Old-Earth Belief Ussher took a known point in Biblical history, namely, the fall of Jerusalem in 588 B.C. Counting back from there, with the Bible's genealogies and the known number of years that these people lived, he simply added up the dates to get back to the 4,004 B.C. date for Adam's birthday.

If you are an old-earth believer, there is no need to lose any sleep over Ussher and his dates, because his dates have no impact upon the events of the creation week. This is because his dates, if you choose to believe them, confirm the year of Adam's creation. Adam's creation was the last event of God's creation, the crowning achievement of God's creation, at the end of Day Six. Ussher's methods of calculation does not go beyond Adam's creation, because the genealogies he used stop with Adam, so they do not accurately account for the first five days of creation, nor to they account for most of Day Six.

Ussher claims that 23 October 4004 BC is the date of the creation of the world. While Ussher does add the six 24-hour days for the creation to his calculations, we have ample evidence today to show that the days of creation were long periods of time. All we can say for certain, if you believe Ussher, is that Adam was created on 28 October 4004 BC, which is Ussher's sixth day of creation.

Therefore, it is possible to fully believe in Ussher's dates, and also believe that the days of creation were billions of years long. The only thing to ignore is the six literal days he adds, which we know were not 24-hour days.

Many old-earth creationists, including the most prominent one today, Dr. Hugh Ross, have criticized Ussher's dates, in an attempt to discredit them and give support to their own old-earth theories. They incorrectly claim that Ussher's dates are inconsistent with the evidence from geology. However, all that is inconsistent is Ussher's addition of the 24-hour days of creation. They are mistaken in the belief that Ussher's dates threaten old-earth belief. Again, since Ussher's dates are based on genealogies, they only go back to the creation of Adam, and have no impact upon the preceding events of God's creation, which were billions of years long. Conclusion Ussher has almost reached the point of sainthood among fundamental Baptist believers. His dates have long been used as proof of a young earth. However, they have nothing to do with the length of God's creation days, since his method only goes back to the beginning of Adam's life. Young-earth creationists have no basis for arguing the age of the earth based on Ussher's dates. Old-earth creationists can even believe in the dates if they wish. If Ussher had been an old-earth creationist, his dates would have been the same, except for the six added 24-hour days of creation. The bottom line...Ussher has no impact upon the age of the earth debate, and does not support a young earth.

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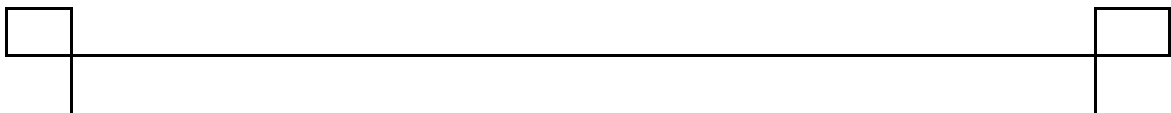
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