

## NOTES ON BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

- [1] Noah began to have children when he was 500 years old (Gen. 5:32). Shem's appearance first in the list of sons does not indicate he is the firstborn son; rather Shem is listed first because of his importance as the ancestor of Abraham, and thus a part of the Messianic line. That Shem could not be Noah's firstborn son is clear from the fact that Noah had a son at age 500 (Gen. 5:32), but Shem is said to have begotten Arpachshad two years after the FLOOD at age 100 (Gen. 11:10). Since Noah was 600 years old when the FLOOD came (Gen. 7:6), Shem must have been born when Noah was 502. Finally, we know that Ham was not the firstborn son (Gen. 9:24); thus, it must have been Japheth that was Noah's firstborn son at age 500.
- [2] Methuselah's name is derived from the Hebrew roots *muth*, meaning "death", and the verb *shelak*, meaning "shall bring"; thus, *Methuselah* means "his death shall bring", referring to the judgment of the FLOOD. The FLOOD indeed came the year Methuselah died. Apparently, Enoch received a prophecy from the LORD of the coming FLOOD and its relationship to the life of his son, which led him to select the name Methuselah. Is it any wonder that "Enoch walked with God after he begot Methuselah" (Gen. 5:22)?
- [3] The TOWER OF BABEL and the resulting division of the Earth are said to occur during the "days of Peleg" (Gen. 10:25). However, it seems clear from Genesis 12 and following that this division had already taken place by the time Abraham received God's call to depart from the Ur of the Chaldees, since separated people and civilizations already existed in Canaan and Egypt at this time. Thus, this date for the TOWER OF BABEL is the earliest possible date, with the death of Peleg being technically the latest possible date. Practically, however, the division must have occurred some time before Abraham's call to depart from Mesopotamia.
- [4] As with Shem in note [1], Abraham's listing first in the sons of Terah (Gen. 11:27) does not necessarily indicate that he was the firstborn son. In fact, like Shem we know he was not from elsewhere in Scripture. Terah died in Haran at age 205 (Gen. 11:32), at which time Abraham departed Haran for Canaan (Acts 7:4); Abraham was 75 when he departed from Haran (Gen. 12:4). Thus, Abraham was born when Terah was  $205 - 75 = 130$  years old.
- [5] Abraham received the promise from the LORD twice: once in Mesopotamia before moving to Haran (Acts 7:2; Gen. 12:1-3), and once in Canaan after moving there from Haran (Gen. 12:4-7). The date of the promise given first in Mesopotamia is indeterminate.
- [6] It cannot be true that the sojourn of Israel in Egypt was 430 years (Ex. 12:40), as this would lead to a contradiction in Scripture. Levi's son Kohath was one of the 70 who initially went down to Egypt with Jacob (Gen. 46:8,11). Kohath lived 133 years (Ex. 6:18), and his son Amram, the father of Moses, lived 137 years (Ex. 6:20). Moses appeared before Pharaoh at age 80 (Ex. 7:7). Levi, Kohath, Amram and Moses do correspond to the four generations prophesied to be in bondage in Egypt (Gen. 15:16). However, simply adding their ages together gives only  $133 + 137 + 70 = 340$ ; in actuality, Kohath lived some years in Canaan before moving to Egypt, and all of their lives overlap

significantly by an unknown number of years. Thus, the time spent in Egypt must have been even less than 340 years. The resolution to this apparent contradiction is found in taking the 430 years from the PROMISE given to Abraham (Gen. 12:4-7) to the giving of the LAW at Mt. Sinai, as suggested by Gal. 3:17. This results in Israel sojourning in the land of Egypt for 215 years.

- [7] The present construction of a Biblical chronology that results in a date for creation of 3,959 BC differs slightly from the one of Bishop Ussher (4,004 BC). Both begin at the event of creation and calculate durations of time from creation to Biblical events using the record of Scripture. At some point, however, a Biblical event must be linked to the modern (Gregorian) calendar. Ussher used the 3rd (final) deportation of Judah to Babylon, thought in his day to be 584 BC, as the link. In the present chronology, the link is taken as the death of King Solomon and the division of the United Kingdom in 930 BC.
- [8] The date of 586 BC for the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar is taken as the **anchor point** for the entire chronology, fixing the date of this event to the Gregorian calendar. All other dates are derived from Scripture alone relative to this anchor point. If the date of this event were to need to be shifted slightly, the entire Biblical Chronology would shift by that same amount.