



6

Chronology Conundrums

Key Theme

- The Bible records actual history.

Key Passages

- Genesis 12:10–16, 37:17–28; Exodus 1:13–14, 2:1–10, 5:6–9, 12:31–36

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize conflicts between the biblical and secular histories of Egypt.
- State why it is important to always start with the Bible.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “How does the secular timeline of Egyptian history relate to the Bible?”



Studying God's Word

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Since the Bible is an accurate account of history, we should be able to align secular archaeological findings and historical records with the Bible. We must always start with the Bible and align the thoughts and discoveries of man with its truth.

Students will complete a quiz prior to viewing the video clips, and then take notes in their Student Guides while viewing the video clips. There is no separate activity for this lesson.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Study the Prepare to Share section. | <input type="checkbox"/> Digging Up the Past Video answer key |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go Before the Throne. | <input type="checkbox"/> Preview the “Digging Up the Past” video clips from the Resource DVD-ROM. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digging Up the Past Quiz from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student | <input type="checkbox"/> DVD player and TV or projector |



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

We know that we can absolutely trust every word of Scripture and that its history can be trusted. In the book of Genesis, we find a history of the peoples of the world with a narrowing focus on Abraham and the Middle East. The accounts that we have recorded tell us about the leaders of the various tribes who descended from Esau and the other sons of Abraham. These are extensions of the accounts from Genesis 10 of families dispersing throughout the earth.

Throughout Genesis, the focus narrows to Abraham's family and the people they interact with. From Abraham to Jacob there are travels to and from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the land of Canaan. In Exodus we see the interactions between peoples of the Arabian Peninsula and the areas of Edom and Moab. The Bible is primarily concerned with communicating the history of the interactions between people living in this region. Later, we see missionaries carrying the message of Christ throughout Asia and into Europe.

Scripture frequently mentions the land of Egypt, which plays a very prominent role in the narrative of redemption. We find Abraham there on several occasions. Joseph landed there and rose to power through God's guiding hand in his life. The Jewish people grew in number within the borders of Egypt. Moses was born in Egypt so that he might lead the people out of captivity, demonstrating God's power over mankind and the world. Throughout the Old Testament, there were interactions between the Israelites and Egypt. It served as a source of horses for Solomon, and the kings of Israel made treaties with the kings of Egypt. Apart from various writers referring to historical events, one of the last mentions of Egypt comes in the New Testament as Joseph flees the murderous Herod with Mary and the young Christ child (Matthew 2:13–15).

Egypt is an important region to understand as we seek to know more about how God worked throughout history to accomplish His plans. As you study this material about Egypt, remember that none of these things happened by chance—they were all under the sovereign guiding hand of the Almighty.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As secular historians examine the records of ancient civilizations, they recognize that there are some problems with the chronologies of various civilizations. There was a period when several nations were involved in a chronology war—to show that their civilizations went back further than the others. This resulted in instances of nations fabricating kings and stretching dynasties out for thousands of years. Many have assumed that the Bible contains the same types of errors.

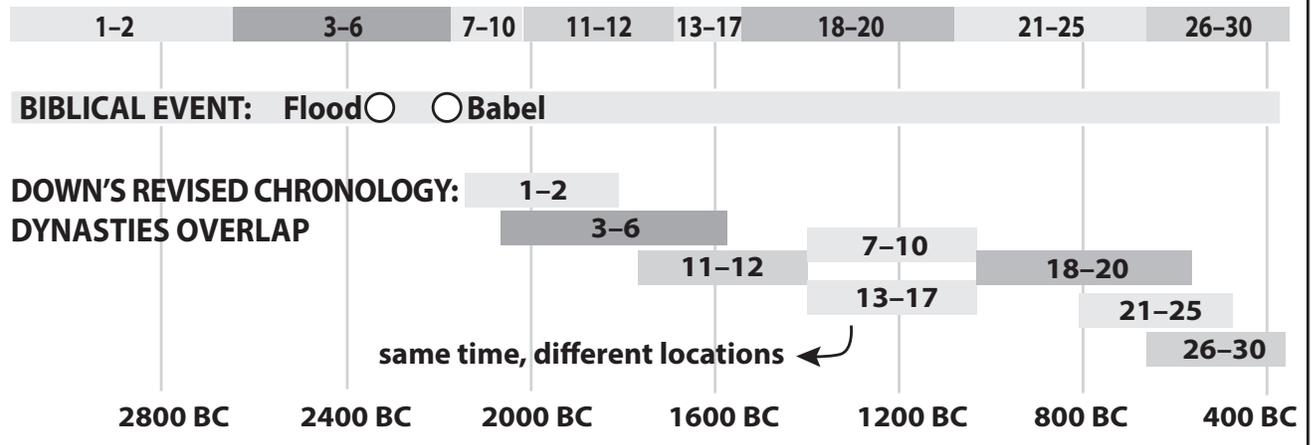
Most secular historians and archaeologists also assume that over time mankind accumulated ability and information. They would agree with the biblical concept that civilization began in the Mesopotamian region, but they would reject the idea of civilization beginning there as a result of the Ark's landing in that region. Any previous civilizations or cities, as we read about in Genesis 4, would have been obliterated by the Flood. Further, secular historians would also reject the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel and the implications for the spread of humanity across the globe.

That is why it is absolutely essential that we use the truths of Scripture to explain the world we live in. As we open the pages of Scripture to give a defense of the events recorded there, God's Word is being brought to those who reject the truth. We can use this as an opportunity to share the hope of salvation found in Christ alone presented in the same book. For some, God may use the historical truthfulness of the Bible to open their eyes to the spiritual truths found in God's Word.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Maybe you disliked history when you studied it in school—it was just a bunch of dates and dead people. Maybe the pyramids and the pharaohs didn't interest you apart from some of the embalming techniques or fascinating artwork. But when we connect them to the lives of Abraham, Joseph, and Jesus, they can take on new meaning. Although the Bible doesn't name many

TRADITIONAL CHRONOLOGY: DYNASTIES IN SEQUENCE



of the Egyptian rulers it references, we can use its record of history to help us understand who some of these men and women may have been.

From a secular perspective, the Bible isn't any more accurate than any other history. In fact, most historians doubt the claims that a large number of Jewish people lived in Egypt and then executed a mass exodus. The problem is they are looking for the evidence in the wrong time frame. Constructing a historical chronology using records from the historian Manetho, the timeline goes back well before the Flood, which would have occurred near 2349 BC. How can these dynasties have been in place before the Flood? Well, in the secular thinking there was no Flood, so there is no conflict.

In the chart above, the traditional secular chronology of Egypt is compared to an adjusted chronology proposed by Dr. David Down. The traditional chronology assumes that one dynasty ruled after another. Using this assumption, the timeline extends way beyond the date of the Flood. It is easy to conclude that the typical chronology does not line up with Scripture. Dr. Down attempts to use biblical information along with the archaeological evidence to produce a timeline that begins after the events of the Tower of Babel—where it should start. He identifies overlapping periods of rule and periods where there were rulers in the north and south of Egypt (not unlike in Israel). Down's revised chronology helps identify some of the unnamed pharaohs in the Bible

and uses the archaeological evidence to confirm what we know to be true from Scripture.

The lesson today will use several video clips from a video series entitled "Digging Up the Past." Dr. Down will explain how Abraham encountered Pharaoh Kufu, how Joseph was promoted by the pharaoh Sesostris I, and where the slavery of the Israelites fits into the scheme of the pyramids. When we start with the Bible as our absolute authority, we can make sense of the history of our world.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Father, I know that you are the God of all history. You are the one who has directed the hearts of kings like channels of water to bring about your purposes on earth. Help me understand the importance of what can seem like a bunch of people and dates in your plan of redeeming a people for yourself. Help me communicate these truths about your character to the students and to offer them a proper view of your guiding hand through history, especially to know that Jesus stepped into that history to die for our sins.

➤ **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.



Review

In the previous lesson, we looked at when the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt began. After Joseph died, the new pharaoh saw the rapidly expanding Jewish population as a threat to his kingdom and placed them under harsh slavery. They were forced to build cities for this pharaoh.

They cried out to the Lord under their heavy burden. They didn't know it, but God would use the baby who had been raised in Pharaoh's household to deliver them from their bondage and fulfill the promises given to Abraham.



Studying God's Word

► Write on the board, "How does the secular timeline of Egyptian history relate to the Bible?"

► Students should turn to page 41 in their Student Guides.

► Play the video segment "Abraham in Egypt."

Genesis 12:10–16

READ THE WORD

Our lesson today is going to be a bit different. We will be looking at a few passages of Scripture, but our main teaching is going to come from a video. This video features Dr. David Down, an archaeologist who has studied in Israel for many years. He will take us on location to several places in Egypt and help us connect them to the biblical accounts.

In your Student Guides you will find space to record some of the information we hear in the videos, so be listening for the answers to fill in the blanks and then we will discuss them after each of the clips.

But before we watch the first clip, we are going to have a little pop quiz! Follow along as I read the questions, and mark them true or false. At the end of class, we will come back to these questions as a way to review the lesson. *Pass out the Digging Up the Past quizzes. Read the questions from the pop quiz aloud.*

Now that we are thinking about the past, let's watch the first clip where Dr. Down talks about Abraham in Egypt. Be sure to take notes as you watch.

Show the video clip "Abraham in Egypt" (2:33). Review the information after the clip, helping the students fill in the blanks in their Student Guides if they missed any points. Use the Digging Up the Past Video answer key.

Let's read Genesis 12:10–16 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- ? From the Bible, is there any mention of exchanging ideas about mathematics or astronomy? *No.*
- ? So how do we treat the idea that Abraham brought the knowledge that helped Kufu build the pyramids, knowing that it is extrabiblical? *We need to be careful not to be too dogmatic, but it does seem to be a reasonable solution to the apparent conflict between the Bible's presentation and secular historians' view of the timing of the events.*

READ THE WORD

The next passage we will look at is the account of Joseph being sold into slavery and taken to Egypt. Turn to Genesis 37, and let's read verses 17 through 28. Then we will watch the next clip. *Show the video segment "Joseph in Egypt" (9:26) and then review the answers.*

Genesis 37:17–28

► Play the video segment "Joseph in Egypt."

READ THE WORD

The next segment picks up with the account of the Israelites from the book of Exodus. Let's listen to Dr. Down's explanation of the pharaohs mentioned there. *Show the clip "Moses in Egypt" (3:31).*

► Play the video segment "Moses in Egypt."

Let's read a few excerpts from Exodus to see how what Dr. Down said lines up with the passage.

? How do Exodus 1:13–14 and 5:6–9 connect to what we saw in the video? *Have someone read the passages. The bricks that were being made during this period were of mud and straw, just as in the pyramid of Amenemhet III.*

Exodus 1:13–14, 5:6–9

? What connection to Sobeknefru do we see in Exodus 2:1–10? *Sobeknefru was likely at the river to worship the fertility god of the Nile, Hapy, when she found baby Moses and took him as her son. She may have viewed this as a gift from her god since she had no children.*

Exodus 2:1–10

READ THE WORD

The last section moves us forward about eighty years to the time of the Exodus. Let's hear what Dr. Down has to say about these events and then we will compare that to Scripture. *Show the clip "Exodus from Egypt" (4:56). Review the answers.*

► Play the video segment "Exodus from Egypt."

Will someone please read Exodus 12:31–36? *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Exodus 12:31–36

? Why is it that the secular historians cannot find evidence for the Exodus? *They are looking in the wrong place, so they are not likely to find the evidence that would support the events.*

We must start with the Bible if we hope to understand true history.

? Now that we have gone through a few of these important biblical accounts, how would you describe the approach Dr. Down used to understand the Egyptian chronologies? *He sought to use the Bible as a filter to look at the dates. He held the Bible as infallible while holding the accounts of historians and the reconstructions from modern archaeologists with due caution.*

With that said, we also need to make sure that we are using the Bible to measure his ideas, as well. Ultimately, a lot of questions about the exact timing and details of many of the events remain. While the Bible is a very accurate history, it is not an exhaustive history. Our modern mind expects a lot of detail and ideas written in perfect chronological sequence, but

that is not what the Bible is. We need to be careful not to impose our expectations on the Bible—God knew what He was doing when He wrote it, and why.

To wrap up the teaching time, let's go back and look at the pop quiz questions and make sure we understand them. *Review the pop quiz questions and answers, discussing as needed.*



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

We know that God is the One guiding all of history and that He has revealed much of that record to us in the Bible. While the world will try to discredit the Bible's accounts of history, we must always be sure that we do not allow secular ideas to take precedence over what the Bible clearly teaches. If there is ever a claim that there was no Exodus from Egypt led by Moses, we must reject that idea, trusting that God has communicated to us truthfully. Everything must be viewed through the lens of Scripture.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Now, let's think about how these ideas might come up in our daily lives so that we can think biblically when questions come up.

- ? The History Channel and other networks broadcast many programs that try to promote scholarly ideas about biblical events. How should we view such programs? *We need to make sure that we understand that such programs are produced with an agenda that is likely intended to work against God's truth. We need to evaluate all the information in light of what Scripture says. We should open the Bible and read exactly what God has said.*

? How would you respond to a friend who told you he had watched a program on the Exodus and that the scholars had determined there was no evidence that it ever happened? *Open the Bible and show him what God's Word says. After that, consider offering an alternative explanation that takes the Bible's truths into account. Also consider discussing the motives of people who would make such a film—they are likely trying to discredit or disprove God and His Word.*

? What is the most intriguing idea you learned today, and how can you use that idea to proclaim the truthfulness of God's Word? *Discuss various answers.*

? How do we take questions about the history of Egypt and the Bible and use them to communicate the truths of Christ's life and death as our Savior? *Using the idea that the Bible is truth, we can transition to the truth about man's sinfulness and need for the Savior. Because we can trust the history of man's fallen condition, evident in the accounts we hear from Egypt, we can trust what we read about who Christ is and what He did for us.*



MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for His unchanging character.
- Ask God for wisdom to avoid worldly philosophies.
- Pray for opportunities to share the truth of Christ's salvation.

