

Summary: The Church currently teaches that Adam and Eve ushered in the temporal existence of the earth approximately 6000 years ago. At least on its face, this idea is incompatible with the archaeological record.

Joseph Smith claimed to receive direct revelation from God on various topics, and this Q&A session is recorded as Doctrine and Covenants 77. Here are [verses 6–7](#):

Q. What are we to understand by the book which John saw, which was sealed on the back with seven seals?

A. We are to understand that it contains the revealed will, mysteries, and the works of God; the hidden things of his economy concerning this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence.

Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?

A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh.

According to this direct revelation, Adam and Eve existed sometime around 4,000 BCE and this was approximately when the earth began its temporal existence. This date is difficult to reconcile with what is known about, for instance, [Australian aboriginal artifacts](#), [the invention of agriculture](#), or the evidence suggesting [continuous inhabitation of the city of Jericho since 9,000 BCE](#).

Note: The idea that the earth began its temporal existence 6,000 years ago should not be confused with the length of creation (i.e., the 6 “days” of creation are different than the 7 seals referred to by Joseph Smith in D&C 77 [as diagrammed here](#)). The Church freely admits the earth could have been created over a long period of time, suggesting that the “the Hebrew word for day . . . can also be used in the sense of an indeterminate length of time” ([Encyclopedia of Mormonism: Earth](#)).

Current Teachings

The LDS Church *currently* teaches the idea that the earth began its temporal existence (beginning with the Fall) roughly 6,000 years ago. Note that every manual linked below is its *current* version (as of December 2016).

1. [President Monson in GC in 2011](#) quoting President Benson:

For nearly six thousand years, God has held you in reserve to make your appearance in the final days before the second coming of the Lord.

2. [The New Testament manual](#):

In Revelation 6–7 Jesus Christ opens the book with seven seals. As each seal is opened, John sees a representation of an event or events of a thousand years of the earth’s history.

John saw in vision a representation of important events from the first six thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence.

3. [The Doctrine and Covenants manual on section 77:](#)

D&C 77:6–7. Why Was the Book Sealed That John Saw?

“‘The book which John saw’ represented the real history of the world—what the eye of God has seen, what the recording angel has written; and the seven thousand years, corresponding to the seven seals of the Apocalyptic volume, are as seven great days during which Mother Earth will fulfill her mortal mission, laboring six days and resting upon the seventh, her period of sanctification. These seven days do not include the period of our planet’s creation and preparation as a dwelling place for man. They are limited to Earth’s ‘temporal existence,’ that is, to Time, considered as distinct from Eternity.” (Whitney, Saturday Night Thoughts, p. 11.)

4. [The New Testament seminary manual:](#)

Invite students to read Doctrine and Covenants 77:6–7 silently, looking for the meaning of the book and the seals.

- What does the book contain?

Explain that the 7,000-year period refers to the time since the Fall of Adam and Eve. It does not refer to the actual age of the earth, including the periods of creation.

- According to Doctrine and Covenants 77:7, what did the seven seals represent? (Seven thousand-year periods of the earth’s temporal existence, which extends from the Fall of Adam to the end of the Millennium.)

5. [The Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual:](#)

11. The Savior will appear to all the world sometime in the beginning of the seventh thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence (see D&C 77:12–13).

6. [The Doctrine and Covenants Seminary Manual:](#)

- The earth will have a temporal existence of 7,000 years (see D&C 77:6–7).

During the seventh thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence, God will finish His work for the salvation of His children (see D&C 77:12).

- How long will the earth exist in a temporal state? (see vv. 6–7).
- What thousand-year period do you think we are in now? (The sixth.)
- What work will take place during the seventh thousand years of the earth’s temporal existence, or the Millennium? (see v. 12).

7. The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual introduction to [The Book of Abraham](#):

Who Is Abraham and When Did He Live?

Adam and Eve and the Fall (approximately 4000 B.C.), Enoch (approximately 3000 B.C.), Noah and the Flood (approximately 2400 B.C.), and the tower of Babel (approximately 2200 B.C.) preceded Abraham’s time. Abraham, who was born in about 2000 B.C., was the father of Isaac and the grandfather of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. (See Bible Dictionary, “chronology,” 635–36.)

8. [The Old Testament Teacher Resource Manual](#):

Tell them that Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden about 4000 B.C. and the book of Malachi was written about 400 B.C.

9. [The current New Testament Teacher Manual](#) (from 2014):

John saw visions associated with the opening of the first six seals of the book, which symbolize the earth’s first six thousand years of temporal existence.

Ask students to recall what each of the seven seals on the book represented (see D&C 77:7). Tell students that Revelation 6 contains John’s visions of the earth’s first 7,000 years of temporal existence.

10. [The Wilford Woodruff manual](#):

I want to ask who are looking for the fulfillment of these events, and who upon the earth are preparing themselves for the fulfillment of the word of the Lord through the mouths of prophets, patriarchs and apostles for the last six thousand years? Nobody that I have any knowledge of, [except] the Latter-day Saints . . .

11. [The “Old Testament at a glance” seminary chart](#).

12. [The “Old Testament bookmark”](#)

13. Currently taught in LDS Scriptures as part of [the Bible Chronology](#)

This idea has been repeatedly taught by leaders in the past.

1. Searching the LDS [General Conference Corpus](#) for “six thousand years” and “seven thousand years” yields nearly 100 references in General Conference to this teaching.

2. [A 1983 Ensign article](#):

When the first seal is opened in the beginning verses of Revelation 6, there is shown to John an important occurrence from the first thousand years after the Fall. The Bible dictionary of the LDS edition of the King James Bible places the Fall near 4000 B.C. (See Bible Dictionary, p. 635.) When the second seal is opened in the subsequent verses, John is shown something about the second thousand years. And so on through the first four seals. The fifth seal information presented to John represents both a time period and some events of which John knew a great deal.

3. Bruce R. McConkie in [General Conference 1974](#):

For 4,000 years all the prophets testified of his coming and proclaimed his goodness and grace.

Finally, consider the references and perspective introduced in the post [6,000 Years of So What!](#).