

CHAPTER SEVEN

BIBLE BACKGROUND

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this chapter you will be able to:

- C Write the Key Verse from memory.
- C Identify major historical periods of the Bible.
- C Describe everyday life in Bible times.
- C Define Biblical archaeology.

KEY VERSE:

Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever. (Psalm 119:152)

INTRODUCTION

Each part of the Bible occurred at a specific time in history and in a specific cultural context. Proper understanding of a passage often relates to these factors. This chapter gives a brief summary of the history of the Bible and explains details of everyday life in Bible days.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

Chronological history tells when an event occurred in the past. "Chronological" means in order or sequence. Chronological history organizes events of the past in proper order.

In most of the world the dating of time is divided into two major periods. These two periods are shown by the use of initials after the number of the year:

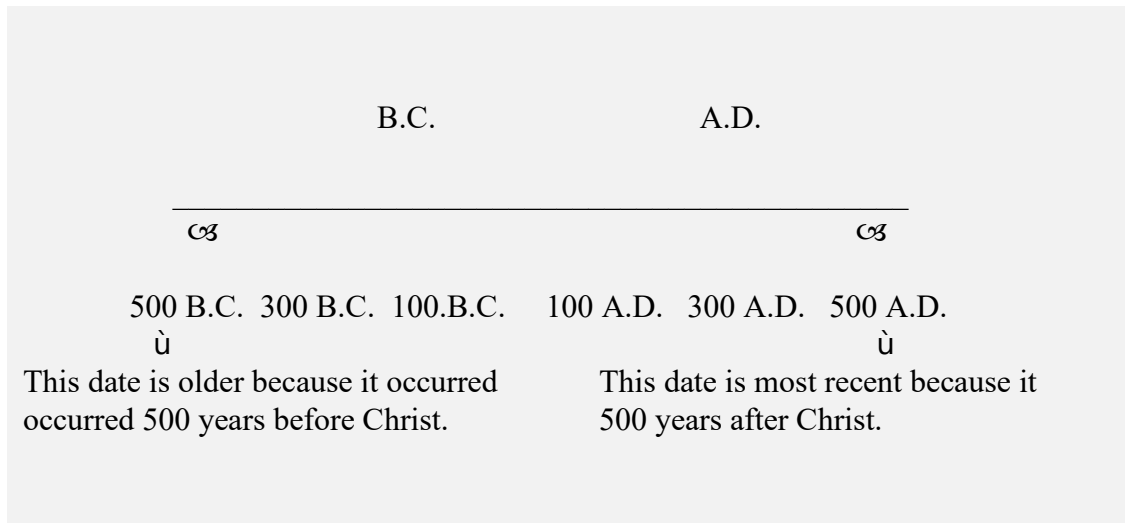
B.C. Numbers marked with these initials mean an event happened before the birth of Christ.

A.D. Numbers marked with these initials mean an event happened after the time of the birth of Christ.

When we say something happened 250 B.C., it means it happened 250 years Before Christ. When we say an event happened 700 A.D., it means it happened 700 years after the birth of Christ. When a number has B.C. after it, the larger the number is the older

the date is. When a number has an A.D. after it, the larger number is the more recent date.

This chart will help you understand dating:



There are several ways we are able to know the chronological history of Bible events:

1. The Bible itself provides the dates of some events.
2. Early records of historians provide dates.
3. Through archaeology, which is the study of ancient things. It is a science which gains knowledge of times past from the study of existing remains of their civilizations. Biblical archaeology is the study of remains found in Bible lands. Some of the historical record of the Bible has been gained by dating these remains.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

The chronological history of the Bible is most easily divided into twelve major periods. Chart One shows the major periods of Bible chronology. Look at Column Two on the chart. It shows the 12 periods of Bible history starting with "Creation to Abraham" and concluding with "Spread Of The Gospel."

Columns One and Three show when the books of the Bible were written. Note that

between the Old and New Testament there was a period of 386 years during which no books were written. Refer to this chronology as you study the Bible. It will help you determine when events happened:

Chart One Chronological History Of The Bible

One	Two	Three
GENESIS	1. Creation to Abraham 2. Abraham to Moses	
EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY	3. The Exodus	
JOSHUA	4. The Conquest	
JUDGES RUTH	5. The Judges	
	6. The Kingdom	JOB PSALMS PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON ISAIAH JEREMIAH LAMENTATIONS EZEKIEL DANIEL HOSEA JOEL AMOS OBADIAH JONAH MICAH NAHUM HABAKKUK ZEPHANIAH
I SAMUEL II SAMUEL		
I KINGS II KINGS		
I CHRONICLES II CHRONICLES	7. Two kingdoms 8. Judah alone	
	9. The captivity	
EZRA NEHEMIAH MALACHI	10. The Restoration	HAGGAI ZECHARIAH

(Chart One, Continued)

Between The Testaments

One	Two	Three
MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN	11. Life of Christ	
		ROMANS I AND II CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS I AND II THESSALONIANS II AND II TIMOTHY PHILEMON TITUS HEBREWS JAMES I AND II PETER I , II, AND III JOHN JUDE REVELATION
ACTS	12. Spread of the Gospel	

Now read the description of major events which occurred in these 12 periods of Bible history:

1. Creation to Abraham (From creation to 2000 B.C.):

The creation of the universe, the fall of man into sin, the murder of Abel by Cain, Noah and the flood, and the Tower of Babel are some of the major Bible events of this period.

2. Abraham to Moses (200-1500 B.C.):

This period covers approximately 500 years. The experiences of one man, Abraham, and his descendants are the focus of this period. From Abraham God raised up the nation of Israel through which He wanted to reveal Himself to the nations of the world. This period includes the stories of Isaac, the son of Abraham, and of Isaac's son, Jacob. The period climaxes with the story of Joseph, Jacob's son, who was sold into slavery in Egypt and became a great ruler. Jacob and his family later joined Joseph in Egypt.

3. The Exodus (1500-1460 B.C.):

Between the close of Genesis and the opening of Exodus approximately 100 years passed. The family of Jacob multiplied into the nation of Israel during this time. The Egyptians became fearful because of the rapid increase of the Israelites so they made them slaves. Moses was raised up and under his leadership the Israelites miraculously departed from Egypt. After spending a year at Mt. Sinai, they wandered for 38 years in the desert. This period closes with the death of Moses and the leadership of Israel being assumed by a man named Joshua.

4. The Conquest of Canaan (1460-1450 B.C.):

During this period Joshua led Israel into Canaan to possess the land God had promised them. When the ungodly people of this area were conquered militarily, the land was divided among the 12 tribes of Israel. This period of 10 years is recorded in the book of Joshua.

5. The Judges (1450-1102 B.C.):

This was a time during which God raised up judges to rule the people of Israel. It is a dark period of time in the story of Israel as it was a time of spiritual failure. This period lasted for 348 years.

6. The Kingdom (1102-982 B.C.):

Samuel, the last judge of Israel, established the Kingdom of Israel and anointed Saul to be king. Three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned about 40 years. During this time the nation of Israel attained the highest glory in their history. The government was firmly established and Israel's borders were expanded. The story of this period, as well as the three following periods, are recorded in I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, and I and II Chronicles. The kingdom period lasted for 120 years and then the kingdom was divided.

7. The Two Kingdoms (982-722 B.C.):

When the evil son of Solomon, Rehoboam, came to the throne, the Northern tribes revolted. They established a separate kingdom of Israel. The Kingdom in the south became known as the Kingdom of Judah. For about 259 years Israel was divided into these two kingdoms.

8. Judah alone (722-587 B.C.):

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The people were taken captive into Assyria. After the fall of Israel, the southern Kingdom of Judah lasted 135 years. Judah's kings had shown more loyalty to God and the people had not gone so deep into sin.

9. The Captivity (587-538 B.C.):

In spite of the warnings of the prophets, Judah finally went deeper into sin until God let them be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and taken captive into Babylon. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed and the people of God, who a few hundred years before had miraculously crossed the Jordan River, now marched away in chains.

10. The Restoration (538-391 B.C.):

When a king by the name of Cyrus became leader of Babylon, he permitted God's people to return and rebuild Jerusalem and their temple of worship. Zerubbabel led the group who returned to reestablish themselves in the promised land. The records of this period are found in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. This period of restoration lasted for 147 years.

Between the Testaments (391-5 B.C.)

The Old Testament closes with the reestablishment of God's people, Israel, in Canaan. Then came a period of about 400 years between the Old and New Testaments. There were no Bible books written during this period so information on the time comes from secular writings.

During this time Palestine was ruled by the Persians (536-333 B.C.), the Greeks (333-323 B.C.), the Egyptians (323-204 B.C.), the Syrians (204-165 B.C.), the Maccabees (165-63 B.C.), and Rome (63 B.C. through the time of Christ).

11. Life of Christ (5 B.C. to 28 A.D.):

After 400 years, John the Baptist was raised up by God to prepare the way for the coming

of Jesus Christ. Jesus was to be the Savior of sinful mankind. The promise of this plan of salvation was first made in the garden of Eden when man originally sinned (Genesis 3:15). Jesus was miraculously born of a virgin, revealed Himself to Israel as the Messiah, was rejected, crucified for the sins of all mankind, and resurrected by the power of God. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record this period of 33 years.

12. The spread Of The Gospel (28-100 A.D.):

This period covers the events after Christ's return to Heaven following His resurrection. It records the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and throughout the world,

Chart Two: Judges Of Israel

The Old Testament refers to many events which happened when Israel was ruled by Judges. Judges ruled before Israel had kings. The stories of the judges are recorded in the book of Judges. Use this chart to help you identify when events occurred during the period of the judges:

Reference	Name	Dates B.C.	Number of Years
Judges 3:7-11	Othniel	1400-1360	40
Judges 3:12-31	Ehud	1360-1280	80
Judges 3:12-31	Shamgar	1280	1
Judges 4-5	Deborah	1280-1240	40
Judges 6-8:32	Gideon	1240 -1200	40
Judges 9	Abimelech	1200-1197	3
Judges 10:1-2	Tola	1197-1174	23
Judges 10:3-5	Jair	1174-1152	22
Judges 10:6-12	Jephthah	1152-1146	6
Judges 10:6-12	Ibzan	1146-1138	8
Judges 10:6-12	Elon	1138-1128	10
Judges 10:6-12	Abdon	1128-1121	7
Judges 13-16	Sampson	1121-1101	20

Chart Three: Kings Of Israel And Judah

Many Old Testament events are mentioned as having occurred during the reigns of different kings of Israel and Judah. This chart will help you date these events:

Kings Of Israel:

Name Of King	Length Of Reign In Years	Dates B.C.	Reference
Jeroboam I	22	976-954	I Kings 11:26-14:20
Nadab	2	954-953	I Kings 15:25-28
Baasha	24	953-930	I Kings 15:27-16:7
Elah	2	930-929	I Kings 16:6-14
Zimri	(7 days)	929	I Kings 16:9-20
Omri	12	929-918	I Kings 16:15-28
Ahab	21	918-898	I Kings 16:28-22:40
Ahaziah	1	898-897	I Kings 22:40- II Kings 1:18
Jehoram	11	897-885	II Kings 3:1-9:25
Jehu	28	885-857	II Kings 9:1-10:36
Jehoahaz	16	857-841	II Kings 13:1-9
Jehoash	16	841-825	II Kings 13:10-14:16
Jeroboam II	40	825-773	II Kings 14:23-29
Zechariah	½	773-772	II Kings 14:29-15:12
Shallum	(1 month)	772	II Kings 15:10-15
Menahem	10	772-762	II Kings 15:14-22
Pekahiah	2	762-760	II Kings 15:22-26
Pekah	20	760-730	II Kings 15:27-31
Hoshea	9	730-721	II Kings 15:30-17:6

Kings Of Judah:

Name Of King	Length Of Reign In Years	Dates B.C.	References
Rehoboam	17	976-959	I Kings 11:42-14:31
Abijam	3	959-996	I Kings 14:31-15:8
Asa	41	956-915	I Kings 15:8-24
Jehosphahat	25	915-893	I Kings 22:41-50
Johoram	8	893-886	II Kings 8:16-24
Ahaziah	1	886-885	II Kings 8:24-9:29
Athliah	6	885-879	II Kings 11:1-20
Joash	40	879-840	II Kings 11:1-12:21
Amaziah	29	840-811	II Kings 14:1-20
Azariah (Uzziah)	52	811-759	II Kings 15:1-7
Jotham	18	759-743	II Kings 15:32-38
Ahaz	19	743-727	II Kings 16:1-20
Hezekiah	29	727-698	II Kings 18:1-20:21
Manasseh	55	698-643	II Kings 21:1-18
Amon	2	643-640	II Kings 21:19-26
Josiah	31	640-609	II Kings 22:1-23:30
Jehohaz	(3 months)	609	II Kings 23:31-33
Jehoiakim	11	609-597	II Kings 23:34-24:5
Jehoiachin	(3 months)	597	II Kings 24:6-16
Zedekiah	11	597	II Kings 24:17-25:30

Chart Four: Old Testament Prophets

Since much of the Old Testament are books of prophecy, it is important to know when the prophets lived and prophesied. Use this chart to date events during the periods of the prophets.

Name Of Prophet	Prophesied To	Dates
Jonah	Assyria	Before Captivity (800-650)
Nahum	Assyria	Before Captivity (800-650)
Obadiah	Edom	Before Captivity (800)
Hosea	Israel	Before Captivity (750)
Amos	Israel	Before Captivity (750)
Isaiah/Jeremiah	Judah	Before Captivity (800-606)
Jeremiah/Lamentations	Judah	Before Captivity (800-606)
Joel	Judah	Before Captivity (800-606)
Micah	Judah	Before Captivity (800-606)
Habakkuk	Judah	Before Captivity (800-606)
Zephaniah	Judah	Before Captivity (800-606)
Ezekiel	Judah	During Captivity (606-536)
Daniel	Judah	During Captivity (606-536)
Haggai	Judah	After Captivity (536-400)
Zechariah	Judah	After Captivity (536-400)
Malachi	Judah	After Captivity (536-400)

LIFE IN BIBLE TIMES

The Bible, historians, and archaeological studies have provided information on the everyday life of the people of Israel in Bible times. Prior to the time when they went to Egypt the people of Israel lived in tents. They moved about with their flocks and herds in search of fresh pasture and water.

After the exodus from Egypt and the years traveling in the desert, Israel settled in their promised land of Canaan. From that time on the life of ordinary people followed a pattern that changed little throughout the years.

Peasant men worked either in the fields or in a village craft while the women and children kept the home. Farming and shepherding were both important occupations. There was some fishing and all kinds of village crafts including carpentry, pottery, and leather work.

Water was in short supply since the land was hot and dry most of the year. Water was drawn from a village well in a goatskin bucket. This was an important place of socializing for the women.

People wore long flowing robes in order to keep cool. The material of the robe was decided by wealth. The wealthy could afford brightly dyed cloth. Often clothes indicated a man's profession. For example, the priests wore special clothing and the rabbi (religious leader of Israel) wore a blue-fringed robe. Shoes were made of cow hide soles with leather thongs which fastened to the ankle.

Marriages were arranged by parents and there was little social mixing between young people. Because the bride was a working asset, she had to be paid for with a bride price. Domestic life centered in the home.

In Old Testament times there was no school for common men's children. They were taught skills and religion by their parents. By the time of Jesus, a girl's education was still entirely her mother's responsibility. Boys went to a school at the synagogue from age six on. The Old Testament was the textbook they used to learn history, geography, literature, and law. Exceptional students were sent to Jerusalem to learn from the Rabbis. Each boy also had to learn a trade. When a boy became 13 years old, he became "Bar Mitzvah" which is Jewish for "a son of the law." This meant that he was considered to be a man.

Death among the people of Israel called for elaborate ceremonies of mourning. Sometimes professional mourners would be hired. In New Testament times bodies were anointed and wrapped in special grave clothes. Poor people were buried in common graves or caves, but the wealthy had tombs dug out of rocks and sealed with a flat boulder.

There was no division between civil and religious law in Israel. The gate of the city or village was the place where problems were formally judged. The highest court in New Testament times was the Sanhedrin which consisted of 70 men who met in the temple. The Roman authorities, who were in control of Israel during New Testament times, allowed the Israelites to pass any sentence under their law except the death penalty.

The religious life of Israel centered first on the tabernacle and later on the temple in Jerusalem. Old Testament religious regulations were administered by the priests and the Levites. The greatest religious day of the year was the day of Atonement. On this day the high priest entered the innermost room of the temple to make atonement for his own sins and the sins of the people.

Other festivals included the Passover, which was a way of remembering Israel's escape from Egypt. The feast of Pentecost marked the beginning of harvest and the feast of Tabernacles was the harvest festival. The feast of Purim recalled Esther's deliverance of Israel, and the feast of trumpets marked the start of the new year.

Between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament regular worship shifted from the main temple to the local synagogue. This practice started in the

days when Israel was in captivity and there was no temple in Jerusalem. Only men took an active part in the synagogue service. The women and children sat in a different section. The pattern of the service included statement of a creed, prayers, and readings from the law and prophets. This was followed by a sermon and a time when the men could question the minister.

The Old Testament Scriptures were written on sacred scrolls which only the doctors of law might open. Whenever possible visits were made to the temple at Jerusalem which had been rebuilt. The temple was similar to Solomon's original temple of Old Testament times but on a larger scale.

The story of the Bible is set against this background of traditional family and rural life which did not change for centuries. It was also set against the background of warring empires around Israel and the influence of the Roman Empire. Rome had extended to control the people of Israel during the time of Jesus.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. If you are especially interested in Bible chronology obtain the New Chronological Bible published by World Bible Publishers. The Chronological Bible is a King James version of the Bible which is organized on the basis of chronology. This means that instead of being organized by books (Genesis through Revelation) that the chapters and verses are presented in chronological order that events happened in the past or will occur in the future.

The content of Genesis through Revelation is organized in the Chronological Bible under twelve major sections:

- Development of the Early World
- Development of Israel As A Tribe
- Development of Israel As A Nation
- Development of Israel and As Kingdom
- Division of Israel into Dual Kingdoms
- Survival of Israel in the Southern Kingdom
- Captivity of Israel in Babylonia
- Restoration of Israel as a Nation
- Preservation of Israel during the Intertestamental period
(this is the period of time between the writing of the Old and New Testaments)
- Inauguration of the Kingdom of God on Earth
- Continuation of the Kingdom of God on Earth
- Consummation of the Kingdom of God on Earth

The Narrated Bible published by Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, is also a good tool for chronological study of the Bible. This book does not give the actual Bible text, but provides Bible references in chronological order and a brief narrative (commentary) on each reference.

2. If you are interested in Biblical archaeology, the following books are suggested:

Beginnings In Biblical Archaeology by Howard Vos published by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

Archaeology in Bible Lands by Howard Vos published by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.