

HOW OLD IS THE EARTH?

Reconsidering the Creation Account of Genesis 1:1-3

Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.



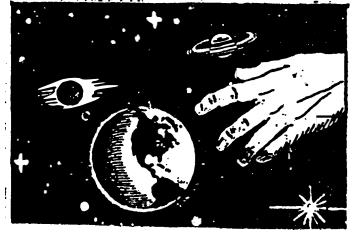
Strich von Georg Meissner in Relief.

Strich von Meissner und Meissner in Relief.

Der vierte Schöpfungstag.

RECONSIDERING THE CREATION ACCOUNT OF GENESIS 1:1-3

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1A. The Concise Issue:

Merrill F. Unger, formerly Chair of the Department of Semitics and Old Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, states the basic issue very succinctly:

The majestic opening verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth," apparently does not refer to the original sinless and perfect earth brought into existence in dim antiquity. That original sphere, says Isaiah, was created "not a waste" but "formed to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). The laying of its cornerstone was celebrated by the sinless song of "the morning stars" and the joyous shouts of "all the sons of God" (angels), perhaps millions of years ago (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan. 1958, 27).

2A. The Common Assumptions:

The Genesis account apparently opens at a time far removed from the original creation. Commentators usually make two assumptions concerning Genesis 1:1-3, neither of which is required by the original language.

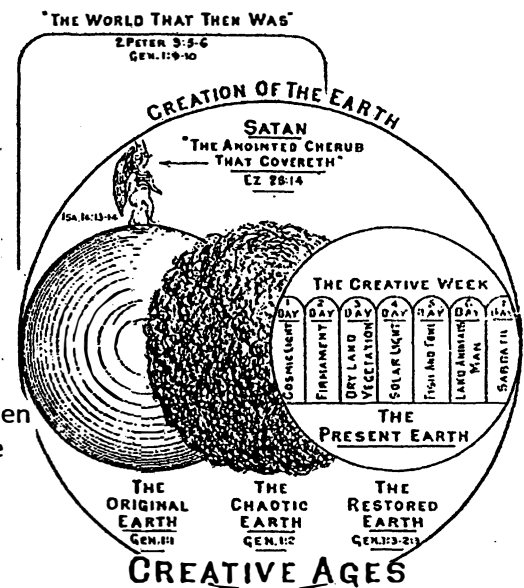
- 1b. The phrase "in the beginning" refers absolutely to the beginning of the material universe encompassing "the heavens and the earth."
- 2b. The Hebrew word *bara'* (create) in Genesis 1:1 means "not formed from any pre-existing materials; formed out of nothing" (*creatio ex nihilo*).

These common assumptions lead to conclusions which run counter to simple and natural grammatical interpretations of Gen 1:1-3 and involve major difficulties of reconciliation with other biblical statements.

3A. The Gap View:

Some Bible scholars see a long gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, allowing for the rebellion of Satan and his angels and their subsequent judgment, bringing about the chaotic conditions in the universe and on earth. In this view the original earth could be millions of years old but the present earth of rather recent origin.

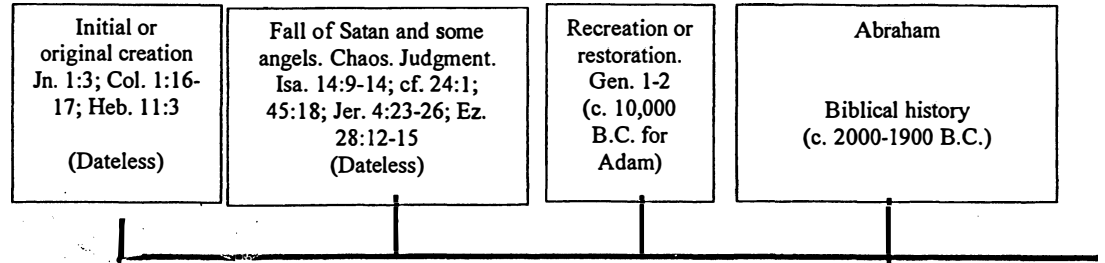
Clarence Larkin subscribed to this position. His diagram on the right serves to illustrate the view. Unfortunately, the Hebrew grammar (as distinct from the reading of Gen. 1:1-3 in the KJV) does not permit one to insert a long time gap between the first two verses. As will be discussed below, if anything, the gap between the original creation, fall of Satan and the recreation should most likely be placed before Genesis 1:1.



4A. The Non-Original Creation View:

1b. The rationality of the view:

- 1c. Original creation occurred before 1:1 altogether.
- 2c. Sometime between original creation and the literal days, angels were created and Satan as their head. Satan fell. Judgment came upon the original creation as described in Genesis 1:2.
- 3c. There is no break between Genesis 1:1-2. The issue can be diagrammed thusly:



2b. The reasons for this view:

1c. The basic rule of hermeneutics:

All Scripture must be interpreted in the light of the context. One should ask himself the question: What is God doing here?

Genesis 1 and 2 deal with God's concern in preparing the earth for human habitation or **making the world habitable for man**. As such, the idea of **restoration** is very fitting.

2c. The major grammatical difficulty:

Unger has well stated:

If Genesis 1:1 refers to the original creation of the universe out of nothing, Genesis 1:2 must either be construed to be the original chaotic state in which the earth was created or to be the result of a subsequent judgment (the Gap Theory). But the first interpretation is contradicted by both Scripture and theology. Why should a perfect Creator create an original imperfect and chaotic earth, the fact of which is expressly denied by revealed truth recorded in Isaiah 45:18. (Unger, *Bib. Sac.*, Jan. 1958, 28).

3c. The translation of v. 1:

A careful grammatical rendering of Genesis 1:1-2 results in a clear understanding that the verses form a unit. As Unger, a superb Hebrew grammarian, remarks:

These two pivotal verses must not be separated. They form an introduction to the activity of the seven days (1:3-2:3), because they tell us the condition of the earth *when* God began to remake or refashion it. It "was" (not "became") wasteness and emptiness, with darkness upon the surface of the waters, showing that God had not utterly forsaken and forgotten the earth, ruined by the sin of former angelic inhabitants (cf. Gen 6:1-6; Isa 14:13-14; Ezk 28:12-15). When sin entered the universe, God gave the first intimation that He would deal with it in mercy as well as in judgment (*Unger's Bible Handbook*, 38).



2c. View 2: The original earth in a spectacular universe was created in remote, dateless past. The present earth is relatively young.

The angels, who were created some time before the universe, rejoiced over God's consummate creation. God Himself related to Job the angelic anthems and accolades at the creation of the pristine earth: "Job, where were you 'when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?'" (Job 38:7)

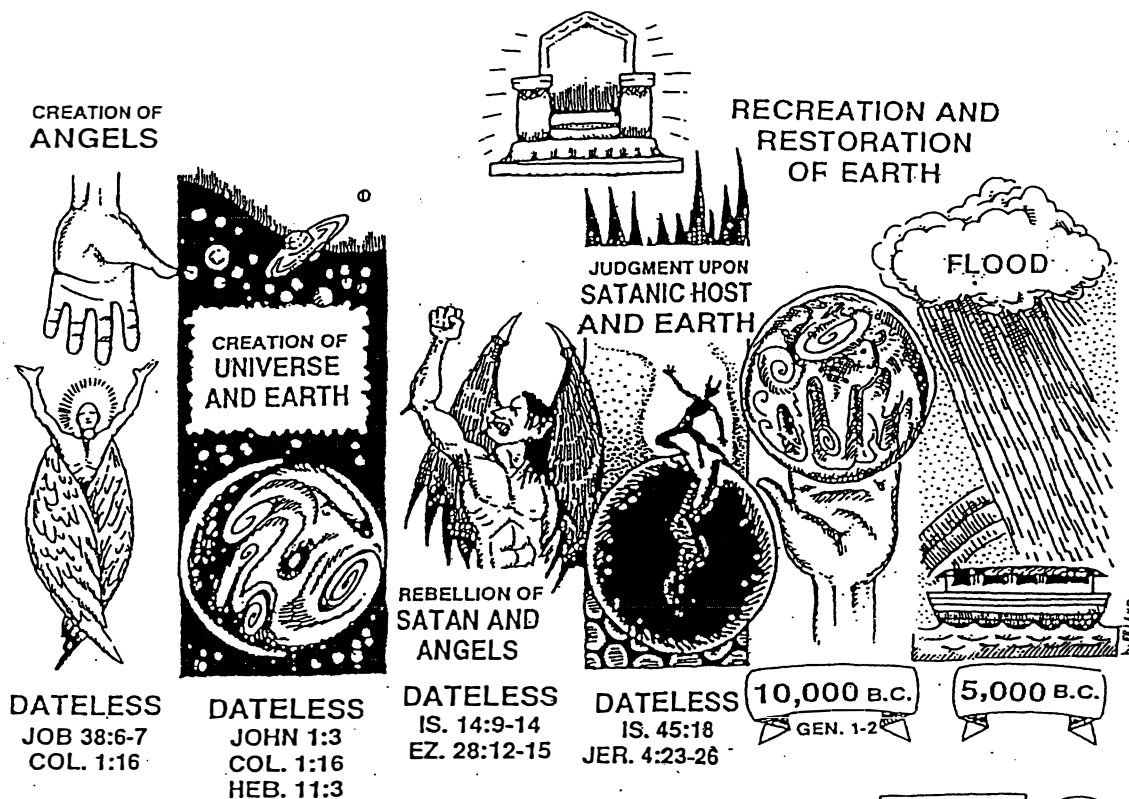


1d. Satan subsequently rebelled against God and took one-third of the angels with him (Rev.12:4).

2d. The angelic rebellion and ensuing divine judgment affected the entire universe and left the stellar and planetary world in a state of desolation and chaos. The universe seems to give evidence of a divine judgment because of the angelic apostasy.

3d. The book of Genesis opens with a description of the earth as being without form and void, a condition attributed elsewhere to divine judgment (Is. 45:18). The grammar of Gen. 1:1-3 certainly allows for a recreation of earth rather than the depiction of an original creation.

GOD'S CREATION AND RECREATION



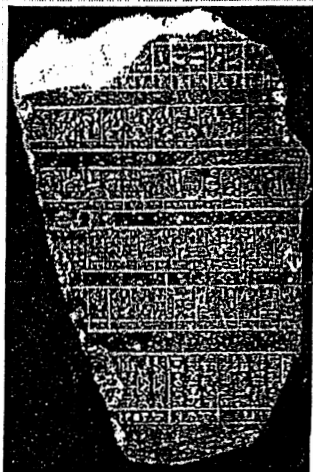


5A. Two Concluding Questions:

- 1b. Should the view of a recent earth be made a test of orthodoxy? Such a position is strongly urged by various creation groups, including Ken Ham's fine organization, **Answers in Genesis**. Is it right to ignore a totally biblical position which is faithful to the verbally inspired creation account and consist with proven scientific facts? One looks in vain in the writings of young earth advocates for any reference to the possibility that the universe may be very old, but that the present earth, as argued above, is relatively young.
- 2b. Do the recent earth advocates carry their view too far when they subscribe to a very recent date of creation? For example, Ken Ham follows Bishop Ussher in dating creation to 4004 B.C. and the Noachic Flood to 2348 B.C. See the diagrams below. It is quite impossible to calculate precisely the date of creation. In the 18th century the German Scholar Desvignolles, in his *Chronology of Sacred History*, says he has collected upwards of 200 calculations of the chronology between creation and the birth of Christ. The longest time is 6984 years, the shortest 3483 years.



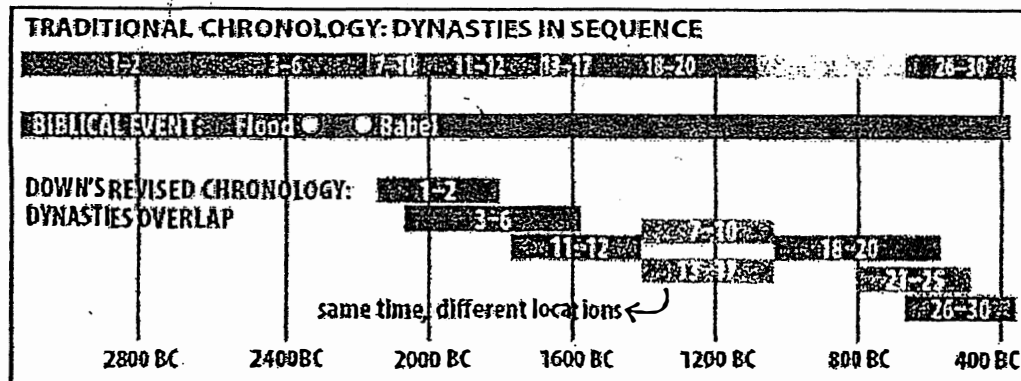
One must really manipulate the dates of Mesopotamian civilization and of the Egyptian dynasties whose origin is normally given for around 3000 B.C. It is not possible to telescope the dynasties by suggesting overlap and thus reducing their duration by 1000 years. This procrustean procedure, adjusting evidence to support one's theory, is greatly deplored by the other recent creationists such as the Associates of Biblical Research in their periodical, *Bible and Spade*.



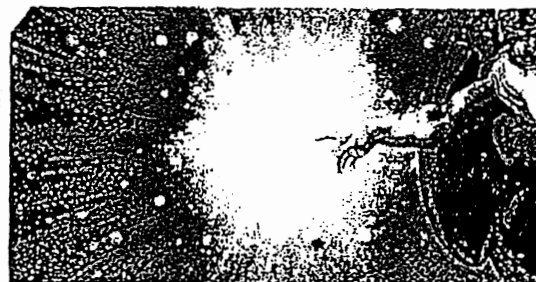
The discovery of the Palermo Stone enables Egyptologists to trace fairly accurately Egyptian dynasties back to about 3000 B.C. This would be a considerable time after the Flood, which possibly occurred around 5000 B.C.

Ken Ham's efforts to reduce the beginning of the Egyptian dynasties by 1000 years.

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DATE	EVENT	SCRIPTURE	AGE OF EARTH
4004 BC	Creation	Gen. 1:1-31	0
3874 BC	Seth born when Adam was 130	Gen. 5:3	130 yrs.
3769 BC	Enos born when Seth was 106	Gen. 5:6	236 yrs.
3679 BC	Cainan born when Enos was 90	Gen. 5:9	326 yrs.
3609 BC	Mahalaaleel born when Cainan was 70	Gen. 5:12	396 yrs.
3544 BC	Jared born when Mahalaaleel was 65	Gen. 5:15	460 yrs.
3382 BC	Enoch born when Jared was 162	Gen. 5:18	622 yrs.
3317 BC	Methuselah born when Enoch was 65	Gen. 5:21	687 yrs.
3130 BC	Lamech born when Methuselah was 187	Gen. 5:26	874 yrs.
2948 BC	Noah born when Lamech was 162	Gen. 5:28	1,036 yrs.
2446 BC	Shem born when Noah was 502	Gen. 11:10	1,538 yrs.
2348 BC	Flood when Noah was 600	Gen. 7:6	1,636 yrs.
2346 BC	Arphaxad born when Shem was 100	Gen. 11:10	1,636 yrs.
2311 BC	Salah born when Arphad was 35	Gen. 11:12	1,693 yrs.
2281 BC	Eber born when Salah was 30	Gen. 11:14	1,723 yrs.
2246 BC	Peleg born when Eber was 34	Gen. 11:16	1,758 yrs.
2217 BC	Reu born when Peleg was 30	Gen. 11:18	1,787 yrs.
2185 BC	Serug born when Reu was 32	Gen. 11:20	1,819 yrs.
2155 BC	Nahor born when Serug was 30	Gen. 11:22	1,849 yrs.
2126 BC	Terah born when Nahor was 29	Gen. 11:24	1,878 yrs.
1996 BC	Abraham born when Terah was 130	Gen. 11:32; 12:4	2,008 yrs.
1921 BC	Abraham enters Canaan at 75	Gen. 12:4	2,083 yrs.



Ken Ham's abbreviated chronology

Standard View of Egyptian Dynasties

Predynastic Period c.3500-3100 BCE

Early Dynastic Period c.3100-2686 BCE

'Scorpion'
Narmer

1st Dynasty c.3100-2890 BCE

Menes (Hor-Aha)
Djer
Wadj (Djet)
Den
Anendjib
Semerkhet
Qa'a

2nd Dynasty c.2890-2686 BCE

Hotepsekhemwv
Raneb
Nynetjer
Seth-Peribsen
Khasekhemwy

Old Kingdom c.2686-2181 BCE

3rd Dynasty c.2686-2613 BCE

Sanakhte (Nebka) (c.2688-2668)
Djoser (Netjenkhet) (c.2668-2649)
Sekhemkhet (Djoser Teti) (c.2649-2641)
Khaba (c.2641-2637)
Huni (c.2637-2613)

	Sample Chronological Calculations of Birth Date - BC			
	"Ussher" Method		"Patriarchal-Age" Method	
	Masoretic	Septuagint	Masoretic	Septuagint
Adam	4004	5490	10842	12028
Seth	3874	5260	10712	11798
Enos	3769	5055	10607	11593
Cainan	3679	4865	9702	10688
Mahalaaleel	3609	4695	8792	9778
Jared	3544	4530	7897	8883
Enoch	3382	4388	6935	7921
Methuselah	3317	4203	6570	7556
Lamech	3130	4016	5601	6597
Noah	2984	3828	5419	6399
Flood	2348	3228	4819	5799
Shem	2446	3326	4917	5897
Aphaxad	2346	3226	4317	5297
Cainan		3019		4762
Salah	2311	2961	3879	4302
Eber	2281	2831	3446	3842
Peleg	2247	2697	2982	3438
Reu	2217	2567	2743	3099
Serug	2185	2435	2504	2760
Nahor	2155	2305	2274	2430
Terah	2126	2126	2126	2126
Abram	1996	1996	1996	-120-36



The World: Born in 4004 BC?

Ussher and the Date of Creation

by Larry Pierce on April 28, 2006; last featured October 23, 2007

The age of the earth is one of the most contentious issues in the creation/evolution debate. In today's culture, the thought of creation occurring about 6,000 years ago is frequently mocked by non-Christians—and also by many Christians.

The age of the earth as described by James Ussher

THE AGE OF THE EARTH IS ONE OF THE MOST CONTENTIOUS ISSUES IN THE CREATION/EVOLUTION DEBATE.

Even James Ussher (1581-1656), the famous and respected Archbishop of Ireland in the seventeenth century, is today greatly ridiculed for declaring that the world was created in 4004 BC.

However, this date was widely accepted until people began to believe in ideas such as billions of years of Earth history. In other words, they started trusting in the latest secular findings based on fallible dating methods, instead of the only absolutely reliable method—consulting the history book provided by the Eyewitness account (the infallible Word of God).

Ussher also argued that Day 1 of creation was October 23. On the surface, this does seem a bit extreme to suggest such a specific date—but when one studies what Ussher did, one quickly realizes he was a brilliant scholar who had very good reasons for his conclusions concerning the date of creation.

Studying Ussher's line of thinking as he arrived at his conclusion—creation on October 23, 4004 BC—provides food for thought to this very day.

The Bible—The Basis for Ussher's Work

One of Ussher's many projects was to write a complete history of the world in Latin, covering every major event from the time of creation to AD 70. He published this 1,600-page volume in 1650. An English translation entitled *The Annals of the World* was first published in 1658, two years after his death. (The complete work is fascinating. It has recently been

Arguments for the Non-Original Creation View

1. The contextual reason:

The brief creation account sets the stage for the main theme: God is making the earth habitable for man. There is more revelation on Gog and Magog (Ez. 38-39) than on the creation account of the universe in Genesis 1-2, which merely gives the background for man's origin and subsequent demise.

2. The grammatical reason:

The first main verb of the passage is "said" in verse 3, preceded by three circumstantial clauses, dependent on verse 3. The earth was, not became, waste and empty when God fashioned it. **It is remarkable that creationists who pay such careful attention to Hebrew grammar to support the literal days of Genesis (and rightly so) fail in most instances to heed the grammar of the earlier verses in Genesis 1.**

3. The esthetic reason:

At the time of creation, everything was good (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) very good (31) and pleasant to the eye (2:9). The formless and void condition suggests a restoration of the earth, rather than an original creation.

4. The hermeneutical reason:

Applying the law of cross reference, Isaiah 45:18 clearly states that the earth was not created without form and void (tohu wabohu). The question must be asked, How did it get that way?

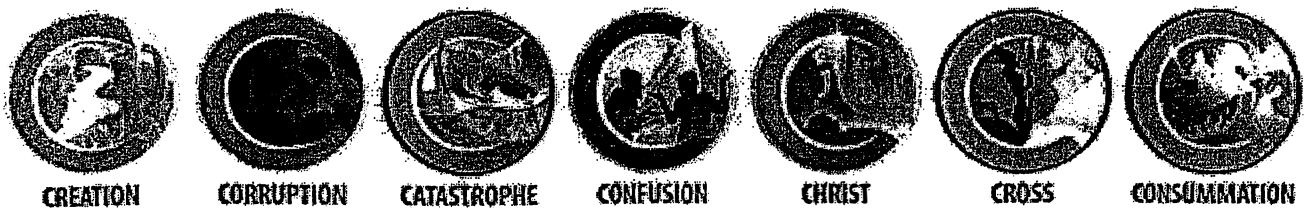
5. The angelic reason:

The angels were created prior to the original creation and sang for joy because of the perfect, harmonious creation of the universe. That creation would hardly have included a formless, empty, dark void, testifying of some awful catastrophe.

6. The moral reason:

The formless and empty condition of the world might well be explained by the judgment that came upon the universe because of Satan's sin. After all, God said to Satan, "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God" (Ez. 28:13). The earth and the universe await redemption (Rom. 8:20-22). What the planets are today, the earth was then. One day the universe will be redeemed and restored to its perfect, pristine condition.

THE SEVEN C'S IN GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN



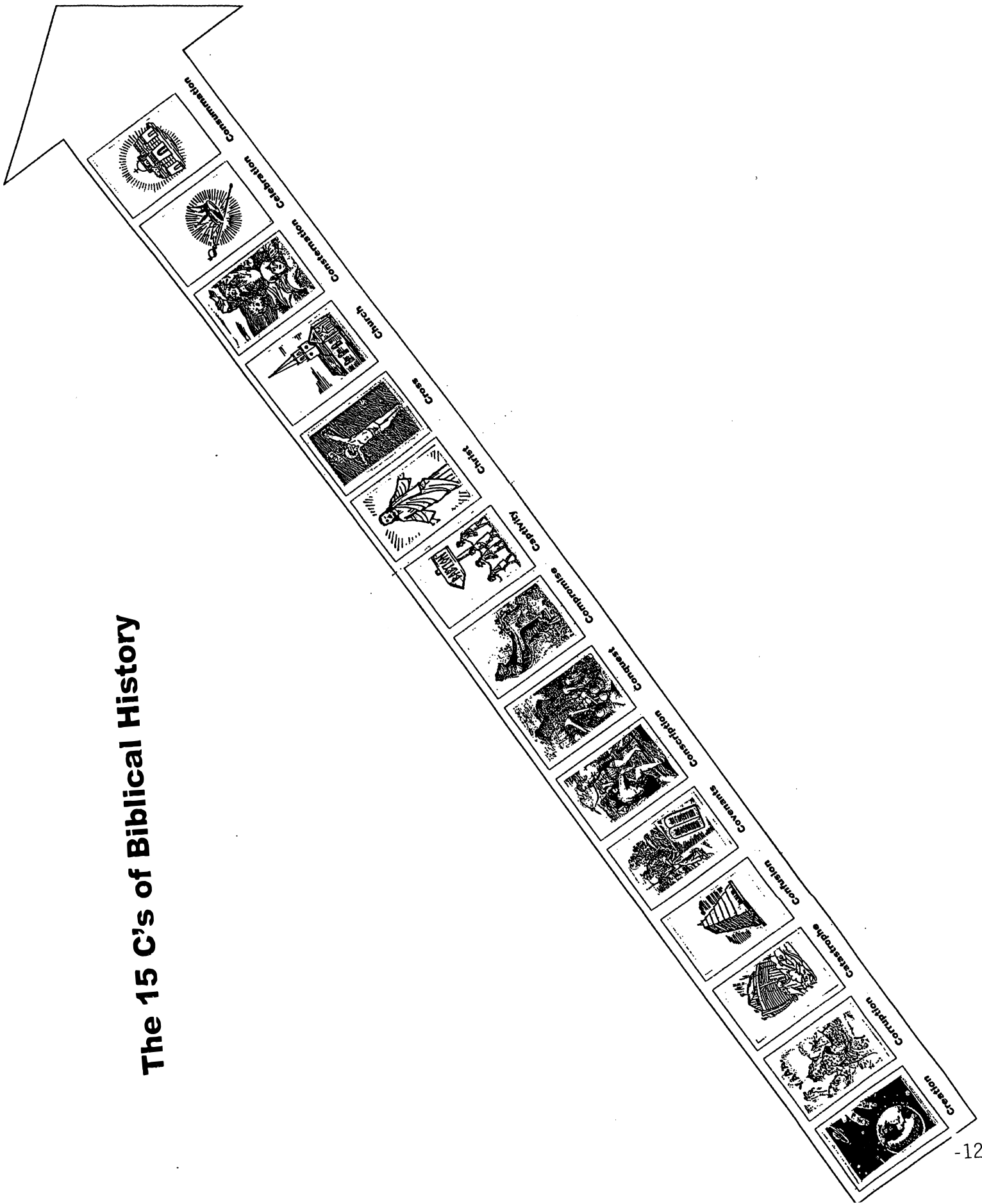
Ken Ham and his Answers in Genesis ministry are to be commended for their valiant defense of a literal creation in 24-hour days and a world-wide flood. Everyone who has seen the full-scale replica of Noah's Ark is amazed. While opting for a literal interpretation for the seven days of the beginning of human history in Genesis 1, one could wish that Ham would be consistent and interpret literally the thousand years at the end of human history in Revelation 20. The rule of grammar is the same in Hebrew and Greek: when the word day or year is preceded by a numerical adjective, be it first day or a thousand years (used 6 times in Revelation 20), the reference would be to that literal time span.

In the diagram of the Seven C's of History, any reference to the millennial reign of Christ is missing. The Kingdom age will see a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant with Israel. It is strange indeed that the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis and the Mosaic covenant in Exodus are ignored on the diagram, as is the Church Age with its unique revelation that believers engage in evangelizing the world, something that Answers in Genesis takes very seriously.

Inexplicably, the Seven C's chart skips biblical history between the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 and the incarnation of Christ in Matthew 1, thus ignoring virtually the entire history of the Old Testament. To put it differently, Ham's first four C's (Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion) cover the first 10 pages of my Ryrie Study Bible. For the next 865 pages there is nothing! Then comes the fifth C on Ham's diagram (Christ) with Matthew 1. To make up for some of the omissions, I thought it helpful to suggest several more C's of biblical history.

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The 15 C's of Biblical History



Visual Arts > Graphic Art

Palermo Stone

Egyptian archaeology

Britannica Editors History



Palermo Stone The front side of the Palermo Stone, which preserves the fragmentary regnal annals of the Egyp..(more)

Palermo Stone, one of the basic sources of information about the [chronology](#) and cultural history of [ancient Egypt](#) during the first five [dynasties](#) (c. 2900–c. 2306 BCE).

Named for the Sicilian city where it has been preserved since 1877, the black [basalt](#) stone is one of six existing fragments from a single [stela](#) that probably originally stood in an Egyptian temple or other important building. It is inscribed on both sides with horizontal lines of [hieroglyphic](#) text, the top row listing the names of predynastic rulers. The following rows, each headed by the name of a different king, are divided into compartments, each compartment signifying one year. Within the compartments the hieroglyphs always list one or more memorable events of that year. Thus, the original monument was apparently a year-by-year record of all the kings from the [1st](#) through the [5th dynasty](#) (c. 2900–c. 2306 BCE), although the [last name](#) preserved on the stone is that of Neferirkare (see [Ancient Egypt: The 5th dynasty](#)), the third of the nine kings of the [5th dynasty](#).

HSU, SHIH-WEI

The Palermo Stone: the Earliest Royal Inscription from Ancient Egypt*

Abstract

The Palermo Stone of black basalt, which probably stood in Heliopolis, is housed today in the Museum of Palermo, while smaller fragments of it are kept in museums in Cairo and London. This fragment can be regarded as the earliest Egyptian royal inscription, because its faces preserve the earliest royal annals.

Its royal annals were comprised by the royal names from the Early Dynasty to the Fifth Dynasty and the principal events of that particular year. In addition, it provides us with significant information about the Old Kingdom, such as historical circumstances, the nature of these reigns and some king's ritual activities. These are great values to us knowing about the royal deeds of the Old Kingdom.



Fig. 1. Palermo Stone *recto*-side (H. Schäfer (1902), Taf. I.)

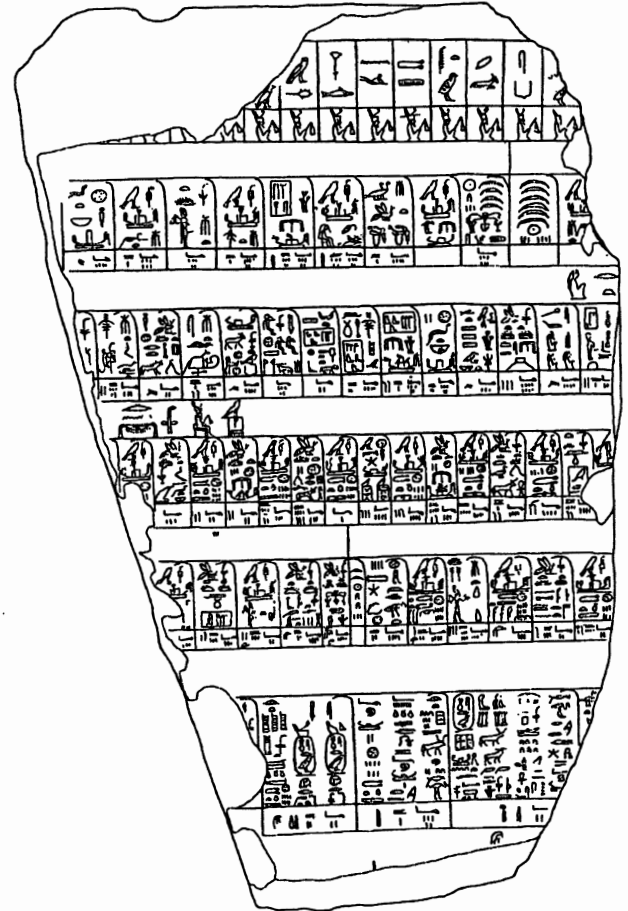


Fig. 3. Palermo Stone *recto*-side (T. A. H. Wilkinson (2000), Figure 1)

4. Summary

Although the Palermo Stone and its associated fragments remain incomplete, it is arguably the most valuable extant information about the Old Kingdom in Ancient Egypt. This claim is based, first and foremost, on the fact that the PS presents registers of the predynastic kings as well as of the pre-Old Kingdom monarchs of Lower Egypt. Second, this exemplar of the “Royal Annals” provides us with a rich source of information about the kings of Egypt from the First to the Fifth Dynasties. The annals record the names attributed to each of these years, the specific events that occurred during them and the height attained by the Nile floodwaters. Thus, it is an invaluable record for all Egyptologists in their attempts at reconstructing the chronology of Ancient Egypt. Third, this particular exemplar of the “Royal Annals” might be better classified as a royal inscription in that it constitutes the earliest royal inscription to provide details of the history of the Old Kingdom. Thus, on the PS we find references to all the most significant events that occurred in the reigns of the kings. All in all, the stone represents an extremely valuable source of information about early kingship since each of these events tells us much about the king’s role and responsibilities at that time. For example:

O.T. CHRONOLOGY AND ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

