

Chapter 1: OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Since 1984 the author has helped in teaching a basic course on world history to the students who attend the classes of his Church. The most important of our courses is a two-year program dedicated to studying the Bible from a proper perspective, without putting 2,000 years of irrelevant tradition and false ideas into the subject matter. Part of that entails learning the history of Israel during the Old and New Testament eras. We do that so one can understand where the authors of the Bible came from, how ancient prophecies have been fulfilled, and why God has always been so interested in Israel. It should also be made clear that despite His preoccupation with Israel, God has plans for all of us, whether we are "Jew or Greek," as the apostle Paul put it.

Because of that, early on it was decided that teaching how God views the course of events in history would be useful, which is often very different from how humanity views them. The first time the course was taught, we used a textbook which claimed to teach world history from a Christian perspective. The textbook came in two volumes: Volume I went from the Creation to the Renaissance, and Volume II covered the most recent 500 years. Those books showed how different godly and human perspectives on history can be, even when someone from a "born-again Christian" background writes the text. Volume I worked out all right (the pictures were great, anyway), but Volume II blatantly followed the point of view often called "Americanism." To the authors, all of human history led to the establishment of a great Christian nation on Earth, namely the United States; they were full of praise for those founding fathers who drew upon the ideas of humanism to establish this country. Now there are good reasons to be patriotic and loyal to our country--the Apostle Paul talked about it in Romans 13--but nowhere does God say that the United States is His chosen nation, or that the Americans are His chosen people. The prophets of old have always pointed to Israel, not Egypt or China or Belgium, as the apple of God's eye. The result was that Volume II of that textbook was never used for the course, and since no textbook could be found that supports our view 100 percent, the teachers chose to make their own handouts, teaching aids, etc. As it turned out, we got better results when we did the research ourselves, rather than relying on somebody else to do it.

The handouts, essays and such served their purpose well enough, but over the years there has been a nagging suspicion that few people besides the original instructors can teach the course right. That is where this book comes in. None of us expects to live forever, barring the unforeseen circumstance of the Lord returning tomorrow. Contrary to what advertisers tell us, we're not getting better, we're getting older! One of these days there will be a need to teach the world history course and neither the author nor the pastor will be available; when that happens it will be helpful if the teacher is a knowledgeable person with appropriate degrees from college, but how likely is that? The history instruction in our schools is terribly inadequate; over the past generation it has turned out a generation of Americans who know woefully little about history and care even less about it. One of the reasons for this is that the teachers who teach history on the high school level often do it as a sideline; many of them go by the first name of "Coach." Worse than that, in recent years some outright lies, such as multiculturalism, have been introduced into the curriculum for political

reasons.¹ It is hoped that this work will allow anyone to study history from a Biblical perspective, and possibly teach it, without the need to get a four-year degree in it.

This work will concentrate on four specific patterns or trends in world history. The overall trend is more important than **who** did **what** in any particular year; understanding what is happening is easier if you know the trends that cause it. For example, it is more useful to know that the Greeks spread their culture wherever they went than it is to recall the names and dates of the battles Alexander the Great fought as he marched his way across Asia. If you can understand the trends, I believe that you will be able to fully grasp where we came from and where we are going. The four trends are:

1. The rise and spread of civilization.
2. The growth and decline of several major empires.
3. The origin and spread of humanism, also known as the Apostasy.
4. God's acts of intervention in human affairs.

IS HISTORY RELEVANT?

Now why should we study history in the first place? Is there more to it than a collection of stories (some of which are interesting), names and dates? How can knowing what happened 2,000 years ago be relevant to our lives today? It would be impractical for all of us to go to college and get degrees in history, but we can at least become amateur historians. Here is why we should:

1. First, we can learn from the mistakes of the past by reading about those who have made them before. A popular proverb has it that "experience is the best teacher," but to use the same analogy, if you can get your learning secondhand, the tuition is less.
2. The past **really is** the key to the present. To understand why we look and act the way we do, we have to know where we came from. For example, how can we understand the cultural and economic challenges faced by black Americans today, if we do not know that once they were slaves, then second-class citizens? How can we understand the headlines from troubled places like the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and the former Yugoslavia, if we do not know why those people hate each other? The only real difference between history and current events is that history has already happened, while current events are happening now. For example, those of us who are middle-aged or older tell our children about events which we remember but are now part of history, like the Apollo moon flights and the Vietnam War.
3. God wants His people to know where they came from. If He didn't, he would not have filled chapter after chapter of the Bible with genealogies and census data, what I sometimes call the "telephone directory." If it is important to Him, it ought to be important to us. It's unfortunate that more of us don't know the history behind our own families, because one of the marks of a true unbeliever is somebody who doesn't care about the past.

¹ One of the worst cases of false history I have ever heard came to the press in November 1996. A teacher in Milwaukee promoted self-esteem among his black students by teaching that the ancient Egyptians were black men with wings, who flew around the pyramids until some evil white men came along and killed them off!

4. If we know the past we are less likely to believe the lies and faulty thinking of the present. Joseph Goebbels of Nazi Germany said that if you tell a lie long enough people will believe it to be the truth. For that reason the dictators of our own time, like the communists, have often tried to rewrite history so that their subjects will think that their lives cannot be any better than they are now. But if we know what really happened we will be less susceptible to false ideas, because we will know that they either don't work or are based on things which simply aren't true. We will also learn that no single person or ideology is perfect--only God is. The best of men are men at best.²

THEORIES OF HISTORY

Historians often use the saying, "Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it." Is this true? Does history really repeat itself, or is it men who do the repeating? Does history follow any sort of formula, and if it does, is it possible to predict the future from it? Over the years several different theories have been set forth to explain how history works. We will start by examining them briefly.

The first theory we will look at is Divine Will. This is the traditional view of the West; the idea that God ("the gods" if you're a polytheist) initiated everything and is in control over whatever might happen. Those who subscribe to this view see time as a linear experience, which can be plotted on a line or graph, with a definite direction and goal. We believe that if there is any dominating factor over history, it is Divine Will, with the other factors merely influencing the nature of what has developed. When we consider Divine Will we look not only at the positive intervention by God to accomplish redemption, but also that intervention by evil or Satan to mold human society in opposition to God's will and design.

The most common view of history taught in the West divides the past into "ages." Like Divine Will, it sees time as linear, but marks portions of it by specific trends or events. For example, European-centered historians divide history into three ages: the classical or Greco-Roman age (about 600 B.C. to 476 A.D.), the medieval or dark ages (476-1453), and the modern era (since 1453). As you might guess, the fall of Rome and the Turkish capture of Constantinople are the events dividing the ages in this model. This viewpoint is so common that all historians seem to refer to it whether they believe it or not, though the pattern breaks down when one tries to use it on non-European history. For instance, the author does not consider himself a European-oriented historian (if anything I am Asian-centered), but he uses the terms classical, medieval and modern anyway, in full knowledge that the Arabs, Chinese and Mayans did not experience a "dark age" after the fall of Rome.

The most important historian of our time, Will Durant, appears to have followed the age theory closest; only one of his eleven volumes on history focused on the world outside Europe.³ An interesting variant comes from William McNeil, who changes the dates marking the ages to allow for worldwide trends. In his *A World History*, he places the transition points at 500 B.C. and 1500 A.D., and calls them the first and second "Closures of the Ecumene." During the first age (before

² If men were angels we would need no government. If angels governed men we would not need a government with checks and balances.

³ Volume I, *Our Oriental Heritage*.

500 B.C.), a minority of the world's population was civilized; they lived in a small area, and were in danger of being completely wiped out by barbarians like the Celts, Scythians, and Huns. The second age saw four major civilizations in the Old World existing side by side: European, Near Eastern (Islamic after the seventh century A.D.), Indian (which included most of Southeast Asia), and Far Eastern (dominated by China). Between these four were powerful nomadic tribes, who kept any one of the civilizations from getting too strong and sharply limited commerce between them. With the Second Closure of the Ecumene (1500 A.D.) the barbarian threat faded away, and since then most of the world has been dominated or influenced by European civilization.

In 1836 Christian Jurgensen Thomson, curator of the National Museum of Copenhagen, coined the terms "stone age," "bronze age," and "iron age," to classify the artifacts in his collection. Archaeologists took an immediate liking to the three-age system, and now use it whenever they start excavating a new site. They do this is because technology is easier to follow than any other part of a civilization's development, especially if no form of writing is present. Once they have enough artifacts, they group them by apparent age into subcategories like Late Bronze Ia, Early Iron IIb, etc.; normally they do this by comparing different styles of pottery. In the Middle East, the bronze age began around 3000 B.C., and the iron age around 1500 B.C.; both ages usually started later elsewhere.

The problem with this method comes when one tries using it to compare Old and New World cultures. For example, in the fifteenth century Africa was comfortably ahead of pre-Columbian America in technology; Black Africans had been in the iron age for at least 1,500 years, while most American Indians did not work much with any kind of metal. However, in literature and social organization the Indian had reached a level at least equivalent to the sub-Saharan African. In the countries where there were enough of them--Mesoamerica and Peru--they built considerable empires whose ruins still astonish us today. Black African states like that are harder to find; the only ones around 1500 that we can call kingdoms (rather than just tribes) are Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Songhai (modern Niger), and Zimbabwe. Moreover, non-black peoples (mainly Arabs and Berbers) had influenced them to the point that Abyssinia and Songhai converted to Middle Eastern religions: Christianity with the former, Islam with the latter. As far as we can tell, natives of the western hemisphere developed their religion, technology, etc., all by themselves. Literacy may be the best test of cultural sophistication and ancient Mexico looks better when this test is applied than one that uses a purely metallurgical scale.⁴

The "ages" view of history is nothing new. Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso, 43 B.C.- 17 A.D.), a Roman historian, wrote in his *Metamorphoses* that history had four great ages, to which he gave each the name of a metal. His primary source was a Greek one, Hesiod's *Theogony*, which in turn seems to have been based on an unknown, older source:

"The GOLDEN AGE was first, a time that was cherished. . . . The years went by in peace. And Earth, untroubled, unharried by hoe or plowshare, brought forth all that

⁴ The Mayans developed an elaborate system of picture writing which less sophisticated Mesoamericans, like the Aztecs, borrowed for their own use. The South American tribes were quite illiterate, though the Incas managed to keep records by tying knots into a bunch of strings called a *quipu*.

men had need for, and those men were happy, gathering berries from the mountainsides, cherries, or blackcaps, and the edible acorns. Spring was forever. . . . And Earth, unplowed, brought forth rich grain. . . . *(This must be the pre-Flood era.)*

After Saturn was driven to the shadowy land of death, and the world was under Jove [Jupiter], the AGE OF SILVER came in, lower than gold, better than bronze. Jove made the springtime shorter, added winter, summer and autumn, the seasons as we know them. That was the first time when . . . icicles hung down in the winter. And men built houses for themselves . . . and the oxen struggled, groaning and laboring under the heavy yoke. *(This corresponds to the time between the Flood and Babel, when the Earth was beginning to take on the form we are familiar with today.)*

Then came the AGE OF BRONZE. *(Ovid gives no description of this era, so we'll give it the same dates archeologists give to the Bronze Age we are familiar with, about 3000 - 1500 B.C.)*

And last of all the IRON AGE succeeded. . . . Heaven was no safer. Giants attacked the very throne of Heaven, piled Pelion on Ossa, mountain on mountain, up to the very stars. Jove struck them down with thunderbolts . . . Jove was witness from his lofty throne . . . He summoned them to council. No one dawdled. Easily seen when the night skies are clear. . . . Along this road the gods move toward the palace of the Thunder."⁵

Eastern societies, which are strongly affected by the theory of reincarnation, see history in a different, nonlinear way. For them time moves not in a straight line, but in circles. This cyclic pattern causes everything to eventually repeat itself. To the Hindu mind, what will happen has happened before, and what has not happened will never take place in the future, so what's the point in studying the past?⁶ Because of this attitude, few Indians are interested in their own history; in fact, they didn't think they had a history until archaeologists discovered it! The Chinese have a cyclic theory of their own called the "Mandate of Heaven." It states that the first emperor of any dynasty was given the right to rule from Heaven. Whenever the emperors grew cruel or incompetent, according to this theory, the Mandate of Heaven is taken away from them, and transferred to the family of the person who overthrew the last monarch of the dynasty. But while the Chinese came to believe that no state established by man will last forever, they do not believe that the fluctuations of civilization are god-ordained and unchangeable; instead they saw nations grow strong or weak through the actions of men, and the emperor was doing his proper duty when his actions postponed the next downswing for as long as possible. That gave Chinese scholars a strong incentive to study history, so that they could learn from previous examples how to run the state properly, instead of calling history irrelevant like their Indian counterparts did.

⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1958, pp. 5-8.

⁶ The Hindi word for "tomorrow" is the same as "yesterday."

Western versions of the cyclic theory have been popularized by Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*) and Arnold Toynbee (*A Study of History*). Both of those historians traced the rise and fall of various civilizations, and came to the conclusion that nations are like people: they are born, grow in strength, get old, and eventually die. We often cite the Roman Empire as the best example of how this cycle works. Because of this many Christians warn that our society cannot continue its current course forever; it is no longer following the principles that made it great, so eventually it must fall.

Another popular theory is one we can call the "Great Men" theory. This one postulates that a great man or woman in the right place and the right time will cause actions that can change the course of human events. Examples of "great men" include powerful monarchs; military leaders like Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Joan of Arc; founders of religious movements; and scientists like Newton, Pasteur and Einstein. A variant of this has history shaped by key events, like battles. Sir Edward Creasy took this point of view when he wrote a historical classic entitled *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* (1851).

The opposite of the "Great Men" theory is "Psychohistory," or as I like to call it, the "Little Men" theory. Isaac Asimov invented this when he wrote his most popular science fiction novels, the *Foundation* series, in the 1940s. Asimov imagined a future where humanity has filled the entire galaxy, and where there are so many billions of people that no one individual can make a difference. In this situation countless ordinary people pulling in one direction do more to shape history than the actions of one important person, and Asimov's characters write out mathematical formulas to predict what will happen next. For example, Hari Seldon, Asimov's fictitious inventor of Psychohistory, learns that the galactic empire of his day is going to fall, so he sets up two libraries full of all available knowledge, because he calculates their presence will shorten the upcoming dark age from 30,000 years to a mere 1,000. Unfortunately for the theory, there simply aren't enough people on this Earth for the masses to cancel out the deeds of the great, so Asimov had to have his stories take place somewhere else for Psychohistory to be plausible. In fact, Asimov disproved the whole idea in his second novel when he introduced a villain ("The Mule") with psychic powers strong enough to mess up the calculations of the mathematicians.

One of the most influential philosophers of the modern era, G. W. F. Hegel, introduced the "Dialectical" view of history, which sees all history as a conflict between ideas. According to this, whenever a new idea (Hegel called it a "thesis") arises, another idea called an "antithesis" will come along to oppose it. Thesis and antithesis will clash for a period, and then they will merge to form a third idea, a "synthesis." The synthesis then becomes the new thesis, and the cycle starts again. Although Hegel came from a Christian background, he did not believe in absolutes; to him nothing stayed the same. Consequently his views have been popular with anti-Christian thinkers; Karl Marx, for instance, was inspired enough by them to call his own philosophy "dialectical materialism."

Marx's contribution to world history was the introduction of economic factors. Up to this point historians saw the past as a collection of dates, kings and battles; they ignored economics and general trends. By contrast, Marx saw every event in history as arising from a class struggle between the "haves" and the "have-nots." He divided the past into five stages, according to the general economic system of the time:

1. Primitive. There was little conflict during this time, because the only possessions anybody had were some sticks and stones.

2. Slavery. With the rise of civilization wealth is concentrated into the hands of a few, and these rich rulers enslave everybody else. Eventually the slaves throw off their chains and their masters, and this results in the replacement of slavery by Feudalism.
3. Feudalism. In this society wealth is determined by how much land one owns, since the slaves are gone and money is not widely used yet. Those working in the fields are serfs, so they are better off than slaves, but not by very much. Eventually the serfs move to towns, become *bourgeoisie* (town-dwellers), and set up a new society which replaces Feudalism.
4. Capitalism. This is a money-based economy, run by the *bourgeoisie* of the previous era. Capitalism causes the industrial revolution, but again the people on top oppress those on the bottom, in this case the urban workers or *proletariat*. Eventually the workers rise and start a revolution which overthrows the capitalists and establishes Socialism.
5. Socialism. The workers redress the wrongs of society during a period Marx called "the dictatorship of the proletariat." At the end of it all wealth is held in common and society is as close to being a utopia as is humanly possible, so the state withers away, to be replaced by "true communism." Since Marxists define history as class struggle, and no more class struggle is needed under communism, history ends at this point as well.

A FEW WORDS ON CALENDARS AND DATES

Before I continue, it would be appropriate to mention a few words about how we got our calendar, since some of today's students come into a history class so deficient of facts that they don't even know the difference between "B.C." and "A. D." Those of you who already know the difference may skip on to the next section.

The calendar we use is a solar calendar, meaning that it measures one year as the time it takes the earth to travel around the sun. We count years from an absolute point, the traditional date when Jesus was born. Dates before that point are labeled B.C., which simply means "before Christ."⁷ Dates after the birth of Jesus are called A.D., which comes from the Latin *Anno Domini*: "the year of our Lord." Thus 1998 is really 1998 A.D., the 1,998th year since the traditional date of Jesus' birth. It has one small problem in that there is no "year zero" between B.C. and A.D., presumably because the calendar was made before mathematicians came up with the idea of using a numeral to represent nothing. Keep that in mind when adding up B.C. and A.D. dates; e.g., a person born in 4 B.C. will be twelve in 9 A.D., not thirteen.

Of course this calendar was not always used. Nobody working on Pharaoh's pyramids knew he was living in 2600 B.C.. In 1 B.C., calendar makers did **not** argue over what they would call the next year! Before the modern Western calendar came into use our ancestors used other ones. The Greeks, for example, used a calendar that counted from the year 776 B.C., the year of the first Olympic games; hence, Alexander the Great was born in the Greek year of 421 (356 B.C.). The

⁷ Jews prefer to use B.C.E., meaning "before the common era," or as some wags like to put it, "before the common error!"

Roman calendar counted from the traditional date of the founding of Rome (753 B.C.).⁸ The Babylonian king Nabonassar (747-734) established a lunar calendar, which was used for the rest of the time that Babylon was an important city.

Most of the calendars described above are solar ones, which are kept accurate by following the sun's movement across the sky. Often lunar calendars have been used instead, which measure time by the phases of the moon. On a lunar calendar, every time there is a new moon, a new month begins. In fact, our word for month comes from moon ("moonth"), and we see the original derivation of the word in Westerns, when an Indian begins a story by saying, "It happened many moons ago." As noted above, the Babylonian calendar was a lunar one, consisting of twelve months totaling 354 days. With that you can see an immediate problem--a solar year is not exactly twelve lunar months long. If such an error is not corrected, only seventeen years will go by before winter begins in June! Babylonian astronomers solved the problem by adding a thirteenth month whenever the calendar was more than thirty days off; by adding seven "leap months" over a 19-year period, they brought the dates back to where they should be. This calendar was adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity, with all the month names unchanged, thus becoming the Jewish calendar of today. That is why on the Western (solar) calendar the Jewish holidays fall on different days every year.

Moslems also use a lunar calendar, which counts years from 622 A.D., the date of the *Hegira* (Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina). Unlike the Jews, however, most Moslems make no effort to keep it accurate, so it is 42 years off by now: in most of the Islamic world our year 1998 is 1419, when it should be 1377. Iran is a notable exception, because it did not use an Islamic calendar until the 1979 revolution.

After the fall of Rome Western scholars and writers continued to use the Roman calendar for a while. In 525 A.D. Pope John I introduced the calendar which marks years as either B.C. or A.D.. It was popularized by the Venerable Bede, the foremost scholar of seventh-century England, who used it in all of his works. Few historians today believe that 1 A.D. is the correct date for the birth of Jesus; the pope picked it through some obscure reasoning that had to do with the date of Easter. It now appears that 4 B.C. or even 6 B.C. is more likely, since the principal villain of the Christmas story, King Herod, died in 4 B.C.. Correcting the year number would mean changing just about every book that has been written since the fall of Rome, so it is too late to fix the calendar now. The durability of our calendar was shown in the middle of the French Revolution, when the radical (Jacobin) faction among the revolutionaries introduced an anti-Christian calendar, which counted years from 1792 A.D. (the year when they took over). Just eight years later Napoleon Bonaparte trashed it and went back to B.C.-A.D. reckoning. Even enemies of the Lord cannot change the past that much!

Before the eighth century B.C., nobody seems to have counted years from a single fixed date. Usually they counted years from the coronation of the current king--the history books of the Old

⁸ At first the Roman calendar had ten months of 36 days each, like the Greek one. The second ruler of Rome, Numa (716-672 B.C.), changed the length of each month to thirty days, and added two new months (January and February) at the end of the year. That is why September, October, November and December have names which in Latin mean "seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth," even though they are now the ninth through twelfth months.

Testament are written using that formula (e.g., David reigned for forty years, and Solomon built the Temple in his fourth year as king). Thus if we are going to use these records with some confidence that they are accurate, we will have to get a fixed date from somewhere else. The usual way to do that is by getting a fixed date from someone else's history, or by looking for an eclipse when it is mentioned in a location and calculating through astronomy and mathematics when it took place. In the case of the kings of Israel we often match their records with those obtained from Assyrian libraries, so now most scholars believe that Solomon was king from 970 to 930 B.C.; this means that he built the Temple in 967 and that David reigned from 1010 to 970 B.C..

The only modern people I know of who count years in this fashion are the Japanese. They called the last year of Emperor Hirohito's reign "Year 63 of the Showa (enlightened peace) era," and when he died in 1989 they went back to Year 1 and started counting again. Extensive commerce with the outside world forces them to keep track of what year it is on our calendar, though.

WHAT IS CIVILIZATION?

We will use the following definition of civilization. Civilization is a state of social culture characterized by relative progress in the arts, science and statecraft. Some of the specific conditions that must be met in order for a civilization to exist within a community are:

- (1) Economic system - base industry and commercial network
- (2) Political Organization
- (3) Established religious order
- (4) Language - common means of communication
- (5) Development of arts and pursuit of knowledge

Closely associated with these factors would be an (1) educational system, (2) a written language, and (3) a unifying moral code (normally included with the religious system).

The oldest civilizations that we are familiar with got started about 5,000 years ago, in four river basins of the Old World. These are: (1) the Nile, (2) the Tigris- Euphrates, (3) the Indus, and (4) the Yellow River. It is interesting that all of these river basins lie in the north temperate zone. One possible reason for this fact is that temperate climates provide the best seedbed for civilization because food is not so easily attained as in tropical regions; thus there is motivation for developing efficient food-producing economies. Yet, the climate is not as harsh as in the polar regions where most energy is consumed in survival.

Civilization has spread gradually, so that 5,000 years later it has encompassed nearly all of the world. Today only a few pockets of uncivilized groups exist. The process of civilization has been gradual and can best be perceived if viewed in 1,000-year steps:

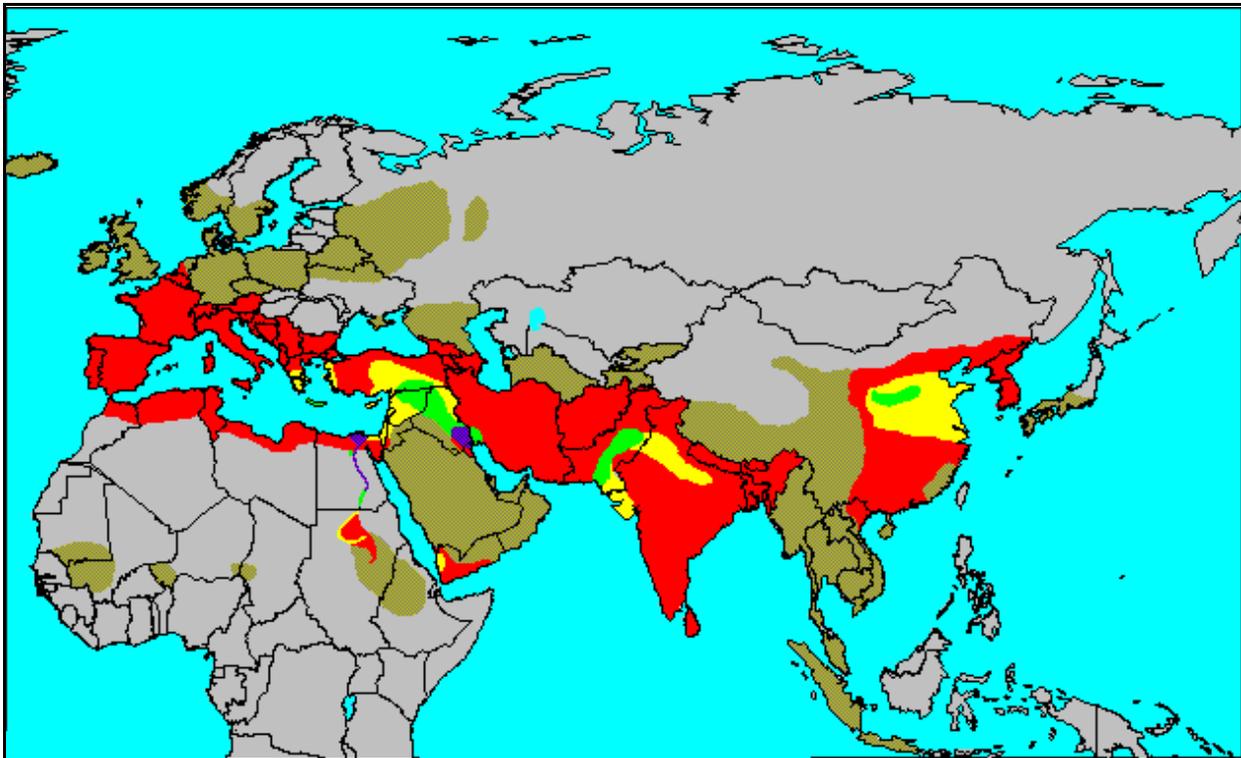
3000 - 2000 B.C.: Civilization originates in the Nile, Tigris- Euphrates, and Indus valleys. These three centers are close enough together that some commerce takes place between them. The land between Iraq and Egypt is watered by rain (the bend of the "Fertile Crescent"), so civilization spreads here during the second half of this period, and into the nearest corner of Iran (Elam).

2000 - 1000 B.C.: The Fertile Crescent is completely civilized. Civilization now appears in China, Turkey, Greece, and isolated spots of the New World (Mexico and Peru).

1000 - 1 B.C.: Civilization expands at a much greater rate, now that civilized men outnumber the barbarians. The entire Mediterranean basin is engulfed, as well as Nubia, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan and most of India; the result is a civilized area stretching from France to Bangladesh. In the Far East, Chinese civilization spills over into Korea and Vietnam.

1 A.D. - 1000 A.D.: Civilization spreads from the area encompassed by the Roman Empire into German, Slav, Viking and Magyar-ruled areas; often missionaries lead the way. Islam crosses the Sahara desert to establish footholds on the Niger River, while Christian kings rule Ethiopia. Japan adopts the Chinese way of life, and the Indian and Chinese civilizations meet when they expand into Southeast Asia and Tibet. In the New World, the Mexican and Peruvian civilizations begin to expand beyond their core territories.

1000 - 2000 A.D.: Just about every remaining piece of land in the world is conquered, settled and civilized. Also important is that most of this colonization effort is done by one civilization (Western European), so the world is now becoming a place with one culture.



Map 1: The spread of civilization in thousand-year steps. The purple areas became civilized by 3000 B.C. Civilization spread to the green areas by 2000 B.C., yellow by 1000 B.C., red by 1 A.D., and brown by 1000 A.D. The rest of the world (grey) has either acquired civilization since 1000 A.D., or is not yet civilized.

Obviously, there is continuing motivation in mankind that moves him toward civilization. We can view this motivation at various levels. We will consider two: (1) The need in man to provide the essentials of life, and (2) the underlying spiritual drive to establish order or authority over mankind. The basic needs within man leading to the establishment of civilization include: (1) economic provisions, (2) security from external and internal threats, (3) religious zeal, (4) comfort, (5) greed, (6) desire for knowledge and (7) glory. The most basic of these is the need for economic well-being and security. Comfort, greed, glory, power and the pursuit of knowledge are probably more significant as higher levels of civilization develop.

If we consider the deeper spiritual significance of the drive for civilization, it appears that there are two basic conflicting directions involved. One, which from a Biblical perspective would be considered evil, is the drive in mankind to establish an order or kingdom within mankind without allegiance or responsibility to any Divine authority. Such a kingdom would be patterned after the prehistoric kingdom of Babel. The most important empires in recorded history appear to have Babel as their model. In competition to that is the kingdom which is ordained by God and revealed through the Bible. God is moving elect portions of society to establish a kingdom under His authority. Ultimately, prophecy declares that this will be the only kingdom that remains on the earth. So, beyond the motivation associated with basic human needs are those spiritual drives operating within mankind which move him toward civilization and to the establishment of kingdoms.

Civilization typically evolves in stages. The first stage is that of the nomadic hunters and shepherds. The second stage consists of the developed agricultural economy where a stabilized food supply is attained. The third stage consists of the development of urban centers. Key cities become commercial and military centers and wealth is accumulated. Finally, the fourth stage is the development of arts and science.

We can also view civilization as an organism which is born, grows to maturity, eventually reaches a peak of effectiveness and begins to decline, and finally dies. Most civilizations go through such a lifespan. We should note that civilized areas do not typically regress all the way to the nomadic stage when a civilization dies. In fact, they are more often incorporated into another civilization which is at an earlier stage of its development.

THE IMPACT OF THE BARBARIAN

Throughout much of world history there has been an ongoing struggle between barbarians and civilized nations. As the inhabitants of civilized areas grew rich, they attracted the attention of their uncivilized neighbors. These barbarians had to chase down their dinner every day, and they did not have fine homes, good clothing, or any of the other conveniences we take for granted; life for most of them was nasty, brutish, and short. What they did have in their favor was a superior fighting ability, unmoderated by an easy life. When civilization was strong it was able to defend its borders against raids from the outside, and the population of civilized areas (usually higher than that of barbarian-ruled regions) would be high enough to replace the losses in people & property caused by those barbarians who did get in. But when civilization was weak, the barbarians would come in to plunder or even conquer the land.

Administering a country is a very different task from conquering it. The barbarian rulers of a conquered nation found that it was a task they were quite unsuited for, forcing them to adapt to the

ways of their subjects if they wanted to have any help from them. When they did, they started to become civilized themselves and unwittingly introduced civilization to their homeland. We see an excellent example of this in Europe around 500 A.D. By this time Rome had fallen to the Germanic tribes that overran western Europe. But during the next 1,000 years, new nations sprang up where the Roman Empire had been, each holding onto a piece of the old Roman culture, leading to a rebirth of Western civilization when the common people learned how to read again.

Another very good example of this process took place in China. The history of China is also the history of its barbarian neighbors, especially those to the north, for they never allowed the Chinese to ignore them for long. China had a good army, but not a great one, and whenever they let down their guard, the raiders (Huns, Turks, Mongols, Manchus, and others) came pouring in. The population of China always outnumbered that of Mongolia by more than 100 to 1, though, and within a generation or two the Chinese usually assimilated their masters. Soon the barbarians were completely indistinguishable from their Chinese subjects. When the children and grandchildren of barbarians spent their lives in Chinese palaces, surrounded in luxury, wearing silk, eating and drinking far too much, they lost their strength, and were pushovers when the Chinese got tired of having them around.

From 600 B.C. to 1500 A.D. the main stronghold for barbarism was Central Asia. Much of this heartland is inhospitable desert & mountains, especially along the borders of China; the rest is grassland, often called the steppes. Since they had no system of writing, most of what we know about the barbarians comes from the civilizations they dealt with--not always an unbiased source of information! Whether they were called Scythians, Huns, Turks, Mongols, or something else, we usually first see them in Mongolia. If China was too strong for them to tackle, or if another tribe beat them up badly, they would migrate west in search of greener pastures. If they turned south before reaching the Caspian, they would come to India or the Middle East; if they continued west across Russia, they would enter Europe. Any other tribes of nomads in the way would be forced to move too. Soon wave after wave of nomads would be traveling across Central Asia, like clouds blown by the wind.

In this manner the actions of one tribe could have far-reaching consequences in another time and place. For example, the Chinese drove the Huns out of the Gobi desert in the second century B.C. The Huns decided to migrate west, until they reached the north shore of the Caspian Sea. There they stayed until 372 A.D., when the nearest Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths, picked a fight with them. This caused Attila's ancestors to invade both the Ukrainian Steppe and the lands of the Germans. Fleeing the Hun offensive, the Germans came into the Roman Empire in large numbers, bringing it down sooner.

The Central Asian barbarians enjoyed their last hurrah in the thirteenth century, when Genghis Khan united the tribes of Mongolia to form the toughest fighting force of his day. From the Gobi the Mongols now marched forth to attack all four of Eurasia's centers of civilization, and for most of the century they were considered unbeatable. By the time expansion stopped in the 1280s, the grandsons of Genghis ruled China, Korea, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and just about all of the lands that would one day make up the Soviet Union.

Division and decay quickly followed. First the original Mongol Empire split into four smaller empires (Southern Russia, the Middle East, Central Asia and China), which were still more than a match for their non-Mongol opponents. The Chinese portion, so glorious when Marco Polo visited

it, disappeared in 1368 when the Chinese threw Kublai Khan's descendants back across the Great Wall and started the Ming Dynasty. Those Mongols in the other portions converted to Islam, terrorized everybody else around them for the rest of the fourteenth century, then turned inward and wiped each other out. In the 1480s the Russian sub-empire, called the Golden Horde, split into four mutually hostile groups, which made life much easier for the Russians. Meanwhile in the east the Chinese played a skillful game of bribery to keep the Mongols fighting each other. In Central Asia, Kazakhs and Kalmucks quarreled without the benefit of a subsidy.

After that it was a losing battle for the barbarians. By this time the invention of gunpowder gave the civilized nations an overwhelming advantage over the raiders. Russia advanced east, China pushed north and west, and they divided the Central Asian heartland between them. Other barbarian strongholds, like the interior of Africa and the Americas, were conquered by the end of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, the Western powers (Britain, France, Spain, the United States and others) came to dominate nearly the entire world, turning a world of many cultures into the nearly universal culture we see today.

EVOLUTION OF GOVERNMENTS

Governments within the human community have evolved through many stages. The simplest form of government would be the man as head of the family unity. Whenever a group of related families in a given locality begin to cooperate, a clan is formed. Typically clans are seen forming tribes with appropriate tribal chiefs. With the sophistication resulting from developed laws, religion, economic systems, and ability to wage war, a state is formed. The first states were always city-states; a city-state is one city with a bit of land around it. Eventually, with proper leadership, city-states were merged to form empires. In Part II of this work we will look at empires which have played key roles in history.

THE APOSTASY

One of the most important subjects covered in this work is how the human race lost its fear of God. We have called this trend secular humanism or the Apostasy. The Apostasy, as we use the term here, means "a falling away from the fear of God and His Law." It denies man's eternal accountability, as opposed to the more traditional definition of apostasy as meaning heresy.

Why aren't we very religious anymore? Our earliest ancestors were religious, to the point that an atheist was as hard to find as the proverbial hen's teeth. Nearly every ancient civilization embraced a host of gods, which they used to explain whatever they did not understand, like sudden changes in the weather. There were many similarities between their "pantheons," or families of gods:

	Canaanite	Babylonian	Greek	Egyptian
Father	El	Ea or Enlil	Kronos	Osiris
Son	Baal	Marduk	Zeus	Horus
Love Goddess	Asherah	Ishtar	Aphrodite	Isis
Devil	Moloch	Tiamat	Typhon	Set

Gods were often seen as superhuman but with human traits.

Homer portrayed the Greek gods as little more than men in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He prepared later generations to develop Greek philosophy which had as its purpose to rid man of the burden of the gods. With Alexander the Great, Greek culture was spread over the civilized world with evangelistic fervor. Later, Rome embraced Greek philosophy and spread it still farther. During the period known in the west as the Dark Ages, Greek philosophy was forgotten, so this movement was temporarily halted. However, when Greek thought was rediscovered during the Renaissance, it enjoyed a second flourishing and has spread over most of the world since.

Since the time of Homer (about 2,800 years ago) this process has advanced boldly. The Greeks succeeded in what they purposed to do, i.e., relieve man of the burden of the "gods." Today there is very little fear (awe) of God to be found in mankind, so the apostasy is very nearly complete. We will cover this process in detail in Chapter 11.

GOD'S VESSEL OF REDEMPTION

We can discern a deliberate course of action when one considers God's actions as recorded in the Bible. God chose a specific instrument through which He would act to accomplish His purpose. That purpose most concisely stated is to bring all things back under His authority (I Corinthians 15:28). God made covenants with Abraham, Israel and David. He continues to fulfill the provisions of these covenants. Often thousands of years have elapsed as the process works toward His final end. Ultimately according to the Scriptures, God's Kingdom will be the only kingdom in the earth.

While we see God's positive steps toward redemption, we see Satan opposing God's purpose. He is working within mankind to inspire a civilization like that which existed at Babel. John wrote (I John 5:19) "that all the world lies in the power of the evil one." Although Satan attempts to manipulate human society, he always tries to remain anonymous. His ultimate effect will be to turn aside those who despise God and His purpose. We will look at God's activities in more detail in Chapters 4, 12 and 14.

A BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

Since we are looking at world history from a Biblical perspective, it would be useful to present a Bible-based chronology before we go any further. As Edwin Thiele, a leading Bible scholar, once

put it, "chronology is the backbone of history."⁹ It also helps to know where a writer is coming from, so let it be known that the author of this work interprets the Bible literally. I believe that it is the inspired word of God, and the most reliable account on the origins of the world, since obviously none of us was around to witness the Creation. In those cases where I disagree with other fundamentalists, it is either because I believe the text was translated improperly, or because I pay attention to a particular phrase or verse that others overlook; where there is doubt I believe the text was totally accurate when it was first written down.

The reason why a chronology is needed is so all events can be placed in their proper context, meaning we will know **who** did **what** and **when** it was done. Since the men who wrote the Bible didn't use a calendar which counted years from a fixed date (see the section on calendars and dates above), the only way we can establish dates for the events is by finding an event we can peg a specific date to, and work our way backward from there. The New Testament is the easiest part, because everything in it happened within a single century, and we know enough about the ancient Roman world to fix dates on many of the events. For example, we read in Acts 18:2 that Claudius Caesar expelled the Jews from Rome, and other sources (i.e., Suetonius) tell us that Claudius was emperor from 41 to 54 A.D.; therefore the events of Acts 18 happened at some point in that thirteen-year period. The only disagreement worth noting here concerns the birth date of Jesus, and scholars don't get violent on this issue; dates ranging from 7 B.C. to 6 A.D. are cited, with 4 B.C. the most commonly used.

There is a four hundred year gap between Malachi (the last book of the Old Testament) and Matthew (the first book of the New Testament). The final books of the Old Testament--Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and many of the prophets--were written during the era of the Persian Empire. This is a period well documented by Greek historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, so constructing a chronology of this time is also a simple task, where there is general agreement. A century and a half of excavations at the city of Babylon allows us to put together a chronology of the empire preceding the Persians, the Neo-Babylonian Empire, so we can put a fairly solid date of 587/586 B.C. on the most important event of this period, the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁰

The destruction of Jerusalem is one of our benchmark dates because it was also the time when the Jews ceased to rule a kingdom of their own. By using the reign-lengths supplied in the Old Testament books of Kings and Chronicles, it is possible to trace back the years to the united kingdom under David. Here the scholars also generally agree, because there are Assyrian inscriptions mentioning various Israelite and Judaeans kings, like Ahab, Jehu, Menahem, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Since we are secure with the dates of the late Assyrian kings, each of those inscriptions gives us a time frame for when the non-Assyrian lived. For example, the famous Black Obelisk of

⁹ Thiele, E. R., *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Grand Rapids, 1983, pp. 80-81.

¹⁰ We can use recorded eclipses to verify dates in late Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian records, like the one that took place in central Turkey on May 28, 585 B.C.. Consequently a historical event that took place between 911 and 539 B.C., dated by Assyro-Babylonian records, is not likely to be more than a year off the mark.

Shalmaneser III shows a picture of Israel's King Jehu bowing at Shalmaneser's feet, so Jehu must have ruled Israel while Shalmaneser was king (859-824 B.C.).

The thing to be careful about here is co-regencies; reigns can often overlap. A co-regency is a period when a nation has two kings sharing rule of the government, often because the elder king is ill or otherwise unable to rule by himself. Or the elder king may choose to crown a son during his lifetime to secure his claim to the throne and give him proper leadership training. For example, there is a charming inscription from Egypt where Ramses II tells us that he was crowned as an infant by his father Seti I, so Seti could see what the next pharaoh looked like while he was alive. In cases where a king claims a long reign (over 40 years), there is a good possibility that he started as a co-regent, rather than ruling all that time alone. We see this in the Holy Land where Uzziah rules Judah while his father Amaziah is a captive of Israel. For straightening out the confusion this might cause, we are in debt to Edwin Thiele's research on the matter; his dates are the most widely used for the period of the kings.

Now by building on this foundation, we get dates of 1010 to 970 B.C. for King David, and 970 to 930 for Solomon; the United Kingdom of Israel split between Jeroboam and Rehoboam in 930. Beyond this we venture into murky ground, for the Bible does not give a clear reign-length for the first king, Saul, nor does it say how long Samuel judged Israel or how many years elapsed between Samson, Eli and Samuel. Because of this Bible time lines give Saul a reign lasting from 25 to 40 years; the author chose 32 (1042-1010 B.C.), because of the New American Standard translation of 1 Samuel 13:1. Similarly, for the period of the Judges we have how long each judge was active, but there is a definite possibility of overlapping; unfortunately we cannot be certain of how much overlapping there was. For example, Judges 10:7 suggests that the oppression of the Ammonites and that of the Philistines began at the same time, which means that Jephthah and Samson were probably contemporaries. To fill in some of the gaps I have used data from the writings of Flavius Josephus, on the assumption that he knew what he was talking about, since he lived nearly two thousand years closer to those events than we do.

The next solid date comes from 1 Kings 6:1, which states that Solomon began construction on the Temple in the fourth year of his reign, in the 480th year since the Israelites left Egypt. Using Thiele's chronology above, we arrive at 967 B.C. for when the Temple project started, and 1447 B.C. for the Exodus. Liberal scholars like to put the Exodus at a much later date, like 1290 or even 1220 B.C. To do this they site the reference to the city of Raamses in Exodus 1:11, and the "Israel Stele" of Merneptah, which is the first Egyptian inscription to mention Israel by name. Because of that we have movies about the Exodus like The Ten Commandments where Pharaoh's name is given as Ramses, and archaeologists studying the career of Ramses II are keeping an eye out for any evidence that might prove Moses existed.¹¹ Since none has been found so far, the existence of the Exodus is in doubt, and judging from the dialogs in archaeological magazines, the suggestion that the Exodus occurred before the thirteenth century B.C. is an invitation for verbal abuse, even when it comes from the head of a major college's history department.

A thirteenth-century B.C. date for the Exodus may be popular, but is it tenable? Probably not. In the first place, there is another mention of the city Raamses in Genesis 47:11, yet no one uses that

¹¹ The most commonly accepted dates for the reign of Ramses II are 1279-1213 B.C., while Merneptah's are 1213-1203.

to claim that Jacob and Joseph lived in the thirteenth century B.C. In this case Raamses is taken to be an anachronism inserted by a latter editor to make understanding of the text easier. We do the same thing when our history books talk about Julius Caesar crossing the **English Channel** to invade Britain, though Caesar called the same body of water the **Mare Britannicum**. Furthermore, in Judges 11:26 Jephthah tells his enemies that the Israelites of his day have lived in the Promised Land for three hundred years, more time than any liberal chronology allows for the period between Moses and the kings. It makes more sense to accept the Bible's dates at their face value.

By anchoring the Exodus in 1447 B.C., we get 1527-1407 B.C. for the life of Moses, and 1487-1377 for the life of Joshua (Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus, and Joshua was eighty when he succeeded Moses). Our next step is found in Exodus 12:40, where we are told that Israel's sojourn in Egypt lasted for 430 years. Hebrew copyists may have left out part of this verse, though; the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) version claims that the sojourn in Egypt **and Canaan** was 430 years. Moreover, in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 we are told that the Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years. The best resolution of this discrepancy may come from John Bimson, who interprets these verses to mean that the Israelites were in Egypt for four hundred years, before which they were in Canaan for thirty.¹² Thus Exodus 12:40 is really counting years from when Jacob left his uncle and employer, Laban, not from when the whole family entered Egypt. By using such an approach we get 1847 B.C. as the most likely date for when Joseph invited the Israelites into Egypt.

When Joseph introduces his father to Pharaoh the king asks how old Jacob is, and Jacob replies that he is 130 (Genesis 47:8-9). This means that Jacob was born in 1977 B.C. In Genesis 25:26 we learn that Isaac was sixty when Jacob was born, so Isaac was born in 2037 B.C. Likewise, Genesis 21:5 tells that Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. From that we can determine that Abraham was born in 2137 B.C., left Haran to follow God in 2062 B.C., and died in 1962 B.C.

Before Abraham it becomes really difficult to pin absolute dates. There are genealogies to help us in the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis, but it is quite likely that there are gaps in the second listing. For instance, Luke 3:36 includes a patriarch named Cainan who is not mentioned in the Hebrew (Massoretic) version of Genesis 11, though he appears in the Septuagint. Thus the presence of this omission, even if there are no others, is enough to make any calculation of the date of Noah's Flood questionable.

To complete the chronology, the author has chosen the dates of 5508 B.C. for the fall of man, 3852 for Noah's flood, and 3467 for the Tower of Babel incident. Let the record show that these dates are purely arbitrary, and could change if I get convincing evidence to do so; in fact I have changed them in the past. 5508 is the date of the Creation according to the teachings of the Orthodox Church, and I chose it because of all the traditional dates I have come across (including Archbishop Ussher's famous 4004 B.C.), it comes closest to the amount of time I feel is necessary to allow for everything which has happened. 3852 comes from subtracting 1656 years from the Creation date, using the years supplied in Genesis 5, while discussion of the Babel date is reserved for the next chapter.

In the author's opinion, any date that makes mankind more than 10,000 years old is an attempt to compromise with evolution, while putting the Creation no more than 6,000 years ago and the Flood

¹² Bimson, John J., "A Chronology For the Middle Kingdom and Israel's Egyptian Bondage," *S.I.S. Review*, Vol. III (1978), pp. 66-68.

in the third millennium B.C., as many fundamentalists do, is not long enough to account for the rise of civilization in the ancient Middle East. To have the flood hit the world between 2500 and 2400 B.C. would gravely interrupt the Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations, for which we have an unbroken record of development at least as far as 3000 B.C.; it supposes that right after the pyramids of Giza were built, the Flood came along and destroyed all life, and then the Egyptians returned and picked up where they left off with no evidence that they had been interrupted.

The end result of this numbers exercise is the "proposed chronology" on the following pages. I call it "proposed" because despite years of research, it probably is not perfect; however, at the time of this writing it agrees with all the facts on ancient history which the author has come across so far. It will be used as our reference point when looking at the history of God's chosen people in subsequent chapters.

A PROPOSED CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA

(all dates are B.C.)

From Adam to Babel

5508	The fall of man. Dates before this event cannot be measured, since from our point of view, entropy (and time) did not exist.
5508-4578	Adam
5378-4466	Seth
5273-4368	Enosh
5183-4273	Kenan
5113-4278	Mahalalel
5048-4086	Jared
4886-4521	Enoch
4821-3852	Methuselah
4634-3857	Lamech
4452-3502	Noah
3852	The Deluge
3950-3350	Shem
3467	The Tower of Babel incident

The Patriarchs

2267-2062	Terah
2137-1962	Abraham
2051-1914	Ishmael
2037-1857	Isaac
1977-1830	Jacob
1866-1776	Joseph
1847-1447	Sojourn in Egypt (Possible time of the story of Job.)
1527-1407	Moses
1487-1377	Joshua
1447	The Exodus

The Period of the Judges

1407	Beginning of the conquest of Canaan
1382	Joshua retires
(Josephus puts an 18-year period with no judges in it here.)	
1364-1356	Mesopotamian oppression
1356-1316	Othniel
1316-1298	Moabite oppression
1298-1218	Ehud

(Possible time of the story of Ruth.)

1218	Shamgar
1218-1198	Canaanite oppression
1198-1158	Deborah and Barak
1158-1151	Midianite oppression
1151-1111	Gideon
1114-1096	Ammonite oppression
1114-1074	Philistine oppression
1111-1108	Abimelech
1108-1085	Tola
1096-1090	Jephthah
1094-1054	Eli
1090-1083	Ibzan
1085-1064	Jair
1083-1073	Elon
1074-1054	Samson
1073-1065	Abdon
1054-1024	Samuel (dates come from Josephus)

The United Kingdom of Israel

1042-1010	Saul
1010-1008	Ishbosheth
1010-970	David
970-930	Solomon

The Divided Kingdom: Israel

930-910	Jeroboam I
910-909	Nadab
909-886	Baasha
886-885	Elah
885	Zimri
885-874	Omri
874-853	Ahab
853-852	Ahaziah
852-841	Jehoram
841-814	Jehu
814-798	Jehoahaz
798-782	Jehoash
793-753	Jeroboam II
753-752	Zechariah
752	Shallum

752-742	Menahem
742-740	Pekahiah
752-732	Pekah
732-723	Hoshea

(Assyria carries the northern kingdom into captivity.)

The Divided Kingdom: Judah

930-913	Rehoboam
913-911	Abijah
911-870	Asa
873-848	Jehoshaphat
853-841	Joram
841	Ahaziah
841-835	Athaliah
835-796	Joash
796-767	Amaziah
791-740	Uzziah
750-732	Jotham
735-715	Ahaz
729-687	Hezekiah
696-641	Manasseh
641-639	Amon
639-608	Josiah
608	Jehoahaz
608-598	Jehoiakim
598	Jehoiachin
598-587	Zedekiah

(Nebuchadnezzar carries the Jews off to Babylon.)