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4 – Thread of History not Lost in the Post-Flood World

To uphold the stricter version of the Genesis chronology (based on the *Masoretic Text*), scholars have tried to crunch the numbers in a way that could explain mathematically how the population could have grown to a huge extent in a short amount of time. These calculations attempt to show that the world (or Egypt at least) in Abraham's time had developed into a fully advanced civilization during the 400-year time span found in most modern Bibles. Still, there are a number of reasons why, even if the world had a large population, it still would not be realistic to think that so much development had taken place in such a short time.

First of all, there was God's command to re-populate the Earth; the tribes of humankind did not make a beeline for Egypt, or even to the Mid East. When some of them did try to congregate in one place and built the tower of Babel, God confused their languages and *"scattered them abroad"* to far-flung places of the Earth. (Genesis 11:8)

The Babel episode seems to have involved certain of the descendants of Ham, and perhaps some of Shem's. Other descendants of Noah appear to have migrated already to far-flung corners of the world. For example, it seems that the descendants of Japheth never even got to the Middle East. Four of his sons (Gomer, Magog, Tubal, Meshech) and their descendants headed north to what is now Russia, Ukraine, and Europe. Two headed westward: Javan to Greece and Tiras to western Turkey and Thrace. One (Madai) headed east to Iran, and in later years his descendants, the Aryans, migrated to India.

It is interesting to note that the modern day Indo-European family of languages seems to have originated with Japheth and his descendants who migrated to Europe and India. It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, but, unless Japheth himself, along with all his sons, were there at Babel, there would be no way to explain how the languages of his descendants all have a common origin; no other way, that is, than the more likely scenario that neither Japheth nor his sons ever had anything to do with the founders of Babel and their confusion of tongues.

Knowing then how the tribes of humankind were migrating in the post-Flood era, it doesn't matter much how we crunch the numbers. Earth's population may have been quite large after 400 years, but it was scattered far and wide into many different corners of the Earth. If the name of the game in those days (as evidenced by the Tower of Babel episode) was to spread abroad rather than congregate in one place, then it doesn't seem plausible that a highly advanced civilization could have arisen in Egypt and in Sumeria and other parts of the Mid East by the time Abraham came along, if that was only 400 years after the Flood.

So rather than trying to force the population issue to comply with a strictly interpreted chronology, why not just accept the chronology given in the *Septuagint* translation? As we learned from the previous post, there is much good reason to accept its chronology as more reliable.

The seeming lapses in chronological consistency – as evidenced during the time of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, the era of the *Book of Judges,* or the tendency to name only the one patriarch-founder of a multi-generational family – does not have to be viewed as a negative reflection on the Almighty or the Sacred Book; rather it exhibits God's extraordinary capacity to weave through the entirety of human history a record and genealogy, dating from the very Beginning, while using fallible human beings for the task.

The thought that inaccuracies may exist in the Biblical chronology might convince some to conclude that we should accept the science world's version of vast ages of evolutionary time. But inaccuracies in the sacred chronologies do not mean they were so wide of the mark that they should be ignored or stretched unreasonably. (More information on this will be presented further ahead.)

From a skeptical viewpoint one might argue that the "mistakes" in Bible chronology offer proof that the Biblical version of origins is nothing more than some sort of fanciful mythology. But such a view ignores the astounding fact that there is a record at all, and that one can trace and follow that record step by step into the past to arrive all the way back to the starting point of human history.

Just because there are a few missing ancestors and generations or incorrect estimates of life spans does not erase the fact that the persons mentioned in the chronologies were real historical figures. They were no more imaginary or fictitious than the Bible's historically verified characters, such as king David or king Solomon and several of the other personages whose existence can be confirmed in archeological or written records.

Despite the abridgment of some generations in the Bible's various chronological lists, we should marvel at the fact that the line of human ancestry can be traced all the way back to the Beginning. And is not that just what we would expect from the Almighty in the Sacred Book? If, by supernatural means, He created the natural world, thereby making a definite start to human history, would it not seem reasonable that there should exist an ancestral record dating right back to the very Beginning?

God would see to it that such a record be preserved, in spite of the shortcomings of human nature. Thus, we can marvel at the astonishing and unique Biblical (and non-Biblical) chronologies that have survived through the ages… for a couple of reasons: first of all, that they exist at all; and secondly, they stand as an intriguing example of this remarkable capacity that God has to merge human fallibility with His divine infallibility, thereby keeping the thread of history from getting lost or derailed during the roller-coaster course of human affairs.

If we and our environment were created by a Higher Being, and if He has concern for His creations, would it not seem reasonable that the God of Love would not leave us in the dark about our origins? He knew it would be a needed strength to our trust in Him to know that the Sacred Record, that He has inspired His followers to keep, extends throughout time all the way back to the very Beginning.

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