

The Timeline of the Bible

By John J. Yeo

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Study the comments relating to 1 Kings 6:1 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions:

1. Why do the biblical authors include such specific durations of time?
2. How do biblical scholars arrive at a 1446 BC date for the exodus event?
3. Does the author of 1 Kings believe the exodus and the construction of the temple by King Solomon actually happened? How can you tell?

Assignment Two

Study the comments relating to 1 Corinthians 15:12–20 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions:

1. Why was it important that Christ's resurrection be a historical event?
2. Paul says that if Christ were not raised, then Christians would be of all people the most pitied. Why?
3. If Christ were not resurrected, would we have any hope to go to heaven with Him for eternity?
4. Does Paul know that Christ rose from the dead? How?

Assignment Three

Study the comments relating to Luke 1:1–4 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions:

1. Why was it important for Luke to write an account of the life of Christ?
2. What was so significant about Luke's receiving the stories from the apostles themselves?
3. Why did Luke carefully investigate everything he received?

Scripture to Memorize

"But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:20

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the importance of the historical accuracy of the events recorded in Scripture.

John Yeo is assistant professor of Old Testament at Southwestern Seminary. Before coming to Southwestern, he served as a full-time faculty member and academic dean at Reformed Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, for five years. He is the author of *Plundering the Egyptians: The Old Testament and Historical Criticism at Westminster Theological Seminary (1929–1998)*. He also has served in various ministry positions, including serving as a youth minister for ten years. Contact him at jyeo@swbts.edu.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

What would you say if a foreigner were to ask you, "What is an American?" You might explain how our founding fathers fought for our independence. You might add how this nation was built on principles of democracy and religious freedom, as opposed to a monarchy that imposed religious and political tyranny. Undoubtedly your answer would include some sort of historical perspective.

History is significant because it reveals where we come from and who we are. The same is true with the Christian faith. The historical events recorded in the Bible are central to our identity as Christians.

Read 1 Kings 6:1 out loud.

Studying the Passage, v. 1

Verse 1. in the four hundred and eightieth year after . . . Israel came out of . . . Egypt. The Bible gave specific spans of time in order to indicate the historical accuracy of the event being described. Note how firmly the author believed that the exodus was an actual event. **in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel.** Historians traditionally date Solomon's fourth year to 966 BC. **he began to build the house of the LORD.** The passage tells us that Solomon began building the temple in 966 BC, which was 480 years after Israel departed from Egypt under Moses. This would place the date for the exodus at around 1446 BC (966 + 480 = 1446). This illustrates how Bible scholars find dates for the events recorded in Scripture.

The following is a timeline of some of the important historical events of the Bible. The dates given are approximate. The letters *BC* stands for "before Christ." The letters *AD* stands for "*anno domini*" which means "in the year of our Lord."

Creation: unknown

Abraham: around 2000 BC

Moses: around 1500 BC

Israel's exodus from Egypt: 1446 BC

Joshua and the conquest of Canaan: around 1300 BC

King David: around 1000 BC

King Solomon: around 900 BC

Exile of Israel: 722 BC

Exile of Judah: 586 BC

Jews' return to Judah: 539 BC

Birth of Jesus Christ: between 6 and 4 BC

Jesus baptized and begins ministry: around 26 AD

Jesus crucified and resurrected: around 30 AD

Paul converted: around 36 AD

Paul's three missionary journeys: between 47 and 57 AD

The book of Revelation written by John: 90–96 AD

On Your Own

Answer the questions using the timeline above:

1. Do BC dates go up (1, 2, 3 . . .) or down (. . . 3, 2, 1)? What about AD dates? _____
2. How many years separate Abraham from David? _____

3. How many years separate David from Jesus? _____
4. How many years did it take to write the Bible? _____ (Hint: Moses wrote the book of Genesis and John wrote the book of Revelation.)

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now report on the three questions regarding 1 Kings 6:1.

Discussion Question

Why does it matter that the history described in the Bible actually happened?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12–20 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 12–20

Verse 12. some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead. Some people in the Corinthian church were casting doubts on the resurrection. **Verse 13. if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.** Paul's logic was straightforward. If the dead in Christ are not raised, then Christ Himself was not resurrected either. **Verse 14. if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.** Paul asserted that if Christ had not been raised, then the preaching of the gospel and our faith in Christ would be vain (worthless).

Verse 15. we are even found to be false witnesses of God. Paul would be found a liar since he preached about the risen Christ. **Verse 17. if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless.** Our faith in Christ is futile if Jesus were not raised. **Verse 18. those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.** There is no hope of an afterlife if Christ were not raised. **Verse 19. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.** If we have hope in Christ only in this earthly existence, Christians are to be most pitied since we deny ourselves the earthly pleasures of sin in order to follow Christ.

Verse 20. But now Christ has been raised from the dead. During his conversion experience, Paul was confronted by the resurrected Christ Himself (see Acts 9). **the first fruits of those who are asleep.** Jesus was the first one to be resurrected, never to die again (see Romans 6:9). This historical fact guarantees that all those who have died in Christ will also be raised to life to be with Him forever.

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now report on the four questions regarding 1 Corinthians 15:12–20.

Discussion Question

Paul was concerned about verifying the historical accuracy of the resurrection of Christ. Why?

Read Luke 1:1–4 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 1–4

Verse 1. many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us. Luke said many people collected accounts of what took place among them, that is, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Verse 2. they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.** The stories were given by Christ's apostles (Peter, Matthew, John, James, etc.). Jesus's original disciples

(with the exception of Judas) were later commissioned and sent out by Christ to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Verse 3. having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order. Luke was careful to confirm the accuracy of the stories that he had received. **Verse 4. so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.** Luke wanted Theophilus (“one who loves God”) to know the “exact truth” about Jesus Christ.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now report on the three questions regarding Luke 1:1–4.

Discussion Question

Why was it important to Luke that the historical account of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection he recorded was accurate and true?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

The author of 1 Kings 6:1 believed the exodus really happened. He said it occurred 480 years before King Solomon began building the temple in Jerusalem. Notice how one significant event (the exodus) is used to date another one (the building of the temple). Scholars date Solomon's fourth year of reign to 966 BC. If we add 480 years to 966 BC, that gives us a date of 1446 BC for the exodus. This corresponds with the traditional date for Moses. This is how biblical scholars date important historical events they use to construct timelines.

In 1 Corinthians 15:12–20, Paul was concerned about the erroneous rumor that the dead are not raised to life. He logically addressed the issue and its ramifications. He declared that if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised (v. 13). If this is so, then our faith is useless, and we have not been forgiven of our sins (v. 17). Moreover, there is no afterlife. There is only death (v. 18), and Christians are the most pitiable people on earth (v. 19). Paul, however, declared that Christ *did* rise from the dead and that He is the “first fruits” of the resurrection. Those who believe in Him will never die again (v. 20).

In Luke 1:1–4, Luke reported that he carefully investigated everything that was “handed down” to him from “eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (v. 2). These historical accounts of Jesus's life can be trusted because they came from the apostles who had seen Jesus after His resurrection (1 John 1:1–3) and became ministers of the Word (Acts 3:42). Why did Luke go to all that trouble? Because he wanted Theophilus to know the “exact truth” about what he was taught about Jesus (v. 4).

From these passages we understand that biblical history must be true in order for our faith to be real. History matters.

Parent Question

How would you explain the importance of the historical accuracy and truthfulness of the events recorded in Scripture?

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