

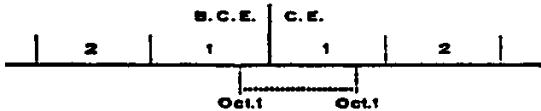
Bible itself. Where differences appear, one can confidently rely on the Biblical record, set down either by eyewitnesses or by those who, like Luke, "traced all things from the start with accuracy." (Luke 1:1-4) The accurate chronological information in the accounts of Luke and others makes possible the fixing of the dates for principal events of Jesus' life and of the apostolic period.—Matt. 2:1, 19-22; Luke 3:1-3, 21-23; and many others.

THE BIBLICAL COUNT OF TIME

The ancient secular records obviously must all be used with due caution. They are known to have inaccuracies in many matters and it is most unlikely that their chronologies should somehow have escaped such inaccuracies. By contrast, the Bible has proved true in all fields dealt with, giving by far the most accurate picture of the ancient times it treats. Its chronology is also reliable.—See BIBLE.

When measuring Biblical periods in harmony with modern dating methods it should be remembered that cardinal and ordinal numbers differ. Cardinal numbers, such as 1, 2, 3, 10, 100, and so forth, have full value. But with ordinal numbers, such as third, fifth, twenty-second, it is necessary to subtract one to obtain the full number. Thus, in the reference to the "thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin the king of Judah," the term "thirty-seventh" is an ordinal number and represents thirty-six full years plus some days, weeks or months (whatever time had elapsed from the end of the thirty-sixth year).—Jer. 52:31.

When counting a number of years from a calendar date in the "B.C.E." period to one in the "C.E." period, it should be kept in mind that from a date such as October 1 of the year 1 B.C.E. to October 1 of the year 1 C.E. is only one year, not two, as can be seen in this diagram:



This is because the year dates are ordinal numbers. Thus, from about October 1 of the year 2 B.C.E. (the approximate time of Jesus' birth) to October 1 of 25 C.E. (the approximate date of Jesus' baptism) is a total of thirty years, that is, one full year plus three months in the B.C.E. period and 28 full years plus 9 months in the C.E. period.—Luke 3:21-23.

COUNTING FROM THE TIME OF HUMAN CREATION TO THE PRESENT

Modern historians are unable to determine any certain date for the beginning of the "historical period" of mankind. Whether they turn to the history of Assyria, Babylon or Egypt, the chronology becomes increasingly uncertain and unstable as they work their way back through the second millennium B.C.E., and in the third millennium B.C.E. they are faced with confusion and obscurity. By contrast, the Bible provides a connected history that allows for a methodical count back to the beginning of human history, a count that is facilitated by Biblical references to certain eras or large periods of time, such as the 479 full-year period from the Exodus to the start of the temple construction during Solomon's reign.—1 Kl. 6:1.

To make the count in terms of modern calendar dating we must use some fixed point or pivotal date with which to commence, that is, a date in history that has sound basis for acceptance and that corresponds with a particular event recorded in the Bible. From this date as a pivotal point we can figure backward or forward and assign calendar dates to many of the events referred to in the Bible.

One such date, harmonizing with both Biblical and secular history, is the year 29 C.E., representing the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, whose rule began after the death of Augustus on August 17, 14 C.E. (Gregorian calendar). It was in the year 29 C.E. that John the Baptist began his preaching and also when, six months later, he baptized Jesus.—Luke 3:1-3, 21, 23; 1:36.

Another date that can be used as a pivotal point is the year 539 B.C.E., supported by various historical sources as the year for the overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus the Persian. (As has been shown, secular sources for Cyrus' reign include Diodorus, Africanus, Eusebius and Ptolemy, as well as the Babylonian tablets.) During Cyrus' first year his decree releasing the Jews from exile was given. And, as considered in the article on Cyrus, it is very probable that the decree was made by the winter of 538 or toward the spring of 537 B.C.E. This would permit the Jews time to make necessary preparations, effect the four-month journey to Jerusalem, and still arrive there by the seventh month (Tishri, or about October 1) of 537 B.C.E.—Ezra 1:1-11; 2:64-70; 3:1.

Using such pivotal dates, we can then relate a very large number of the Bible events to specific calendar dates. The basic framework into which such chronology fits is as follows:

EVENT	CALENDAR DATE	TIME PERIOD BETWEEN EVENTS
From the creation of Adam	4026 B.C.E.	
To the start of the Flood	2370 B.C.E.	1,656 years
To the establishing of the Abrahamic covenant	1943 B.C.E.	427 years
To the exodus from Egypt	1513 B.C.E.	430 years
To the start of the temple construction	1034 B.C.E.	479 years
To the division of the kingdom	997 B.C.E.	37 years
To the desolation of Judah	607 B.C.E.	390 years
To the return of the Jews from exile	537 B.C.E.	70 years
To the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls	455 B.C.E.	82 years
To the baptism of Jesus	29 C.E.	483 years
To the present	1969 C.E.	1,940 years
Total time period from Adam's creation to the present year, 1969 C.E.		5,994 years

What, then, is the Biblical basis and in some cases, the secular history supporting such chronology? We here give further details showing how each of the time periods listed is determined.

From Adam's creation to the Flood

The 1,656 years of this period are set out in Genesis 5:1-29; 7:6, and may be outlined as follows:

From Adam's creation to the birth of Seth	130 years
Then to the birth of Enosh	105 "
To the birth of Kenan	90 "
To the birth of Mahalalel	70 "
To the birth of Jared	65 "
To the birth of Enoch	162 "
To the birth of Methuselah	65 "
To the birth of Lamech	187 "
To the birth of Noah	182 "
To the Flood	600 "
Total	1,656 years