

TOUR EGYPT

with Creation Ministries International



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FOREWORD

by Gary Bates

The overlap between Egyptian history and the biblical record is among the most controversial subjects in biblical studies. Much as many Christians blithely accept evolutionary theory and attempt to insert billions of years into Scripture, some scholars attempt to reinterpret biblical texts to fit the standard Egyptian chronology. There is not even agreement about which biblical text to use, as some favour the Greek Septuagint's timeline, which extends the biblical timeline by several hundred years.

There are many proposed answers to the big picture questions such as, "Who were the pharaohs in the time of Joseph and Moses?" The honest truth is that we do not have enough information to be absolutely sure. We know this will annoy those who claim, "I've solved it," and it will challenge some of us who've read the books that make such claims. But the reason for a lot of this confusion is that the Egyptians did not widely record anything negative that happened to them. Thus, they did not record any of the events of Exodus. To make matters worse, the Hebrews and other Semitic peoples were regarded as a sub-class. Should we really expect that an Egyptian king—who was regarded as the living embodiment of a god—would record his humiliation by the God worshipped by an inferior race? And then put this information on his burial monuments? Moses, as author and compiler of the Pentateuch, also never mentions these pharaohs' names, unlike later biblical authors. Was Moses, who was raised in the Egyptian royal household, simply following the Egyptian tradition of not mentioning your enemies?

One thing we do know is that ancient Egypt was an incredibly important country. It features heavily in the Scriptures as a land of amazing wealth, and a place that Abraham visited. Later, Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt and was eventually joined by his father Jacob and his brothers. Of even greater significance, our eternal Saviour Jesus was taken there as a child, by his parents

Joseph and Mary as they sought to protect Him from the evil King Herod.

What other nation today can testify to a religious and political system that lasted for nearly 2,000 years? Much of this wealth can be attributed to the life-giving Nile River—the longest river in the world. Its annual flooding around September each year deposited rich black silt over the land. The Ancient Egyptians called this the ‘black land’ and the fertile Nile valley was the area where crops were grown. It formed a separation from the ‘red land’—the sandy deserts of low rainfall where nothing grew.

Importantly, the Hebrews were there too. We know this because the Bible tells us so. And the descriptions in Scripture about Egypt and its culture fit well with what we know about Egyptian archaeology. The Bible does not mention the Great Pyramids and, despite popular misconceptions, the Hebrews did not live near Giza or build these pyramids. These well-known monuments were likely finished hundreds of years before Joseph even arrived. Yet, we can glean many other facts about Egyptian life and history from the biblical account. For example, Scripture tells us that the Hebrews built cities out of mud bricks during their enslavement. Everywhere you go along the Nile, you will see ancient constructions made out of these same materials. God saved them from the hard labour of making these bricks under a tyrannical pharaoh at the time of the Exodus.

The Bible’s history has proven to be correct time and again when it comes to archaeology. Who knows what future discoveries will further corroborate the testimony of Scripture?



Gary Bates



KEATON HALLEY

Mudbrick mold from the time of Thutmoses III

INTRODUCTION

by Gary Bates

When you tour the ancient sites of Egypt, you will hear the nearly unpronounceable names of their kings, what dynasty they lived in, and the years that they allegedly reigned (called the *regnal date*). Keep in mind that the ancient Egyptians did not have a calendar like we do today. They were not counting years from an important historical anchor (like the birth of Christ, the basis of our AD/BC system). And they usually did not mention anything other than the king and maybe his father. This is unlike the biblical account, where, for example, a king of Judah starts his reign in the *Nth* year of a king of Israel and one can string all these statements together to get an accurate history of the divided monarchy. The regnal dates attributed to these pharaohs also have a recent derivation, more than 2,000 years after the time in which some of the pharaohs lived. Modern scholars have struggled to figure out how to put all the Egyptian kings in order and on a proper timeline. It has not been an easy task, and the results are imperfect and hotly debated.

It would be fair to say that many Egyptologists, both secular and Christian, agree that there are massive problems with the dates attributed to ancient Egypt. One problem is that Egypt was not always a unified land. On many occasions, the country was split between the north (the ‘lower’ Nile, or delta region) and the south (the ‘upper’ Nile). On occasions, there was a third, central region based around Luxor/Thebes and at other times the country was broken up into even smaller districts, each ruled by a local chieftain. In other words, there were often two and sometimes three or more different kings ruling at the same time. Even though they were listed sequentially in ancient sources, it is now known that some of these kings ruled contemporaneously with each other. It appears that much of this confusion is down to an Egyptian priest named Manetho.

From 336–323 BC, Alexander the Great conquered much of the world, including Egypt. After his death, the kingdom was divided and one of his

generals, Ptolemy I, installed himself as pharaoh of Egypt. Either he or his successor (Ptolemy II) commissioned an Egyptian priest named Manetho to write a history of Egypt. The Egyptians believed that they were the most ancient race on earth. But so did the Greeks and the Mesopotamians, and agendas most likely influenced their writings.

We have no original records of Manetho's writings, but he was cited by many other ancient historians, and often not very kindly. Josephus quoted Manetho, as did Africanus, and Syncellus compiled much from these various ancient sources. Yet there is a big disparity in the regnal years of the pharaohs they were listing. Thus, we cannot even be certain what Manetho wrote. Josephus claimed that Manetho used myths and legends, as was common for historians of the time.



Egyptologists now know that the Manetho listings were demonstrably wrong in many areas. He even made mistakes with the most recent New Kingdom dynasties that we know the most about. Elsewhere, he listed some pharaohs as preceding one another when they clearly overlapped. But Manetho's history is the basis for Egyptian history, and the history of other nations is often force-fit into Egyptian history even when the two disagree. This is quite frustrating for scholars and layman alike.

But what does this mean? Simply that if Manetho was wrong, and many of the kings he listed were contemporaries, ancient Egyptian history does not

stretch as far back as the dates commonly ascribed to it. It did not predate the Flood, for example. And even carbon-dating—in recent years the creationists’ best friend—has been shortening the Old Kingdom period (the oldest) of Egyptian history.¹

Many look for areas where we can reduce Egyptian chronological dates in one ‘chunk’. It is not that simple. One cannot erase 700 years of Egyptian history in one fell swoop. The more one studies this, the more one realizes how complex it all is. While we think there is room for significant shortening of the alleged dates at the beginning of the pre-dynastic and early Old Kingdom dates, in every kingdom and period there seem to be examples where one can easily remove 10 or 20 years, for example. We suspect that, cumulatively, there will be many places where years can be trimmed here and there, and that, ultimately, this is where the answers will lie.



As with so many other things in this world, the best way to understand Egypt is through the lens of Scripture. However, even as biblical creationists, we have difficulty identifying the exact dates that the pharaohs lived. In order to guide your understanding, we have produced the following:

1. Two tables, which appear on the following pages.
 - a. The first shows the traditional dates ascribed to the various kingdoms and periods of Egyptian history. This is mainly based upon Manetho’s sequential listing of the pharaohs. The dates were derived by later researchers, who worked backwards from known dates, such as the Greek occupation by Alexander in 331 BC. The Old Kingdom’s beginnings are primarily influenced by carbon-14 dating of some artefacts.
 - b. In the second table, we have listed some biblical events and where they might fit into Egyptian history, to the best of our understanding.
2. Following this, Gavin Cox has compiled information about the sites we are visiting, with the traditional dates and our view of where they might be placed in biblical history.

3. Keaton Halley has then provided a summary of intertestamental history and how it relates to some of the Ptolemaic temples we'll be seeing. This was a time when Alexander the Great's kingdom was being fought over by two of his conquering generals. This is the period between the book of Malachi and the beginning of the New Testament that is prophesied in detail in Daniel chapter 11, believe it or not.
4. Lastly, Gary Bates and Rob Carter explain how we arrived at these biblical dates and include some population growth estimates to show you how the Egyptians could have accomplished all this monumental building within a short timeframe after the Flood and Babel. However, these proposed dates should not be taken as 'gospel', for the reasons mentioned in our Foreword. Nevertheless, from the 18th dynasty New Kingdom dates, we believe that they might be accurate to within a few tens of years, compared to the discrepancies of hundreds of years in earlier kingdoms.

Who was the pharaoh of the Exodus?

You will be excited to see that 'we've stuck our neck out' and advocated the timing of the Exodus, plus a candidate for the pharaoh involved. We hope all of this will make the Bible come alive for you. It will be even better when you see some of the artefacts he left behind, and also his mummy, which can be seen in the Egyptian museum (and no, he did not die in the Red Sea—read on!).

All of the intensive work we've put into this should serve to highlight, once again, what a difficult job it is to determine accurate dates for ancient Egypt—despite the fact they left so much behind! We've done our best, so at least when you hear a pharaoh's name and dynasty mentioned on this tour, you can refer to this chart for some perspective and you should be able to roughly place him in the order of things.

We hope you have a blessed time and we are looking forward to being your guides and building friendships on our upcoming trip.

TRADITIONAL/SECULAR DATES FOR EGYPTIAN HISTORY

PERIOD	DYNASTIES	TRADITIONAL DATE BC
Predynastic/Prehistory		Pre 3200
Early Dynastic Period	1st-2nd	3200 – 2686
OLD KINGDOM	3rd-6th	2686 – 2181
1 st Intermediate Period	7th-10th	2181 – 2055
MIDDLE KINGDOM	11th-12th	2055 – 1650
2 nd Intermediate Period/Hyksos	13th(?)–17th	1650 – 1550
NEW KINGDOM	18th–20th	1550 – 1069
3 rd Intermediate Period	21st–25th	1069 – 664
Late Period	26th	664 – 525
Achaemenid/Persian Egypt	27th–31st	525 – 332
Ptolemaic/Greek Egypt		332 – 30
Roman & Byzantine Egypt		30 BC – AD 641