

Week #: 30 Text: ----- Title: Egypt's Timeline (3)
 Songs: Come, Now is the Time – Experiencing Worship (4:17)
Worship – Experiencing Worship (4:00)
You Are Lord of Heaven – Experiencing Worship (4:24)
 Videos: Movie Trailer: Patterns of Evidence: The Moses Controversy
Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus

Video: *Patterns of Evidence: Exodus* ((Start at 1:26:00))

The earlier pattern of evidence for the judgment and Exodus steps includes:

- a Middle Kingdom papyrus that describes events remarkably similar to the biblical plagues
- grave pits filled with bodies, hastily buried
- mass abandonment at Semitic sites in Egypt
- an Egyptian source, outside the Bible, stating that a powerful god acted in Egypt's history, delivering a deadly blow, which led to an invasion by foreigners
- and all this coinciding with the only collapse of Egyptian society in 1,000 years

You look for a collapse in Egyptian civilization and that's where you'll find Moses and the Exodus.

But what about the final step of that sequence, the conquest of Canaan, the land that had been promised to Abraham and his descendants? Would the earlier pattern of evidence continue there as well?

The children of Israel leave Egypt. They travel to Mount Sinai where they received god's law and made a covenant to be His people. Then, after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses transferred his authority to Joshua and ascended the heights of Mount Nebo, and there he died.

The Israelites had been waiting centuries for the promise to be fulfilled, and now it was Joshua who would lead them in their conquest of Canaan.

The land of Canaan was very different from Egypt. It was a land ruled by many independent city-states with names like *Hazor*, *Jericho*, *Hebron*, and *Arad*. The history of these cities has been divided into two major time periods:

- the Middle Bronze Age, matching Egypt's Middle Kingdom, when they were thriving and fortified by high walls.
- Then a sudden destruction and burning came up on the land, leaving those cities in ruins and bringing in a new period known as the Late Bronze Age, matching the time of Egypt's New Kingdom.



Archaeologist Norma Franklin represents a large group of scholars that sees no evidence for a biblical conquest of the Promised Land. She says, "As an archaeologist I hate to disappoint people, but we have no evidence for a single mass migration of people from one country, over a period of 40 years, wandering and coming into another country. There is destruction, amazing destructions. None of them actually fit one another. They all happened within 100 years, but not overnight. Not what you'd expect in – you know, Joshua didn't live that long, if he existed, okay?"

Archaeologist Israel Finkelstein says, "First and foremost, many places which are mentioned in Joshua, in the conquest story, specifically mentioned, you know, as major places in Canaan were excavated, and no evidence for a city in the Late Bronze Age has ever been found. I'm speaking about major excavations. And we are speaking about many sites. It's systemic; it's not only a single site."

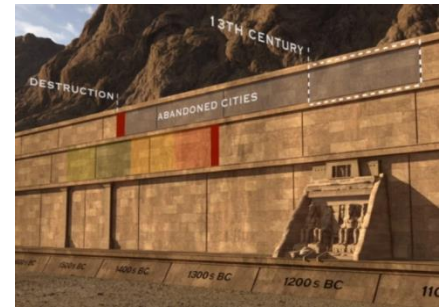
This is a serious problem for the Conquest, if it really happened in the Late Bronze age. But again, what if it happened in the earlier Middle Bronze Age? It seemed only logical to begin by looking at the key site of Jericho, the first city the Israelites are said to have destroyed. And we know exactly where that was.

Major archaeological excavations at Jericho began with a German team in the early 1900s, led by Ernst Sellin. This was followed by a British team, headed by John Garstang, in the 1930s. At the time of their digs, both Sellin and Garstang believed they had uncovered a layer of destruction that matched the biblical story.

However, things took a dramatic turn when Kathleen Kenyon dug at Jericho in the 1950s. She demonstrated that there was no evidence for a destruction of Jericho matching the biblical account because she dated the demise of the city much earlier. A wave of skepticism began to sweep across the field of archaeology, in an instant, Kenyon's discoveries at Jericho had undermined the entire Exodus story.

She was expecting that if there was any evidence there at all it would be in what we call the Late Bronze Age and it simply isn't there. If the Israelites had arrived in the 13th century, they would have found almost nobody there, no walls to collapse. It just wouldn't have fit the biblical narrative. So her excavations helped to compound this very negative view that was developing, not just from Jericho, but from other sites as well.

Is there a time when Jericho was destroyed, where the walls fell down or it was burned?



Finkelstein says, "I don't think so. I don't think we have evidence, this kind of evidence in the case of Jericho and I don't think that we can really look for this evidence. We are very much past this phase of archaeological research."

But David Rohl sees things differently. "If people are telling us that there was no Jericho at the time that Joshua conquered the Promised Land and therefore Joshua is a piece of fiction and therefore the Conquest is a piece of fiction and then probably Exodus is a piece of fiction as well, if that's the case, why don't we ask the simple question, when was Jericho around? When was Jericho destroyed? Let's start from that point of view."

The conquest began with the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. Joshua sent men to spy out the massively walled city of Jericho, and there they met a harlot named Rahab, who reported that all in the land had heard what God had done for the Israelites and they were terrified. Rahab hid the spies and aided their escape to the mountains.

What evidence do we see matching the conquest at Jericho?

Bryan Wood says, "First of all, we're told that Jericho was fortified. When the archaeologists dug the city, particularly Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950s, discovered that the tell that the city's built on was surrounded by a great earthen rampart.

Excavators found that Jericho was protected by a brilliant defensive system. At its base was a stone retaining wall more than 15 feet high, with a defensive extension wall of mud-bricks rising higher still. Beyond this was the rampart, a steep slope covered with a slick surface of white plaster, where attackers would have been exposed to arrows and sling stones from above. At the top of this rampart was the main city wall, also made of mud-brick, this one more than 25 feet high and 10 feet thick.

Imagine the dread and the desperate panic of the people of Jericho. Day after day, for six days, the people of Israel are walking around their city with the Ark of the Covenant and the sounding of ram's horns. Then, on the seventh day, they encircle the city 7 times and the priests give a long blast on their horns. The people let loose with a mighty shout. The walls come tumbling down, allowing the Israelites to climb up into the city, taking it and commencing the conquering of the land of Israel.

When the city met its end, these mud-brick walls collapsed and they actually fell down to the base of the stone retaining wall. Kenyon describes it very clearly and in detail in her excavation report. And then we're told they set the city on fire, and that's exactly what we find. Jericho was massively destroyed by fire. Kenyon said it was very clear that within the city, the walls of the buildings had fallen as well and she says that the walls fell before the fire. So, we have the sequence that we read in the Bible: first the fallen walls, and then the city being set on fire by the Israelites.

Excavations at the site uncovered clear evidence for a massive destruction by fire with a very thick burn layer of extremely high temperatures. This caused Kenyon to attribute the burning to an enemy attack and not fires that would result solely from an earthquake. She claimed that the city was destroyed around 1550 B.C. by the Egyptians. There's absolutely no evidence that the Egyptians were ever in the Jordan Valley at this time period.

So, because Kenyon dated the destruction of Jericho 150 years before the Israelites were supposed to be there, she made no connection between the destruction and the biblical account. But, once again, this date fits the earlier pattern Mahoney had been seeing.

Within the city, a very unique discovery was made. Both Garstang and Kenyon found, in the houses that they excavated, many jars full of grain that were stored there. The store jars in the city were pretty full. That suggests the harvest had only recently been gathered in. The details in the biblical account point to an event that happened sometime in the spring. Down there in the Jordan Valley, the spring is when the grain harvest is gathered in. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, the first thing they did was celebrate Passover. When is Passover? Again, the spring of the year.

The full jars also indicate that if this was a siege, it was very short, unusual for a strong fortified city such as Jericho. That matches the biblical account because the siege was only 7 days, otherwise the people inside would have consumed a lot of that grain if it dragged out for months. The grain was found all over the city. In every house that was excavated they found jars of grain.

There was one other intriguing detail at Jericho that fits the Bible remarkably well. It had to do with the promise made to Rahab. She actually lived in the city wall, and after hiding the spies, they promised her that she and her family would be protected when they attacked the city, and they kept their promise. She had marked her home with a scarlet cord, which she hung out the window.

But if her house was built into the city wall, how could it have survived?

Mahoney came across the actual archaeological report that the German excavator of Jericho, Ernst Sellin, had published in 1913. He was the first to conduct a major excavation of the site, and Mahoney could see that his work was impressive, but now seemed to have been forgotten. Here were detailed plans and photographs, including one part of the site, which echoed the Rahab story in an unexpected way.

The Germans found that in this one short stretch on the north side of the city, there were houses built on the rampart, between the lower city wall and the upper city wall, and some of those houses were built right up against the lower city wall. They found that the city wall did not fall in this area. So that provides an explanation for how the spies could have saved Rahab and her family because God brought the wall down everywhere else except where her house was, and we have archaeological evidence to back that up.

Mahoney asked Bryan Wood, "What if people say, 'I think you're biased?'"

He answered, "I think everybody in the field is biased, at one point or another. I admit my bias. However, I cannot make up the evidence. I cannot plant it in the ground. I have analyzed it and compared it to the Bible and I see, wow, it matches exactly. That's science: look at your evidence and come to a conclusion based on the evidence."

Archaeologists have uncovered:

- a city with high fortification walls that fell down
- evidence that the city was intentionally burned after the collapse
- storage jars filled with charred grain, evidence of a short siege in springtime
- a section of houses within the wall, miraculously preserved, just as in the biblical account

According to the biblical account, Joshua spoke a curse against anyone who would rebuild the city of Jericho, and the archaeology shows that, after the destruction, the city of Jericho was indeed abandoned for centuries.

But, of course, this all happens in the wrong time in the view of most scholars. Bryant Wood believes that Kenyon misdated the pottery at Jericho, resulting in a wrong destruction date. He, along with Charles Aling, believed that the conquest occurred around 1400 B.C. using the conventional dates for Egypt and Canaan

However, David Rohl and John Bimson have a different idea. They propose that Kenyon came to a wrong destruction date at Jericho because the dates assigned to the Middle Bronze Age are not correct, and these dates for history need a major adjustment.

Regardless, all these scholars agree that Jericho was destroyed in the manner that matches the story of Joshua and the Israelites.

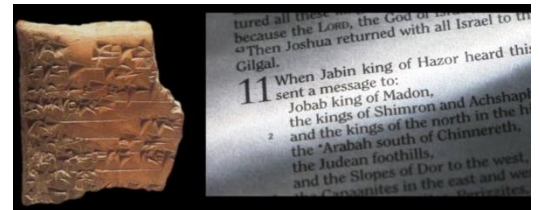
But there's more to the conquest than just Jericho. Spies had reported that Canaan was a beautiful land flowing with milk and honey, but it was also filled with great fortified cities that had walls reaching up to heaven. One by one they would fall to Joshua.

Then Joshua turned north and headed for the city of Hazor. Jabin, king of Hazor, gathered all the kings of the region against Israel. Joshua captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword, and Joshua destroyed Hazor by fire.

Israeli archaeologists at Hazor found a massive burn layer from the same time as Jericho's destruction. They also found something else. They found tablets in the Middle Bronze Age palace belonging to a king called Jabin, and that's the name of the king that Joshua actually stuck his sword into in the story.

The cuneiform tablet contains the name of Jabin, was found in the remains of the palace in ancient Hazor.

Mahoney asked David Rohl, "So, you have a connection between the Bible story, and these tablets?"



Rohl answered, "We have a name that's identical. We have a tablet coming out of the ground with the name Jabin on it, and in the story of Joshua, Joshua killed King Jabin of Hazor."

But when looking for the Conquest in the expected time period, Archaeologists have found no evidence. In fact, many of these sites were not even occupied throughout the entire Late Bronze Age; no high walls, no massive destructions; only a series of burned out and empty ruins. This has been a key factor in the current skepticism over the biblical account of the Conquest.

Again, maybe they've been looking in the wrong time for evidence of the Israelites entering Canaan, because when you look earlier in the Middle Bronze Age, all these cities were occupied, and they were guarded by high walls, and amazingly, they all suffered major destructions in the same short period, just as described in the Bible.

When you put those cities side by side, the biblical account and the archaeology match extremely well. There are enough destroyed and abandoned cities to say this fits the sequence of events the Bible is describing. There's a high probability that we're looking here at Joshua's Conquest.

The whole thing, from the beginning of the sojourn in Egypt, to slavery, Moses and the Exodus, the Conquest of the Promised Land is all there in one nice neat line, but it's way too early.

Rohl, Bimson, and others suggest that this problem didn't start with the Bible, it began with Egypt. They propose that early scholars developed its dating incorrectly, and that new information requires that the events of Egypt's history be shifted forward on the timeline by centuries.

All of a sudden these things that are too early become contemporary with the events in the Old Testament. They sync up again. Everything links together.

Mahoney was excited to hear of this possibility. It would explain why all the evidence has been consistently earlier. But could the history scholars created for Egypt really be off by centuries?

James Hoffmeier says, "I'm very much against chronological revisionism. Very good, very competent historians have been working for decades and decades on Egyptian chronology and Near Eastern chronology. There's still more work to be done, but I don't see a possibility of moving things centuries.

Israel Finkelstein says, "I'm not into this business at all, and I think that we know enough to say that we may be wrong 10 years here and 10 years there, but there's no way to change, to shift centuries. I mean, forget it. I think that we are on solid ground, so there's no need to look for different centuries.

Mahoney asked himself what was he supposed to do now? Hoffmeier and Finkelstein represent mainstream opinion, and Mahoney can't simply ignore it. The fact is, the majority of scholars, even believers in the Bible, won't allow the evidence Mahoney's seen to be connected to the Exodus. It's just too early. This is the biggest giant of all, standing in the way of solving this problem. But the biblical pattern was so strong Mahoney couldn't just let it go.

Mahoney's researchers uncovered a lead that led him to Oxford University. On St. John's Street is the Griffith Institute, one of the greatest storehouses of Egyptological documents in the world. He went to review the writing of the late Sir Allen Gardiner, perhaps the greatest specialist in reading hieroglyphs in the 20th century and he had a great hand in uncovering what we know today.

Mahoney was moved as he looked through his personal notes. In some ways, Mahoney was following a path that he had helped to clear. After a lifetime of searching, Gardiner wrote something that directly impacted the question Mahoney was dealing with.

Sir Allen Gardiner wrote:

"It must never be forgotten that we are dealing with a civilization thousands of years old and one of which only tiny remnants have survived. What is proudly advertised as Egyptian history is merely a collection of rags and tatters."

If all we have are rags and tatters, how sure can we be about the dates?

Mahoney asked Kent Weeks, "Allen Gardiner said that what we have is rags and tatters. Is that still true today or do you think that's changed?"

Weeks answered, "No, I think that basically is true. What's interesting about the source material from ancient Egypt though, is that those rags and tatters are more numerous and of a more varied kind than almost any other civilization on the face of the earth. You name it, every kind of material imaginable has come down to us, not complete, but tantalizing rags and tatters. And it's a wonderful thing to have all this material, but it's also extremely frustrating because it means there's that much more room for argument and doubt.

Kent Weeks made no indication that he'd be in favor of anything as major as shifting Egypt's history by centuries, but the reality is, a shift wouldn't just affect Egypt, because the archaeological dates for Canaan and the surrounding region are all dependent on Egypt's history.

When all is said and done, it's the Egyptian chronology that underpins everything else that's being done throughout the rest of the known world. It's a big responsibility and it's one of the reasons that people look at it so closely. In terms of reconstructing ancient history, a lot hinges on the answers.

So if Egypt's historical dates are not that certain and need adjusting, then Canaan's history would also require the same kind of shift, because they're connected. But a lot of people don't want to do that, because Egyptian chronology has been assumed to be fixed now for a very long period of time. So the whole idea of taking it apart and starting again is an anathema to most Egyptologists. It would undo a lot of their books.

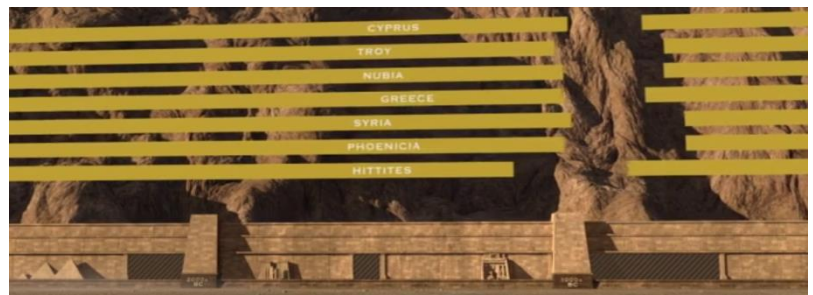
But there's mounting evidence that the current reconstruction of Egyptian history has major problems that have nothing to do with the Bible. There's a whole host of reasons for being skeptical about the current Egyptian chronology, and some of them to do with Egypt itself, but a lot of them from outside Egypt, which a number of people are beginning to look at.

Other good scholars maintain that you don't need to change Egypt's timeline in order to see evidence for the Exodus. James Hoffmeier believes textual clues in the Bible point to the Exodus happening at the 1250 B.C. Ramesses date. Bryant Wood and Charles Aling believe the Exodus occurred around 1450 B.C., using the conventional dates for Egypt and Canaan. They believe a case can be made for Israelites living in Egypt prior to that time and later Israel appearing as a nation in Canaan. So an Exodus of some kind must have taken place.

The only place that Mahoney saw a pattern matching all the steps was in the Middle Kingdom, not the New Kingdom. If that's not a coincidence, it would require some kind of major change. Either the Exodus happened long before 1450 B.C., or the dates for Egypt's timeline are off.

The debate over the dates of ancient history is intensifying. While the conclusions of those who support major adjustments differ in their details, they're all of the same mind that these things are worth investigating, and that chronology is not yet fixed and is not yet final.

Researchers like Rohl and Bimson believe the main problem lies in these lesser known dark periods of Egypt's past. They think scholars have miscalculated their lengths, causing distortions in the dates for everything before them. The biggest suspect is this very long third dark period, which new information suggests has been over-inflated by centuries. If it were reduced, the history of Egypt would need to move forward in time.



For many years, Mahoney was intimidated by the giant of Egypt's dating. But what made him take a second look was when he learned that it's been necessary to insert gaps into the histories of all the surrounding civilizations in order to match the dating of Egypt's third dark period. Yet, the archaeology of these cultures does not seem to support such gaps. Something was wrong.

What might history look like if the dark periods were adjusted the way that some scholars believe the evidence demands?



What's not changing is the Bible timeline, because that's not affected by it. If you're changing the Egyptian timeline, you're moving it against the Bible timeline. So, all of a sudden, things that were not in the right time period between the two are suddenly lining up in a different way. That's the exciting bit, because that's when we suddenly start to find evidence for the biblical story.

It's starting to think how significant this could be, because chronology, the dates assigned to these events, is the thing being used to convince the world that the Bible is just a fairy tale, but look at the pattern:

- evidence matching Joseph and the early Israelites arrival in Egypt
- their tremendous multiplication
- their descent into slavery
- the judgment and collapse of Egypt
- the deliverance and exodus of the Semitic population
- and finally in Canaan, evidence matching the conquest of the Promised Land

(1:52:00) Mahoney knows there's a lot of disagreement over the dating, but what strikes him is that if you put all the dates to the side for a moment, what emerges from the archaeology is the pattern that matches the Bible every step of the way, and doesn't that deserve to be taken seriously?

For now, those who hold to established conventions will not allow these connections to be made.

Mahoney says, "I'm not an Egyptologist, I'm a filmmaker. And I'm not endorsing any one dating theory out there. I'm just searching for the truth. Because isn't that what the pursuit of both science and faith should be, a search for truth?"

Monsour Boralk says, "At the end, the audience, the people themselves, they will judge. They will know if you are a scientific man, a logical theory, or you are exaggerating or you have some story from your own mind.

Are these findings just an exaggeration? Or is looking for the Exodus at the earlier date the key step in bringing the Bible out of the shadows of myth and into the light of true history?

Mahoney concludes with this statement:

"People wonder why they haven't heard about this before, but what I found out was that a lot of people don't want to talk about it. Archaeologists, people in the media, no one's willing to actually tell this story, and I had to ask that same question of myself – was I willing to follow this story to where it really led? But there is something to these ancient stories and we just felt that, "You know what? We just have to let people know what the truth was."