

Bible History – Making a Time Chart

One wonderful way to learn more from the details of the men and women in the Bible is to understand a little of the dates and times in which they lived. This helps us better appreciate the context of Bible events, and how they link together.

A simple way to do this is to construct a time chart for ourselves. There are several very good ones available in book shops and on the internet, but the activity of making our own really helps to cement the facts in our minds. What is more, we can add to it as we continue our Bible study.

The dates used here are rounded up or down to give whole numbers, and the Bible references show where the person is introduced. The time chart to the right has been completed following the steps below, and is colour-coded to help build it step by step.

Step 1: 2000–year Sections

Start with periods of 2000 years, beginning at 4000 BC and going through to 2000 AD.

Begin with Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:27, 2:22), placing them about 4000 years before Jesus. Then measure 2000 years on from that first pair, and we arrive at 2000 BC. As we move forwards through the years *before* Christ, so the numbers decrease.

2000 BC gives us the time of Abraham (Genesis 11:27). He was the founder of the Jewish nation, and the rest of the Bible relates God's dealing with the Jews, from Abraham onwards.

Moving 2000 years after Abraham brings us to the time of Jesus, and we note that there is no year '0' on history, we would go from 1 BC to AD 1. Just over 2000 years after Jesus brings us to our own day.

Step 2: 1000–year Periods

Now divide each of these time periods into half, giving 1000–year gaps.

Half way between Adam and Abraham is 3000 BC, and it was about then that Noah was born (Genesis 5:29).

Mid-way from Abraham to Jesus, King David ruled over Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). He was a godly man who wrote many of the Psalms and lived in about 1000 BC.

Half way between Jesus and our time is about AD 1066, a date noted in Britain for the Battle of Hastings. As the New Testament was completed within around a hundred years of the birth of Jesus, AD 1066 does not of course feature in the Bible.

Step 3: 500–year Groups

Finally, we have to split these periods of 1000 years into 500–year groups.

Approximately 500 years before Abraham, Noah built the ark and was saved from the Flood. It is possible to add up the years in Genesis 5, where we find that the more accurate date is about 400 years before Abraham.

Half way between Abraham and David, Moses lived (Exodus 2:10). He

led the Israelites out of Egypt, and received the Law from God, which he wrote down and passed on to the people.

Then in the final segment 500 years after David, Zedekiah the last king of the southern part of Israel was taken captive into Babylon (2 Kings 25:1).

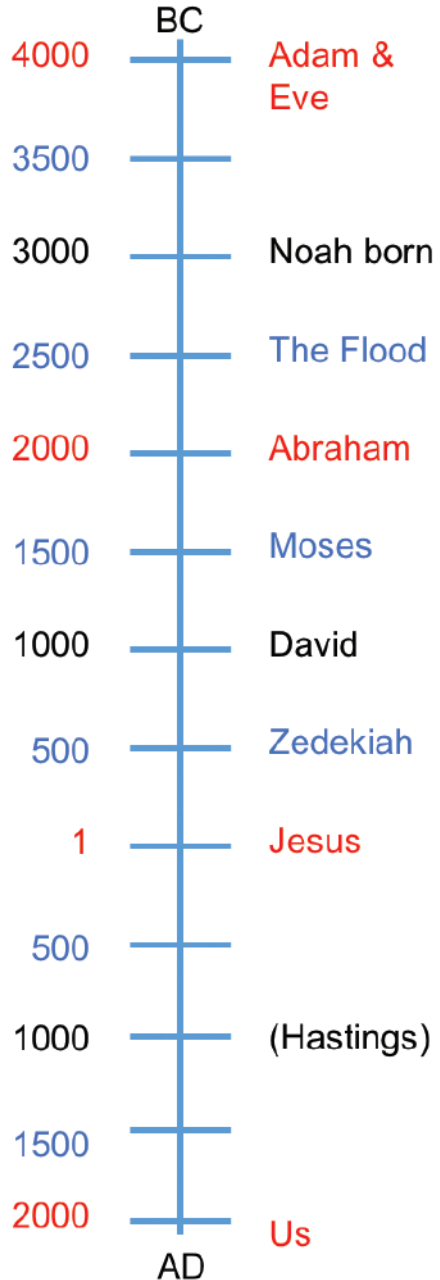
Before the Flood

To avoid confusion, it is worthwhile to note the ages of people living before the Flood. If you look at the information given in Genesis 5, you will see that people lived for much longer before the Flood than after it. This is possibly explained by there being a canopy of water surrounding the earth (Genesis 1:6–8), which filtered out many of the sun’s harmful rays. During the Flood, this water would have fallen to the earth (Genesis 7:11), so reducing the protective layer and the length of people’s lives.

Using the Time Chart

It can be interesting to keep adding to our time chart as we read our Bibles. If you plan to do this, it will be worthwhile having a larger version on a larger piece of paper, or using a notebook with each time period starting on a new page. For those with a computer, a spreadsheet is a good way to do this.

It is very useful to have a chart such as this to hand whenever we think about Bible characters. It helps us to better imagine the times in which they lived and the order in which their stories took place. Looking at the Bible in this way also reminds us that these were real people, living real lives, with a part in God’s plan. Just as we can be!



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