

The Timeline of the Bible By John J. Yeo

Memory Verse *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”* 1 Cor. 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.

It’s in the Book What would you say if someone 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 Christianity. 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 one way 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 precisely, most likely either 4,000-8,000 BC or *Much* earlier **Abraham:** ~ 2000 BC **Moses:** ~1500 BC **Israel’s exodus from Egypt:** 1446 BC **Joshua and the conquest of Canaan:** ~1300 BC **King David:** ~1000 BC **King Solomon:** ~900 BC **Exile of Israel:** 722 BC **Exile of Judah:** 586 BC **Jews’ return to Judah:** 539 BC **Birth of Jesus Christ:** 6-4 BC **Jesus baptized and begins ministry:** ~26 AD **Jesus crucified and resurrected:** ~30 AD **Paul converted:** ~36 AD **Paul’s 3 missionary journeys:** 47-57 AD **Revelation written by John:** 90–96 AD

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.

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.

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?

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.