

gists keep finding more evidence of humankind being around on this earth for more than 40,000 years.⁶

Notes

¹World Glacier Monitoring Service Available Data on web at: www.geo.unizh.ch/wgms/wgmshome/data.htm

²Ice Cores on web at: www.antarctic.com.au/encyclopaedia/physical/IceCores.html

³L. G. Thompson, et al. "A 25,000-Year Tropical Climate History from Bolivian Ice Cores," *Science* 282, no. 5295: 1858-64 on web at: <http://polarmet.mps.ohio-state.edu/Icecore/Abstracts/25Y-98.html>

⁴"Antarctica - Byrd & Dome C," on web at: <http://www-bprc.mps.ohio-state.edu/Icecore/ByrdStation.Dome.html>; and S. S. Abysov, et al., "Deciphering Mysteries of Past Climate From Antarctic Ice Cores," *Earth in Space* 8, no. 3 (November 1995): 9 on web at: www.agu.org/sci_soc/vostok.html

⁵Earle Holland, "Researchers Date Chinese Ice Core to 500,000 Years," Ohio State University News Release (June 29 1997) on web at: www.sciencedaily.com/print.php?url=/releases/1997/06/970629224509.htm

⁶*Past Worlds: The Times Atlas of Archaeology* (London: Times Books Ltd, Harper & Collins, 1996). One hundred pages take you back in time many thousands of years.

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Abraham Began the 430 Years: Such Numbers Are Not Figurative

Martin LaBar's letter in the previous issue (*PSCF* 56, no. 4 [Dec. 2004]: 308) disagrees with "Gilbert's interpretation of Exodus 12:40" described in my letter on "Genesis Age Gaps?" (*PSCF* 56, no. 2 [June 2004]: 153-4). I simply stated St. Paul's interpretation (Gal. 3:16-17) that the pre-Exodus 430 years began when God gave the covenant promise to Abram. Paul links this promise to the law that was introduced 430 years later and also to Christ. The first expression of the promise that refers to Christ tells Abram "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:2-3). Christ Jesus accomplished that blessing and fulfilled that prophecy (John 8:56).

Abram begat Isaac twenty-five years after that promise was given (Gen. 12:4; 21:5). Isaac begat Jacob at age 60 (Gen. 25:26), and Jacob went to Egypt at age 130 (Gen. 47:9). Add those years up to get 215; subtract that from 430 to get 215 years between the descent into Egypt and the exodus. Josephus wrote: "They left Egypt ... 430 years after our forefather Abraham came to Canaan, but 215 years after Jacob removed from Egypt" ("Antiquities of the Jews," Book 2, Chap. 15:2, in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. Wm. Whiston [1736] (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 75.

LaBar argues that the 430 years began when Jacob and his sons went to join Joseph in Egypt. He bases his disagreement with Paul on Gen. 15:13, when God tells Abram "... your descendants shall be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years" (NIV). LaBar says that "means a captivity of Abraham's descendants, in Egypt, amounting to considerably more than 200 years."

First, "a country not their own" (NIV) is also translated as "a land ... not theirs" (KJV). These two translations provide different interpretations: "country" suggests that Abram was within the boundaries of a particular nation. "Land not theirs" is less specific and simply suggests "foreign soil" or "somebody else's turf." The NIV footnote to Exod. 12:40 says the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint name both Egypt and Canaan as the places of slavery and mistreatment foretold in Gen. 15:13.

Second, "descendants" (NIV) is a derivative of the primary meaning of the Hebrew in Gen. 15:13, which is "seed" (KJV). "Descendants" restricts interpretation of that word to "offspring already born," whereas the "seed" of Abram obviously went where he went until it joined the seed of Sarah to produce offspring of the promise, who are also included in "seed."

And third, LaBar interprets Gen. 15:13 to mean that slavery occupied many more than 200 years. However, compare "your descendants will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years" with "Americans had a bloody Civil War and antagonism over slavery for decades." The war occupied only four years of those antagonistic decades, and the Hebrew slavery occupied considerably less than half the 400 years of "mistreatment." Moses, born into that slavery (Exod. 1:8-2:3), led the exodus at age 80 (Exod. 7:7), which indicates that the slavery began at least eighty years before the exodus.

Scripture does not say how long it was between the start of slavery and Moses' birth, but estimates range from 0-1 years (Klassen, 1975) to 38 years (Reece, 1977), according to *The Reece Chronological Bible* (Bethany [1980], 118-9). These estimates indicate a range of 80-118 years of slavery, which is less than half LaBar's estimate. My explanation for the thirty year difference between the 400 years of "mistreatment" (Gen. 15:13) and the 430 years of Exod. 12:40 is that Joseph held power in Egypt for thirty more years after Jacob and his sons joined him (his ages 40-70), during which time the Israelites were treated very well indeed (Gen. 47:11, 27).

For those who think the patriarchs were not "mistreated" (KJV has "afflicted"), consider Abraham's afflictions described in Genesis 12-20, and Gen. 23:2, which has Sarah separated from him at Kiriath Arba, possibly furious over the attempt to sacrifice Isaac, whose own afflictions are described in Genesis 26. Jacob sums up his afflictions in Gen. 47:9 (NIV): "My years have been ... difficult."

In response to Carol Hill's letter (*PSCF* 56, no. 4 [Dec. 2004]: 308), I agree with her point that Adam was around 6,000 years ago; I disagree with her point that Old Testament numbers are sometimes "sacred or figurative." I do not think God lied when he inspired the Scriptures, as attested by two witnesses (Heb. 6:18 and Titus 1:2), even "white lies" for numerological purposes; a patriarch can live to a "sacred" age if God wills it.

I thank my wife Mary Ann for insightful comments about this letter.

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