

## Bible Study from an Archaeological Perspective

### Lesson One

The **Pottery Neolithic period** through the **Early Bronze period** – From the creation of Adam unto the Flood.

Genesis 1:9-13 – *...let the dry land appear...; Let the earth bring forth grass, and herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth...*

Genesis 1:20-25 – *...Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. ...Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind...*

- Body and soul – self-awareness

**Paleontology** – The Encyclopedia Britannica defines Paleontology as the scientific study of life of the geologic past that involves the analysis of **plant and animal** fossils, including those of microscopic size, preserved in rocks.

Genesis 1:26-27 – *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (ca. 3899 B.C.).*

God is a triad (trinity) – Matthew 3:16-17

Man is a triad – I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12

- Body, soul, and spirit – God-awareness

**Archaeology** – The Encyclopedia Britannica defines Archaeology as the scientific study of the material remains of past **human life** and activities.

### Archaeological periods

#### Pottery Neolithic Period (ca. 6000 B.C. – ca. 4500 B.C.)

#### **Scripture reading:**

Genesis 3:6-7 – Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:20-24 – God drove out the man.

Genesis 4:1-2 – *And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

### **Archaeological evidence:**

Dr. Tamar Noy, curator of prehistoric periods, at the Israel Museum wrote, "...The creativity of Neolithic humans and their changing attitudes to many aspects of their lives led to innovations that included the systematic **cultivation of plants and the domestication of animals**, followed by the growth of settlements, which had to accommodate expanding permanent populations. In time, a more complex society evolved, which practiced a variety of crafts, engaged in trade, and developed a rich religious and spiritual life" (Dr. Tamar Noy, *Treasures of the Holy Land*, Neolithic Period, 1986, p. 41).

- As we look at what the Bible says about tilling the ground and keeping the sheep, we see how Dr. Noy's observations read like an interpretive account of the biblical narrative presented as history. Note that Dr. Noy's dating is approximate, and, in my opinion, she may be off by up to 1000 years.

Pottery is important in archaeological dating.

"Pottery, a great invention of the Neolithic period, came into use in the sixth millennium B.C. and provided a reliable means of cooking, transporting, and storing food. The potter fashioned the vessels by hand and baked them in an open fire (later in a kiln). Pottery is easily breakable, but the fragments are practically indestructible; these pieces give evidence of the forms and decorations unique to each culture and each period. Therefore, from this point on, pottery is important in archaeological dating" (Dr. Tamar Noy, *Treasures of the Holy Land*, Neolithic Period, 1986, 42, 43).

### **The Chalcolithic (copper/stone) period (ca. 4500 – ca. 3150 B.C.)**

#### **Scripture reading:**

Genesis 4:17-22 – Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.

"brass" – Strong's #5178 = copper

Genesis 4:25-26 – Seth

Genesis 5:1 – This is **the book** of the generations of Adam... (Like Gen. 2:4)

*Book*; Strong's #5612 – writing; from #5608 – to score with a mark, to inscribe.

When Adam was created, he had the ability to understand God and speak to God. He also had the ability to put his thoughts into writing. You could say that Adam hit the ground running!

Genesis 5:3 – Adam 130 years-old when Seth is born. 3899 – 130 = 3769 B.C.

Gen 5:6 – Seth lived 105 yrs. and begat Enos.	3664
Gen. 5:9 – Enos lived 90 yrs. and begat Cainan.	3574
Gen. 5:12 – Cainan lived 70 yrs. and begat Mahalaleel.	3504
Gen. 5:15 – Mahalaleel lived 65 yrs. and begat Jared.	3439
Gen. 5:18 – Jared lived 162 yrs. and he begat Enoch.	3277
Gen. 5:21 – Enoch lived 65 yrs. and he begat Methuselah (who lived 969 yrs.)	3212

**Archaeological evidence:**



**Pre-Dynastic, Black-Topped Earthenware Jar** with modelled rim and flat base. From the Naqada, Egypt site. Purchased in 1987 from Malter Galleries (Michael Malter), Encino, California.

Distinctive, black-topped red ware jars were produced in Egypt during the Naqada I and II phases of the Predynastic Period (3550-3400 B.C.) This type of pot was formed by hand. Before the pot was fired, it was burnished with a smooth pebble until it was polished. After the pot was fired, the upper part of the vessel was immediately placed in organic material, which resulted in the blackened rims characteristic of this type of pottery.

**From Jerusalem:**

One morning I was asked to wash artifacts that had been brought up to site headquarters in numbered pails. Dr. Shiloh handed me a special pail which contained, among other things, flint tools that had been found in a pit in the bedrock near the Gihon Spring. The flint points and flakes were still so sharp that it felt like I was touching broken glass beneath the murky water in the pail. In Dr. Shiloh's opinion, the flint tools and associated pottery appeared to be from the Chalcolithic period.



Israeli Arrowhead. Unifacial except for stem which is napped on both sides. Length 1.45". Purchased in 2020 from Antillian Antiquities (Larry Roberts), Gainesville, Florida.

Later that day, I turned to Genesis chapter one in my Bible and noticed the familiar 4004 B.C. date in the margin. It was exciting for me to think that I had just handled artifacts from Jerusalem that might have come from that time – the time of Adam and Eve! My area supervisor, Donald Ariel, later wrote:

“The great importance of the assemblage published here lies in the fact that it is the first undisturbed assemblage of Chalcolithic pottery to be found in Jerusalem. Though the small quantity of material does not permit discussion in depth, it is clear evidence of settlement of unknown extent of Jerusalem in the Chalcolithic period. A few Chalcolithic sherds have been found in different locations all over the eastern slope of the City of David hill. One might suggest that such a settlement grew up around and adjacent to the Gihon Spring. Similar settlements close to springs are known in the Chalcolithic period; an example near Jerusalem is Sataf (Gibson, Ibbs, and Kloner 1991: 34-35)” (Qedem 40, *City of David Excavations – Final Report V*, 2000, Alon De Groot and Donald Ariel, pp. 92-93).



In 1961, a group of archaeologists were looking for ancient Hebrew scrolls in the Judean Desert. Instead, they found this striking double ibex and the rest of the hoard now known as the “Cave of the Treasure.”  
(Courtesy of the Israel Museum)

An astonishing hoard of 429 ritual objects from the Chalcolithic period was discovered in 1961 in a remote cave above Nahal Mishmar in the Judean Desert. The objects were found wrapped in a woven mat, concealed behind a large stone. They included hundreds of mace heads, dozens of scepters, and several enigmatic objects, such as the "crowns." Most of the objects were made of copper, with a few made of ivory or stone.



The Chalcolithic trove showed an advanced local civilization that could import copper and create sophisticated artwork. It is possible that this spectacular treasure belonged to the sanctuary at En Gedi, some 12 km away. It seems that some approaching danger led the priests to stow away the precious objects in the hope of better days to come. (Courtesy of the Israel Museum)

**Early Bronze period (ca. 3150 – ca. 2200 B.C.)**

**Scripture reading:**

Gen. 5:25 – Methuselah lived 187yrs. and begat Lamech. 3025

Genesis 5:5 – Adam died after living 930 years. – 2969 B.C.

Gen. 5:28 – Lamech lived 182 yrs. and begat... Noah. 2843

Gen. 5:32 – Noah was 500 yrs. old and begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.  
2343

**Genesis 6:5-9a – ...every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

Gen. 9:28-29 – The Flood – 2243 B.C. (Noah lived 950 yrs. – 350 yrs. after the flood)

Gen. 11:10 – Shem was 100 yrs. old, and begat Arphaxad 2 years after the flood. 2241

### **Archaeological evidence:**

Author Barbara Bell, who, in the early 1970s, published several journal articles on the connection of **climate variability** to the fall of Egyptian dynasties, wrote, “Although the details remain obscure and the primary cause open to dispute, some aspects of the trouble which occurred at the end of Dynasty VI (ca. 2345 BC–ca. 2181 BC) seem clear: **texts from the period indicate that hardly any form of civil order was absent, ranging from strife between districts to looting and killing by infiltrating Asiatics in the Delta, to individual crime run riot, to revolution and social anarchy.** Reference to **famine** occurs in several texts” (Barbara Bell, *The First Dark Age in Egypt*, American Journal of Archaeology, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Jan. 1971), p.7).

Miriam Tadmor, Senior curator of Chalcolithic and Canaanite Periods, Israel Museum, wrote, “The emergence of the Bronze Age civilization heralds a decisive departure from the earlier Chalcolithic culture. **Reasons for these far-reaching and as yet unexplained changes have been sought in climatic fluctuations** and in population influx from the north. Settlement patterns changed: **villages in the semiarid northern Negev and in the Golan, abandoned at the end of the Chalcolithic period, were not resettled**” (Miriam Tadmor, *Treasures of the Holy Land*, Canaanite Period, Bronze Age, 1986, p. 88).

“In the last stage of the early Bronze Age, there was a deterioration in traditional pottery forms... By the time of the Sixth Dynasty (ca. 2345 BC–ca. 2181 BC), Egyptian influence was virtually nonexistent, and Egyptian royal names are absent even in the copper mines of Sinai. **The collapse of the urban order is synchronous with the fall of the Old Kingdom in Egypt and with the collapse of the Akkadian empire in Mesopotamia. The reason for such widespread destruction must have been manifold and complex.** Ethnic movements from the north have been singled out as a decisive factor, but **climatic and internal changes** have also been emphasized. ...Coppersmiths produced tools and weapons which, though seldom outstanding, were always effective and well made. It is therefore astonishing that so few objects of high artistic quality have been unearthed: a handful of human or animal representations, some bone carvings, a few small ivories and sculptures, and some jewelry. Cylinder-seal impressions add some lively designs but are simple and crudely made. **There is a striking contrast between the**

**somewhat utilitarian (practical) material culture of the Early Bronze Age and the richly artistic achievements of the preceding Chalcolithic period”** (Miriam Tadmor, *Treasures of the Holy Land*, Canaanite Period, Bronze Age, 1986, p. 90).



**Early Bronze Period Jar** with globular body, short, everted neck (crude repair), three evenly spaced button knobs, red burnished slip, and flat base. Found in Jerusalem. Purchased in 1984 from the City of David Museum (Prop. Abed Abu Sbeih), Silwan: Near Gihon Spring, Jerusalem, Israel.

Barbara Bell wrote, “In Egypt, where the chronology is best established, the first Dark Ages began around 2200 B.C., when at the end of Dynasty VI (ca. 2345 B.C.–ca. 2181 B.C.) **Egypt**, until then a very stable society, **with seeming suddenness** fell into anarchy. About the same time **the Akkadian Empire** disintegrated. ...In **western and southern Anatolia** ‘the end of the Early Bronze II period is marked by **a catastrophe** of such magnitude as to remain unparalleled until the very end of the Bronze Age’ (Melcart 1962); widespread destruction is followed by general decline in material culture and **a decrease of about 75 percent in the number of known settlements**. We may probably include also the decline of **the Indus Valley** civilization.”

“...As supporting evidence for a **dust storm** interpretation, we note Butzer’s (1959b:66) finding that at Hierakonopolis, nearby, **a predynastic cemetery was denuded by wind action, which removed up to 2 M. (6.56168 feet) of fairly resistant silt and exposed the burials, probably sometime after the end of Dynasty VI**. At Abydos, some 100 km. to the north, the ‘funerary palace’ of Queen Merneith of Dynasty I (c. 3150 B.C. – c. 2890 B.C.) suffered such denudation that its walls were reduced to only a few courses of bricks, partly buried beneath a layer of sand

by the time of Dynasty XII, when a few small mastabas were constructed over the ruins. (B.J. Kemp 1966, JEA 52)" (Barbara Bell, *The First Dark Age in Egypt*, American Journal of Archaeology, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Jan. 1971), 1-26).

Isn't it more likely that the predynastic cemetery was denuded by the action of water? More than 6 feet of "fairly resistant silt" was removed to expose the burials. Regardless of what you believe about the flood, you must admit that, regarding this specific period in time, the parallels are remarkable between what Scripture says and what the archaeologists have found.

NEXT – Lesson Two

**The Middle Bronze period (2200 – 1550 B.C.) through the Late Bronze period (1550 – 1200 B.C.) – From the Flood, through the Exodus, unto the Judges.**

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