



A CREATIONIST VIEW OF GÖBEKLI TEPE: TIMELINE AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Göbekli Tepe is a prehistoric archaeological site in SE Turkey that has captured the attention of the world by how advanced it is for its age, an astounding 12,000 years old on the conventional timeline. This has required conventional scholars to readjust their thinking about the capabilities of ancient people because, according to their worldview, humans should not have been able to produce carved stone monuments like these that far back in time. Creationists do not find this difficult to accept because they believe that early man was a capable being, as created by God. In addition, because the creationist timeline is far shorter than the conventional one, Göbekli Tepe was not built as long ago as conventional scholars believe. In this paper we discuss the conventional versus biblical timelines and show the enormous telescoping of the conventional timeline in historical times that is necessary to correlate it to the two slightly variant biblical timelines (Masoretic and Septuagint). Using the end of the Neanderthals, the end of the Pleistocene, the Nile Delta formation, and Abraham's visit to Egypt, it is proposed here that Göbekli Tepe was most likely founded somewhat more than one hundred years before Abraham's visit to Egypt (Masoretic timeline) or, alternatively, around two hundred and fifty years before Abraham's visit to Egypt (Septuagint timeline). It is postulated that geological events at the end of the Ice Age may have caused the builders of Göbekli Tepe to first migrate to the site, and then later abandon it.

KEY WORDS

Göbekli Tepe, archaeology, conventional timeline, biblical timeline, prehistory, Ice Age, Neanderthals.

INTRODUCTION

An unusually interesting site that has surfaced in archaeological news in recent years is called Göbekli Tepe (pronounced “go-bek-lee’ te’-pe”; translation “potbelly hill”), located on a mountain ridge about 50 km north of Harran (or Haran) in southeast Turkey (Fig. 1). The site is a tell (mound) about 15 m high and 300 m in diameter, at an elevation of about 750 m, with low hills all around. Four stone circles incorporating large T-shaped carved stone pillars have been excavated so far; in the layer above these are later rectangular enclosures with smaller and fewer pillars (Fig. 2). Many more of these circles-with-pillars remain underground, according to geophysical surveys. For a more detailed description of this site, with photos, see the online article written by the Göbekli Tepe research staff (Tepe Telegrams n.d.), as well as an excellent perspective by Strebe (2017). Creationists have also written about this site (see, for example, Cosner and Carter 2011; Smith 2014; Thomas 2012).

What has made Göbekli Tepe so especially interesting, and what has astounded the archaeological world of scholars, is how old and how advanced technologically this site is. Because all published archaeological dates are on the conventional historical timeline, creationists need to work out where those dates fall on their biblical timeline. We will therefore attempt to correlate the conventional timeline with the two slightly differing biblical timelines (Masoretic and Septuagintal) to determine approximately where the date of Göbekli Tepe sits. We will then look at some wider implications of the chronological conclusions.

In this paper Masoretic dates will be designated as BC(MT) and Septuagintal dates by BC(LXX). Conventional dates (i.e., standard historical dates, sometimes called secular dates) will be indicated

as BC(CT).

CONVENTIONAL DATING OF THE GÖBEKLI TEPE SITE

Currently archaeologists date the earliest level that they have excavated to just under 10,000 BC(CT); this is level III where the largest pillars are. Scholars consider this ancient date of Göbekli Tepe to be solid, with carbon dating backing up their other dating methods (Dietrich et al. 2013). The building and reconstruction work at Göbekli Tepe lasted somewhat under 2,000 years before the site was abandoned (Dietrich 2016; Gresky et al. 2017).

Nearby Nevalı Çori (45 km NW of Göbekli Tepe, now under water behind the Atatürk Dam) has some similar architectural characteristics to Göbekli Tepe, including T-pillars, but is slightly younger (Gleick et al., pp 184–185; Tobolczyk 2016); several other sites with T-pillars in the Göbekli Tepe area date to this period (Guler et al. 2012; Moetz and Celik 2012). To compare with other sites worldwide, the age of Göbekli Tepe is much the same as Qaramel (65 km south of the Turkish/Syrian border, 25 km north of Aleppo) (Mazurowski et al. 2009, pp. 771–781). It is just a bit older than the earliest Jericho habitation, widely considered to be about 9,000 BC (CT) (Kenyon 2017). The dates of these sites are well before the Egyptian Predynastic period that started about 5,500 BC(CT) in Lower Egypt and 4,400 BC(CT) in Upper Egypt (Shaw 2003, p. 481). Most world history starts in the era of the Egyptian dynasties (the 1st Dynasty began ca. 3,000 BC(CT)); historians are able to tell us little about the people who lived earlier.

BIBLICAL TIMELINE

Göbekli Tepe most certainly represents a post-Flood archeological site. The site was built above Paleogene bedrock (Bingöl 1989)

which is interpreted as post-Flood by most creation geologists (Whitmore and Garner 2008). Furthermore, it is hard to imagine how any site, let alone Göbekli Tepe, could have survived the destructive power of the Flood. The question that this paper is trying to address is how long after the Flood this site was constructed.

Our biblical timeline splits into two somewhat differing branches starting at Nahor, Abraham's grandfather, as we go back in time (Genesis 11:24). The one branch is the well-known Masoretic (MT) timeline. The other is the Septuagintal (LXX) timeline, which differs because of the longer ages to fatherhood in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. We could therefore argue that we are dealing with three timelines when we place Göbekli Tepe in history: the conventional, the biblical MT and the biblical LXX. Young (2003) provides further information on the LXX and provides an extensive comparison of the MT and LXX. In this paper, Fig. 3 shows the conventional timeline versus the MT biblical timeline and Fig. 4 shows the conventional timeline versus the LXX timeline.

DETERMINING THE DATA POINTS TO BE PLACED ON THE CONVENTIONAL AND BIBLICAL TIMELINES

To see how the conventional and biblical timelines line up against each other in Figs. 3 and 4, we will first need to determine the historical data points that will go on the timelines. In both figures we have placed data points for the Babel dispersion and Abraham's visit to Egypt at the beginning and end of the lower biblical timelines. Now we will work out data points for the upper conventional timelines. These upper data points will be addressed from left to right on the upper (conventional) timelines and will be the same in both Figs. 3 and 4.

1. Acheulean tools as a conventional timeline data point

We will start with a data point on the conventional timeline that represents very early humans. On a biblical timeline, this data point is the date of the earliest tools that would have been used by early post-Flood humans. In the evolutionary view, stone tools evolved from very primitive to more advanced; any given tools are therefore dated according to an assessment of how "advanced" they are. We must therefore proceed cautiously because some of the objects that they claim are very early tools look like nothing but broken stones; what complicates their thesis is that there are animals like chimpanzees that make and use tools (e.g. stones and twigs) even today. But the most telling information on this subject is that there is a sudden leap in sophistication of stone tools with the Acheulean ones (named after Saint-Acheul in France). These Acheulean hand-



Figure 1. Map of Turkey, showing the location of Göbekli Tepe. This is about 50 km north of Abraham's city of Haran, today modern Harran, in Şanlıurfa Province. (Work by Bjoertvedt 2008, *Wikipedia*.)

axes show admirable skill in their making; we will take the view here that the Acheulean tools were made by humans and could not possibly have been made by animals (see Diez-Martin et al., 2015, for a scholarly paper on Acheulean tools). These Acheulean tools give us a data point of about 1.76 million years ago for the earliest Acheulean tools that have been found so far (Schick and Toth 2012, p. 267). We know that Acheulean tools are post Babel because they are widely spread geographically; however, because the conventional timeline is stretching out breathtakingly fast in this part of our timeline we cannot say how long after Babel these earliest Acheulean tools date. In other words, the exact date where the Babel dispersion lies on the conventional timeline is impossible to determine with current information. We assume here that the Acheulean tools form a data point on the conventional timelines (Figs. 3 and 4) that essentially approaches the date of the Babel dispersion shown on the lower biblical timelines. The Babel dispersion is therefore about 1.76 million years ago on the conventional timeline.

2. The Neanderthals as a conventional timeline data point

These ancient people are brought into this discussion because conventional scientists are certain that the Neanderthals had died out before the Ice Age was over. Scientists' date for the last lingering Neanderthals is as late as 23,000 BC(CT) (Finlayson et al. 2008; Zilhao and Pettitt 2006), about 13,000 conventional years before the end of the Ice Age. We therefore put 23,000 BC(CT) as our second data point on the conventional timeline in the figures.

3. Göbekli Tepe founding and end of the Ice Age deglaciation as a conventional timeline data point

As noted earlier, the earliest level of Göbekli Tepe dates to just under 10,000 BC (CT). This date is significant because 10,000 BC(CT) was approximately the end of the great Ice Age, and the beginning of the Holocene era (Walker et al. 2009). Therefore, the data point of 10,000 BC(CT) has a double meaning: it will go on the conventional timeline for both the founding of Göbekli Tepe and the end of the deglaciation in both figures. If we knew exactly when the Ice Age ended in the Old Testament, we would have an easy answer to the question of the biblical dating of Göbekli Tepe. But Scripture is silent on the end of the Ice Age. Therefore, the



Figure 2. View of the Göbekli Tepe site before the first (temporary) cover was built for protection against the elements. A permanent roof is now being built. (Photo by Teomancimit 2011, *Wikipedia*.)

Göbekli Tepe/end of Ice Age data point on the lower Figs. 3 and 4 biblical timelines is directly below where we have placed it on the upper timelines; it is not independent of the upper data point in the figures.

4. Formation of the Nile Delta as a conventional timeline data point

The end of the Ice Age also figures in determining our next timeline data point. As shown by Habermehl (2013a), one of the consequences of the great deglaciation (ice meltdown) was that world weather systems were affected, and the monsoon rain belts moved northwards into southern areas of Africa where the Nile River originated (the Nile River is about 6,800 km long). The resultant unusual heavy rains in the Nile basin caused the Nile River to go “crazy” for a short period in history; geologists call this the time of the “wild Nile” (Butzer 1982, p. 284). At this time the Nile Delta was formed in its entirety by the raging river washing vast amounts of sediments northward (although Egypt had existed before this geological event, there had been no Nile Delta; see Anonymous 1981; Muhs et al. 2013; Woodward et al. 2015). This means that there was a time lag between the end of the Ice Age and the formation of the Delta. Scientists have determined that the Nile Delta has not enlarged appreciably since the end of its formation about 6,000 BC(CT), as shown by bore profiles (Butzer 1970, p. 67). The Nile Delta formation around 6,000 BC(CT) is therefore a data point that lies on the conventional timeline (in Figs. 3 and 4).

5. Founding of the 1st Dynasty of Egypt as a conventional timeline data point

The 1st Dynasty of Egypt began about 3,000 BC(CT) (Shaw 2003, p. 481). Habermehl (2013b) supports this early conventional date for Abraham’s visit to Egypt by showing that the famous Imhotep of Egyptian history in the 3rd Dynasty was Joseph, and then estimating a date for Abraham from this. However, we note that the more traditional date for Abraham’s visit around 1,920 BC(MT) can be substituted on the upper timeline, and it will make little difference in the conclusions because the numbers on the conventional timeline are so large relative to the numbers on the MT and LXX timelines. The beginning of the 1st Dynasty of Egypt is therefore a data point on the conventional timeline of Figs. 3 and 4; this point is placed opposite Abraham’s visit to Egypt on the lower biblical timelines of Figs. 3 and 4.

We now have the following approximate historical data points for the conventional timelines in Figs. 3 and 4: (from left to right) appearance of Acheulean tools, end of Neanderthals, end of the Ice Age/founding of Göbekli Tepe, formation of the Nile Delta, and beginning of the 1st Dynasty of Egypt. We emphasize that placement of these data points on the conventional timelines is approximate, and therefore the conclusions that are drawn from these figures are not precise. This is because we do not have the necessary data for precision.

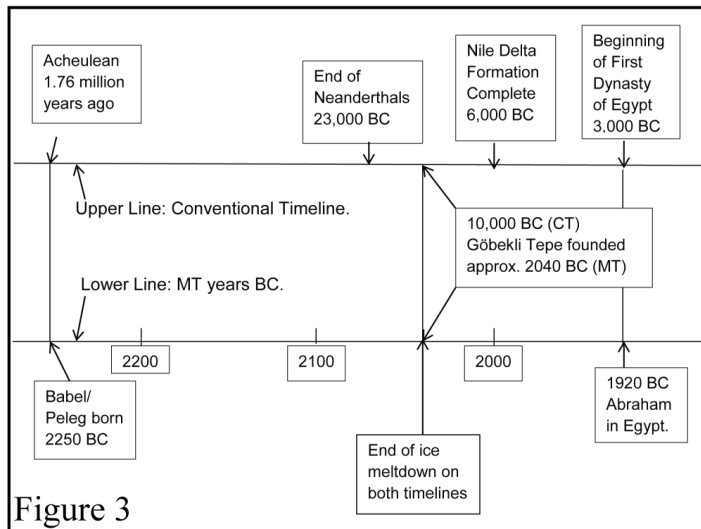


Figure 3

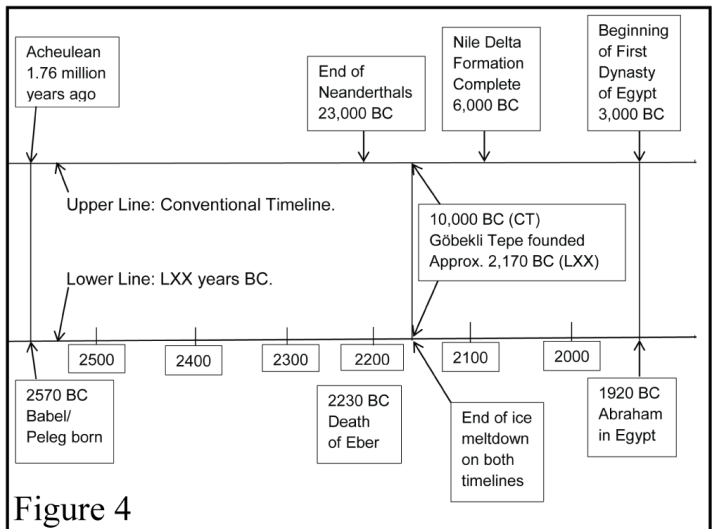


Figure 4

Figure 3. The conventional historical timeline versus the MT biblical timeline. The three points on the upper conventional line between the Acheulean on the left and the beginning of the 1st Dynasty on the right (23,000, 10,000 and 6,000) are suggested estimated positions based on the rapidly decreasing amounts of time, and are not precisely calculated. This means that dates read from the lower MT timeline are approximate, including the date for the founding of Göbekli Tepe. The Acheulean point is considered to be close to the time of Babel because time on the conventional timeline is speeding up rapidly as we go backwards. The placement point for the end of the Neanderthals is estimated to fit on the timeline before the end of the secular Ice Age (10,000 BC(CT)). The 3,000 BC(CT) date of Abraham in Egypt is based on timeline revision (Habermehl 2013a,b); if 2,000 BC is instead used, for those who do not accept timeline revision, this will make little difference in the overall conclusions because of the enormous amount of conventional time that has been projected onto the vastly shorter biblical timeline. This shows Göbekli Tepe’s founding somewhat more than 100 years before Abraham’s visit to Egypt in approximately 1920 BC (MT) (this figure for Abraham’s visit to Egypt is based on a 215-year sojourn of the Children of Israel in Egypt). (Figure by A. Habermehl 2018.)

Figure 4. The conventional historical timeline versus the LXX biblical timeline, using the same conventional dates and their estimated placement as in Fig. 3. This figure shows about 250 years between the founding of Göbekli Tepe and Abraham’s visit to Egypt. The death of Eber at 504 years old (Gen. 11:16 LXX) is shown as a historical point between Babel and Abraham’s visit to Egypt. (Eber is not shown in Fig. 3 because on the MT timeline he died in 1817 BC, four years after Abraham (Jones 2004, p. 278)). (Figure by A. Habermehl 2018.)

IMPLICATIONS OF CORRELATION OF THE BIBLICAL VERSUS CONVENTIONAL TIMELINES

What we see in Figs. 3 and 4 is how much the numbers of conventional years compress when they are compared to real (that is, biblical) time. Things that appear to be quite distant in time from each other on the conventional timeline because of the large numbers in their dates are actually quite close to each other on the biblical timeline. For example, the 23,000 BC(CT) when the last Neanderthals disappeared is 13,000 conventional years before 10,000 BC(CT) for Göbekli Tepe. This looks like a large number. But an examination of the MT timeline in Fig. 3 shows that this 13,000 years collapses to around 30 years after the last of the Neanderthals before the founding of Göbekli Tepe. The LXX timeline in Fig. 4 shows about 50 years. How long before Abraham's visit to Egypt was Göbekli Tepe founded? Based on our approximations, this would be about 100 years on the MT timeline in Fig. 3, and about 250 years on the LXX timeline in Fig. 4. In Fig. 3 we see that Göbekli Tepe was built about 210 years after Babel (MT); in Fig. 4 it was built about 400 years after Babel (LXX).

The two thousand conventional years claimed for the time that Göbekli Tepe was in process of being built, from its founding to its abandonment, becomes a very small number on our biblical timeline. From Fig. 3 (MT), we see that there is as little as 25 years allowed for the building of the entire Göbekli Tepe site before its abandonment. Figure 4 (LXX) shows about 50 years. Either way, the building pace would have been much faster than conventional scholars would have us believe. Considering the number of stone T-pillars at the Göbekli Tepe site (quite a number of these have not yet been excavated), these must have been built quite close to each other in time, perhaps with constant erection of new ones going on.

We see that other things are really close together on our biblical timelines in Figs. 3 and 4. For instance, farming is claimed to have been first developed in the world near Göbekli Tepe about 500 conventional years after the building of the site, because the actual builders were not farmers but were hunter-gatherers (Curry 2008a; Hancock 2015, p. 7). But on our biblical timelines, 500 years collapses so much that we might wonder whether these people who built Göbekli Tepe really did do farming, perhaps at a short distance away from the site. In any case, it would appear that this claim about earliest farming is not true; there are reports of cultivation around 21,000 BC (CT) near the Sea of Galilee by hunter-gatherers, an area relatively close geographically to Göbekli Tepe (Snir et al. 2015). This is perhaps 50 years earlier than Göbekli Tepe in biblical time (looking at the biblical timelines in Figs. 3 and 4), not a lot, but it would seem to refute the idea that Göbekli Tepe's builders developed the earliest agriculture in the world. Creationists, who believe that farming goes back to Genesis 4:3 where Cain was a farmer, might wonder why archaeologists talk so much about hunter-gatherers and farming. It is because the evolutionists' obsession with lining up human achievements from primitive beginnings to our modern technology literally demands that hunting/gathering must precede farming. At times this obsession appears to get in the way of their interpretations of evidence because the tyranny of the Primary Axiom, as Sanford (2008, pp. 161–162) calls their worldview, overrides all.

Another thing we notice in Figs. 3 and 4 is that the proportionate

number of years between points on the conventional and biblical timelines two timelines is quite different. For example, the archaeologist Gary Rollefson says, "There's more time between Göbekli Tepe and the Sumerian clay tablets (etched in 3,300 BC(CT)) than from Sumer to today" (Curry 2008a). On his conventional timeline, this would be true because the time between the founding of Göbekli Tepe and the Sumerian clay tablets is close to 6,700 years ($10,000 - 3,300$), while the time between those tablets and today is about 5,300 yrs ($3,300 + 2,000$).

But the territory looks very different on the biblical timelines. In Fig. 3, comparing the conventional and MT timelines, the biblical time between Göbekli Tepe and those Sumerian tablets mentioned by Rollefson is estimated to be about 100 years. Using 4,000 years ago (biblical) as an approximate date for the tablets (they date to just before Abraham), the time from Göbekli Tepe to the Sumerian tablets is only about $1/40^{\text{th}}$ (that is, $100/4,000$) of the time from the tablets to the present. Looking at Fig. 4, and comparing the conventional and LXX timelines, the biblical time between Göbekli Tepe and the Sumerian tablets is about 200 years. Therefore the time from Göbekli Tepe to the Sumerian tablets is about $1/20^{\text{th}}$ (that is, $200/4,000$) of the time from the tablets to the present. These calculations are approximate for purposes of showing why the relative amounts of time are so different when comparing the conventional and biblical timelines.

The important thing in Figs. 3 and 4 is that the number of years of real biblical time is very, very small compared to the number of years of conventional time. This means that if we move estimated positions of data points on the upper conventional timeline, it does not change our biblical timeline conclusions very much.

WHY DID THE BUILDERS OF GÖBEKLI TEPE MIGRATE TO THAT LOCATION AT THAT TIME?

One of the mysteries of Göbekli Tepe is why these unknown people came to this area to build the monument, and why they left again a relatively short time later. We suggest here that the timing of their arrival may have been connected to the melting of the ice at the end of the Ice Age. Göbekli Tepe is located in the hills along the northern edge of the Harran plain, and the immigrant builders would have considered the site safe from flooding; it is higher than its surroundings, and anyone who stands at the top of the Göbekli Tepe hill can see a long distance in all directions. In addition, there is suitable limestone rock for quarrying the T-pillars, and a limestone plateau on which Göbekli Tepe is built (Moetz and Celik 2012). It was also an attractive site, described as a paradise all those years ago, not the featureless brown expanse that we see today (Curry 2008a).

Because our creationist timeline is extremely short compared to the conventional timeline, the devastation caused by the melting of the ice at the end of the Ice Age should not be underestimated. On the conventional timeline this melting was spread out over as much as 12,000 years (Gornitz 2012), but on our collapsed timeline this huge event took place in 50 years or less (see Figs. 3 and 4). It had to have been catastrophic.

We cannot prove that the builders of Göbekli Tepe migrated from a place that was devastated by the melting of the ice. However, the timing of their arrival to start their monumental building does

not seem coincidental. Furthermore, after only staying for a short period (on our biblical timeline), they abandoned the site. We may wonder whether the territory of their former homeland had now become stable and they could live there again.

There are other things to wonder about. Had these people been building monuments like Göbekli Tepe elsewhere before they arrived? In our creationist worldview, there could have been people building very advanced monuments long before the time of Göbekli Tepe. After all, the earlier Babel building project had been a remarkable one, judging by its description in Genesis 11. And after these people left Göbekli Tepe, did they go on building monuments like this somewhere else? If so, monuments like this could be waiting to be discovered elsewhere, perhaps covered over with sediments.

THE CONUNDRUM FOR EVOLUTIONISTS: GÖBEKLI TEPE'S SUPERIOR WORKMANSHIP AND ANCIENT DATE

Göbekli Tepe has made scholars rearrange their beliefs about the capabilities of humans of the distant past (see, e.g., Curry 2008b; Hancock 2015, p. 5–9; Jones 2015). According to standard scholarly belief, in 10,000 BC(CT) men were not supposed to be able to erect large stone pillars like these with such detailed carvings (Collins 2014, p. 38; Peters and Schmidt 2004). As Strebe says (2017), the T-shaped pillars amaze visitors with “their

immense size, consummate artistry, and improbable age.”

Furthermore, there is a problem for evolutionists in that the largest, most finely carved pillars are the oldest ones at Göbekli Tepe. (See Fig. 5 for a close-up of one of the large carved pillars at Göbekli Tepe.) When these people arrived, they set out to build these large pillars right away. As time went on, the pillars they produced became smaller with rougher workmanship (Strebe 2017). This shows evolution going in reverse, and goes against the conventional belief system. As Hancock (2015, p. 9–10) says,

We are used to things starting out small and simple and then progressing—*evolving*—to become ever more complex and sophisticated, so this is naturally what we expect to find on archaeological sites. It upsets our carefully structured ideas of how civilizations should behave, how they should mature and develop, when we are confronted by a case like Göbekli Tepe...

However, archaeologists do not rule out the possibility that some earlier, smaller pillars may yet be found at the bottom of the tell if they dig deeper (see, e.g., Hancock 2015, pp. 9–10, where Klaus Schmidt insists on this). They believe that surely the T-pillars had to have started out small and gradually evolved upwards to the big ones before devolving to later, smaller ones.

ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

Göbekli Tepe has attracted attention from outside the traditional scholarly circles, and there are people promoting alternative theories. One of these theories is that ancient aliens came to earth and enlightened mankind with advanced technology (it is not explained where the aliens came from or how they acquired their skills). The TV show *Ancient Aliens* promotes this idea; its episode that includes Göbekli Tepe was aired on Dec. 16, 2010, in its second season (Unexplained structures 2010). Another version of this is put forward by Collins (2014, pp. 270–300), who believes that those behind the construction of Göbekli Tepe are the Watchers of the Book of Enoch and the Anunnaki gods of Sumerian tradition. Yet another is that during the Ice Age there was superior knowledge known to man, that has now been lost (Hancock 2015, p. 1).

We might dismiss these widely promoted ideas as being outlandish, even bizarre. But if we think about it, there is a certain logic to these alternative theories. These people all recognize that there is something amiss in the conventional evolutionistic worldview of traditional archaeology and they are trying to make sense of what they see in anomalies (in their thinking) like Göbekli Tepe. Because their eyes are blinded, they do not understand that they are nearly right. Early man really was capable of advanced technology according to what the Bible tells us.

CONCLUSIONS

In this attempt at placing Göbekli Tepe on the biblical MT and LXX timelines, we see that ancient places and events are crowded close together far more recently in historical time than we are led to believe by conventional historians. Because of its claimed age, Göbekli Tepe therefore appears to be a lot older to conventional archaeologists than it actually is. It is proposed that the Göbekli Tepe site was most likely founded somewhat more than 100 years before Abraham's visit to Egypt (Masoretic timeline) or, alternatively, about 250 years before Abraham's visit to Egypt



Figure 5. Close-up of carving on large T-stone. The temporary roof is seen in the background. (Photo A. Habermehl 2015.)

(Septuagintal timeline). It is possible that events at the end of the Ice Age caused the Göbekli Tepe builders to migrate to the area and then leave. The Ice Age is shown to be a significant event in our dating of very ancient monuments and events. However, we can only make approximations in biblical dating of monuments like Göbekli Tepe because we do not currently have the needed precise data to do otherwise. Further work in this area is needed.

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