

earthly kingdom would occur after 6,000 years of history, then the conflict is resolved and points one and two can be maintained with no difficulty. However, since we have elsewhere concluded that point three has sound biblical support and is worthy of acceptance, our analysis here will focus on other options.

A second option for avoiding the contradiction that would result from all three premises is to reconsider the soundness of the second conclusion. Are there statements in the New Testament that necessarily indicate that the apostles felt that Christ could return in the first century AD? There are several passages that may be understood to indicate the soundness of this conclusion. In particular we have passages like 1 Corinthians 1:4-8, 2 Corinthians 1:13, Hebrews 3:6, 14, James 5:7 in which the apostles instruct their first century audiences to endure and continue in the faith until the end. These passages can be coupled with places such as 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 1 John 3:2, and 1 Corinthians 15:52 in which the apostles indicate that first century believers would be alive to see and experience Christ's return. At face value these passages indicate that first century Christians could possibly be alive at Jesus' return. For this to be possible, a first-century return of Christ would also have to have been possible.

As we assess the proper understanding of these passages we should not leave out what we have termed "the principle of the transcendent you" which was a common manner of speaking used by biblical Jewish writers when speaking prophetically of future events. A good example of the "transcendent you" occurs in Deuteronomy 18. There Moses tells his contemporary Israelite audience that a prophet like unto him would rise up from among their brethren. Though Moses addresses the current generation, first-century Jews understood that the events Moses spoke about did not occur until their day. This means that though Moses spoke in terms addressing his contemporary generation, his remarks should not be taken to limit the fulfillment of the events he discussed to the timeframe of that generation.

Based on this consideration, it is possible to suggest that statements in the New Testament (which are likewise addressed to a first-century audience) may not necessarily be intended by their Jewish authors to require a fulfillment of the mentioned prophetic events in that immediate generation. (And since we are only discussing passages that refer to Christ's return, there is no danger of overextending this principle beyond the Old Testament prophetic setting.) If this is the case, then the first and third conclusions in the above list can be maintained while the second is discarded. This would mean that the apostles understood that 4,000 years had transpired before Christ's first coming and that 6,000 years would transpire before Christ's return to establish his earthly kingdom. But it would mean that the apostles didn't and couldn't actually mean for their statements to first-century Christians to be understood as conveying a real possibility that first generation Christians might live to see Christ's return. In this scenario, the apostles would know that Christ's return and his kingdom were still thousands of years off in the distant future and so they would not and could not sincerely state that first century Christians could live to see Jesus' coming. In this scenario it is not necessary to conclude that the apostles' statements would have misled their

readers. Rather, since we can assume that their readers would have been aware of the Jewish use of transcendence (because of their familiarity with applying Moses' prophecy to Jesus Christ) it is reasonable to consider that the apostles' readers would have been aware that remarks about prophesied events could not or should not necessarily be taken to mean those events would happen in their lifetime.

While it is possible to consider this explanation it should also be noted that the New Testament situation may not be entirely similar to that of Moses. After all, when the apostles discuss the possibility of a near return of Christ in the first century, they at times place themselves and their readers together in the category of those who would be alive at that time and distinguish them from those who would be dead. Deuteronomy 18 does not contain these types of specifics or categorizations. As such, the specificity and categorical distinctions made in these types of statements may make it somewhat less plausible, though not impossible, to consider that they were writing using the transcendent principle of prophecy that is so clearly exhibited by Moses in Deuteronomy 18. Perhaps applying the "transcendent you" to these New Testament statements would be an excessive application of this concept that should be avoided due to possible differences between the statements made by Moses and the apostles.

A third option for avoiding a contradiction would be to consider the soundness of the first point above. Do we have good reason to conclude that the apostles understood that there had been 4,000 years before Christ's first coming?

As we consider this point a few notes of clarification may be helpful. First, there is a good basis for accepting that the apostles had a very firm and particular understanding of the amounts of time involved in certain periods of Old Testament history. For instance, both Stephen and Paul provide precise amounts of time for periods and events after Abraham. But, for other periods of time, this may not have been the case. For instance, we do not have any direct New Testament attestation that the apostles held to a particular understanding of the amount of time which had occurred prior to Abraham, that is, from creation to Abraham. To be sure, we are not here considering the possibility that the apostles may have allowed for millions of years to have occurred as would be the required if we held that evolutionary theory was sound. Rather, we would be considering the possibility that the apostles may not have been entirely sure as to the exact number of millennia and centuries that had taken place before Abraham and therefore how much time had taken place prior to the first century AD. (As we will see, this may have been true for other segments of the Old Testament as well.) But, as our discussion of this possibility also will reveal, this uncertainty had an upper ceiling and a lower limit as well restricting the range to a few centuries or millennia.

Second, though the New Testament doesn't speak directly to this matter, we may be prompted to assume the apostles possessed a particular and accurate understanding of world history motivated by a desire not to undermine our rightful affirmation of apostolic authority on all areas of biblical teaching. But, in

fact, apostolic authority would not be undermined by such a consideration. Apostolic authority rests on the idea that anything the apostles taught represents and communicates the sole, authoritative, and correct understanding of that subject. Apostolic authority is not, need not, and perhaps cannot be assumed on subjects where the New Testament provides no record of any particular apostolic position on the topic (particularly the amount of time from Adam to Abraham). Furthermore, the idea that the apostles had a range of possibilities in mind or even taught such a range would not violate their inerrancy on doctrine so long as they openly described the limits of their knowledge and the ultimate outcome fell within the range that they provided. The idea that the apostles did not know the exact amount of time until Christ's return is already an established New Testament fact. Consequently, suggesting that the apostles had limited knowledge in some areas in itself does not undermine their inerrancy or authority as teachers. Likewise, it doesn't necessarily undermine the apostles' authority for us to consider whether or not they had a definite, concluded awareness of the amount of time before the Flood.

Furthermore, we are not contemplating this possibility without cause. Our consideration can be attributable to both biblical and historic data. One reason for this consideration would be that we have good biblical support for accepting the two other positions (listed above) but these positions cannot be true if the apostles had a particular and precise understanding of the duration of every segment of the Old Testament period. Therefore, we have at least one reason for considering whether the apostles did, in fact, have a particular and precise understanding of the total amount of time for all of the segments of history prior Christ.

Third, we are not suggesting (nor is it necessary to suggest) that the apostles had an erroneous understanding of the amount of time contained in various Old Testament periods, particularly the period before Abraham. We would simply be considering whether the apostles had a single, particular understanding of this ancient period to which they were committed. Perhaps they were open to varying chronological understandings. In addition, our consideration doesn't require the assertion that the apostles had no idea of how much time might have occurred prior to Christ. Rather, we are considering the possibility that the apostles may have had one of a couple of chronological options in mind, but that they were not certain which of the options was correct. At this point we need to be more specific as to what we are suggesting.

At the time of the New Testament, the Old Testament texts were commonly available in both a Hebrew translation and a Greek translation (the Septuagint). The Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament was used commonly by both Christian and non-Christian Jews until the second century AD.

Septuagint - *Jewish use* - Starting approximately in the 2nd century CE, several factors led most Jews to abandon use of the LXX. - wikipedia.org

A survey of apostolic writing in the New Testament exhibits a familiarity with both the existing Hebrew translation of the Old Testament as well as the Greek translation contained in the Septuagint.

Septuagint - The relationship between the apostolic use of the Old Testament, for example, the Septuagint and the now lost Hebrew texts (though to some degree and in some form carried on in Masoretic tradition) is complicated. The Septuagint seems to have been a major source for the Apostles, but it is not the only one. St. Jerome offered, for example, Matt 2:15 and 2:23, John 19:37, John 7:38, 1 Cor. 2:9.[33] as **examples not found in the Septuagint, but in Hebrew texts.** (Matt 2:23 is not present in current Masoretic tradition either, though according to St. Jerome it was in Isaiah 11:1.) **The New Testament writers, when citing the Jewish scriptures, or when quoting Jesus doing so, freely used the Greek translation, implying that Jesus, his Apostles and their followers considered it reliable.** - wikipedia.org

It is particularly relevant to our current inquiry then that the Hebrew and Greek translation of the Genesis genealogies differ in terms of the amounts of years that are credited to various patriarchs prior to Abraham's birth. Today, we accept the amounts that are given in the Masoretic Hebrew texts and we regard the amounts provided in the Septuagint as erroneous.

Genealogies in Genesis - Genesis numbers - Nearly all modern translations of Genesis are derived from the Masoretic (Hebrew) Text. But there are also two other versions of Genesis: the Samaritan (from a Hebrew script) and **the Septuagint (a Greek translation of a Hebrew text).** Although, scholars are aware that **these three versions of Genesis 5 have different numbers,** people who have seen only the commonly available translations are often unaware that other versions exist. - wikipedia.org

It should be noted that the Masoretic Hebrew texts were produced by non-Christian Jewish scribes (called Masoretes) between the 7th and 10th centuries AD. While the Masoretic texts are nearly identical to the Hebrew texts that were available in the first century AD, we must be careful not to state that the apostles were familiar with the Masoretic texts. The Hebrew text the apostles knew was not the text produced by the Masoretes. To say so would be anachronistic.

Masoretic Text - In modern times the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown the MT to be nearly identical to some texts of the Tanakh dating from 200 BCE but different from others. **The MT was primarily copied, edited and distributed by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE...**The oldest extant manuscripts of the Masoretic Text date from approximately the 9th century CE,[3] and the Aleppo Codex (once the oldest complete copy of the Masoretic Text, but now missing its Torah section) dates from the 10th century. - wikipedia.org

In contrast to the Masoretic Hebrew text which we use today, the Hebrew texts from which the Septuagint was translated (in the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC) are

typically dated to the 4th or 5th century BC. Therefore, the Hebrew texts which underlie the Septuagint are centuries older than the copies which were the basis of the Masoretic texts we have today.

Genealogies of Genesis - The scholarly translation of the Hebrew Pentateuch into Greek at Alexandria, Egypt in about 280 BC worked off a Hebrew text that was edited in the 5th and 4th centuries BC.[9] This would be centuries older than the proto-Masoretic Text selected as the official text by the Masoretes. - wikipedia.org

The quotes below discuss the differing amounts of time contained in the Hebrew and Greek texts of Genesis.

Chronology of the Bible - The period to the Flood is derived using the genealogical table of the ten patriarchs listed in Genesis 5, and 7:6, termed the generations of Adam. According to the Masoretic Text, this period consists of 1656 years, and this dating is also followed by Western Christian Bibles derived from the Latin Vulgate. According to the Samaritan texts the period is 1307 years, and according to the Septuagint (Codex Alexandrinus, Elizabeth Bible) it is 2262 years. - wikipedia.org

Chronology of the Bible - The period from the creation to Abraham is measured by the genealogies at Genesis 5 and 11, elapsed time being calculated by the addition of the years of the patriarchs at the birth of their offspring. The genealogies exist in three main manuscript traditions, the Masoretic (in Hebrew), the Septuagint (in Greek), and the Samaritan Torah (Hebrew). The three do not agree with each other, here or elsewhere. - wikipedia.org

The following chart, excerpted from wikipedia, shows the differences in the amounts of time prior to Abraham as they are recorded in the Masoretic Hebrew text and the Septuagint Greek text.

Chronology of the Bible - (The Septuagint is represented in this table by two manuscripts, Alexandrinus and Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209; dates are Anno Mundi, or AM, meaning year of the world):

<i>Period</i>	<i>Masoretic</i>	<i>Alexandrinus</i>	<i>Vaticanus</i>
Year of the Flood	1656 AM	2262 AM	2242 AM
Year of Abraham's Birth	1948 AM	3334 AM	3414 AM

- wikipedia.org

We can see that in the Septuagint, the amount of time from Adam to the Flood is around 500 years greater than the amount listed in the Masoretic Hebrew texts we have today. And, the amount of time the Septuagint provides for the period from Adam to Abraham is almost 1,500 years more than the amounts provided in the Masoretic texts.

We should be aware that the early Christians, whose faith was derived from the apostles, were aware of both chronological systems regarding period prior to Abraham and had no problems using the timeline set forth in the Septuagint.

Byzantine Calendar - As the Greek and Roman methods of computing time were connected with certain pagan rites and observances, **Christians began at an early period to adopt the Hebrew practice of reckoning their years from the supposed period of the creation of the world.** [42] Currently **the two dominant dates for creation that exist using the Biblical model, are about 5500 BC and about 4000 BC.** These are calculated from the genealogies in two versions of the Bible, with most of the difference arising from two versions of Genesis. **The older dates** of the Church Fathers in the Byzantine Era and in its precursor, the Alexandrian Era, **are based on the Greek Septuagint. The later dates** of Archbishop James Ussher and the Hebrew Calendar **are based on the Hebrew Masoretic text. The Fathers were well aware of the discrepancy of some hundreds of years between the Greek and Hebrew Old Testament chronology,[note 15] and it did not bother them;** they did not quibble over years or worry that the standard calendar was precise "to the very year"; it is sufficient that what is involved is beyond any doubt a matter of some few thousands of years, involving the lifetimes of specific men, and it can in no way be interpreted as millions of years or whole ages and races of men. - wikipedia.org

In its article on calendar systems that were present in the early centuries of the Christian era, wikipedia provides the following list of dates for the amount of time since the world began.

**Byzantine Calendar -
Comparative list of dates of creation -**

Early Church writers

5537 BC – Julius Africanus (AD 200–245), Church historian.

5529 BC – Theophilus (AD 115–181), Bishop of Antioch.

5509 BC – Byzantine Creation Era or "Creation Era of Constantinople."
(finalized in 7th c. AD).

5507 BC – Chronicon Paschale (c. AD 630), Byzantine universal chronicle of the world.

5500 BC – Hippolytus of Rome. (c. AD 234), Presbyter, writer, martyr.

5493 BC – Alexandrian Era (AD 412).

5199 BC – Eusebius of Caesarea, Bishop of Caesarea and Church historian (AD 324).

In fact, these dates as well as the calendar of the Byzantine Empire (which was developed hundreds of years later) both derive their count of world history from the chronological data supplied in the Septuagint. Using the Septuagint, the Byzantine calendar dated the incarnation to the year 5509 from creation.

Byzantine Calendar - The Byzantine calendar, also "Creation Era of Constantinople," or "Era of the World" (Ancient Greek: Ἔτη Γενέσεως Κόσμου

κατὰ Ῥωμαίους,[1] also Ἔτος Κτίσεως Κόσμου or Ἔτος Κόσμου) was **the calendar used by the Eastern Orthodox Church from c. 691 to 1728 in the Ecumenical Patriarchate**. It was also the official calendar of the Byzantine Empire[[note 1](#)] from 988 to 1453, and in Russia from c. 988 to 1700. The calendar is based on the Julian calendar except that the year started on 1 September and **the year number used an Anno Mundi epoch derived from the Septuagint version of the Bible. It placed the date of creation at 5509 years before the Incarnation**, and was characterized by a certain tendency which had already been a tradition amongst Jews and early Christians to number the years from the foundation of the world. (Latin: ‘Annus Mundi’ or ‘Ab Origine Mundi’— AM).[[note 2](#)] Its year one, the supposed date of creation, was September 1, 5509 BC to August 31, 5508 BC. - wikipedia.org

Likewise, the chronology of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus follows the Septuagint for the period before the Flood and the Hebrew text for the period after the Flood.

Byzantine Calendar - Footnote 15: Note that **according to Dr. Wacholder, Josephus' chronology for the antediluvian period (pre-flood) conforms with the LXX, but for the Noachites (post-flood) he used the Hebrew text**. He chose this method to resolve the problem of the two chronological systems. (Dr. Ben Zion Wacholder. "Biblical Chronology in the Hellenistic World Chronicles". in *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol.61, No.3 (Jul., 1968).) - wikipedia.org

In addition, Josephus' chronology of the period from the Exodus to Solomon's fourth year of reign contains 592 years. This is 112 years more than what is provided in the biblical accounts (see 1 Kings 6:1).

1. **SOLOMON began to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign**, on the second month, which the Macedonians call *Artemisius*, and the Hebrews *Jur*, **five hundred and ninety-two years after the Exodus out of Egypt**; but one thousand and twenty years from Abraham's coming out of Mesopotamia into Canaan, and after the deluge one thousand four hundred and forty years; **and from Adam, the first man who was created, until Solomon built the temple, there had passed in all three thousand one hundred and two years**. Now that year on which the temple began to be built was already the eleventh year of the reign of Hiram; but from the building of Tyre to the building of the temple, there had passed two hundred and forty years. – Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 8, Chapter 3

In his book, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Dr. Michael Brown cites the work of the twentieth-century Jewish scholar Abba Hillel Silver. As Dr. Brown explains, Silver noted that first-century Jews had a “great expectation” that they were about to enter the Messianic Millennium. This expectation was closely connected to the widely held Jewish belief that they were at or had passed the 5,000th year from creation. (Although this quote reflects that some Jews expected the sixth millennium would constitute the kingdom of God, it nonetheless reflects

the variety of perceptions concerning chronology including the perception of how much time had passed since creation.)

1. Interestingly, the respected **Jewish scholar Abba Hillel Silver pointed out that there was great expectation among our people that the Messiah would come “about the second quarter of the first century C.E., because the Millennium was at hand.”** 6 Thus, according to Silver, “When Jesus came into Galilee, ‘spreading the gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying the *time is fulfilled* and the kingdom of God is at hand’ [Mark 1:14-15}, **he was voicing the opinion universally held that the year 5000 in the Creation calendar, which is to usher in the sixth millennium – the age of the Kingdom of God – was at hand.”** 7 – Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Volume 1, Historical Objections, p. 73; Footnote 6: Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 7. Footnote 7: *Ibid.*, 6, his emphasis.

The historical data allows us to conclude that like their Jewish contemporaries and Christian successors, the apostles knew both a Hebrew and a Greek form of the Genesis texts which offered differing amounts of time for the period prior to Abraham’s birth. Other variables (such as those reflected in Josephus) led ancient Jews and Christians at the time of the apostles to have a variety of potential totals for earlier historical periods ranging by potentially as much as 1,500 years regarding the period prior to Abraham. (Josephus would add another 112 years between the Exodus and Solomon.) Based on these Jewish and Christian perspectives, it is quite conceivable that the apostles would have thought of their point in an overall chronology in terms of a range or of several different options rather than a specific year, decade, or century. They may very well have viewed themselves as somewhere just after the 4,000th year of world history (i.e. the beginning of the 5th millennium) or somewhere past the mid-point of the 6th millennium (i.e. around 5,500 years or more), placing them much closer to the Messianic Millennium which they expected to occur at around the 6,000th year from creation.

The chronological options that were available to the apostles would offer different perspectives and possibilities regarding the nearness of the eschatological events surrounding Christ’s return. In our Sabbath Millennium study, we discussed sound New Testament evidence that the apostles taught that the earthly Messianic kingdom would occur at 6,000 years from creation. Furthermore, the manner in which they taught this concept exhibits language borrowed from Jesus’ teaching in the gospels. So, if only 4,000 years had occurred prior to Christ’s first coming, then the apostles would expect that Christ’s return and the coming of his kingdom would not occur until the some distant generation around 2,000 years in the future. On the other hand, if 5,500 years or more had already occurred prior to Christ’s first coming, then Christ’s return and the establishment of his earthly Messianic kingdom could have been as little as a few lifetimes away or less.

We must also keep in mind that by the time of Christ’s ascension, the apostles certainly had been given indications that some interval of years would need to

take place before the establishment of the earthly kingdom. For instance, in John 21:18, Jesus plainly states that Peter would grow old and die before he returned. This implies at least several decades of time would occur between Christ's ascension and his return. Daniel's prophecies (which Jesus cited when discussing his return) also describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple after the Messiah's death. These things too still needed to occur and would take time to unfold. Likewise, many of Jesus' parables about his return to establish his kingdom on earth included the provision that he would be delayed or away for a long period of time (Matthew 24:48, Luke 12:45, Matthew 25:14, Mark 13:34, Luke 20:9, Matthew 25:5, 19). And, as pointed out earlier, on particular occasions Jesus explicitly expressed God's intention not to disclose to the apostles and first century disciples how much time would pass before Jesus would return in order to provoke diligence and vigilance and discourage neglect (Matthew 24:36, 50, 25:13, Mark 13:32, 12:46, Acts 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, 2 Peter 3:10, and Revelation 3:3, 16:15). In light of this context and overt divine purpose, it is perfectly reasonable to contemplate that the confusion regarding exact duration of past history created by various post-canonical translations and traditions might not have been clarified by God for the early church. Failing to correct this ambiguity would have served God's purpose of encouraging diligence quite well. And yet, because the ambiguity resulted from post-canonical translations, traditions, and speculations, God himself could not be credited as the author of the disinformation or the confusion.

We must also acknowledge that the New Testament gives us no direct information that the apostles had a particular perspective on the amount of time that had passed since creation. There is never any place where the apostles discuss the amount of time that occurred prior to Abraham's birth, the amount of time prior to the incarnation, or the amount of time left before Jesus' return. We simply do not have any positive exegetical data telling us that the apostles had a particular preference for one chronological view or another. And we certainly have no information in the New Testament that Jesus instructed them about the amounts of time prior to the Flood, the total count of world history prior to his birth, or the amount of time left until his earthly kingdom would begin.

On the contrary, the New Testament provides several scriptural indications that the apostles may have been categorically undecided about the amount of time prior to Abraham (and the total time prior to Christ). The first indication is we find the apostles issuing statement reflecting both the possibility of a "soon" or first-century return of Christ and the possibility that Christ's return would not occur until some distant future generation. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 5:23, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1, Paul speaks of first-century Christians including himself using first person pronouns to refer to those who would be alive to see Christ's return and distinguishes them from those who will be dead by the time of that event. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul similarly states that when Christ returned, Paul and his readers would be changed while the dead in Christ would be raised.

And yet we also find statements indicating the possibility of a distant future generation yet to come which would see Christ coming in his kingdom. In 2 Timothy 3:1, Paul speaks of a future point when perilous days will come. Here he seems to be speaking of something that is yet to be rather than something that was a present reality. In 2 Peter 3:3-4, Peter likewise states that in the last days scoffers will come who will mockingly point out that Christ hasn't come back yet as he promised. Here Peter refers to the times when the fathers fell asleep. It is therefore reasonable to understand "the fathers" as those who first heard of or spoke of Christ's return. In this way, Peter's language would parallel our use of the term "early church fathers." If this is the case, then Peter is stating that Christ would return at some future point after the early church had died. (It is interesting that such an idea might be expressed by Peter given that in John 21:18, Jesus plainly states that Peter himself would grow old and die before he returned.) He even gives us an idea of how much time might be involved when he defends the promise of Christ's return against these future scoffers by appealing to how God views thousands of years of time.

These two types of statements about the timeframe of Christ's return do not fit with the idea that the apostles knew how much time had passed from creation to Christ's first coming. But, expressing both eschatological possibilities is consistent with what we would expect if the apostles, like their Jewish contemporaries, had multiple options regarding the how far they were from creation.

More specifically, we even have an exchange in the New Testament indicating that the apostles, in fact, did not have a particular understanding of where they were in world history. This exchange is recorded in Acts 1.

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at (1722) this (5129) time (5550) restore again (600) the kingdom (932) to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not (3756) for you to know (1097) the times (5550) or the seasons (2540), which the Father hath put (5087) in his own power (1849). 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

It is worth noting that the apostles' question in verse 6 cannot be taken to infer the expectation of an immediate establishment of the Messianic kingdom. There are three reasons supporting this conclusion.

First, although the phrase "at this time" can convey the idea of "right now," Jesus' response to this question tells us how the phrase was meant. In verse 7, Jesus also

uses the word “time.” In fact, in the Greek, the apostles and Jesus both use the word “kronos” (Strong’s No. 5550), which refers to a period of time “either long or short.” We know that Jesus means a “period of time” rather than “right now” because Jesus couples “kronos” with another Greek word, “kairos” (Strong’s No. 2540), which similarly means, “a larger or smaller portion of time.” Since Jesus and the apostles use the same word, we can therefore infer that the apostles are not asking if God was going to restore the kingdom to Israel “right now” but rather if they had already entered the period of time when God would restore the kingdom to Israel. The apostles use the singular of “kronos” and Jesus’ answers in the plural, saying that he is not going to give them any more information about the various time periods particularly in respect to the apostles’ own proximity to the kingdom.

Second, Jesus’ phrase “the times and seasons that the Father has put by his own power” is relatable to Daniel’s prophetic descriptions of the progression of empires which would lead up to the Messianic kingdom. As he discusses these things in Daniel 2, Daniel states that God alone changes the times and seasons and removes kings and sets up kings.

Daniel 2:20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21 And he changeth (08133) the times (05732) and the seasons (02166): he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

Here, Daniel is plainly declaring that the times and seasons in which nations hold dominion is appointed by God. The fact that Jesus uses a similar phrasing in Acts 1:8 in answer to the apostles’ question is informative. In effect, Jesus refuses to give the apostles clarification regarding what historical point they were at in relation to the coming of the messianic kingdom.

Third as we have already discussed, Jesus’ parables indicated the idea of a space wherein he would go away for a long time. And also, between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus informed Peter that there would be enough time for him to grow old and die. Likewise, in Acts 3:21, Peter expresses his awareness that Jesus had to remain in heaven for a time. Therefore, we know that both before and after the ascension, Peter was aware of an interval of time between Jesus’ ascension and the restoration of the kingdom. And we know that Daniel’s prophecies (which Jesus’ cited while discussing his return and the coming of his kingdom) also required the Temple to first be desolated and the city destroyed after Christ’s death. So, it is not likely that here in Acts 1, the apostles now expected the Messianic kingdom to start immediately.

Because of the words in Jesus’ reply to their question and because of Peter’s awareness of an interval immediately before and after Christ’s ascension, we know that the apostles were asking Jesus to identify if they were already in the final period of time before the kingdom or if there would be more intervening periods ahead before the kingdom. In other words, given these biblical and historical factors, the apostles’ question itself indicates the lack of apostolic

certainty concerning exactly where they were in world history in regard to creation or the coming of the Messianic kingdom. Their question indicates that they didn't already have a particular answer that they were certain was accurate (or perhaps that they were aware of multiple options and wanted Jesus to identify which was correct). But, Jesus' reply doesn't supply the information that they requested. Rather than telling them where they were in history in relation to the coming millennial kingdom, Jesus states that it was not for the apostles "to know the times or seasons that the Father had put by his own power." The word translated as "to know" is the Greek verb "ginosko" (1097).

1097 **ginosko**

a prolonged form of a primary verb; TDNT-1:689,119; v

AV-know 196, perceive 9, understand 8, misc 10; 223

1) to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of perceive, feel

1a) to become known

2) to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of

2a) to understand

2b) to know

3) Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman

4) to become acquainted with, to know

For Synonyms see entry 5825

Both their question and their lack of clarity on this issue can easily be understood within the context of biblical and first-century Jewish perceptions of the timing of the Messianic kingdom in the larger scope of world history. This lack of certainty is perfectly in sync with the competing chronological perspectives that were present in first-century Judaism. In light of these considerations, we can be reasonably sure that the apostles (and Luke who records this particular exchange for us) are expressing that they did not know where they were in the historic progression leading to the millennial kingdom. Were they just past the 4,000th year from creation as the Hebrew texts indicated? Or, were they approaching the year 6,000 as the Septuagint (and other factors reflected in Josephus) may have indicated? Here, Luke seems to be demonstrating that the apostles didn't know. Their lack of knowledge regarding where they were in the history of the world is what prompted their question to Jesus. But according to Luke's account, not only do the apostles start out not knowing for sure where they were in history in regard to the coming of the kingdom, but they also are left in that same position at Jesus' ascension. And as Jesus' declaration in Acts 1:8 indicates, throughout the rest of the New Testament the apostles are never recorded as having received knowledge in regard to this question. If they did not know whether they were close to the Messianic kingdom or still far removed from it, then the apostles would have to allow for both possibilities and their preaching and teaching would reflect both possibilities. This would explain why we find both kinds of statements in the rest of the New Testament, statements indicating the possibility of a first-century return of Christ and expressions of distant future developments and generations which would proceed Christ's coming. The apostles were preparing the church for both possibilities, not wanting the church to be caught off guard if Jesus' returned

soon and not wanting the church to be disillusioned if Jesus' didn't return for a long time.

Ultimately, the apostles' lack of specific knowledge regarding where they were with regard to the timing of the Messianic millennium is easily traced to a lack of clarification concerning how many years had passed from creation. This lack of specificity regarding the amount of time from creation is attributable to the fact that Jews of the first-century period had competing chronological models which were in large part based on two different textual traditions of the Genesis genealogies.

To be clear, we are not here stating that the apostles didn't know that it could have been another 2,000 years until Christ's return. Scriptural data indicates that the apostles were distinctly aware of this possibility that Christ's coming would be another 2,000 years in the future. What we are saying is that despite their awareness of that possibility they did not know for sure whether that would be the case or whether the interval preceding Christ's return would be much shorter.

Additionally, Jesus' unwillingness to inform the apostles about their position in world history conforms very well to the general ambiguity with which he spoke about the timing of his return. He gave signs, but he didn't make declarations about dates or amounts of time. And he described the timing of his coming as a thief in the night. Jesus' teachings do present a possible explanation for the lack of information about how long it would be until he returned. Not knowing whether he would return in their lifetimes or not should prompt his followers to be watchful and responsible at all times rather than becoming lazy or disobedient, secure in the confidence that they had plenty of time to straighten up.

Lastly, if biblical and historical data prohibit us from concluding that the apostles knew where they were in history in regard to the coming of the Messianic kingdom, we must ask the question of how or if we can possibly have a sound answer to the same question asked by the apostles in Acts 1. In other words, if the apostles didn't know whether they were 4,000 years from creation or closer to 6,000 years from creation, how can we make that determination now? How can we know how far we are to creation or how close we are to the coming of the kingdom?

While our first thought may be to give up the inquiry, this is a misstep. While the New Testament and history don't allow us to conclude that the apostles knew how far they were from the time of creation, they do allow us to know where we are. There are two cooperating reasons that we can know what the apostles could not. The first is that the New Testament gives us good reason to conclude that the apostles taught that the Messianic kingdom would occur at 6,000 years from creation. Both chronological models they were aware of placed the coming of the kingdom within a 6,000-year timeframe and both models placed this event in the future. It was either within a few centuries or two thousand years away. Both chronological models and possibilities were viable. Today we are not in the same situation.

Two thousand years later the kingdom still hasn't arrived. Therefore, only one of the competing chronological systems (the one using the Hebrew texts of Genesis) is still tenable. Only one allows for the biblical teaching that Jesus would bodily return to physically rule over an earthly kingdom beginning at the 6,000th year from creation. An additional 2,000 years have transpired since the first century AD. This informs us that the chronology offered by the Septuagint is no longer viable due to the fact that the bible requires the kingdom to arrive around the 6,000th year and yet kingdom still hasn't arrived. Using the chronology of the Septuagint, the year 2,000 AD would have been around 7,500 years from creation. This would be 1,500 years after the Messianic millennium was supposed to start. And yet, it hasn't happened yet. This means that, in light of biblical teaching, the amounts presented in the Septuagint's text of Genesis are not correct. In short, we can use one teaching that is given by the apostles as a measuring stick to rule out an option that at the time of the apostles had not yet been invalidated.

So, history and the bible work together to provide us information the apostles didn't know. The apostles knew that as history went forward one of the chronological options would prove to be sound and the other would prove to be invalid based on when the kingdom began. The apostles left us an important aid so that if history continued past a few hundred years without the kingdom arriving, we would be able to tell where we were in relation to creation and the coming of the kingdom. They told us that the kingdom would start with a millennium that would occur after 6,000 years of history. In this way, because several thousand years have passed since the first-century and the kingdom has not arrived, we can know that the Hebrew texts preserved the correct chronological data and that the Septuagint did not.

As we conclude we return to the three statements we began with.

1. The apostles understood the amount of time from creation to Christ to include around 4,000 years.
2. Statements in the New Testament indicate that the apostles felt that Christ's return could occur in the first century AD.
3. The apostles taught that the creation week which was composed of six days of work followed by a seventh day of rest would be paralleled in the course of history such that the kingdom of Christ would include a millennial reign of Christ on earth which was preceded by 6,000 years of history starting at creation itself.

A study of these topics seems to show that the first statement is the least supportable biblically or historically. There are no good logical, historical, or biblical grounds for concluding that the apostles understood that Christ's birth was around 4,000 years from creation. To the contrary, we have good biblical and historical grounds for concluding that the apostles didn't know if they were 4,000 years from creation or closer to 6,000 years from creation. Statements two and three are perfectly compatible with one another. And we do not have to explain what would otherwise have been an apparent difficulty regarding the fact that the

New Testament at times seems to indicate the possibility of a first-century return of Christ while at other times expresses that his coming may still be a long time away. To the contrary, the presence of both types of statements in the New Testament corresponds well with the reasonable conclusion that like other Jews and Christians of the first century, the apostles didn't know where they were in history and allowed for either a near or a distant, future return of Christ and coming of the Messianic kingdom.