

the matter of chronology is considered. When there are written records coming from successive kings or from successive generations of a family, it is possible to add up the period of years and to form quite an accurate idea of chronology, particularly if there are synchronisms between the writings of different groups. When materials only are considered, and no writing is involved, it is far harder to fix upon a chronology. Dates can only be given very roughly, and ^{with} ~~there is~~ an extremely large margin of error. Even in connection with the dates which can be determined from written documents, there has been a great telescoping in recent years and shortening of the dates previously held as far as most scholars are concerned. Back of 3000 B.C. all that can be used for estimating dates is guesses as to length of time that a house might have been used, or that it would take to develop various styles of articles, and such guesses are extremely uncertain.

The idea of dating years one after another with a continuous system is a comparatively recent invention. Not until 312 B.C. did a system of this type begin and be continued for a long period. The so-called era which began at that time, was used to some extent for ~~many years~~ over a thousand years. In the 5th century A.D., the idea was transferred ~~to~~ by the Christian church, and estimates were made as to the time of the birth of Christ, and a system of dating originated which arranged all years on our present system of A.D. and B.C. Previous to this, many systems of chronology were in use in various countries, but nowhere does the same rigid idea of definite chronology seem to have been in existence which is to us a commonplace. In various periods of the Biblical history the data are not present in the Bible to fix a definite and complete chronology. It is quite certain that the genealogical records have gaps at certain places, figures are the very hardest words to transmit correctly as documents are copied and recopied. It is very likely that there are gaps in our chronology of the period subsequent to the flood, so that actually the date of the flood would be earlier than our earliest writings in Mesopotamia or Egypt.