

Insistence on the so-called early date for the exodus depends merely upon one verse in the Scripture. There is always the possibility of a textual error in the transmission of one verse, when it cannot be checked by other verses, giving similar statements. If the Lord meant to give us definite data on which we could be sure of the exact date of the exodus, it would seem likely that He would have caused the data to be available in two or three places in the Scripture, rather than to make it rest upon one particular interpretation of one isolated verse.

For many years there have been those who would place the exodus from Egypt about two centuries later. This has usually been based upon the mention of the city of Raamses in Ex.1.11. This name came into prominence in the 19th dynasty, and it is unlikely that it would have been made the name of an important city previous to that time. For many years it was considered as almost a settled matter that Ramses II was the pharaoh of the oppression, and Merneptah the pharaoh of the exodus. Again it must be said that we cannot be certain. The Bible has simply not given us the data on which to be sure of the date of the exodus.

When we look at the evidence from Palestine, it again is inconclusive. While the book of Joshua tells us of a thorough-going conquest with most of the cities completely overcome, there are statements in Joshua and a still greater number in Judges which suggest that after the first great conquest there was still much land to be taken. In the case of many cities whose armies had been defeated and their king destroyed, people might have been able to return to the city and to reestablish themselves so well that considerable time elapsed before they were again conquered. This is very definitely true of Jerusalem whose king was overcome by Joshua (Josh.10.1-27; 12.7,10) but which was a pagan city in the midst of the land (cf. Judges 19.10-12) until its final conquest by David (2 Sam.5.6,7).

The arguments as to an early or late date of the exodus often seem to be