

### Some of the Amazing Achievements of Ancient Civilizations

The truly astonishing feats of the ancient world, requiring a high degree of intelligence, knowledge and skill, were not only in architecture and civil engineering. The ancient Mayans were meticulous time keepers. Without computers or sophisticated measuring equipment they knew the length of the solar year to be 365.2420 days long. Only recently have astronomers calculated it to be 365.2422 days long.

The Mayans worked out that 405 full moons occurred in a period of 11,960 days; modern research shows it to be 11,959.888 days. They calculated the synodic period of Venus at 584 days; current science shows it to be 583.92 days [the *synodic period* is the phase cycle as observed on Earth—the time between successive appearances of a given phase, e.g., crescent. The Mayans of course were not familiar with Galileo's explanation that the phases of Venus could be explained by its orbit around the *Sun* (224.7 Earth days)—called the *sidereal period*, i.e. relative to the stellar background]. These minute margins of error, confirmed only with the use of modern technology, reveal an amazing degree of accuracy on the part of these ancient cultures.

Interestingly, considering the Mayans' obsession with accurate timekeeping, the Mayan calendar apparently began from a creation date about 3114 BC. The Mayans also excelled at mathematics, using a positional system, similar to today's, that was less clumsy than that used by the Romans in Europe.

#### Ancient ingenuity

Facing an extremely difficult (even by today's standards) task, the civilizations that erected the giant statues on Easter Island, and the colossal figures of the Pharaoh Ramesses in Egypt, used human ingenuity in construction. An Incan wall of irregular stone blocks, fitted together so precisely that even after centuries of earthquakes it is not possible to fit a piece of paper between the joints. The stone block weighs an estimated 100 tons.

Did you know?

- In 1900, off the island of Antikythera, Greek divers discovered the wreck of an ancient ship sunk about 65 B.C. Recovered from the wreck was a device with an extremely complex system of precision mechanical metal gears and engraved scale calibrations. Thought to be some kind of navigation computational device, it reveals the inventors to be extremely intelligent.

- The ancient city of Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley, believed to be one of the earliest civilizations known, had a system of sanitation exceeding that of many European cities thousands of years later.



- The ruins of Roman temple columns at Baalbek in Lebanon stand on a single foundation stone (placed by an earlier civilization) weighing an estimated 2,000 tons.
- Carved from a single block of volcanic rock, the ‘gateway of the sun’ at Tiahuanaco weighs an estimated 100 tons. How it was transported and erected is a mystery.

### **“Cave Men” Are Simply Small Families Living in Caves**

Imagine if you and your extended family were suddenly forced to migrate rapidly into an unpopulated wilderness (after the Flood). Even though you come from a society with great technology, it is likely that your family group would not carry all of the necessary knowledge with you to, for example, be able to find ore-bodies, and smelt and work metals. So you might choose to use stone tools to survive.

After the Flood, some groups chose to shelter in caves. In harsher climates, these would have provided more protection than artificial dwellings. However, this does not make their inhabitants ‘primitive’ or unintelligent. Some people today choose an alternate lifestyle away from cities, in surroundings that could be considered ‘primitive’, without being any less intelligent than others.

The typical ‘cave-man’ is portrayed as a hairy, dim-witted, brutish creature. However, many cave paintings reveal a skill equivalent to that of some of the greatest artists of modern times.

Recently, surprised scientists have even found ‘stone-age’ musical instruments, revealing a high level of understanding and musical ability (see Hamer, M., Haunting tunes from ghostly players, *New Scientist* 151(2048):12, 21 September 1996).

It is easy to see how many skills would be lost if people were broken into isolated small groups today. For example, one such group may have farmers and architects, but no mechanics, geologists, or blacksmiths. That group would *know of* the mechanic’s skill but not *how to apply* it. Similarly after Babel, those groups fortunate enough to carry the broadest range of skills would be able to transplant their previous culture rapidly. It would look as if it had sprung up ‘overnight’.

### **Civilizations Spring to Life**

“The archaeological evidence suggested that rather than developing slowly and painfully, as is normal with human societies, the civilization of Ancient Egypt, like that of the Olmecs, emerged all at once and fully formed. Indeed, the period of transition from primitive to advanced society appears to have been so short that it makes no kind of historical sense.

‘Technological skills that should have taken hundreds or even thousands of years to evolve were brought into use almost overnight—and with no apparent antecedents whatever’ (Hancock, G., *Fingerprints of the Gods*, pp. 135–136, New York Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1995).

Why do we seem to know so little of the ancient world? What is keeping us from understanding the ancient cities and civilizations as they once were? We know a great deal about the Mayans, but why not other civilizations?

**See Appendix 20 – Alexandria’s Library: The Loss of Comprehension of Our Ancient Past**