

From Eden to Patmos
An Overview of Biblical History



TIMOTHY W. BERREY

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DEDICATION



This book was originally written for my students in Bible History & Geography class at Bob Jones Memorial Bible College, Quezon City, Philippines, to whom I dedicate this volume.

CONTENTS



| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1: Beginnings | 5 |
| Chapter 2: From Ur to Egypt | 17 |
| Chapter 3: Out of Egypt..... | 31 |
| Chapter 4: Conquerors and Judges | 41 |
| Chapter 5: God Save the King!..... | 57 |
| Chapter 6: Then There Were Kings..... | 67 |
| Chapter 7: Exile and Return..... | 89 |
| Chapter 8: Bridging the Testaments | 101 |
| Chapter 9: Messiah is Born | 115 |
| Chapter 10: Ministry and Death of Messiah..... | 131 |
| Chapter 11: The Church's First 30 Years | 149 |
| Chapter 12: The End of an Era..... | 169 |
| Appendix A: Basics in Chronology..... | 181 |
| Appendix B: Plea for an Early Exodus | 185 |
| Appendix C: The Numbers in Numbers | 189 |
| Appendix D: Chronology and the Monarchy..... | 195 |
| Appendix E: Dating the Crucifixion of Jesus..... | 201 |
| Notes | 215 |

LIST OF CHARTS



| | |
|--|----|
| Chronological Overview of Bible History | 3 |
| Creation Week..... | 7 |
| Comparison of Two Genealogies | 9 |
| Chronology of the Flood..... | 10 |
| Abraham’s 100 Years in the Land of Canaan..... | 20 |
| Abraham’s Sons | 23 |
| Twelve Tribes of Israel | 25 |
| Jacob: “Few and Evil Have Been My Days” | 26 |
| Jacob’s Family of Seventy (Gen. 46:8-25)..... | 28 |
| Pharaohs of Egypt (The Eighteenth Dynasty)..... | 33 |
| The First Eighteen Months..... | 36 |
| The Forty Years Summarized | 37 |
| Detailed Sketch of the Forty Years..... | 38 |
| On the Plains of Moab | 43 |
| Forty Years to the Day—God’s “Exact Grinding”..... | 44 |
| Mapping the Conquest—Joshua 6-12 | 45 |
| Recorded Failures of Individual Tribes..... | 47 |
| Six Cycles in Judges | 49 |
| Leaders During the Judges Era..... | 50 |
| Chronological Challenges of the Judges Era | 54 |
| The Story of Saul, Son of Kish..... | 60 |
| The Story of Solomon..... | 63 |
| The Story of the Kings of Israel..... | 69 |
| The Story of the Kings of Judah | 70 |
| Prophetic Voices to the Kingdom of Israel..... | 73 |
| Prophetic Voices to the Kingdom of Judah | 75 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Assyrian Kings and the Northern Kingdom..... | 80 |
| Assyrian Kings and the Southern Kingdom | 83 |
| Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom of Judah..... | 86 |
| Restoration Era at a Glance | 93 |
| Persian Kings and The Old Testament | 94 |
| Three Returns from Babylonian Captivity | 98 |
| Alexander’s Four Generals | 105 |
| The Early Dynasty of Ptolemy..... | 106 |
| The Early Seleucids of Syria..... | 108 |
| Joseph Given Divine Guidance..... | 119 |
| Roman Emperors of New Testament Times | 121 |
| Six Early Christian Writers on the Year of Christ’s Birth..... | 128 |
| The Phases of Jesus’ Ministry (as found in the four Gospels)..... | 132 |
| An Important Week: Events Leading up to Jesus’ First Public Miracle..... | 134 |
| Matthew’s Predictions of Jesus’ Sufferings and Resurrection..... | 136 |
| Jesus’ Six Trials..... | 141 |
| Dating the Earthly Life of Jesus | 147 |
| Ye Shall Be Witnesses. . . (Outline of Acts 1:8) | 150 |
| Timeline of the Church’s First Thirty Years..... | 151 |
| Paul’s Missionary Journeys | 156 |
| The Earliest New Testament Epistles | 159 |
| Paul’s First Roman Imprisonment | 171 |
| Places Paul Mentions in the Pastoral Epistles | 172 |
| Final Letters of the New Testament | 176 |
| Example Synchronisms in the Bible | 182 |
| The Numbers At Stake | 190 |
| Large Numbers in the Old Testament..... | 192 |

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INTRODUCTION

Every now and then in our Bible college in the Philippines, I teach a class on Bible History and Geography. I have quite a few pictures from Holy Land trips and various other resources, so the Geography part of the class is not a problem. But for years I have felt like the history part of the class lacked something, and I was not sure how to meet the need.

In-depth volumes on biblical history abound, but I needed something more simple, something more like an overview, that would help my students piece together the flow of events and people in the Bible. I wanted a resource that dealt with Bible chronology, but without overwhelming the reader or getting so bogged down in details that one loses sight of the biblical storyline. It needed to be conservative in its viewpoint—something that takes the numbers in the Bible at face value. It must cover the whole Bible, not just one of the Testaments. It should focus on the actual history of the Bible and not, as so many other excellent resources do, on the messages of the individual books of the Bible. It ought to escort the reader through the biblical story in such a way that it demonstrates how events, people, and even books interrelate to each other. For example, where does the prophecy of Habakkuk fit into the overall “story” of the Old Testament? Or how does one connect the lives of Eli and Samuel to the twelve judges featured in the book of Judges? In the New Testament, how do Paul’s travels in Acts fit with the “itinerary information” that he gives in some of his epistles?

Eventually, I decided to write my own overview of biblical history. The project grew until it morphed into what you hold in your hand. Believe me, I wish it were better. But I am still optimistic enough to think it will accomplish at least some of the purposes I have stated above. I hope that it will help you follow the chronological track of the biblical storyline and better “peg” the timeframe of the

people and events of the Bible. Hopefully, it will ease you into biblical chronology without scaring you away or drowning you with detail.

To be sure, the Bible was not primarily written to provide a detailed chronology, but it includes enough chronological information to make it obvious that God wants us to note the passing of time in biblical history and even synchronize it to the events of the outside world. He wants us to know that the grand events of redemption and the men and women who were His instruments in them are historical facts. These people really lived, really heard from God, really walked with Him, really made a difference in their generation, and really died. In the case of One, Jesus, He really died and rose again.

In the pages that follow, I will discuss matters of chronology and set forth the dates commonly advocated by conservatives. I make no apology for the fact that I hold firmly to the inerrancy of Scripture and to the integrity of its numbers. As mentioned above, one purpose of this book is to alert the believing reader to dates that are not really conservative, even though they are set forth by professing evangelicals.

I also want to admit the tenuousness of some of our fixed or absolute dates. There are grave challenges to integrating our modern system of calculating time with the various ancient ways of doing so.¹ Inevitably, there are assumptions one has to make or interpretations of the data which will alter slightly (or even significantly) the results.² For those interested in further discussion of chronology and how scholars arrive at fixed dates for biblical events, see Appendix A.

The dates I have chosen to follow for this overview of biblical history are reflected in the chart below. Those acquainted with chronology will be able to see quickly where I stand on certain issues and the “sides” that I have taken. Deciding some fixed dates has not been easy. Sometimes I have had to choose between competing options that were almost equally attractive or compelling. Time and further discovery will no doubt prove me wrong on a few of the choices I have made, but I hope the reader will still walk away with a better feel for the chronological track of the biblical storyline as it unfolds from beginning to end.

Reading this book is like embarking on a journey through time. I believe that the journey is a very important one and worth embarking on for the first time, for those who have never traveled this story before, or even trekking through again, for those with a fair acquaintance of it.

Let the journey begin!

**CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW
OF BIBLE HISTORY**

| Approximate Dates | Designation | Brief Synopsis |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Creation-2091 | BEGINNINGS | From Creation until the death of Terah, the father of Abraham |
| 2091-1876 | THE "FATHERS" | Abraham's arrival in the land of Canaan until Jacob's migration into Egypt |
| 1876-1446 | SOJOURN IN EGYPT | The family of Jacob sojourns in Egypt and grows into a mighty multitude |
| 1446-1406 | FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS | Israel exits Egypt en route to the Promised Land but, because of rebellion at Kadesh, ends up wandering in the wilderness for forty years |
| 1406-1051 | CONQUEST AND JUDGES | Israel conquers the Promised Land under Joshua and then is ruled by judges |
| 1051-586 | HEBREW MONARCHY | The start of the United Monarchy (1051-931) under King Saul, the Divided Monarchy (931-722), and the sole Kingdom of Judah (722-586) until the Fall of Jerusalem |
| 586-424 | EXILE AND RESTORATION | The Fall of Jerusalem until the last recorded Biblical events of the Restoration Period |
| 424-6 BC | BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS | So-called Silent Years—the four hundred years between the Old and the New Testaments |
| 6 BC-AD 33 | INCARNATION & MINISTRY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH | From the time that the angel appeared to Zechariah in the Temple until Jesus' ascension from the Mount of Olives |
| AD 33-62 | CHURCH'S FIRST 30 YEARS | From the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost until the end of Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome |
| AD 62-98 | END OF THE APOSTOLIC ERA | From the end of Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome until the death of the Apostle John |

CHAPTER ONE



BEGINNINGS

Date It! (All dates BC)

- Ussher's Date for Creation 4004
- Creation (if gaps in genealogies) *ca.* 8000-7000
- Flood *ca.* 6000-5000
- Tower of Babel *ca.* 5000-4000
- Birth of Terah (Abraham's father) 2296

Can You Believe It?

- John Lightfoot and Archbishop Ussher both calculated the date of Creation as October 23, 4004 BC. Lightfoot even added a starting time: 9:00 am!
- Secular experts regularly point to Mesopotamia as the “cradle of civilization,” the place where human history begins. This agrees with the Bible's description of where Eden was located.
- Jericho is the only city below sea level and is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world.
- Multiple ancient cultures had Flood stories (e.g., Sumerian King List, Gilgamesh Epic). Some of these go back to the third millennium BC. One such story (Sumerian King List) even records the radical drop in life span between those living before the Flood and those living after the Flood.
- The oldest written records go back to at least 3000 BC. Sumerian history speaks of a golden age of peace when all spoke only one language.³

BIBLICAL HISTORY BEGINS WITH A MIRACLE: God’s creation of the world *ex nihilo* (“out of nothing”). The author of Hebrews is clear that God spoke the world into existence (11:3). By “world,” we do not mean our planet only, but the universe in its entirety, everything ever created. “God created the heavens and the earth” is the Bible’s opening line and the logical starting point of all that follows. The last book of the Bible reminds us that God created everything and that everything exists because He wants it to; and, therefore, He—and He alone—deserves all glory, honor, and power (Rev. 4:11).

CREATION—THE WORLD’S FIRST WEEK

God completed His work of Creation, an incredible display of His infinite power, in only six days. Whereas moderns reject the six days as impossibly too short, earlier theologians struggled over them for the opposite reason: why would an omnipotent God need six days to speak the world into existence? Genesis 1, however, clearly describes them as six literal days with an evening and morning. Only by opting for the least plausible contextual meaning of *yom* can one interpret them any other way.⁴ Furthermore, to inject eons of time into the week of Creation seems completely foreign to the language of Genesis 1, and is frankly a capitulation to the theory of evolution.⁵

In the first three days, God formed the earth. In the last three days, He filled that which He had formed. On the seventh day, He rested. Everything He made was good, and the sum total of it all (even at the end of the week of Creation) was still very good. That alone suggests that no sin, death, Tempter, or curse had yet blemished His perfect Creation.⁶

By the end of Genesis 1, we have already learned much about God: He is uncreated, eternal, sovereign, powerful, wise, creative, communicative (and therefore personal), a plural One, and good. Genesis 2 further identifies this God as Yahweh, traditionally pronounced as Jehovah (2:4ff). This name of God is related to the Hebrew verb of being and reminds us that God exists in a way entirely unique from all the rest of His Creation.

Yet, the Creation account in Genesis 1-2 only begins God’s self-portrait: the rest of biblical history, as it unfolds on the canvas of Scripture, continues to paint His picture. But even when the canonical witness is complete, it has sketched only the edges of His ways.

CREATION WEEK

| Formed the Universe | | Filled the Universe | |
|---|---|----------------------------|------------------|
| Day 1 | Light (separated from darkness) | Day 4 | Lights |
| Day 2 | Firmament (separating waters above from waters below) | Day 5 | Fish & birds |
| Day 3 | Dry land (separated from oceans) | Day 6 | Animals & humans |
| Day 7 God rested from all that He had made | | | |

The pinnacle of God’s creative work was the Creation of mankind in His own image on Day 6. Human history thus began with the special and direct formation of the first man, Adam (2:7), and then his wife, Eve (2:21-22). From the beginning, mankind was a curious mixture of the mortal (“dust”) and the immortal (“breath of life”). God placed mankind in a beautiful Garden in Eden. Eden was the name of a larger area of which the Garden was only a part. The four rivers named in Genesis 2:11-14 provide the only clue to its location. The two that are known, the Tigris (“Hiddekel,” Gen. 2:14) and the Euphrates, are the basis for the name Mesopotamia (“between the rivers”). The Pishon may have been to the southwest (of the Euphrates) and the Gihon to the east. This suggests that the Garden, where human history begins, was somewhere in southern or northern Mesopotamia.⁷ The Garden provided everything that humankind needed: food, water, work, responsibility, a source of enduring life, and an opportunity to choose obedience to their Creator. Unfortunately, they chose disobedience and lost the Garden. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, they apparently remained in Eden, but east of the Garden (which is why God placed the cherubim guard on that side, 3:24). When Cain left to build his own city, he journeyed east out of Eden (4:16).

MAN’S FALL INTO SIN

We do not know how long it was after Creation that Adam and Eve fell into sin. Since the restriction to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a test, God (the thought is) would not have continued the restriction forever. Once man had sufficiently proven his choice to obey his Creator, God would have confirmed them in a state of holiness and ended the test. This is admittedly conjecture. What is more

clear is that once Adam and Eve disobeyed, God cast them out of the Garden in order to keep them from eating of the Tree of Life and continuing in their unredeemed state. In an ironic way, it was an act of God's grace—God has much more planned for man than for him to live in eternal death.

Adam and Eve's Fall into sin resulted in a three-part curse. First, the curse on the serpent lay, in part, in the enmity that would exist between him and the woman (3:15). This is not a reference to women's native dislike for snakes but to a spiritual dimension: Satan may have triumphed over the woman in the Garden, but he did not win her or her descendants to himself as his permanent devotees. Instead, two lines of people would emerge in human history between which there would be constant enmity, and eventually the Seed of the woman would rise to crush him.

This marvelous prophecy is called the *protevangelium* because it is the first preaching of the Gospel. Thousands of years later, the Apostle Paul referred back to this promise when he assured the believers in Rome that God would shortly crush Satan under their feet (Rom. 16:20). The victory Christ purchased on the cross assures a triumph for all those descendants of Eve who are heirs of her faith.

Second, Eve was cursed in relation to her role in the family. Childbearing would no longer be easy, and her relationship to her husband would be a constant battleground. Last, Adam was cursed in the field; the challenge of work in a fallen world would prove a source of constant sorrow and frustration (Gen. 3:16-17).

The effects of the Fall are immediately visible. Eve gives birth and hopes her son is the promised Deliverer (4:1). Instead, he (Cain) and his brother Abel personify the enmity that God promised would exist between the women's descendants and the serpent's. Cain's enmity of his righteous brother incites him to the first act of murder (4:5-10). His line of descendants continues his ungodly ways and carries them even further. The seventh from Adam through Cain, Lamech, takes two wives and boasts of revengeful murder (4:19, 23-24).

The seed of the serpent had certainly reared up its ugly head in Lamech, but what about the seed of the woman, those who would battle against the serpent's descendants? Her seed will emerge through Seth, whose descendants will call upon the name of the Lord (4:26). Whereas the seventh from Adam through Cain was Lamech, the seventh from Adam through Seth was Enoch, whose walk with God so pleased Him that he never died. The contrast is sharp and deliberate: the seventh through Cain embodies all that is wicked; the seventh through Seth all that is godly.

We should make one more observation from Genesis 4 before we press onward in the story of man's earliest generations. Genesis 4 reveals that man was civilized

from the beginning. Cain himself built a city (v. 17). Some of his earliest descendants keep domesticated livestock, make and play musical instruments, and forge tools of iron and bronze (vv. 20-22). The belief that modern man evolved from ignorant stone-age cave dwellers distorts the biblical picture. Man *fell* into such ignorance from much loftier beginnings.

GENESIS 5—FIRST OF TWO IMPORTANT GENEALOGIES

Two very important genealogies (Genesis 5 and 11) trace key people in earth’s earliest generations from Adam to Abraham. The two genealogies share a certain symmetry⁸ (see chart below). The first (Genesis 5) leads us to Noah who, because of his righteousness, experienced God’s deliverance of his family from worldwide judgment. The second (Genesis 11) escorts us to Abraham who, by his faith, becomes the father of the Messianic race.

COMPARISON OF TWO GENEALOGIES

| Genesis 5 | | Genesis 11 | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Adam | 930 years | Shem | 600 years |
| Seth | 912 years | Arpaxad (Arpachsad) | 438 years |
| Enosh | 905 years | [Cainan (see Luke 3:36)] | [360 years?] |
| Kenan | 910 years | Shelah | 433 years |
| Mahalalel | 895 years | Eber | 464 years |
| Jared | 962 years | Peleg | 239 years |
| Enoch | 365 years | Reu | 239 years |
| Methuselah | 969 years | Serug | 230 years |
| Lamech | 777 years | Nahor | 148 years |
| Noah | 950 years | Terah | 205 years |
| Shem, Ham, and Japheth | | Abraham, Nahor, and Haran | |

The Genesis 5 genealogy covers about 1,556 years of human history—from Adam to the birth of Noah’s three sons. If this genealogy is without a gap, then about

1,656 years elapsed between Creation and the Flood (in Noah's 600th year) and Methuselah died right before the Flood (in fact, the same year as the Flood).

THE FLOOD

A major event of early biblical history is the Flood. It is the next great summit of revelation after the Creation and Fall of Man, and out of it comes God's first clearly recorded covenant with an individual (6:18; 9:9, 11-13, 15). The wickedness of man had so escalated that only a worldwide catastrophe that would sweep away all human offenders could satisfy the offended justice of God. God's regret over man's sinfulness (Gen. 6:6) does not imply a change in God or that He wished He had done things differently. It simply communicates that God feels in time, when it occurs, what He knows in advance will happen. That the Flood was worldwide seems clear from a straightforward reading of the text (e.g., 7:18-23), even though a growing number of evangelicals are not willing to be dogmatic about it.⁹

CHRONOLOGY OF THE FLOOD¹⁰

| Specific Event of Flood | Date (with reference to Noah) | Day of Flood |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Rains begin | 2.17.600 (Gen. 7:11) | 1 st day |
| 40 days of rain end | 3.26.600 (7:12) | 40 th day |
| Waters prevail 150 days | 7.16.600 (7:24; 8:3) | 150 th day ¹¹ |
| Ark rests on Mt. Ararat | 7.17.600 (8:4) | 151 st day |
| Mountain tops become visible | 10.1.600 (8:5) | 225 th day |
| Raven sent forth | 11.10.600 (8:6-7) ¹² | 264 th day |
| Dove sent out returns | 11.17.600 (8:8-9) ¹³ | 271 st day |
| Dove returns with leaf | 11.24.600 (8:10-11) | 278 th day |
| Dove does not return | 12.1.600 (8:12) | 285 th day |
| Face of the ground is dry | 1.1.601 (8:13) | 315 th day |
| Noah leaves the Ark | 2.27.601 (8:14-16) | 371 st day |

Numerous arguments support a global-in-scope flood. The book of Genesis records the passing of days during the Flood with a painstaking detail almost unparalleled

anywhere else in Scripture (e.g., 7:11, 17, 24; 8:4-6, 10, 12-13). We know the exact day of Noah's life when he entered the Ark (7:11), and the exact day when he exited it (8:14-16). Why? God evidently wanted it well documented that Noah and his family spent an astonishing 371 days in the Ark. Noah's Flood was no ordinary flood! In addition, cultures around the world have passed down memories of a massive flood. For example, the Chinese character for *large boat* is a boat with eight mouths. The fact of the Ark itself, not to mention its size,¹⁴ argues for a universal Flood. (Why an Ark if Noah could have escaped safely by land?)

When the Flood waters receded, the Ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, north of Mesopotamia. Perhaps somewhere near there Noah took up life as a farmer with his three sons and their wives. Ararat (in modern-day Armenia) forms the northern boundary of the Old Testament.

Noah's first action after escaping from his one-year-plus imprisonment in the Ark was to build an altar and offer burnt offerings to the Lord (8:20). His act of worship elicited a response from the Lord in the form of a covenant. God promised never again to destroy the earth with water because of man's sinfulness. Man, in spite of his sinfulness, would be allowed to continue existing. Why? Explicit in the context is the delight God received from Noah's worship. God covenanted to tolerate mankind, as repulsive as their sin is to Him, in order to enjoy the worship that they offer Him (8:21-22).

The story of Noah ends with an incident that reveals the moral character of his three sons and reflects unfavorably upon Ham. The curse that follows Ham's action falls specifically upon his son Canaan, who particularly reflected all that was evil in his father (9:22, 25). (The wickedness of Canaan's descendants will ultimately lead to expulsion from their land and virtual extermination.) Shem and Japheth respond more honorably and are both blessed by Noah (9:23, 26-27). Shem's blessing lies in his connection with Yahweh, a clear anticipation of Messiah. From the *protevangeliium* (Gen. 3:15), we learned that Messiah would be human. Now we learn that He will be a Semite. (*Semite* comes from the word *Shem*.) Japheth's blessing will be geographical and numerical; in addition, his "dwelling in the tents of Shem" may allude to his participation in the latter's Messianic blessing, a kind of precursor of God's promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

TABLE OF NATIONS

After the Flood, the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth repopulated the world.

Shem seems to have been the oldest (10:21, NASB), and Ham the youngest (9:24). The Table of Nations¹⁵ in Genesis 10 gives us an idea of where the various descendants of Shem, Japheth, and Ham settled. Essentially, Japheth is the father of Europe; Ham, of Africa; and Shem, of the Middle East.

Japheth (vv. 1-5) settled north of the Fertile Crescent, in the area roughly equivalent to modern Europe, stretching from southern Russia (“Ashkenaz,” v. 3) on the east to Spain (“Tarshish,” v. 4) on the west; and, ultimately, to the outer reaches of the known world. *Madai* (v. 2) is the ancestor from which comes the Medes. From *Javan* comes the word for the Ionians or Greeks. *Isles* (v. 5) in the OT refer to the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. *Ashkenaz* (v. 3) is perhaps the father of the Scythians, Iranian nomads who migrated into the area of southern Russia. Of the three sons of Noah, the least is said about the descendants of Japheth. They are the peoples farthest removed from the Old Testament’s principal storyline.

Ham (vv. 6-20) settled in Africa and the strip of land northeast named after Canaan. *Nimrod*¹⁶ (v. 8) was one notable exception who did *not* settle in Africa. He founded a kingdom headquartered at Babylon (v. 10). Not content with Shinar, he exerted his powers northward into Asshur and its environs (see 10:11, NASB). *Mizraim* (v. 6) was the founder of Egypt (see Psa. 105:23). The Philistines descend from the *Casluhim* (v. 14). The descendants of *Canaan* are listed in detail, as are the boundaries of their territory (vv. 15-19), in anticipation of Israel’s later conquest of the land of Canaan.

Shem (vv. 21-31) settled in a kind of arc from modern Turkey (“Lud,” v. 22) through Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf, including the area of the Arabian Desert to the west. The line of Shem splits with the two sons born to Eber: Peleg and Joktan. *Joktan* and his descendants are not the “Messianic line” of Shem; they settled in the area of Mesha near Shephar in southern Arabia (v. 30). The “important” line of Shem, found in Genesis 11:10-32, is the line through Peleg.

The Table of Nations is helpful for another reason: it records the approximate time the Tower of Babel occurred when it states that the “earth was divided” in Peleg’s day (v. 25). This apparently refers to the Tower of Babel incident. As it stands in the Masoretic text of Genesis, Peleg was the fourth generation after Shem. If we include the witness of the Septuagint and the New Testament (Luke 3:36) to Cainan, Peleg was the fifth generation (see “Comparison of Two Genealogies” chart above on p. 9). However, the rather marked drop in lifespan of Peleg from that of his forefathers may indicate some gaps in the genealogy. We will discuss that in more detail at the end of this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that conservative estimates place the Tower of Babel one thousand years after the Flood.

TOWER OF BABEL

The Babel story explains how and why the one language that originally united mankind was replaced with the many languages alluded to in Genesis 10 (vv. 5, 20, 31). We normally focus on the tower, but the Babel builders were actually building a city *and* a tower. The tower was simply to be the most remarkable thing about their city and a way for them to gain lasting recognition. Their acquired fame, they hoped, would keep them together and avoid their being scattered over the earth.

Virtually all modern commentators hold that the Tower they were constructing was a *ziggurat*, a pyramid-shaped Temple tower very popular in ancient Mesopotamia, and was therefore primarily religious in its purpose.¹⁷ No idolatry, however, is insinuated in the text. If anything, the idol of the Babel builders was their pride, quest for autonomy, or desire for security.

The description of the tower with its top “unto heaven” is similar to later descriptions of the Canaanites’ cities, which were fortified “up to heaven” (Deut. 1:28; 9:1). The word *migdal* (“tower”) is normally associated with fortifications for security purposes (Judg. 8:9; 9:51; II Kings 9:17). God, responding to the danger when humanity unites for proud and rebellious purposes, disabled effective communication, broke up their building effort, and scattered them over the face of the earth (11:7-8). It was really a divine mercy. To achieve a great name and the sense of security it brings feeds sinful man’s pride and deters him from seeking after God (Acts 17:26-27). God would later single out Abraham and make his name great (Gen. 12:2). But he would live in tents and look for a city whose builder and maker was God (Heb. 11:10).

GENESIS 11 GENEALOGY

The Genesis 11 genealogy lists nine individuals (vv. 10-32). (Ten, if we include the name *Cainan* found in Luke 3:36 and the Septuagint of Genesis 11:13.) The last, Terah, had three recorded sons (v. 26). Genesis 11 reveals the downward trend in life expectancy as the effects of the Fall tighten their grip on mankind.¹⁸

It is when we move into the time of Terah, Abraham’s father, that we arrive at the first clear fixed date in biblical history, and that is Terah’s birth in 2296 BC. This is calculable because of the relative precision with which the Old Testament records events in the life of his son Abraham and in the lives of Abraham’s descendants. Interestingly, Terah lived during the glory days of the city of Ur, with its estimated population of 100,000 and relative sophistication and culture.

The genealogy in Genesis 11 is often used for early biblical chronology. Based on biblical data, we know that Abraham's birth year was 2166 or 2167 BC. If we follow the numbers in Genesis 11 strictly, we come up with a date for Babel of about 2300 (during the lifetime of Peleg) and for the Flood of about 2500 BC. If we add the 1,656 years of recorded human history in Genesis 5, we arrive at a date of about 4000 BC for Creation. This is exactly what Archbishop Ussher did in the mid-17th century when he followed a strict chronology of the numbers recorded in Genesis and calculated 4004 BC as the date of Creation.

We should exercise restraint, however, in using the genealogies to obtain absolute dates of Creation, the Flood, or the Tower of Babel.¹⁹ Genealogies were sometimes abbreviated (Matthew 1:8 "skips" three generations when it says that Jehoram "begot" Uzziah). Luke 3:36 inserts an additional name (Cainan) that is not found in Genesis 11.²⁰ Also, Peleg's lifespan seems significantly shorter than that of his father (suggesting some gaps in the genealogy).²¹ Further, if Genesis 11 is followed rigidly, then Noah was still alive when Abraham was born; and Shem, when Abraham died. Could mankind have so forgotten their spiritual roots if their original ancestors were still alive? Anything is possible given man's propensity to evil, but it hardly seems tenable.

Thus, even a staunch conservative like Eugene Merrill is comfortable with the Tower of Babel occurring about 7000-6000 BC and the Flood about 8000-7000 BC.²² Creation would then have transpired about 10,000-9000 BC. A surprising consensus exists even among secular historians that human civilization began about 10,000-7000 BC.²³ Allowing for some adjustment due to their evolutionary presuppositions (of man's alleged prehistoric development), this number might approximate the biblical timeline since mankind was civilized from the very beginning. My personal preference is to go with the minimum numbers cited above, resulting in Creation, the Flood, and Babel in 7000, 5000, and 4000 BC, respectively. These are admittedly estimates.

The following quote should serve as a fitting final caution and guide:

No such gaps can be proven in the detailed genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. But even allowing for some possible gaps, it's inconceivable that the date for Adam's creation could be much more than ten thousand years ago. As Henry Morris has written, "At the outside, it would seem impossible to insert gaps totaling more than about five thousand years in these chapters without rendering the record irrelevant and absurd. Consequently, the Bible will not support a date for the creation of man earlier than about 10,000 B.C."²⁴

Review It

1. With what does biblical history begin?
2. Where probably was the Garden of Eden?
3. What are some proofs that the Flood was worldwide in its scope?
4. What is the “Table of Nations”?
5. Explain what the Tower of Babel might have been.
6. What do we mean when we say there might be “gaps” in the genealogies in Genesis?
7. What are some evidences that the genealogy in Genesis 11 might have some gaps?
8. What was the date of Creation calculated by Archbishop Ussher?
9. What is the oldest date of Creation accepted by conservatives?

CHAPTER TWO



FROM UR TO EGYPT

Date It! (All dates BC)

- | | |
|----------------------|------|
| • Birth of Abraham | 2166 |
| • Call of Abraham | 2091 |
| • Birth of Isaac | 2066 |
| • Birth of Jacob | 2006 |
| • Death of Abraham | 1991 |
| • Birth of Joseph | 1916 |
| • Migration to Egypt | 1876 |
| • Death of Joseph | 1806 |

Can You Believe It?

- The pyramids of Egypt were already hundreds of years old by the time Abraham was born. The **Great Pyramid** was finished around 2560 BC and was the tallest manmade object until the completion of the Lincoln Cathedral in London in 1311 AD.
- Abraham's father lived during or shortly after the reign of the famous **Sargon of Akkad** ("Sargon the Great"), credited as the first man in secular history to build an empire (but see Gen. 10:8-12).
- **Ur**, where Abraham was born, is said to have been the largest city in the world around 2100 BC, with an estimated population of 100,000 people.
- A barbaric tribe called the **Gutians** invaded southern Mesopotamia and ended the Akkadian empire about fifty years before Abraham's birth. Their

conquest included Sumer, the area of Terah's origins. Could this crisis have been what the Lord used to open this family to a revelation of Himself?

- The Patriarchal Age from the death of Abraham (1991) to the death of Joseph (1806) corresponds almost exactly with the **Twelfth Dynasty** in Egypt (1991-1803 BC).
- A canal dug in Egypt under the supervision of **Sesostris II** (1897-1878 BC) is still called *Bahr Yusef* ("River of Joseph").²⁵
- The pharaoh whom Jacob stood before and blessed was probably **Sesostris III**, the most powerful ruler of Egypt's entire Twelfth Dynasty.

GENESIS 11 ENDS WITH A GENEALOGY that traces the line of Shem to a man named Terah. This man Terah had three sons: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Although Abram is listed first, he was evidently the youngest of the three siblings.²⁶ He is mentioned first because he is the son to whom Yahweh revealed Himself and began the work of raising up a nation through which He would bless all the families of the earth. He is also the first of Israel's patriarchs or "fathers," as the Old Testament refers to them (Exod. 13:11; Deut. 1:35; 8:1; Josh. 1:6). Centuries after Abraham, when God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, He did so as the "God of your fathers" and specified those fathers to be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 3:15-16). Forty years later, Moses himself named the same three men as Israel's fathers (Deut. 1:8). These three men are whom the Patriarchal Period is primarily about. (Because his life overlaps with the patriarchs, we will include Joseph in this chapter; but he is not technically one of Israel's "fathers.")

THE FIRST FATHER—ABRAHAM

Abraham may have been a tent-dweller in Canaan, but he was not uncivilized or uncultured. When Abraham obeyed the call of God to leave Ur and travel to the land God would show him, he left one of the largest and most civilized cities of ancient Mesopotamia.

Some experts date the beginning of civilization to the time when the Sumerian people migrated to and took control of Ur in the fourth millennium BC. Ur, about 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the modern city of Nasiriyah, Iraq, boasted a healthy trade in its day because of its nearness to the Euphrates River and Persian Gulf. During his excavations of Ur in 1922-1934, archaeologist Leonard Woolley uncovered a fascinating city of culture, progress, and wealth, including royal tombs

that held beautiful jewelry and objects made of solid gold. One of archaeology's most recognizable structures is Ur's ziggurat, built in the twenty-first century BC by the Sumerian king Ur-Nammu.

Abraham's ancestors, including his father Terah, were idolaters (Josh. 24:2) until God's call to Abraham altered the course of his family's history. Terah must have known of God's revelation to his son, Abraham, because he also embarked on the arduous journey from Ur to Canaan (Gen. 11:31). Although we are not certain of Terah's age when he left Ur, Lot was already born, and Abraham was old enough to receive and understand divine revelation (Acts 7:2). For some unstated reason Terah only made it as far as Haran in northern Mesopotamia (also called Paddan-Aram). After he died, Abraham continued the journey to the land of Canaan, where he took up life as a nomadic tent dweller. Abraham made the journey from Haran to Canaan in 2091 BC, when he was seventy-five years old (Gen. 12:4).

Canaan had no central government during Abraham's time. There was no "Kingdom of Canaan" but a collection of "city kingdoms" or "city states," each with their own local king (e.g., the King of Sodom, and Melchizedek, King of Jerusalem). Tribal chieftains or family clan leaders also wielded power and influence (e.g., "Mamre" the Amorite, Gen. 14:13). Travelers of all kinds—merchants, armies, bandits, and migrants—crisscrossed Canaan. It was the geographical land bridge between Egypt to the Southwest, Anatolia (modern Turkey) to the North, and the ancient cities of Mesopotamia to the East. The battle in Genesis 14 between the four Mesopotamian kings and the five kings of Canaan also fits what we know from secular history about life in that part of the world.

To Canaan's south was Egypt, with one of the longest histories of any modern country. When Abraham traveled to Egypt (Gen. 12:10) early in the twenty-first century BC, during what historians now call its "First Intermediate Period,"²⁷ the pyramids were already standing, some of them for five hundred years. The pharaoh who appropriated Sarah and whom Abraham deceived may have been Wahkare Achthoes III (ca. 2120-2070 BC) of the Tenth Dynasty.²⁸ Abraham's trip to Egypt had drastic consequences. While there, he and Sarah acquired an Egyptian maid servant by the name of Hagar (12:16; 16:1), who would eventually become an unfortunate pawn in Sarah's struggle to bear a son for her husband.

When God called Abraham to leave Ur, He promised to reward his obedience (12:1-3). We normally summarize these promises as threefold: 1) a seed that would become a great nation, 2) a land where that seed would live, and 3) a blessing (Messianic!) upon all nations through Abraham's seed. During Abraham's one hundred years of living in the land of Canaan (2091-1991), God was building

Abraham’s faith in these promises. The first few recorded episodes in chapters 12-15 focus primarily on the promised land. The land promise peaks in chapter 15, in a very momentous instance of revelation called the Abrahamic Covenant. In this covenant God, symbolized by a smoking firepot and flaming torch, passed through the cut animal pieces and unilaterally promised to give Abraham the land.

Beginning with Genesis 16, the focus shifts to how God will provide Abraham an heir. One of the earliest details we learn about Abraham was that his wife Sarah was barren (11:30). This barrenness became one of God’s tools to build Abraham’s faith: can Yahweh, of whom Abraham has become a follower, fulfill His promise of giving Abraham a child even though his wife is barren? Ten years into their time in Canaan (16:3), Sarah gave up hope and offered Abraham her servant Hagar.

ABRAHAM’S 100 YEARS IN THE LAND OF CANAAN

| Date | Age of Abraham | Event |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2091 | 75 | Leaves Haran bound for Canaan |
| 2080 | 86 | Ishmael born |
| 2066 | 100 | Isaac born |
| 2030 | 136 | Sarah dies |
| 2026 | 140 | Isaac marries |
| 2006 | 160 | Grandsons, Jacob & Esau, born |
| 1991 | 175 | Abraham dies |

As bizarre as this sounds, it was culturally acceptable and even expected in the ancient Near East. A male child or heir was very important to ancient couples, much as it is still important today in many cultures. A wife who failed to give her husband a male child felt cultural pressure to come up with a way to make it happen, often by giving her husband a “servant-wife.” The child of the servant wife would then be viewed as the wife’s child.

This cultural way of doing things, however, was not God’s way of doing things. (A good reminder in any age!) Ishmael, whom Abraham fathered by Hagar, was a son humanly explainable. God’s plan was to give Abraham a child in a way that was humanly impossible. In order to showcase Himself as *El Shaddai* (God Almighty)

and blow to smythereens culture's way of doing things, God waited until Sarah was past childbearing age before giving them Isaac (18:11). As the "child of the promise," the answer to twenty-five years of waiting, Isaac is the seed through whom Messiah would come and bless "all the nations of the earth" (22:18).

God's testing of Abraham's faith through the seed promise culminates when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac (ch. 22). Abraham's sturdy faith shines brightly throughout the trial. From the beginning, Abraham was confident that he and Isaac would go away, he and Isaac would worship, and he and Isaac would return (v. 5). Hebrews 11:19 reveals that Abraham was sustained by his confidence that God's plan was to resurrect Isaac on the spot. God instead provided a ram as a substitute. Abraham saw in this substitutionary provision a hint of what God would do in the future, and he called the place *Jehovah Jireh* ("God will provide") as a testimony to the fact that someday God would provide a substitute sacrifice on that mountain in the land of Moriah (Gen. 22:2). Providentially, the threshing floor that King David purchased some 1000 years later was on that same Mount Moriah (II Chron. 3:1), one of the hills that comprises the current city of Jerusalem. There Solomon built the Temple, where Passover lambs were slaughtered for hundreds of years. And there, at Jerusalem, Jesus suffered and died as the Lamb of God (Matt. 16:21).

TWO CONTEMPORARIES OF THE PATRIARCHS

Although way off the trajectory of this chapter, this is perhaps the best place to comment on two men whose lives coincide with the patriarchs. The first is Job. God's appraisal of him is second to none (Job 1:1, 8), and Ezekiel ranks him with Noah and Daniel (14:14). The truth is that we know very little about this man who was the focus of such intense heavenly scrutiny. A number of things suggest that Job lived during the time of the Genesis patriarchs. The length of his life roughly matches theirs. If God doubled Job's remaining years the way he doubled his possessions (Job 42:10), then Job lived to be about 210 years of age. His book also contains no trace of the Mosaic system of sacrifice. Instead, Job clearly functions as the priest of his family (1:5).

Job was from Arabia. He lived east of the Jordan River since he was one of the "people of the East" (1:3). He resided in a city, where he was highly respected (29:7). The name Uz itself is associated with descendants of Aram (Gen. 10:23), Abraham's brother Nahor (22:20-21), and Edom (36:28). On the other hand, Jeremiah distinguishes Uz from Arabia and Edom (Jer. 25:20). Uz was evidently a rather popular Semitic name, much like the name Job was. Job's attackers—the

Sabeans and the Chaldeans (Job 1:15, 17)—give credence to the idea that Job lived somewhere in Arabia, as does what we know about his three friends. Eliphaz, the Temanite, is clearly from an Edomite city (Jer. 49:7; cf. Gen. 36:4). The closest biblical parallel to Bildad’s ancestry (“Shuhite”; Job 8:1) may be Shuah, the son of Abraham by Keturah, whom Abraham eventually sent east (Gen. 25:2, 6). Zophar’s origins are unknown, but the Septuagint uses his name to translate the Hebrew name of Esau’s son, Zepho (36:11, 15).

Even more fascinating is that the ancestry of Elihu, the final human speaker in the book of Job, contains the name Buz (Job 32:2). We mentioned above that Nahor, the brother of Abraham, fathered a son named Uz; he also fathered a son named Buz (Gen. 22:21). This may be a mere coincidence, so we must keep our creative juices in check. Buz also occurs in context with two names, Dedan and Tema (Jer. 25:23), that have Edomite connections (49:7-8).

By way of summary, if we put all these clues together, Job’s life connects with Edom, Aram Naharaim (through Nahor), and Arabia. A kind of middle ground between all these geographically is Arabia. If Job’s counselors were really related in some way to Esau, Shuah (Abraham’s son), or Nahor, then Job (we speculate) may have been more a contemporary of Isaac’s than Abraham’s.

In some sense, Job reminds us of Melchizedek, another contemporary of the patriarchs, because he also possesses a knowledge of the one true God but lies outside of the Bible’s main storyline. Melchizedek, perhaps Amorite ethnically,²⁹ is king of Jerusalem and a man to whom even the King of Sodom shows deference. (The King of Sodom is introduced first in the text of Genesis 14 but does not speak up until Melchizedek has spoken his piece.) Curiously, he is also identified as priest of the Most High God (*El Elyon*), an identification that Abram clearly accepts as authentic because he pays him a tithe of all the booty he had taken in his triumph over the four Mesopotamian kings. Melchizedek appears in only three verses in the Genesis account (14:18-20), but his name re-surfaces in Psalms and in the New Testament book of Hebrews as a highly significant type of Messiah (Psa. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10-11, 15, 17).

ISAAC—THE SON OF PROMISE

Abraham did not just have two sons; he actually had eight. Not just the nation of Israel, but the tribes of Arabia (descendants of Ishmael), the Midianites, and others, are all direct descendants of Abraham. This actually fulfilled God’s earlier promise

to Abraham that he would become the father of many nations (Gen. 17:4-5). Only one of these eight sons, however, was the child of the promise—Isaac. To the rest, Abraham gave gifts but sent them east, away from the Land of Promise (25:6).

For his son Isaac, Abraham did not want a wife from the Canaanites (24:3). He instead sent his servant back to Paddan-Aram in northern Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. (Interestingly, ancient texts mention a city *Nakhur* in Mesopotamia.) The servant providentially found Rebekah, the grand-niece of Abraham, and brought her back to be Isaac’s wife. God’s leading of Abraham’s servant to Abraham’s own relatives is singled out repeatedly as one more demonstration of God’s faithful kindness to Abraham (24:12, 14, 27).

ABRAHAM’S SONS

| Wife | Sons |
|---------|---|
| HAGAR | Ishmael |
| SARAH | Isaac |
| KETURAH | Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah |

When Abraham died at 175 years of age, Isaac became not only the inheritor of Abraham’s great wealth but also of his covenant promises (25:5; 26:1-5). Of the three patriarchs, the Bible says the least about Isaac. His life seems to lack both the grandeur of his father Abraham and the “color” of his son Jacob. Isaac shared his father’s faith but lived it out in a more mundane manner—refusing to flee to Egypt during a famine, digging and re-digging wells, and contending with friction from unfriendly neighbors (ch. 26).

Isaac was not the traveler that his father was (nor that his son Jacob would be) and spent most of his life near Beersheba on the *Negev*³⁰ border. In fact, Isaac seems to have lived his entire life without once leaving the boundaries of Canaan. He lived his final years in Hebron near the family’s ancestral burial site (35:27-29; 49:31).

He was forty years old when he married Rebekah. Much like his mother, Isaac’s wife was barren. He and Rebekah were married for twenty years before God, in answer to prayer, gave them twin boys. Although Esau was older, God decreed the Abrahamic blessing should be passed down to the younger, Jacob (25:20-23).

Isaac allowed parental favoritism to prevail over God's known decree when he chose to give Esau the much-coveted covenantal blessing (25:28; 28:1-4). God's plan, however, triumphed. Jacob, true to his name's meaning ("heel catcher"), had already maneuvered Esau out of his birthright (25:29-34). At the behest of his mother, Jacob then tricked his blind father into pronouncing on him the Abrahamic blessing. Strikingly, when Isaac learned that he had been duped into giving the "wrong" son the blessing, he did not retract what he had done but instead acknowledged the hand of God in what had transpired (27:33).

The "blessing" that Isaac pronounced on Esau is not always clearly translated in English Bibles (27:39-40). It is actually a kind of "anti-blessing." Whereas Jacob had been blessed with blessings *from* the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth (27:28), Esau is "blessed" (in a play on the same Hebrew preposition) *away from* the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven (v. 39). Esau would instead have to live by the sword (v. 40). History has certainly borne out the truth of this.

In the end, Esau emerges as more pathetic than pitiful. His light regard for his birthright evidenced his spiritual shortsightedness (25:34; Heb. 12:16). His marriage to Hittite women evidenced poor spiritual discernment (Gen. 26:34-35). His later marriage to an Ishmaelite woman, in a bid to get back in the good graces of his parents, revealed his spiritual cluelessness (28:9). Although broken-hearted when he did not get the family blessing (27:38), Esau frankly did not have a heart for the eternal values it embodied.

JACOB

As we mentioned, the story of Isaac is rather brief, and the spotlight quickly shifts to Jacob. Of all the patriarchs, Jacob's life is surely the most colorful. On the one hand, he truly desires the Abrahamic blessing; on the other, he does not grasp all of its spiritual ramifications. He has been promised the Abrahamic blessing; but he bargains with God and everyone around him in order to seize it for himself. How does a scheming *Heel Catcher* ("Jacob") become a successful *Wrestler with God* ("Israel")? The story is fascinating.

Forced to leave home because of Esau's murderous plans for revenge, Jacob flees, heading for Paddan-Aram and the family of his mother Rebekah. En route, God reveals himself to Jacob at a place that Jacob calls *Bethel* ("house of God"). In a dream, Jacob sees a ladder extending from earth to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. This ladder is a visual promise: God will protect Jacob and make him the inheritor of all that He had sworn to Abraham and Isaac. Little did Jacob

realize how much he could have and should have banked on that ladder vision during what followed in his life!

There is quite a bit of humor and even irony in Jacob’s relationship with his uncle, Laban, as he finally meets his match in cunning. Jacob will spend twenty years being “schooled” by Laban (Gen. 31:38). Laban deceives Jacob on his wedding night, changes Jacob’s wages repeatedly, and in many other ways tries Jacob’s nerves. The real story, however, is how God overrules and even uses Laban to make Jacob rich in children and possessions, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

| Wife | Children |
|-------------|--|
| LEAH | Reuben, Levi, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun |
| RACHEL | Joseph, Benjamin |
| BILHAH | Dan, Naphtali |
| ZILPAH | Gad, Asher |

When Jacob finally left Laban to journey back to Canaan, he was almost ninety-seven years old.³¹ It was on this homeward journey that Jacob faced the crisis that changed him. His whole life he had schemed and connived his way “to the top.” Esau was older, but Jacob had wrestled from him the firstborn’s blessing and birthright. Uncle Laban had tricked him over Rachel, but Leah was the wife with whom he had the most sons. Laban had played non-stop games with Jacob’s salary, but Jacob had also used his knowledge of genetics to “checkmate” his uncle.

On his way home, however, Jacob finally faces a crisis that he cannot squirm out of: his brother Esau is coming to meet him with four hundred men (32:6). Jacob knows this is a lynching party, not a welcome wagon!

God uses this crisis to transform Jacob (32:24-32). God Himself appears to Jacob in the form of an angel and wrestles with him. Jacob seems to prevail at first but when he refuses to give in, God dislocates Jacob’s hip. All Jacob can do now is cling; his wrestling days are over. This wrestling match symbolizes Jacob’s spiritual life. All his life he had wrestled with men for blessings that God already

planned to give him. By wrestling with men, Jacob was actually wrestling against God. What he needed to do was cling to His God. For the first time we see the name Israel—*One who contends with God*. Through grace—not by his own considerable strength but by his supplications (Hosea 12:3-4!)—Jacob had prevailed with God!

Genesis goes on to record Jacob’s deliverance from his brother, his return to Bethel (which he renames *El-Bethel*), and his reunion with his father, Isaac—who was still alive after all these years and would go on to live another twenty-plus years! The story, however, quickly shifts its spotlight from Jacob to Jacob’s sons.

JACOB: “FEW AND EVIL HAVE BEEN MY DAYS”

| Age | Event |
|-----|--|
| 77 | Left home and received the “Ladder Dream” at Bethel |
| 91 | Finished his 14 years of service for his two wives |
| 97 | Headed back home to Canaan after 20 years with Laban |
| 108 | Joseph “is no more” |
| 130 | Migrated to Egypt |
| 143 | Died in Egypt |

JACOB’S FAMILY—FROM JOSEPH TO JUDAH

Everything that is described about Jacob’s sons, even the unsavory, is an important part of biblical history. Reuben disgraces himself by what he does with Bilhah, his father’s concubine (Gen. 35:22). Simeon and Levi are excessively and unnecessarily violent in dealing with Shechem (34:13-26). Jacob’s three oldest sons have “disqualified” themselves to be leaders. What about his fourth son Judah? The answer to that is part of a longer story normally (and rightfully) associated more with Joseph.

We often fault Joseph for sharing his dreams with his brothers (37:5-11). Surely he should have discerned that dreams of his supremacy at their expense would not set well with them! Then again, he could not have foreseen to what extremes their hatred and envy would lead them nor the amazing turnaround of events that would follow. We must also remind ourselves that Joseph’s dreams were not just wishful thinking on his part but were actually divine revelation from God of what would

happen. They were really God's grace to Joseph to keep him going during some extremely difficult years when the heavens would seem to be brass and God apparently caught off-guard by sibling malice. God would use these dreams to test Joseph's endurance and faithfulness until what God had promised would come to pass (Psalm 105:19).

When seventeen-year-old Joseph entered Egypt in 1899, Egypt was still in its Twelfth Dynasty and Pharaoh Amenemhat II (1929-1895 BC) was in his final years. We do not know how many years Joseph spent in Potiphar's house, but we know that he was in prison for over two years (Gen. 41:1) and that when he finally stood before Pharaoh (perhaps Sesostris II) as an interpreter of dreams he was thirty years of age (41:46). While Joseph's first thirteen years in Egypt may have passed slowly for him, the next ten no doubt went quickly, busy with his duties as Pharaoh's second in command and as a new husband (vv. 41-45).

Just as Joseph had interpreted to Pharaoh, seven years of plenty gave way to seven years of famine. Back in Canaan, Jacob and his family began to feel the pinch of hunger. Hearing of food in Egypt, Jacob sent his ten sons down to buy food. When Joseph saw his brothers, he remembered his dreams (42:9) and everything fell into place. Joseph first tested the hearts of his brothers toward his father (and Benjamin), but he eventually unveiled himself to his brothers and invited them to join him in Egypt. God, Joseph tells his brothers, had used their evil to work out things for good (Gen. 45:7-8; 50:19-20). Indeed, Egypt would become a sanctuary for the family of seventy-plus people, not just in providing them with food, but also by removing them from the immoral and idolatrous influences of their Canaanite neighbors.³²

But what about Judah, Jacob's fourth son? Judah is the round character³³ in Genesis 37-50. Our first glimpses of him are not so good. He is the one who proposes selling Joseph into slavery to the Ishmaelites (37:26-27). He is the one who marries a Canaanite woman (38:2), ends up with wicked Canaanite sons (38:7-10), and sleeps with a woman he thinks is a Canaanite prostitute (but who is actually his daughter-in-law, Tamar; Gen. 38:15-18). But fast forward the story about twenty years. It is Judah's speech that convinces his father to allow Benjamin to accompany them to Egypt (43:3ff). It is Judah and his brethren who come to Joseph's house (44:14), and it is Judah who offers his own life up as a substitute for Benjamin (44:16ff). It is Judah to whom Jacob entrusts the leadership as they approach Egypt (46:28). It is Judah, Jacob prophesies, who will become the ruling tribe; and it is through Judah that the Messiah will come—the one to whom the scepter truly belongs—and He will gather to Himself all peoples (Gen. 49:10). God's steady work through the years had changed Judah. What was his turning point? Perhaps the transformation

began when Tamar exposed his own selfishness and he confessed, “She is more righteous than I” (Gen. 38:26). Judah’s confession is deeper than we realize. In confessing his unrighteousness he is really absolving Tamar of wrongdoing in the death of his sons, acknowledging that it was *their* wrongdoing that led to their death, and implying that their wickedness really stemmed from *his* own wrong choices.³⁴ Tamar becomes an instrument in Judah’s transformation and an ancestress of Jesus through her son Perez (Matt. 1:3).

JACOB’S FAMILY OF SEVENTY (GEN. 46:8-25)

| Wife | Descendants |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Descendants of Leah | 33 ³⁵ |
| Descendants of Zilpah | 16 |
| Descendants of Rachel | 14 |
| Descendants of Bilhah | 7 |
| Total: | 70 |

CONCLUSION

With Jacob’s migration to Egypt in 1876 BC, the Patriarchal Era begins to fade into twilight. Jacob is 130 years old when he makes the move and only lives for another thirteen years after moving. When his father dies, Joseph and a whole multitude journey back to Canaan in order to bury him in the family tomb (Gen. 50:7-13). The sun finally sets fully on the Patriarchal Period when Joseph closes his eyes in death, about 1806 BC. Joseph, however, does not pass off the scene before he extracts a promise from his extended family to take his bones with them when the Lord takes them out of Egypt and re-deposits them in the Land of Promise (50:24-25). Who could have foreseen the twists and turns of this era of Old Testament history! What began with a call in Ur (Acts 7:2) ends with a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26).

Review It

1. What do we mean by “the fathers” and who are they?
2. What does the Bible say about the spiritual background of Abraham’s family?
3. Summarize God’s three promises to Abraham.
4. Explain how Sarah’s actions involving Hagar were culturally acceptable in their day.
5. What is the significance of the expression *Jehovah Jireh*?
6. What evidence is there that Isaac shared the “faith” of his father Abraham?
7. What is the crisis in Jacob’s life that transforms him into *Israel*?
8. How are we to view Joseph’s dreams?
9. What chapter in Genesis helps us best understand why Jacob’s family needed to move to Egypt for their own spiritual protection?
10. Explain how Judah’s character develops in the final chapters of Genesis.

CHAPTER THREE



OUT OF EGYPT

Date It! (All dates BC)

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| • Birth of Moses | 1526 |
| • Exodus from Egypt | 1446 ³⁶ |
| • Rebellion at Kadesh | 1445 |
| • Death of Moses | 1407 |

Can You Believe It?

- The pharaohs we encounter in Exodus are rulers of the Eighteenth Dynasty, during which ruled some of the best known of all Egypt's pharaohs and when Egypt reached the peak of its power.
- Thutmose III, either the pharaoh from whom Moses fled or the Pharaoh of the Exodus, was the most powerful king of Egypt's entire New Kingdom era. He expanded Egypt's empire to its greatest extent ever and has been called the "Napoleon of Egypt."
- The name Moses is Egyptian. Compare it to other Egyptian names like Thutmosis or Rameses.
- Because of diverging opinions over Egyptian chronology, two pharaohs are candidates for being the stubborn "Pharaoh of the Exodus": Thutmose III or Amenhotep II. In neither case did their firstborn son succeed them. Could this be related to the tenth plague?
- Have you ever heard of King Tut? His full name was Tutankhamun. He was a boy king of the Eighteenth Dynasty who reigned for only ten years (ca.

1332-1323 BC) and died before he was twenty years of age. Although a rather insignificant pharaoh in his day, he became famous when his untouched royal tomb was discovered in 1922 by archaeologist Howard Carter.

WITH THE DEATH OF JOSEPH, our journey through biblical history takes us into the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy. The central figure in these books is Moses. We know very little about the 280 years between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses (1806-1526 BC). The Bible simply says that a new pharaoh arose who did not “know Joseph” (Exod. 1:8). Some think this new pharaoh refers not just to a new king but to a non-Egyptian dynasty, the Hyksos, who ruled Egypt for about one hundred years. The Hyksos were Semitic foreigners (like the Israelites) and fewer in number than the native Egyptian majority. They would naturally have felt threatened by the growing number of Israelites and likely introduced a consequent policy of oppression.

When native Egyptians regained power around 1570 BC, the new dynasty of pharaohs (Dynasty 18) continued the policy of enslaving the Israelites. (They may have feared another uprising by Semitic foreigners.) One pharaoh added a macabre twist to the oppression of Israelites: he ordered all Hebrew infants to be killed (1:16). We infer that this was a new policy because no difficulty is recorded in connection with Aaron’s birth in 1529, and Aaron was only three years older than Moses. If our knowledge of Egyptian chronology is correct, Thutmose I came to the throne in 1526, the very year that Moses was born. It was his change of policy that caught an expectant Jochebed and her husband Amram by surprise.

PROVIDENCE AND PREPARATION IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

Amram and Jochebed’s decision to preserve their new son’s life rather than surrender him to Pharaoh’s dictates was a step of faith (Heb. 11:24). From there, divine intervention took over in the form of an Egyptian princess who dared to defy her father’s decree and adopted Moses as her own son.

Thutmose I did have a headstrong daughter, Hatshepsut, who certainly fits the description of someone willing to balk against direct orders. She became one of the most powerful women in Egyptian history, ruled as “Pharaoh” for a time, and forced the powerful Thutmose III to submit to her wishes during the first twenty years of his reign.

By a stroke of fortune that only divine providence could finagle, Moses ends up being nursed and cared for by his own mother (2:7-9). By the time he was weaned at about three years of age and shifted his residence to the palace, he had “caught” enough of his parents’ morals and Israel’s plight to affect his outlook in life. At forty years of age, he made a decision to turn his back on what he could have enjoyed as an Egyptian prince and to throw in his lot with his own people, the Hebrews (Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24-25).

PHARAOHS OF EGYPT (THE EIGHTEENTH DYNASTY)

| Pharaoh | Possible Biblical Parallels |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Thutmose I (1526-1512) | Ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be killed. |
| Hatshepsut (1503-1483) | The headstrong daughter of Thutmose I who perhaps rescued Moses. She went on to rule as “Pharaoh” herself. One of the most influential women in all of Egypt’s history. |
| Thutmose III (1504-1450) | The pharaoh from whom Moses fled when he killed an Egyptian (Exod. 2:15). |
| Amenhotep II (1450-1425) | The pharaoh of Exodus 7-14 who was bested in his contest with Yahweh and lost his troops at the Red Sea. |
| Thutmose IV (1425-1417) | Alleged a revelation from the Sphinx proclaiming him the next pharaoh, even though he was <i>not</i> the crown prince. Was his older brother, Amenhotep II’s firstborn, killed by the death angel? Did Thutmose IV imagine the revelation in order to solidify his claim to the throne? |

Moses, at forty, understood that God had called him to be a deliverer (Acts 7:25), however, his timing was wrong. When he took justice into his own hands and killed an Egyptian, he was forced to flee for his life to the country of Midian (Exod. 2:15). Forty years of Moses’ life pass in relative silence, during which he lived with a priest of Midian named Reuel (or Jethro). He married Zipporah, one of Jethro’s seven daughters, and fathered a son whom he named Gershom (2:21-22).

MOSES BEFORE PHARAOH

The next (and final) forty years of Moses' life began with a bush. Moses was eighty years of age, carrying out his regular duties as a shepherd, when he encountered a bush that burned but was not consumed (3:1-2). From the bush, God informed Moses that the time had come to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt and that Moses was the man for the job.

Forty years earlier Moses was willing and even foolhardy enough to try it on his own. Now, a more mature but reluctant Moses tried to wiggle his way out of God's call (3:11ff). God did not allow it, but He did send Moses' brother Aaron to be his mouth piece (4:14-16).

When Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh and proclaimed to him *thus saith the Lord*, an epic contest began. Egyptian pharaohs were not renowned for their humility, and they certainly would not have submitted to what they would perceive as a Semitic deity. Egypt was a world power with an ancient civilization—who were these Hebrews anyway?

The contest that unfolded was not really between Moses and Pharaoh but between Yahweh, the God Moses was proclaiming, and the gods of Egypt (12:12). At the burning bush, God had revealed Himself to Moses as *I am that I am* or *Yahweh*, the self-existent, immutable God (3:14). The ten plagues systematically attacked the pantheon of Egypt's gods, mocked their powerlessness, and proclaimed clearly that there was no other god except Yahweh.

PASSOVER

The climactic tenth plague, the death of Egypt's firstborn, led to the Passover, one of the most important events in Israel's history. So seminal was this event that Nisan, the month of Passover, became the first month of the year. (Nisan corresponds to the March/April of modern calendars.) On the evening of the plague, the fourteenth of Nisan, every obedient Israelite household put blood prominently on the doorposts of their home and waited for the death angel to pass at midnight. He *passed over* those households who obeyed; those who did not lost their firstborn, both of man and of beast (12:12-13). Even the firstborn of Pharaoh died. Grieving over the death of his firstborn son and pressured by his own countrymen, Pharaoh could ultimately do nothing except issue the command for Israel to leave (12:31-33). Leave they did, in such haste that their bread did not have time to rise. Jews still commemorate their haste in leaving Egypt at the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

A VERY IMPORTANT EIGHTEEN MONTHS

On the fifteenth of Nisan, the children of Israel left the land of Goshen en route for Horeb, the mountain before which God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The miraculous crossing of the “Red Sea” likely took place at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez.³⁷ Some liberals have made much of the fact that the Hebrew term for Red Sea is *yam suph* (“Sea of Reeds”), implying to them that it was a shallow, marshy body of water prominent with reeds and thus very easy to cross. If such were the case, the conservative is justified in asking how one of the most powerful, war-ready armies of the ancient world drowned in just a few feet of water!

Only a few incidents in the seven-week journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai are recorded, but those few are enough for us to see that Moses had his hands full. The children of Israel had exited Egypt physically but surprisingly their hearts were still there in the land of their recent bondage. Whenever what they faced did not match their expectations, they complained (15:24; 16:2-3; 17:2-3).

Israel arrived at the base of Mount Sinai in late May/early June (19:1), where they camped for just over eleven months (compare Exod. 19:1 with Num. 10:11). During this time, Israel entered into an official covenant with Yahweh (Exodus 19-24), often referred to as the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant. The covenant ratification ceremony in Exodus 24 marks the official “birth” of Israel as a nation. From the beginning, it was a theocracy. Israel also built a tent for Yahweh to “dwell in”; as soon as it was erected (40:2, 17) and the glory of God filled it (40:34-35), God began to speak to Israel from there (see Lev. 1:1; Num. 1:1).

The book of Numbers opens with God’s command to take a census of all the men able to go to war. The census, taken about twenty days before Israel’s departure from Sinai, registered 603,550 males twenty years of age or older (1:1-46). This number did not include Levite males nor men unable to go to war (1:3). From this number of 603,550 males, we arrive at the often-cited estimate of 2 to 2.5 million Israelites.³⁸

When the two million-plus Israelites left their Sinai base camp in early May 1445 BC (10:11), they should have been spiritually ready. Yahweh had made a covenant with them. They had constructed His “house,” the tabernacle, and He had filled it with His glory. A pillar of cloud guided them by day, and a pillar of fire by night. They had clear arrangements for their marching and their camping, and they faced a journey of only about eleven days to Kadesh Barnea (Deut. 1:2), from where they would launch their formal conquest of Canaan. Unfortunately, the story turned spiritually tragic. Eleven days became almost forty years because of their unbelief.

THE FIRST EIGHTEEN MONTHS

| Event | Time |
|---|--|
| Israel leaves Egypt hastily in the early hours of the morning | 15 th day of first month (late March/early April 1446) |
| Israel arrives at Mount Sinai | The third month (May/June 1446) |
| Israel departs from Mount Sinai | 20 th day of the second month (early May 1445) |
| Israel arrives in Kadesh Barnea | Time of the First Ripe Grapes (late July 1445) |
| Israel rebels against the Lord | End of forty-day spy mission (early September? 1445) |

While they were en route from Sinai, the journey was delayed by complaining (Num. 11) and by opposition to Moses by both Miriam³⁹ and Aaron (ch. 12). When they arrived in Kadesh it was the time of the first ripe grapes (late July) and Moses ordered a spy mission (ch. 13). When the spies returned to the camp of Israel forty days later, the report they gave was one of disbelief and the whole congregation rebelled.

Angered at the unbelief of His people, who had seen dazzling displays of His power in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and at Sinai, God decreed forty years of wandering—one year for each day of the spy trip—and the death of every man numbered in the census (14:20-35). Only Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who gave a good report, were exempted. A mere 18 months had passed since the Exodus from Egypt, and already the first generation had forfeited entering the Promised Land.

THE FINAL THIRTY-EIGHT AND ONE-HALF YEARS

Very little history is recorded during the “wilderness wanderings.” God in His mercy included Israel’s first eighteen months (From Egypt to Kadesh) as part of the forty years of punishment. He also allowed the fortieth year to be a year of progress and victory. But the 37 ½ years in between is basically a wash. Numbers 15-19 records the only known incidents.

THE FORTY YEARS SUMMARIZED

| Amount of Time | Location |
|-----------------------|--|
| First 18 months | From Egypt to Kadesh Barnea |
| 38 years (Deut. 2:14) | From Kadesh Barnea to the Brook Zered |
| Last 6 months | From the Brook Zered to the Plains of Moab |

When Numbers 20:1 records the return of Israel to Kadesh in the first month, it is the first month of the fortieth year. Although a year of progress and victory for the nation as a whole, it would be a disappointing year for Moses. First his sister Miriam died (20:1). Then he and Aaron, provoked to anger by the congregation's murmuring and quarrelling, sinned so publicly that they were banned from entering the Promised Land (20:9-12). Less than four months later, Aaron died (20:24-29; 33:38), and finally Moses himself (Deuteronomy 34).

But in between the deaths of Aaron and Moses, much happens. Israel experiences its first victory in battle (against Arad; Num. 21:1-3), completes a long and tiring journey around Edom (21:4-20), overcomes two established kingdoms in the Transjordan area (21:21-35), survives a challenge from Balak and Balaam (chs. 22-24), and recovers from their grievous stumble into idolatry and immorality at Peor (ch. 25). Remarkably, in spite of all of this, a second census of the men of war numbered 601,730 (26:51), a difference of less than 2,000 from the first census.

All of this sets the stage for Moses' farewell speeches to the nation of Israel. We know these speeches as the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy opens on the first day of the eleventh month (1:3), and the bulk of it could have easily been uttered in one day. After delivering his final speeches, Moses hiked up to the top of Pisgah (Mount Nebo), took a long look at the Promised Land, died, and was buried by the Lord. His death took place *within about a month* of the date given in Deuteronomy 1:3.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

When Moses died at 120 years of age, the greatest prophet in Israel died. No other prophet spoke with God face to face, and no other prophet did such signs and

wonders as he. In fact, the only prophet that would rival him would be the Prophet mentioned in Deuteronomy 18, who would be like Moses but even greater (v. 18). God would personally deal with anyone who did not listen to that future Prophet (v. 19). That future Prophet would turn out to be more than just a prophet of God; He would be His Son. But first, fourteen hundred years must transpire...

DETAILED SKETCH OF THE FORTY YEARS⁴¹

| Date Month. Day. Year (from the Exodus) | Event | Reference |
|--|--|--|
| 1.15.1 | Exodus from Egypt | Ex. 12:2, 6, 29, 31 |
| 3.15.1 | Israel arrives at Mount Sinai | Ex. 19:1 |
| 1.1.2 | Tabernacle completed Laws for offerings begin Offerings for altar begin Ordination of priests | Ex. 40:2; Num. 7:1 Lev. 1:1 Num. 7:3 Lev. 8:1, 33 |
| 1.8.2 | Ordination of priests completed | Lev. 9:1 |
| 1.12.2 | Offerings for altar completed | Num. 7:78 |
| 1.14.2 | Second Passover | Num. 9:2 |
| 2.1.2 | First census commanded | Num. 1:1 |
| 2.14.2 | Passover for the unclean | Num. 9:11 |
| 2.20.2 | Departure from Sinai en route to Kadesh | Num. 10:11 |
| “Wilderness Wanderings” (Rebellion at Kadesh Barnea results in 37.5 years of largely unrecorded journeyings) | | Num. 14-19 |
| 1.?.40 | Return to Kadesh | Num. 20:1 |
| 5.1.40 | Aaron dies | Num. 33:38 |
| 11.1.40 | Moses’ farewell speeches begin | Deut. 1:3 |
| Early in 12 th Month? | Death of Moses | Deut. 34:5 |

Review It

1. Is the name *Moses* Egyptian or Israelite? Does that agree with the biblical record?
2. What Dynasty may have begun the policy of oppressing the Israelites in Egypt?
3. Divide the life of Moses into three equal parts and briefly summarize each part in one sentence.
4. Name four or five key events that took place during Israel's first eighteen months out of Egypt.
5. How long did Israel spend at Mount Sinai?
6. What chapter in Exodus marks the "official birth" of Israel as a nation? What was the event?
7. How do we arrive at the estimate that Israel in Moses' day consisted of about two million people?
8. Read Deuteronomy 2:14. Can you explain how Moses arrived at his calculation of "thirty-eight years"?
9. When did the book of Deuteronomy take place?

CHAPTER FOUR



CONQUERORS AND JUDGES

Date It! (All dates BC)

- Crossing the Jordan River Nisan 10, 1406
- Sustained by the Promised Land Nisan 15, 1406
- End of Conquest Proper 1399
- End of Judges Era 1051

Can You Believe It?

- Archaeologists sometimes denigrate a 1406 date for the Conquest because they have only found evidence for the burning of three cities (Jericho, Ai, and Hazor) during that time. Actually, this fits the biblical record perfectly; these are the only three cities the text *says* they burned. Joshua and the Israelites did not destroy every city they conquered.
- Archaeologists found jars of unconsumed food in the destroyed ruins of **Jericho**, evidencing that Jericho fell quickly, right after harvest time, and not after a lengthy siege.
- The earliest extrabiblical use of the word **Israel** occurs on a victory stele erected by an Egyptian pharaoh named Merneptah (1236-1223 BC) during the time of the judges.

THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR consolidating the history of the Conquest and of the Judges Era into one chapter.⁴² One is that the period of the judges has very few highlights, and it is a rather dismal period to study by itself.

Another is that we have almost no clear, specific dates for the 350 years from the end of the Conquest Era proper (about 1399 BC) until the anointing of King Saul (1051 BC). A third reason is that not a lot of history is recorded for either of the two eras. Almost half of Joshua is lists (chs. 12-21). Judges gives us only a smattering of episodes for the three hundred or so years of history that it purports to cover. A final reason is that Scripture itself makes a close connection between Joshua and Judges. The book of Judges opens by mentioning the death of Joshua (1:1), but parts of it hark back to a time when Joshua was still alive (2:6). Furthermore, some of the events recorded in Judges are also recorded in the book of Joshua, such as Othniel's capture of Debir (Josh. 15:16-17; Judg. 1:11-13) and Dan's migration to the north of Palestine (Josh. 19:47-48; Judg. 17-18). Finally, studying the Conquest and the Judges Era together reinforces what Israel lost in the passing of Joshua and what they so desperately needed to meet their God-intended potential. When Joshua died, there was no one clear spiritual leader over all the tribes of Israel. Without strong spiritual leadership, the twelve tribes of Israel quickly—very quickly, in fact—fell into idolatry, immorality, and chaos. What Israel needed was a strong spiritual leader, a central figure, who could meld the scattered tribes into a sturdy kingdom, rout the enemies that lurked in Israel's heartland and on its fringes and, most importantly, lead Israel into the spiritual life that God intended the nation to have.

CROSSING THE JORDAN—PREPARATION FOR CONQUEST

As we open the book of Joshua, a definite leadership transition has taken place. Moses, one of the greatest leaders Israel ever had, is dead. Joshua is now the one with whom the Lord communicates His instructions. We do not, however, want to exaggerate or overstate the transition. In terms of *time*, only about two months have passed since Moses began his farewell sermons in Deuteronomy.⁴³ In terms of *place*, nothing has changed since Numbers 22:1, when the children of Israel first pitched their tents on the Plains of Moab, a high plateau region just east of the Dead Sea. Israel is still camped on the Plains of Moab, in a place known more specifically as Shittim (Josh. 3:1; "Acacia Grove," NKJV).

Shittim is not far from Jericho, only about 20 kilometers (12 miles) as the crow flies. To journey from Shittim to Jericho, however, one must cross the Jordan River. The Jordan River is neither an incredibly large nor an incredibly deep river. (Naaman, in later biblical history, was decidedly unimpressed with the Jordan!) But it does reach its highest point during the first month of the year (March/April), when

it is swollen by the winter rains and the melting of whatever snow has fallen in the Lebanon Mountains to the north.⁴⁴

ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB

| Event | Reference |
|--|------------------|
| Arrival | Num. 22:1 |
| Balaam’s attempted curse of Israel | Num. 22-24 |
| Israel commits immorality and idolatry | Num. 25 |
| Second census taken | Num. 26 |
| Vengeance taken upon the Midianites | Num. 31 |
| Transjordan granted to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh | Num. 32 |
| Moses gives his farewell speeches | Deut. 1-33 |
| Moses ascends to Mount Nebo and dies | Deut. 34:1-6 |
| God stirs up Joshua to be courageous | Josh. 1:1-9 |
| Joshua sounds the “three-day warning” | Josh. 1:10-11 |
| Joshua sends out the two spies | Josh. 2:1 |
| Joshua departs from Shittim & encamps on the banks of the Jordan River | Joshua 3:1 |

By divine design, Israel crossed the Jordan River in the first month, as it was overflowing all its banks (Josh. 3:15). When the priests dipped their toes in Jordan’s waters and God piled the waters up in a heap about 29 kilometers (18 miles) to the north at Damiya (“Adam,” KJV), it was an event just as miraculous as the crossing of the Red Sea. God intended it to exalt Joshua the way the earlier event had exalted Moses (Josh. 3:7; 4:14).

The importance of crossing the Jordan in the first month extends beyond its swollen waters. The first month marked forty years exactly since Israel had left Egypt. A poet once wrote, “Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exacting grinds He all.”⁴⁵ No less can be said with regard to God’s timing in Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land. They crossed on the tenth day of the first month (4:19)—the same day forty years earlier that they had selected the Passover Lamb. All the men were then

circumcised (5:2-3), since circumcision (the sign of God’s covenant with Abraham) had ceased during the Wilderness Wanderings. On the fourteenth of Nisan, Israel commemorated the events of the original Passover (5:10). And on the fifteenth day of Nisan—the very day that Israel had “by a mighty hand” exited Egypt, they ate the produce of the Promised Land (5:12). Talk about exact! God had decreed forty years as the penalty for Israel’s disobedience at Kadesh (Num. 14:33-34). It was forty years to the day.

FORTY YEARS TO THE DAY—GOD’S “EXACT GRINDING”

| 1446 BC | | 1406 BC | |
|----------|---|----------|---|
| Nisan 10 | Passover Lamb selected | Nisan 10 | Israel crosses the Jordan River |
| Nisan 14 | Passover Lamb killed and blood applied on the doorposts | Nisan 14 | Israel commemorates the original Passover |
| Nisan 15 | Israel hastily exits Egypt, taking with them their Unleavened Bread | Nisan 15 | Israel eats of the produce of the Promised Land |

THE CONQUEST

Once across the Jordan River, Israel now faced the daunting task of possessing the Land. God had, however, given them many promises of His help to dispossess the Canaanites. Israel had no reason to fear or doubt as long as they believed and obeyed.

Israel’s conquest of Canaan is told rather briefly (Josh. 6-12). As in Abraham’s time, Canaan was composed of multiple city states, each with its own king. Therefore, each city state needed to be defeated individually. Multiple battles are alluded to in Joshua 6-11, but only five battles are described in any detail.

- Battle against Jericho (ch. 6)
- First battle against Ai (ch. 7)
- Second battle against Ai (ch. 8)
- Battle to help Gibeon (ch. 10)
- Battle against Hazor (ch. 11)

By the end of chapter 11, Joshua had taken “the whole land” (v. 23), and chapter 12 logs 31 conquered kings.

Think of these battles in terms of three “campaigns.” First are the three battles in the central part of Canaan in order to establish a foothold in the country (Josh. 6-8). Israel’s first battle took place at Jericho since this was the first major city they encountered once they crossed the Jordan River. Israel’s battle at Jericho is the most well-known and its story is given in the most detail (Josh. 6). By conquering Ai (Josh. 7-8), Israel further strengthened its foothold in central Canaan.

MAPPING THE CONQUEST—JOSHUA 6-12

| Reference | Details |
|-------------|---|
| Joshua 6-8 | Central Campaign (Battles against Jericho and Ai) |
| Joshua 9-10 | Southern Campaign (Battles against Jerusalem, Jarmuth, Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir) |
| Joshua 11 | Northern Campaign (Battle against Hazor and all of its associates) |
| Joshua 12 | List of 31 conquered kings |

Second is a series of battles that gave Israel control of southern Canaan (Josh. 9-10). These battles actually grew out of Israel’s regrettable alliance with Gibeon, a Hivite city in central Canaan. When the king of Jerusalem (Adonizedek) learned that Gibeon had made peace with Israel, he became very fearful. Gibeon was a large city, and its loss to the other Canaanite cities was a great blow. Adonizedek convinced four neighboring kings, all of them in southern Canaan, to join him in eliminating Gibeon. Gibeon then naturally appealed to Joshua for help. Joshua rushed to help his threatened allies and, with God’s supernatural help, won a stunning victory. Not only was Gibeon delivered, but all five kings were killed. Further, he laid siege to and conquered a number of other cities—Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. All these cities (with the exception of Gezer) are south of Gibeon.

The primary target in the third campaign was Hazor and its king, Jabin. Hazor lies north of the Sea of Galilee. Hazor, as the text itself tells us, was the head of the northern city states of Palestine (11:10). Hazor, over ten times larger than Jericho, dwarfed other cities by comparison and was probably the largest city in Palestine at that time. With God fighting for him, Joshua defeated Hazor and all the other kings associated with it. Victorious over these northern city states, Israel was now master of the land. The backbone of Canaanite possession had been broken. As Joshua 11:16 puts it, “So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same.” There were still battles to be fought and won, but who the victor would be was not in doubt (13:1-6).

These battles to possess Canaan took place in the space of only about seven years. In Joshua 14, when Caleb comes to Joshua to ask for the city of Hebron, he is eighty-five years old (14:10). Forty-five years have passed, he calculates, since Moses sent him from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land. Since about thirty-eight years passed from the rebellion at Kadesh until the crossing of the Jordan River and the beginning of the Conquest (Deut. 2:14), the Conquest Proper was only about seven years in length. If the conquest began in 1406 BC, Caleb asked Joshua for Hebron about 1399.

GOD DID NOT FAIL—BUT DID ISRAEL’S TRIBES?

With the land subdued before Israel, Joshua began to parcel out the land to the twelve tribes. The Transjordan tribes—Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh—had already received their allotment to the east of the Jordan River in the former territories of Sihon and Og (Josh. 13:8-13, 15-32). Judah was apparently the first of the Cisjordan⁴⁶ Tribes to receive its share (15:1-63), followed by the two tribes associated with Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh (chs. 16-17). The next seven portions were allotted in the following sequence: Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan (chs. 18-19). The six cities of refuge were set aside, then the forty-eight Levitical cities (chs. 20-21). God had been faithful in giving the Canaanites into the hands of the Israelites: nothing had failed of all that God had promised (21:45).

“Nothing had failed of all that God had promised,” but this does not mean that everything in the book of Joshua is golden. There are hints, even during the lifetime of Joshua, that Israel had not fully embraced its responsibility and privilege to take possession of the land. First of all, we see that even the leading tribes—Judah,

Manasseh, and Ephraim—could not drive out all the Canaanites in their allotted portions.

Second, when the nation re-gathered at Shiloh, Joshua chided seven of the tribes for their failures to take possession of the land (18:3). In order to motivate them to action, he commanded each tribe to provide a three-man survey team who would partition the remaining land into seven portions (18:4ff). His accusation may seem unfair at first. After all, no one had yet allotted them an inheritance! On the other hand, their cowardly hanging back reflected a failure of faith on their part. The land was before them—why could they not strike out on their own as Caleb had done at Hebron?

RECORDED FAILURES OF INDIVIDUAL TRIBES

| Tribe | Failure Recorded in Scripture |
|--------------------|--|
| Transjordan tribes | Failed to drive out the Geshurites and the Maacathites (Josh. 13:13) |
| Benjamin & Judah | Failed to drive Jebusites out of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63; Judg. 1:21) |
| Western Manasseh | Failed to drive the Canaanites out of at least five cities (Josh. 17:11-13; Judg. 1:27-28) |
| Ephraim | Failed to drive Canaanites out of Gezer (Josh. 16:10; Judg. 1:29) |
| Dan | Virtually squeezed out of his inheritance & thus migrated north (Josh. 19:47; Judg. 1:34) |
| Zebulun | Did not drive out the Canaanites from at least two cities (Judg. 1:30) |
| Asher | Did not drive out the Canaanites from at least seven cities (Judg. 1:31-32) |
| Naphtali | Failed to drive out the Canaanites from at least two cities (Judg. 1:33) |

Third, Joshua’s two farewell speeches convey his concern for the future of the children of Israel. His first speech is primarily addressed to the leaders (Josh. 23). He fittingly (and almost prophetically) warns them of what will happen if they turn back from total devotion to Yahweh and mingle instead with the Canaanite

remnants in the land. His final speech in Joshua 24 is addressed to the people as a whole. He lays before them a choice: the gods of their fathers, the gods of the Amorites, or Yahweh. He evidently has some misgivings as to their real allegiance to Yahweh. Even when they choose Yahweh, he challenges their level of commitment before ratcheting up their decision to the level of a covenant (24:25).

Finally, those seven tribes mentioned above that hung back from their duty had the same problems the larger tribes did in driving out the Canaanites from their possessions (Judg. 1:21; 30-34). The truth be told, the majority of the tribes (if not all) failed to dispossess the Canaanites. The excuses vary—from iron chariots (1:19) to stubbornly rooted “originals” (1:35)—but God says it like it is: they disobeyed His voice (2:2). Their disobedience left them in a situation fraught with spiritual danger, in which they were living side by side with winsome bachelors and beautiful maidens—but pagan Canaanite ones. These failures would cast ugly shadows over the period of the judges and would ultimately lead to the moral and religious darkness that prevailed in that dismal era of Israel’s history.

DISOBEDIENCE LEADS TO MORAL DOWNFALL

In other words, even before Joshua’s death there were cracks in the superstructure of their obedience. While Joshua lived, his very presence and the legacy that he represented kept the erosion in check. Once, however, he and those of his generation had passed off the scene, the dam holding back Israel’s corruption broke loose. The cracks eroded into gaping fissures, and idolatry and immorality poured in like a flood.

Humanly speaking, the religion of the Canaanites among whom the Israelites intermingled was an attractive one. It connected their chief god (Baal) to the weather cycle and the weather cycle to pleasurable opportunities with prostitutes at widely scattered “high places.” One could satisfy his fleshly desires, worship god, and boost his crop yield all at the same time.

The enticing, contagious appeal of the religion of the Canaanites was one of the reasons that God had so strongly demanded their extermination and had warned of the dangers of prolonged interaction with them (Deut. 7:4). Israel refused to heed His warnings, intermingled and intermarried with the Canaanites, and ran off after their gods. The result? God delivered His people over to their enemies so that they would learn obedience.

ABOUT THE JUDGES

This leads to what we refer to as the “Cycles of Judges.” When the oppression from their enemies got bad enough, Israel would repent and cry out for deliverance. God would, in mercy, raise up a deliverer (judge!) who would free them from oppression and usher in a time of rest and peace. These cycles of sin, oppression, deliverance, and rest are repeated six times in the book of Judges, each time featuring one of the six “major judges.” The other six judges are often referred to as “minor judges,” since very little is known about them. We can assume that they too arose to deliver Israel from oppression caused by sin.

SIX CYCLES IN JUDGES

| Reference | Cycle | Judge |
|------------|----------------------------|----------|
| 2:11-19 | Introduction to the Cycles | |
| 3:7-11 | First Cycle | Othniel |
| 3:12-30 | Second Cycle | Ehud |
| 4:1-5:31 | Third Cycle | Deborah |
| 6:1-8:35 | Fourth Cycle | Gideon |
| 10:6-12:7 | Fifth Cycle | Jephthah |
| 13:1-16:31 | Sixth Cycle | Samson |

Some general observations about these judges may help in better understanding the nature of their activities and leadership. The first is that the judges we see in the book of Judges were *not* kings.⁴⁷ This may seem obvious but the truth is we often view the judges as king-like in their jurisdiction. The judges functioned in ways similar to those of kings⁴⁸ but there were several significant differences: “They had less power than kings.... They governed much smaller geographic areas, often including the territories of just a few tribes. And, unlike the kings, their position of rulership was not passed on to their descendants.”⁴⁹

In addition, some of the judges ruled contemporaneously. Jephthah and Samson are a clear example. Ammonites and Philistines arose at the same time to afflict Israel (10:7). Jephthah fought Ammonites east of the Jordan River, while Samson fought Philistines to the southwest near the Mediterranean coast. Another two possible contemporaries were Tola (in the hill country of Ephraim) and Jair (from Gilead in eastern Manasseh). That the Judges sometimes overlapped follows in part because

LEADERS DURING THE JUDGES ERA

| Name | Brief Summary | Total Years (Oppression + Judgeship) |
|-----------|--|--|
| Othniel | Fought against Cushan-Rishathaim & the Mesopotamians, demonstrating a courage & faith similar to his Uncle Caleb's. | 48 (8+40) |
| Ehud | Custom-made a weapon, took advantage of his God-given uniqueness as a lefthander, and seized on a providential opportunity—all to get rid of Eglon, the obese Moabite king. | 98 (18+80) |
| Shamgar | His name suggests he might have been only part Israelite; whatever the case, he inflicted serious damage on the Philistines with a rather primitive weapon. | Not stated |
| Deborah | Exerted, as a woman, both political and spiritual influence over the tribes of Israel, even overshadowing her military commander Barak in the battle against Jabin, King of Hazor. | 60 (20+40) |
| Gideon | A doubt-filled man from the tribe of Manasseh, whom God nonetheless used to overcome severe Midianite oppression. | 47 (7+40) |
| Abimelech | Haughty son of Gideon, who proclaimed himself king. | 3 |
| Tola | A descendant of Isaachar, who dwelt in Ephraim, rescued Israel during an unknown crisis. | 23 |
| Jair | A man of Gilead, with some prosperity and prestige, since he had 30 sons, 30 donkeys, and 30 cities. | 22 |
| Jephthah | Bravely fought and defeated the Ammonites, but is perhaps better known for his “rash vow.” | 24 (18+6) |
| Ibzan | Judged from Bethlehem, but sought a wider influence by marrying his children outside of the family clan. | 7 |
| Elon | A Zebulonite about whom we have virtually no details. | 10 |
| Abdon | An Ephraimite with a staggering 70 sons and grandsons. | 8 |
| Samson | Used his powerful physical strength to battle the Philistines, but his moral weakness got the better of him. | 60 (40+20) |
| Eli | A sincerely godly man whose testimony is unfortunately marred by the ungodliness of his two sons. | Not stated |
| Samuel | The last of the judges and perhaps the judge who exercised the greatest spiritual influence. | Not stated |

Total Years: 410 years

they did not hold sway, like kings, over all of Israel. True, some judges experienced a wider sphere of influence than others. Deborah was able to garner the support of six tribes (Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali) in her defeat of Jabin and Sisera (5:14-15, 18). Four (Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh, and Ephraim) aided Gideon (6:35; 7:23). Others worked largely alone or within the confines of their own tribe. The Benjamite Ehud managed to get help from only one other tribe, Ephraim (3:27). Jephthah seems to have only led eastern Manasseh (“the elders of Gilead,” 11:5-6). Samson is something of an anomaly who accomplished what he did singlehandedly—a kind of one-man army whom even the neighboring Judahites did not support (15:9-16). We must not forget that Israel was no longer grouped at Gilgal or Shiloh in one encampment. Each tribe was busy in their own inheritance, isolated in some cases from the other tribes by mountains or other geographical phenomena.

These judges were essentially military leaders raised up and empowered by God *ad hoc* to deliver His people from the consequences of their sinful behavior. In fact, the first two judges (Othniel and Ehud) are called *deliverers* (3:9, 15). Some—such as Deborah, Eli, and Samuel—exerted a decided spiritual influence; others leave a somewhat questionable legacy. Ehud was an adventurer. Jephthah was rough and rash. Samson was a panderer. Gideon migrated from fearful insecurity to “unintentional” idolatry.⁵⁰ The text records that at least four of these judges were explicitly empowered by the Holy Spirit (Samson, astonishingly, more so than any of the others), from which we are probably to infer that all twelve were.⁵¹ Hebrews 11 includes four or five of these in the “Hall of Faith.” Perhaps there was more spiritual matter in these men (and woman) than meets the eye!

WHY THE BOOK OF JUDGES?

What are we to make of the book of Judges? Has the author left us any clue as to why he composed a book about such a dismal period of Israel’s history? The answer, in short, is yes. The author has appended two rather bizarre stories (chs. 17-18, 19-21) that reiterate the thought that he wants us to take with us when we finish his book of sordid tales.

These two stories actually portray events that took place rather early in the Judges Period. Both episodes name individuals who cannot have lived deep in the Judges Era. The “young” Levite in the first story who became an idolatrous priest for the tribe of Dan was a grandson of Moses (18:30).⁵² In the second story, Phinehas, the

grandson of Aaron, is the functioning high priest (20:28). A reasonable assumption is that both these episodes took place within fifty years of Joshua's death.

To get back to our point, the thought that the author reiterates through these two impious episodes is this: *there was no king in Israel in those days, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes*. This is, in fact, his last statement in the entire book (21:25). Why? First, it underscores the observation we made above that the judges were *not* kings, and the author wants us to feel that fact. Second, he is observing that everyone did what was right in their own eyes *because* there was no king in Israel. Which leads naturally to this: the author wants us to experience Israel's *need* for a king. Israel has no central leader such as they enjoyed under Moses and then Joshua.

In certain ways, the death of Joshua is *the event* that launched the Judges Era. Reference to his death occurs twice in the opening chapters of Judges (1:1; 2:8). His death introduces a vacuum in leadership, the effect of which the elders who outlived him could only postpone not erase (Josh. 24:31; Judg. 2:7).

When Moses died, he left behind a Joshua. When Joshua died without a clear successor, a kind of tribal leadership soon emerged. Initially, Judah was seen as a leader, but ultimately each tribe was responsible individually to possess the land which it was bequeathed. As a whole, the tribes failed. The various judges provided stop-gap help but none could provide the enduring, strong spiritual leadership that the right kind of king could. This is the last thought in the book of Judges.

Thankfully, it is not the end-all conclusion to the Judges Era. Scripture next turns our attention to the beautiful story of Ruth. Set in a time of famine in the days of the judges, the story of Ruth tells of God's surprising kindness to a hapless widow who thought her best days were behind her. At the end of the story, not only has God provided her with an unexpected *kinsman redeemer*, but He has, in a sense, provided the nation of Israel with one as well by working behind the scenes to bring forth a king for the nation.

The book of Ruth concludes with a genealogy, whose last word is *David* (Ruth 4:22). This is no accident. Once again the biblical author has pointed the way.⁵³ Where Judges showed us Israel's *need* for a king, Ruth shows how God is working behind the scenes to *provide* for that king.

Even Ruth is not the conclusion of the Judges Era. The first eight chapters of Samuel give us the final look at the Judges Era as they highlight two more of Israel's Judges, Eli and Samuel. Samuel is the last of the judges, and he *lived* the transition from the Judges era to the Israelite monarchy.

CHRONOLOGY IN THE JUDGES ERA

But where exactly does Samuel, who is not mentioned at all in the book of Judges, fit in the Judges Era? The answer is related, in part, to the larger question of the chronology of the judges. Added up, the various years of judges, oppression, and rest recorded in the book of Judges equal 410 years. However, if you recall our dates for the Conquest (1406-1399) and the start of King Saul's reign (1051), you can see immediately that we have a problem. We have only 350 years of actual time available. Furthermore, that 350 years needs to include the years from the time the Conquest ended until Joshua's death, the time needed for his generation to pass off the scene, the priesthood/judgeship of Eli, and the lengthy ministry of Samuel—all of this *in addition to the aforementioned 410 years of events in the book of Judges*. Perhaps you can better understand why many reference works refer to the “chronological problems of the Judges Era.”

Our first response is that this kind of “problem” is not unusual, but occurs often in ancient Near Eastern history as well as in later Biblical history.⁵⁴ Our real solution, however, in the case of the Judges Era is one to which we have already alluded above. Some of them ruled contemporaneously. We have already noted that the judges were, for the most part, territorial (sometimes even tribal) leaders and thus occasionally their years overlapped.

Clearly, for example, Shamgar wielded his ox-goad sometime *after* Ehud's brilliant stunt against Eglon but sometime *during* the eighty years of rest (Judg. 3:28-4:1). We mentioned above how Judges 10:7 mentions two different enemy oppressors—Ammonites and Philistines—to introduce two different but *roughly simultaneous* story lines. The first story line carries us into the life of Jephthah, who delivers Israel from the Ammonites (10:17-12:7). Judges 13 picks up the second story line with the exploits of Samson against the Philistines. These two men's judgeships evidently overlapped. That this is feasible becomes apparent if one has any grasp of biblical geography. The Philistines were emigrants from the Aegean Sea, where they clung like stubborn burrs to a small enclave of cities on the Mediterranean coastline of Palestine. The Ammonites, on the other hand, were a kingdom located in the Transjordan area. Jephthah and Samson each had ample room to fight their respective enemies without getting in each other's way.

This brings us back to Samuel's relationship to the book of Judges. Simply put, he also was probably a contemporary of Samson. Samuel and Samson shared a common enemy in the Philistines. We know that the Philistines pestered Israel for forty years (13:1). We also know that Samson only *began* to deliver Israel from the Philistines (v. 5). That is, he did not live to see the forty years come to an end.

Furthermore, his judgeship of twenty years actually fell *within* the forty years of the Philistines (15:20). Piecing all of this together, it seems possible that Samuel *finished* the deliverance from the Philistines that Samson began. The occasion, most likely, was the Battle of Mizpah (I Samuel 7:13).

Do we have any other clues to help us with the chronology of the judges? Surprisingly, our clearest chronological marker comes out of the mouth of a judge who does not strike us as the kind of man who took his history studies in school seriously. In his pre-war talk with the Ammonites, Jephthah reminds them that Israel had occupied the Transjordan area of Palestine for three hundred years (Judg. 11:26). No doubt he is rounding up (or down) a little, but it still pegs him at about 1100 BC. In turn, this places Deborah around 1200 BC and Ehud around 1300 BC. Samuel, who was old in 1051 when he anointed Saul to be king (I Sam. 8:5) and older still when he died some twenty-plus years later (25:1), was evidently born a few years before Jephthah made his three-hundred-year remark. Eli, Samuel’s aged mentor, was toddling around in diapers (or the ancient equivalent) sometime during Deborah’s forty years.

CHRONOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF THE JUDGES ERA

**Only about 350 years
(1399-1051) to
include...**

Working toward a solution

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Joshua’s final years | Joshua was older than Caleb and died not long after the Conquest. |
| Death of all Joshua’s generation | The text actually mentions the “elders” who outlived Joshua (Josh. 24:31; Judg. 2:7). This could refer to the few not included in the census who did not die in the wilderness (Num. 1:3; 14:29). Thus, their passing need not require a lengthy period of time. |
| “410 years” of Judges | Some judges overlapped so that the “410 years” of events are not 410 actual years. |
| Years of Eli’s judgeship | Eli overlapped with the other judges (he was also the high priest). |
| Samuel’s long life & ministry | Samuel was a younger contemporary of both Samson and Jephthah. Furthermore, he is the last of the judges and lives into the Monarchy Period. |

Review It

1. Why discuss the books of Joshua and Judges together?
2. What was so miraculous about the crossing of the Jordan in the first month?
3. Explain the exactness of God's timing in Israel's crossing of the Jordan River.
4. What do we mean by the "Conquest Era"?
5. What are the three parts (or campaigns) of the Conquest?
6. How long did the Conquest last? How do we know that?
7. How would you reconcile Joshua 11:23; 13:1; 18:3; and 21:45?
8. Why was it so dangerous for Israel to live among the Canaanites?
9. What do we mean by the "Cycles of the Judges"? Who are the judges of those cycles?
10. Explain what we mean when we say the 410 years in Judges were not "actual years."
11. How do Eli and Samuel fit in the Judges Era?

CHAPTER FIVE



GOD SAVE THE KING!

Date It! (All dates BC)

- Saul Anointed King 1051
- David Reigns over Judah 1011
- David Reigns over All Israel 1004
- Solomon Becomes King 971
- Death of Solomon 931

Can You Believe It?

- The discovery of a ninth-century BC stele at Tel Dan with the words “**house of David**” [*Byt-Dwd*] successfully silenced many of those who questioned the historicity of Israel’s most famous king.
- The Ekron Inscription is one of the most important archaeological finds of the twentieth century. Discovered in 1993, it proved the identity of Ekron, one of the Philistine cities. One of its five lines includes the name Ikausu or **Achish**. This is not the same Achish as the one during David’s day, but it confirms the use of the name linguistically among the Philistines.
- An archaeologist team working a small site in southern Israel discovered six bullae (clay seals used for official correspondence) that date to the tenth century (the **time of Solomon**). Many are lauding this as evidence of an official “state” in Israel during the tenth century, something many critics denied was possible.

THE TIME WHEN KINGS REIGNED over Israel is called the Monarchy Era or the Kingdom Period. It is the longest period of recorded biblical history, spanning 465 years (1051-586) and involving twenty-five of the thirty-nine books of the English Old Testament.⁵⁵ We refer to the first 120 years (1051-931), when Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned forty years, as the United Monarchy.

During this era, God made a very important covenant with David, which we refer to as the Davidic Covenant. This covenant represents a key advance in the progressive revelation of the Messiah. Previous Scripture disclosed Messiah to be human (Gen. 3:15), a descendant of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17:19-21), and a ruler of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10). In the Davidic Covenant, God declares the coming Messianic Ruler will descend from David, a fact with which the entire NT begins: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*, the Son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1).

TRANSITION TO MONARCHY

The door to Israel’s monarchy swings open in I Samuel 8 when Israel’s elders request a king. Various reasons lay at the root of their request. The reason they *state* is Samuel’s advanced age and the failure of his sons, whom he had appointed as judges, to walk in his ways (8:1-5). Clearly, though, central to their request was the desire for someone to lead them in fighting their battles (8:20; 9:16; 12:12).

For Israel to ask for a king was not inherently wrong. Hundreds of years earlier, God had promised both Abraham and Jacob that kings would descend from them (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11). The scepter, Jacob prophesied, would never depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10). Moses, foreseeing the day when Israel would request a king, had even given legislation specifically for kings (Deut. 17:14ff).

Why then Samuel’s disappointment in and God’s disapproval of their request (I Sam. 8:6-8)? The problem lay not in the request itself but in the people’s motive and timing. They wanted to be *like all the nations around them* (8:5, 20). They wished for a human leader to whom they could tie their expectations of deliverance, rather than being directly dependent on the Lord. Their timing was also evidently wrong. Samuel would go on to live for another couple decades and even appoint their next king, David, before he finally died (25:1).

In summary, it was Israel’s *impatience* with their situation that led to God’s disapproval; nonetheless, God granted their request and gave them the best available option at the time.

SAUL—THE FIRST OF ISRAEL’S KINGS

I Samuel 9 introduces us to the man who would become Israel’s first king. Israel wanted a human figure to look up to and God gave them just that in Saul, son of Kish. Saul was a full head taller than anyone around him. One’s overall picture of Saul in I Samuel 9 is positive—he obeys his father’s command to search for lost donkeys (9:3), he persists in his search when they are not immediately recovered (9:4), and he shows respect for the man of God (9:7, 10).

The next three chapters (I Samuel 10-12) describe Saul’s three “steps” to the throne. At Ramah,⁵⁶ Samuel anoints Saul to be Israel’s first king (10:1). A series of signs authenticate to Saul that he really is God’s anointed, the Spirit of God comes upon him, and he is given “another heart”⁵⁷ (I Sam. 10:9). At Mizpah, Samuel then publicly declares Saul to be Israel’s first king (10:17-24). Although some still doubted Saul’s ability to deliver them (10:27), Saul’s defeat of the Ammonite king Nahash (11:5-12) proved to a watching nation that he was God’s appointed deliverer and Israel, at Gilgal, turned out *en masse* in order to officially inaugurate the kingdom (11:15). Samuel bids the nation a touching farewell in I Samuel 12 and warns them that both they and their king will be swept away if they refuse to obey the Lord (12:25). At the moment, however, Israel is content: they have obtained what they requested, and everything seems to bode well for the future.

Saul reigned for forty years⁵⁸ (Acts 13:21) and successfully routed Israel’s enemies (I Sam. 14:47-48). Saul, however, had a fatal flaw. It is this flaw that the Scripture emphasizes in its narratives of his earlier years (I Samuel 13-15). Saul lacks complete obedience to the word of the Lord. He does not adhere to Samuel’s guidelines (I Sam. 13:8-13).⁵⁹ He lacks the courage that a true relationship with God brings (ch. 14).⁶⁰ He does not obey the Lord’s direct command to *completely* exterminate the Amalekites (ch. 15).

The consequences for Saul are disastrous: he forfeits any chance of establishing a dynasty (13:13-14), he loses the respect of his people (14:45-46), and ultimately God rejects him as being king (15:26-28). This rejection meant the loss of God’s empowering to be a king. When Samuel anointed David to be Israel’s next king, the Spirit of God left Saul and rushed upon David. From then on, Saul’s reign is overshadowed by David. Saul alternately envies, fears, stalks, and blesses him. Two chapters record Saul’s death (I Sam. 31; I Chron. 10). The latter explains why God “slew” him: Saul did not obey God, and he sought a medium instead of seeking the Lord (vv. 13-14).⁶¹ As a result, the Lord gave the Kingdom of Israel to David *ben Jesse*.

THE STORY OF SAUL, SON OF KISH

| Reference | Storyline |
|-------------------------|--|
| I Sam. 9 | Introduced and providentially directed to Samuel |
| 1 Sam. 10-12 | Pathway to the throne |
| I Sam. 13-15 | Fatal flaws disclosed |
| I Sam. 16-30 | Overshadowed by David, his successor |
| I Sam. 31 / I Chron. 10 | Death of Saul |

DAVID *BEN* JESSE—KING AFTER GOD’S OWN HEART

Even during his own reign, Saul knew that David would be his successor (I Sam. 24:20). Scripture pinpoints the key difference between the two: *Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart* (I Sam. 16:7). David will turn in some pretty impressive battlefield performances, but it is his heart that sets him apart. Saul was, in a sense, the people’s choice; David was God’s.⁶²

David becomes not just one of the most well-known figures in the Bible—his name occurs over 1100 times in the Bible—but also one of its best *loved*. From the moment he emerges as a hero after his triumph over Goliath, David is loved. Saul loves him (I Sam. 16:21). Jonathan loves him (18:1-3). Michal, Saul’s daughter, loves him (18:20). Israel and Judah love him (I Sam. 18:16). Even Hiram, king of Tyre, loved David (I Kings 5:1). How do you *briefly* summarize the story of such a figure?

David reigned for forty years (1011-971 BC): first for seven and one half years from Hebron over the tribe of Judah, and then for thirty-three years from Jerusalem over all Israel (II Sam. 5:4-5).

His story in the books of Samuel and Kings develops like this:

- Anointed “king to be” (I Samuel 16-II Samuel 1)
- Reigning king of Judah (I Samuel 2-4)
- Established king of all Israel (II Samuel 5-I Kings 1)

The chronicler's account of David divides as follows:

- Events from the reign of David (I Chronicles 11-21)
- David's preparations for Solomon to build the Temple (I Chron. 22-29)

David is first mentioned in I Samuel 16, where he is anointed as Saul's successor. His victory over Goliath catapults him to national prominence as Israel's champion. As such, he evokes the wrath of Saul, and ends up on the run for the last decade or so of Saul's reign. David meekly submits to God's direction even after Saul's death. Rather than seek for himself all of Israel, he goes first to Hebron, an important city of Judah since the days of Caleb. Over the course of the next seven years, God allows David to win over the hearts of all Israel. Mighty men, the kind that legends are made of, flock to David. They flock to him even before he was king, risk their lives for him, and stay faithful to him until the end. Israel's heart for David was evidence that God was with him (I Chron. 11-12; cf. 11:9).

When, after seven and one-half years, David became king over all Israel, he wisely realized Hebron was too far south to be viewed as a central capital and so he made Jerusalem his capital. We should not discount the possibility that David also had specific guidance from the Lord. Jerusalem was a city chosen by God. As such, David not only made Jerusalem into the political capital of Israel but worked to make it the religious one as well. He brought the ark of God into Jerusalem. He would have built the Temple itself if God would have permitted him. David transformed Saul's rustic beginnings into a real kingdom. He defeated Israel's enemies and expanded Israel's influence well beyond its actual boundaries.

The most significant event in David's life occurred when God denied him the privilege of building the Temple (II Sam. 7). Instead of allowing David to build Him a house, God decreed (unilaterally) that He would build David a house; that is, a dynasty of kings would proceed from David. Even more striking, a seed of David would sit upon his throne forever (I Chron. 17:12, 14). This is an unmistakable promise that Messiah would issue from David's roots, and the prophets hark back repeatedly to this promise (Isa. 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5; 30:9; 33:15, 17; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5; Amos 9:11). We call this promise the Davidic Covenant.

Another important but unfortunate event in the life of David was his sin with Bathsheba. This occurred about halfway through his forty years⁶³ and irreversibly turned his reign from golden years to troubled ones. His sin caused ripples in his own family—the rape of his daughter Tamar, the death of his son Amnon, and the rebellion of his son Absalom—and in the kingdom at large (e.g., Sheba's revolt, II

Sam. 20). Remarkably, David's marriage with Bathsheba produced the heir chosen by God⁶⁴ to succeed David as king and become the inheritor of the promises in the Davidic covenant.

Another sin of David—the military census he commanded (II Sam. 24; I Chron. 21)—led to an unexpected consequence. In the chastisement that followed because of David's sin, God stayed His hand of judgment against Israel while the angel was standing at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (21:15). God commanded that the place become a place of sacrifice (v. 18), and David bought it from Ornan. When David built an altar there and offered a sacrifice, the Lord answered with fire from heaven. This evidenced to David that the threshing floor of Ornan was God's appointed place to build the Temple, and he relocated the sanctuary from Gibeon to Jerusalem (21:26-22:1).⁶⁵

The purchase of the threshing floor is the conclusion to the story of David in the books of Samuel, but in Chronicles it launches the Chronicler into his grand finale about David's elaborate organization and preparation for Solomon to build the Temple (chs. 22-29). David amassed a fortune in preparation for erecting the Temple (29:1-5). God communicated to David the architectural plans that Solomon later used in building the Temple (28:11-19). David's organization of Temple priests, musicians, and doorkeepers remained in place for a thousand years (chs. 24-26).⁶⁶ Furthermore, as the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1), David authored over half of the Psalms found in our Psalter.

No wonder David is the most mentioned human figure in the Bible! He was the pattern by whom all future kings of Israel were measured (I Kings 11:4; 15:3, 11; II Kings 14:3; 16:2; 18:3; 22:2; II Chron. 11:17; 17:3; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2), he was the reason why God sometimes withheld his judgment in times of apostasy (I Kings 11:12-13; II Kings 8:19), and he is the clearest *personal*⁶⁷ type of Christ in the entire Scripture. His faithful service to God in his own generation calls us to do the same before we also join him in "falling asleep" (Acts 13:36).

SOLOMON—LAST KING OF THE UNITED MONARCHY

Solomon, David's son, like the first two kings of Israel, reigned for forty years (971-931). His forty years divide into two parts of twenty-four and sixteen years each. At the start of both, God appeared in a special way to Solomon (I Kings 11:9)—a privilege beyond what even his father had.⁶⁸ The first time was toward the beginning of his reign, when God gave Solomon the opportunity to ask for anything he wanted (3:5). Solomon chose wisdom instead of riches, fame, or long life. God

was so pleased with Solomon’s choice that He gave him riches and fame in addition to the requested wisdom. Solomon became so rich that silver was counted as nothing. He took in an astonishing twenty-five tons of gold annually, not including what he accumulated from explorations, merchandising, and tribute (10:14-15).

In the fourth year of his reign (967/966 BC), Solomon began twenty years of building projects—seven years building the Temple and thirteen years building his own palace (I Kings 1-8). The Temple he built was impressive; his throne room, with its ivory throne and twelve lions, was second to none (10:20). His kingdom ushered in a time of peace and prosperity that became a type of the future Messianic kingdom: “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon” (4:25).

After Solomon’s twenty years of building were completed, God appeared to him again. This was in answer to Solomon’s prayer for God to honor the House that he had built (9:1-3). God warned Solomon that as long as Israel followed Him, all would be well with the Temple. But if Solomon or his descendants turned to idolatries, God would make the Temple a heap of ruins (9:8). The warning seems almost prophetic.

THE STORY OF SOLOMON

| Events | References | |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| First Twenty-Four Years: Divine gift of wisdom and rise to glory | I Kings 1-8 | II Chron. 1-7 |
| Final Sixteen Years: Divine warning against apostasy and downfall | I Kings 9-11 | II Chron. 8-9 |

Solomon’s final sixteen years are not as carefully detailed in Scripture. Chronicles hints at a military campaign that extended Solomon’s power far beyond the city of Damascus (II Chron. 8:3). He built store cities and fortifications (vv. 4ff). He built a palace for his Egyptian princess-wife (I Kings 9:24). Perhaps the highlight was the state visit from the Queen of Sheba. Wealthy and wise in her own right, she left deeply impressed with all that she had seen and heard (10:1-13).

Solomon's wealth and wisdom were unrivalled, and the whole earth sought to hear his wisdom (vv. 23-24). Even Egypt, renowned for its wisdom, sang his praises (4:30). Solomon penned most of the Old Testament's wisdom literature—Job,⁶⁹ Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Unfortunately, Solomon himself laid the foundation for Judah's future apostasies. From Solomon's marriage alliance with the king of Egypt, we might have guessed that something was amiss (3:1). Solomon would go on to amass many foreign wives and love them (11:1). Over four hundred years earlier, Moses had warned future kings that multiplying wives, especially foreign ones, would turn away their heart (Deut. 17:17). Did Solomon view himself as immune to the lure of idolatry? After all, he was the wisest and wealthiest man of his day! Tragically, foreign women caused "even him" to sin (Neh. 13:26). Solomon joined his wives in their idolatry (I Kings 11:4-5). For this sin, Solomon and his kingdom would pay dearly. Adversaries raised up by God breached the perfect peace of his kingdom (vv. 14-26). In addition, God decreed that the kingdom would split during the days of his son Rehoboam and the larger part would be given to another.

Did Solomon ever recover from his apostasy? The inclusion of his writings as Scripture makes us think he did (after all, God spoke to *holy* men; II Peter 1:20-21), and the New Testament depicts him rather positively (Luke 11:31; 12:27). We know from Proverbs that a foolish man is wise in his own conceits—not even a hundred blows can shake him from his foolishness—whereas, a righteous man gets up when he falls (Prov. 12:15; 17:20; 24:16). More convincingly, Ecclesiastes reads like the memoirs of an older man who has become wiser from imprudent choices that he has made and who has realigned himself with that which matters most: contentment lived in a fear of God. Perhaps Solomon wrote Proverbs (and Song of Solomon) before his fall and Ecclesiastes after his repentance. Matthew Henry's surmise is as likely as anybody's:

The account we have of Solomon's apostasy from God, in the latter end of his reign (1 Ki. 11:1), is the tragical part of his story; we may suppose that he spoke his *Proverbs* in the prime of his time, while he kept his integrity, but delivered his *Ecclesiastes* when he had grown old (for of the burdens and decays of age he speaks feelingly ch. 12), and was, by the grace of God, recovered from his backslidings.⁷⁰

Review It

1. How many years did Israel's Monarchy Period last?
2. How many kings reigned during the "United Monarchy" and how many years did each reign?
3. Was it wrong for Israel to ask for a king?
4. Was it wrong for Israel to have a king?
5. Explain how I Samuel 16:7 pinpoints the differences between Saul and David.
6. What does the Scripture mean when it refers to David as the man after God's own heart?
7. Explain how God's grace appears even in the midst of David's sinful choices.
8. Break down Solomon's forty-year reign into its two parts and briefly summarize each. What occurred at the beginning of both?
9. What sin of Solomon led to the division of the kingdom?

CHAPTER SIX



THEN THERE WERE KINGS

Date It! (All dates BC)

- Kingdom Splits 931
- Beginning of Jehu's Reign (and Deaths of King Ahaziah of Judah and King Joram of Israel) 841
- Death of King Uzziah (and Beginning of Isaiah's Ministry) 740
- Fall of Samaria 722
- Destruction of Jerusalem 586

Can You Believe It?

- In the Tel Dan Stele, the author mentions conflict with two Hebrew Kings: Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah. If the author of the Stele is Hazael, as many believe, the Stele is an amazing corroboration of II Kings 8:27-28!
- **Omri**, of whom the Bible makes short shrift, is surprisingly one of the most oft-mentioned of all Israel's kings in ancient Near Eastern documents. His name even appears in Assyrian records years after his death. The Mesha Stele also acknowledges Omri's conquest of the Moabites.
- A very important battle in Assyrian history is the Battle of Qarqar (853) fought by Shalmaneser III against a coalition of eleven kings. On Shalmaneser's Kurkh stele, he identifies **Ahab** as one of the kings of the coalition and says Ahab sent 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers to the battle.

- The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser features King **Jehu** of Israel bowing before him and offering tribute.
- The Lachish Letters (*ca.* 588 BC) give a picture of Judah's fall that agrees with **Jeremiah 34:7**.

AS WE NOTED IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, the Monarchy Era is the longest recorded era of biblical history, lasting some 465 years (1051-586). During the first part of the Monarchy Era, Israel was one kingdom, thus rightly referred to as the United Monarchy. Three kings reigned—Saul, David, and Solomon—each for forty years (1051-931). After Solomon's death, the kingdom split into two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). This Divided Monarchy continued for about 209 years, until the Assyrians brought the Northern Kingdom to an end in 722 BC. Technically, the last part of the Monarchy Era (722-586 BC) is called the Kingdom of Judah, since Israel had ceased to exist.

Tragically, by the end of the Monarchy Era, the cumulative weight of both Judah's and Israel's repeated idolatry led to their expulsion from the Promised Land and the disintegration of both kingdoms.

THE KINGDOM SPLITS

At Rehoboam's coronation, the northern tribes came with complaints (II Chron. 10:3-4). Solomon, with all his genius for administration, had divided the nation into twelve districts, each of which was responsible to provide for the king's household for one month of the year (I Kings 4:7-19). Judah, however, was not included as one of those twelve districts, leading us to suspect that the other tribes of Israel felt bitter at the obvious favoritism. In addition, the expenditure necessary to support Solomon's sizeable royal family (1,000 wives, plus children and servants) was naturally burdensome. Rehoboam chose to ride rough-shod over Israel's complaints, and the kingdom split (II Chron. 10:13-16).

Ten tribes proclaimed a man named Jeroboam⁷¹ their first king and formed the Kingdom of Israel (or "Northern Kingdom"). Nineteen kings reigned over Israel during its 210-year history (931-722 BC). Unlike the Southern Kingdom of Judah whose kings were all of one dynasty (David's), Israel had five different dynasties.⁷²

THE STORY OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL

| Who & When (capitals = dynasty founders) | Where to Look | Followed in Jeroboam's sin? |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. JEROBOAM I (931-910) | I Ki. 12:20-14:20 | Started it! |
| 2. Nadab (910-909) | I Ki. 15:25-31 | Yes |
| 3. BAASHA (909-886) | I Ki. 15:27-16:7 | Yes |
| 4. Elah (886-885) | I Ki. 16:8-10, 12-14 | Implied |
| 5. Zimri (885) | I Ki. 16:9-20 | Yes |
| 6. OMRI (885-874) | I Ki. 16:23-28 | Yes |
| 7. Ahab (874-853) | I Ki. 16:29-22:40 | Implied |
| 8. Ahaziah (853-852) | I Ki. 22:51-53; II Ki. 1:1-18 | Yes |
| 9. Joram (852-841) | II Ki. 3:1-8:24 | Yes |
| 10. JEHU (841-814) | II Ki. 9:1-10:36 | Yes |
| 11. Jehoahaz (814-798) | II Ki. 13:1-9 | Yes |
| 12. Jehoash (798-782) | II Ki. 13:10-25; 14:8-16 | Yes |
| 13. Jeroboam II (793-753) | II Ki. 14:23-29 | Yes |
| 14. Zechariah (753) | II Ki. 15:8-12 | Yes |
| 15. Shallum (752) | II Ki. 15:10-15 | Not mentioned |
| 16. MENAHEM (752-742) | II Ki. 15:14-22 | Yes |
| 17. Pekahiah (742-740) | II Ki. 15:23-26 | Yes |
| 18. Pekah (752-732) | II Ki. 15:27-31 | Yes |
| 19. Hoshea (732-722) | II Ki. 15:30; 17:1-6 | Not mentioned |

THE STORY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH

| Who & When (capitals = measured up to David) | Where to Look | Good or Bad? |
|---|---|---------------------|
| 1. Rehoboam (931-913) | I Ki. 12:1-24; 14:21-31; II Chr. 10-12 | Mainly bad |
| 2. Abijah (913-911) | I Ki. 15:1-8; II Chr. 13 | Mainly bad |
| 3. ASA (911-870) | I Ki 15:9-24; II Chr. 14-16 | Very good |
| 4. JEHOSHAPHAT (873-848) | I Ki. 22:41-50; II Chr. 17-20 | Very good |
| 5. Jehoram (848-841) | II Ki. 8:16-24; II Chr. 21 | Very bad |
| 6. Ahaziah (841) | II Ki. 8:25-29; 9:27-29; II Chr. 22:1-9 | Very bad |
| 7. *[Athaliah (841-835)] | II Ki. 11:1-16; II Chr. 22:10-23:15 | Very bad |
| 8. Joash (835-796) | II Ki. 11:4-12:21; II Chr. 23-24 | Mainly good |
| 9. Amaziah (796-767) | II Ki. 14:1-20; II Chr. 25 | Mainly good |
| 10. Uzziah (792-740) | II Ki. 14:21-22; 15:1-7; II Chr. 26 | Mainly good |
| 11. Jotham (750-731) | II Ki. 15:32-38; II Chr. 27 | Mainly good |
| 12. Ahaz (735-715) | II Ki. 16:1-20; II Chr. 28; Isa. 7-8 | Very bad |
| 13. HEZEKIAH (729-686) | II Ki. 18-20; II Chr. 29-32; Is. 36-39 | Very good |
| 14. Manasseh (696-642) | II Ki. 21:1-18; II Chr. 33:1-20 | Very bad |
| 15. Amon (642-640) | II Ki. 21:19-26; II Chr. 33:21-25 | Very bad |
| 16. JOSIAH (640-609) | II Kings 22:1-23:30; II Chr. 34-35 | Very good |
| 17. Jehoahaz (609) | II Ki. 23:31-34; II Chr. 36:1-4 | Bad |
| 18. Jehoiakim (608-598) | II Ki. 23:34-24:6; II Chr. 36:4-8 | Bad |
| 19. Jehoiachin (598-597) | II Ki. 24:8-16; 25:27-30; II Chr. 36:9-10; Jer. 52:31-34 | Bad |
| 20. Zedekiah (597-586) | II Ki. 24:17-25:21; II Chr. 36:11-21; Jer. 37-39 | Bad |

*Not a king, but an interloping queen who reigned between Ahaziah and Joash.

Of the nineteen kings of Israel, none were really good. Virtually all fell prey to a counterfeit worship established by Jeroboam, the kingdom's first king. The capital of Israel began at Shechem (I Kings 12:25), then moved to Tirzah (14:17; 15:21; 16:15), before finding a more permanent home at Samaria (16:24).

The tribe of Benjamin joined the tribe of Judah in remaining true to Rehoboam and together they formed the Kingdom of Judah (or "Southern Kingdom"). The Kingdom of Judah, like Israel, boasted nineteen kings but they (on average) reigned longer and thus it continued 345 years (931-586 BC) before it finally fell. Of Judah's nineteen kings, eight were good kings. Four of those eight eclipsed the others by doing right according to the standard of David their father. The capital of Judah remained at Jerusalem. With the ten northern tribes in lockstep with Jeroboam and the remaining two loyal to Rehoboam, the stage and players were now set for the "Divided Monarchy."

(NK⁷³) Both kingdoms began with every opportunity to prosper. The Northern Kingdom unfortunately got off to a bad start from which it never recovered. Fearful of the political consequences if his subjects continued to travel to Jerusalem to worship, Jeroboam turned his back on God's explicit promise of an enduring dynasty (I Kings 11:38; 12:26-27). He erected two shrines, one at Dan in the far north and the other at Bethel on the road to Jerusalem. Both were calculated efforts to keep worshipers from exiting his country. These places of counterfeit worship not only brought about the downfall of Jeroboam, but the worship he established ensnared almost every future king of Israel (see chart). From the time of its first king, Israel was doomed (14:15). Jeroboam lost his chance at a "sure house." His son Nadab reigned only two years before a conspiracy exterminated Jeroboam's entire family (15:29).

(SK) The Southern Kingdom got off to a good start. Rehoboam listened to the prophet Shemaiah and desisted from attempting to re-unite the kingdom. For three years, he and Judah obeyed the Lord, and the kingdom prospered. Many of the godly in Israel chafed at Jeroboam's calf worship and immigrated to Judah (II Chron. 11:13-16). This was an additional boon to Rehoboam. But after three years, when the kingdom was established, he forsook God's law and went his own way. As punishment, God sent Pharaoh Shoshenq I, who helped himself to Solomon's golden shields. The bronze shields that Rehoboam made to replace them (I Kings 14:27) were a definite "downgrade" and served as a tragic reminder of the glory that his sin had forfeited.

(SK) When Rehoboam died, his son Abijah (or Abijam) succeeded him. His *walk* did not match his pious *talk* (cf. 15:3; II Chron. 13:4-12). His most notable

accomplishment was to dole out a crushing defeat to Jeroboam (vv. 2-20). Abijah died after a short reign of only three years.

(SK) Asa then came to the throne, the first king of Judah to measure up to the benchmark of David's spirituality (I Kings 15:11). The first part of his reign was marked by rest, righteousness, and reliance on God. Asa then turned inexplicably to self-reliance in dealing with King Baasha of Israel.

(NK) Baasha was the founder of Israel's second dynasty. Raised up by God to exterminate the entire family of Jeroboam, he foolishly adhered to the very same calf worship that brought about Jeroboam's demise. Evidently not *all* in Israel were happy with the direction the kingdom was taking for "great numbers" were pulling up stakes and migrating to Judah. Baasha decided to put an end to the mass exodus by fortifying Ramah, a city on the border between Judah and Israel (v. 17).

(SK) Asa responded to Baasha's construction project with a little maneuvering of his own. Asa paid Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria at the time, to break his treaty with Baasha and help himself to some of Baasha's northern cities. (Syria was Baasha's immediate neighbor to the north.) Asa's plan worked well. Ben-Hadad pounced on Baasha's northern flank, and Baasha retreated from Ramah. But God was not pleased. As innocent as Asa's politicking might look, God's prophet Hanani called it what it was: a failure to rely on God (II Chron. 16:7-8). Sadly, good king Asa never turned from his self-reliance (v. 12).

(NK) In Asa's twenty-seventh year, the dynasty of Baasha came to a violent end. Elah, Baasha's son, was killed by his chariot commander, Zimri, who then struck down every male friend or relative of Baasha's. The grisly end Baasha had inflicted upon Jeroboam's house boomeranged back upon his own with deadly ferocity. The parallels between Jeroboam and Baasha are too striking to miss: both (1) exalted by God *then* (2) brought to utter extinction (3) in the second year (4) of the second ruling member of their respective dynasties.

(NK) Zimri's would-be reign collapsed after only seven days, when the army chose Omri, their commander-in-chief, over him.⁷⁴ Opting to cook himself rather than *be cooked*, Zimri burned the palace down upon himself. With Zimri dead, a four-year tussle for the throne broke out between Omri and an otherwise unknown contestant named Tibni. Omri emerged victorious and founded his own dynasty.

Under Omri, Israel stabilized economically and politically. He moved the capital from Tirzah to the more defensible hill of Samaria. During his reign, Israel first shows up in the records of Assyrian kings.⁷⁵ Spiritually, though, Omri did worse than all the kings "who were before him" (I Kings 16:25, NKJV). We infer from

this statement a friendship with Ethbaal, king of Phoenicia, that opened the door for Omri's son Ahab to marry Ethbaal's daughter Jezebel. It was a matrimony destined for infamy.

(SK) When Ahab came to the throne of Israel, Asa was still reigning in Judah. (Asa's long reign overlapped with *seven* kings of Israel—Jeroboam I, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab.) Asa then died and was replaced by his son Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat, like his father Asa, was one of Judah's good kings whose walk with God is compared with David's (II Chron. 17:3). Jehoshaphat, however, blundered in one regard. During his reign, the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah first came to terms of peace (I Kings 22:44).

(NK) Like his father Omri, Ahab exhibited some military ability. He joined the alliance that stalemated Shalmaneser III at the Battle of Qarqar in 853 BC. He warred repeatedly against Syria, often with success. However, the biblical account emphasizes Ahab and Jezebel's destructive role in making Baal the god of Israel (16:31-33). It was to this godless couple that Jehoshaphat allied himself by marriage (II Chron. 18:1) when his son Jehoram wedded Athaliah, Ahab's daughter.

PROPHETIC VOICES TO THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

| Prophets | Reigning King(s) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ahijah | Jeroboam I |
| “Man of God” from Judah | Jeroboam I |
| Jehu, the son of Hanani | Baasha |
| Elijah | Ahab and Ahaziah |
| Micaiah (and others) | Ahab |
| Elisha | Jehoram, Jehu, and Jehoash |
| Amos and Jonah | Jeroboam II |
| Oded | Pekah |
| Hosea | Jeroboam II until the fall of Samaria |

(NK) About this time⁷⁶ God raised up Elijah, who presented himself before Ahab and announced a coming drought (I Kings 17:1). It was a frontal challenge against Baal, the Phoenician storm god. An epic encounter on Mount Carmel ensued, in which Yahweh showed His unrivaled supremacy over Baal. However convincing Mount Carmel was to those watching, neither Ahab nor Jezebel swerved from their allegiance to Baal. Ahab continued his battle against the prophets of Yahweh until the day of his death. They haunted him at every turn—superintending his military actions and rebuking him when he sinned. Even in death Ahab could not escape: he died in battle just as Micaiah the prophet had predicted (22:28, 37-38).

Ahab died battling the Syrians for control of Ramoth-gilead, an important city in Israel's Transjordan area. Syria, Israel's closest neighbor to the northeast, lay immediately above the Transjordan region of Israel. Syria was the most powerful kingdom in the Levant⁷⁷ in the ninth century BC, and Israel's greatest enemy. Around 900 BC Ben-Hadad, a leader remarkable both for his military vigor and long life, ascended the throne of Syria.⁷⁸ He was the king whom Asa hired to trouble Baasha (I Kings 15:18), the king who battled repeatedly against Ahab (20:1ff), and the king who afflicted Israel during the reign of Ahab's son Joram (II Kings 6:24ff). When he finally passed from the scene (8:7-15), his successor Hazael was even more successful in making life miserable for Israel.

(NK) Two sons of Ahab succeeded him to the throne. The first was Ahaziah, who mortally wounded himself in some kind of a fall and cut short what would have been another wicked reign.⁷⁹ Upon his death, his brother Joram ascended the throne of Israel. Joram would be the last of Omri's dynasty. Joram turned from his father's worship of Baal, but clung to Jeroboam's false worship (II Kings 3:2-3). He is the unnamed king of Israel (e.g., 5:5-8; 6:9, 21, 26; 7:6; 8:1-6) who interacted with the prophet Elisha and was witness to so many of the latter's miracles. Like his father Ahab, Joram warred repeatedly against Syria—first against Ben-Hadad (6:24ff), and then (once more for control of Ramoth-gilead) against Hazael (8:28). In the latter battle, Joram was wounded and went home to Jezreel to recover.

(SK) Early in Joram's reign, Jehoshaphat died. Honored and sincerely godly, he nonetheless hurt Judah by his repeated compromising friendships with the house of Ahab. His friendly relations with Ahab continued until the day of Ahab's death at Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat, in fact, accompanied Ahab to the battle that day and was nearly killed himself (I Kings 22:32-33). When he returned safely home, the prophet Jehu confronted him with a penetrating question, *Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?* (II Chron. 19:2).

PROPHETIC VOICES TO THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

| Prophets | Reigning King(s) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Shemaiah | Rehoboam |
| Azariah, Hanani | Asa |
| Jehu, Eliezer, Jahaziel | Jehoshaphat |
| Joel | Unknown ⁸⁰ |
| Obadiah | Jehoram? (addressed to Edom) |
| Zechariah | Joash |
| “A man of God” and “prophet” | Amaziah |
| Isaiah | Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, & Hezekiah |
| Micah | Jotham, Ahaz, & Hezekiah |
| Nahum | Manasseh |
| Zephaniah | Josiah |
| Habakkuk | Jehoiakim |
| Jeremiah | Josiah until the fall of Jerusalem |

Even after Ahab’s death, Jehoshaphat continued the alliance with Ahab’s house—first with Ahaziah (20:35-36) and then with Joram (II Kings 3:7). There was much good in Jehoshaphat, but his compromise flooded Judah with an evil that, in the next generation, nearly swept David’s line from his throne.

(SK) Jehoshaphat’s presence was the dam holding back the evil. When he died, his son Jehoram’s wickedness gushed out unrestrainedly. He murdered his brothers (II Chron. 21:4). He worshiped Baal—thanks to the evil wife his godly father had acquired for him (v. 6). Edom revolted against him. Philistines and Arabians successfully invaded Jerusalem and carried off his sons and wives. (This humiliation of Jerusalem may be the setting for Obadiah’s prophecy.) An agonizing disease of the bowels finally finished him off (vv. 18-20). Ahaziah, his youngest and only remaining son, took the throne of Judah, but his reign would last only one year. *Ahab* was about to be winnowed from Judah.⁸¹

(NK) Years earlier Elijah had personally confronted Ahab after the latter had stolen Naboth's vineyard. A very unpleasant conversation for Ahab followed in which Elijah announced that his dynasty would suffer the same fate as that of Jeroboam's and Baasha's (I Kings 21:17-24). That day of decreed disaster dawned in the year 841 BC. The time bomb of God's wrath against the house of Ahab reached the end of its fuse and exploded over all his members with deadly results. The concussion was first felt at Ramoth-gilead, the scene of so many battles between Syria and Israel. As mentioned above, Joram had been wounded there and had gone home to Jezreel to recover (II Kings 8:28-29). His army though was still at Ramoth-gilead, and its chief commander was a man named Jehu. To this man Jehu, Elisha sent a prophetic messenger, who privately anointed him Israel's next king (9:1-10).

(NK) If his driving is any clue, Jehu was by nature a man of swift, reckless action (v. 20). And he appears in that character now, as he races from Ramoth-gilead to Jezreel. Alarmed at Jehu's speedy approach—fearing, perhaps, disaster at Ramoth-gilead—King Joram chariots out to meet Jehu. Too late, he realized his danger; then Jehu's arrow pierced his heart (vv. 21-24).

(SK) At the very time of Jehu's coup, King Ahaziah of Judah happened to be visiting his uncle Joram. When Joram charioted out to meet Jehu, Ahaziah went with him. After Jehu's arrow ended Joram's life, Ahaziah was the next to fall (v. 27). When Ahaziah fell, he had no one capable of replacing him as king of Judah. An act of almost unbelievable rapacity followed. Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, placed herself on the throne of David and proceeded to kill every member of the royal family—including, presumably, some of her own grandchildren. (Later, we will discover she overlooked *one* of Ahaziah's sons.) As bizarre and tragic as the circumstances were, a punishing providence was at work, using not only Jehu but also Athaliah to remove every possible remnant of Ahab's kin from the face of the earth.

SHAKE-UP OF KINGDOMS (841 BC)

The year 841 is an important one in the history of the Divided Monarchy. It marks, as we have just seen, the year of Jehu's bloody coup and the end of Ahab's dynasty. It marks the beginning of a new dynasty in Israel, that of Jehu's, which will remain in power for almost ninety years. It also marks the time when David's line hung by the slenderest of threads—everything, humanly speaking, depending on the survival of the infant Joash. Even beyond the borders of Israel and Judah, however, the year 841 has some significance. It marks the approximate commencement⁸² of the lengthy forty-year reign of Hazael, king of Syria, and with it, the glory years of

Syria. With consummate skill, Hazael managed to evade the full weight of the Assyrian war machine while simultaneously expanding his borders at the expense of Jehu's dynasty. In addition, the year 841 marks Jehu's submission and payment of tribute to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III. It was Jehu's first year *and* the first time in Israel's history when one of her kings took shelter in the shadow of Assyria. That shadow would eventually engulf the entire kingdom.

(*NK*) Jehu would go on, however, to enjoy the second-longest reign of any king of Israel. In exterminating the house of Ahab and purging Baal worship from the Northern Kingdom, he had acted according to the Lord's decrees.⁸³ God rewarded Jehu with a dynastic promise—four of his descendants would sit upon the throne of Israel (II Kings 10:30). Sadly, however, Jehu stopped short of full obedience to Yahweh. He delivered Israel from its Baal worship only to return it to the golden calf worship of Jeroboam (vv. 28-29). As a result, the Transjordan area—for which Israel had battled so long—was taken away from Jehu and given to his chronic enemy, Hazael, king of Syria (vv. 32-33). In addition, Jehu's dynasty would last *only* four generations. A black cloud loomed ominously on the distant horizon.

(*SK*) In Judah, the black cloud was not distant but overhead. A queen sat on the throne of David, and Baal was the official “god of State.” By all appearances, David's line was no more and certainly would have been, if not for the high priest, Jehoiada, and his wife Jehosheba, who had risked all in hiding an infant son of Ahaziah's named Joash. God, as always, has His plans in place and the turbulence of the times in no way endangers His promises. After six long years of Athaliah, Jehoiada decided the time was right and produced seven-year-old Joash. Athaliah was killed, to the great rejoicing of Judah, and a descendant of David once again sat upon David's throne. Jehoiada mentored Joash during his early years, and Joash did right as long as Jehoiada was alive (II Kings 12:2).

(*NK*) About halfway through the forty-year reign of the “boy-king” Joash, King Jehu of Israel died and to the throne came his son Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz, like virtually all Israel's kings before him, continued in Jeroboam's calf worship. During his reign, the oppression from Syria—first from Hazael and then from Hazael's son Ben-Hadad—became almost unbearable, and he cried out to the Lord for help. God mercifully answered and, toward the end of Jehoahaz' reign, sent Israel a “savior” (13:5). Identifying this unnamed “savior” remains somewhat baffling, but it probably refers to Adad-nirari III, an Assyrian king who during his reign began putting pressure on Damascus and the wily Hazael.

(*SK*) When we last left Joash, he was still under the tutelage of Jehoiada and his reign was a genuinely spiritual one. But Jehoiada, one of Judah's greatest citizens,

eventually died, after which Joash showed his true colors by apostatizing (II Chron. 24:17-18). God chastised Joash by sending none other than the ubiquitous Hazael, who succeeded in seizing the Philistine city of Gath on Judah's western borders. Hazael's presence so traumatized King Joash that he emptied the kingdom's coffers in order to buy him off (II Kings 12:17-18). Unfortunately, Joash continued spiritually obdurate, even killing Zechariah, the son of his former mentor Jehoiada. In response, God again sent the Syrians,⁸⁴ who breached Jerusalem, killed a number of officials, and severely wounded Joash. His servants then conspired against him, killed him, and his son Amaziah succeeded him to the throne.

(NK) Before King Joash of Judah died, another king by the same name began to reign in Israel. We will call him Jehoash so as to distinguish him from Joash, but his name is identical. (This is the third time we have had kings of the same name in both kingdoms.) It was his father (Jehoahaz) who had suffered terribly at the hands of Syria, until God appointed him a "savior" (13:5). Jehoash, more than his father, was the beneficiary of that deliverance. He conquered the Syrians on three separate occasions and recouped from them the Israelite cities that they had taken from his father (v. 25). Elisha died during Jehoash's reign, and even though Jehoash walked in Jeroboam's sins, he knew that Elisha had been Israel's greatest weapon (v. 14).

(SK) Jehoash's contemporary was Amaziah, king of Judah, who came to the throne in Jehoash's second year (14:1). Amaziah was a half-heartedly good king, and his reign contains the curious mixture of good and evil that is always the fruit of such a divided heart. Particularly nonsensical were his dealings with the Edomites, whom he defeated and then whose gods he proceeded to esteem (II Chron. 25:14). His success against them emboldened him to try his hand against Jehoash, king of Israel, who captured him and broke down six hundred feet of Jerusalem's wall (v. 23). Amaziah never fully recovered his throne after this event. Both Kings and Chronicles report that he *lived* fifteen years after the death of Jehoash—not *reigned* but *lived* (II Kings 14:17; II Chron. 25:25). During this time, his son Uzziah was his co-regent (and possibly even *regent*). A conspiracy against him eventually caught up with him in Lachish, where he was put to death (v. 27).

(NK) When Jehoash of Israel died, his son Jeroboam II came to the throne and ushered the kingdom into a time of unprecedented expansion and prosperity. The forty years of Jeroboam II were the greatest of the entire Northern Kingdom. He continued his father's expansion, inflating Israel's borders north toward Hamath (II Kings 14:25). Neither Syria⁸⁵ nor Assyria were strong enough to be a threat to Israel. Israel and Judah seem to have been at peace with each other, and Judah itself was enjoying a golden age under Uzziah.

(NK) Jeroboam II succeeded because of God’s decision to have compassion upon suffering Israel (vv. 26-27). The prophet Jonah—the same one who preached to Nineveh—had actually predicted Jeroboam II’s successes (v. 25). Unfortunately, God’s goodness did not lead Jeroboam II to repentance. His kingdom was large and prosperous but wicked. He continued in the sins of his namesake, Jeroboam I. During his reign, the prophet Amos confronted Israel’s social sins and warned of coming exile (5:27; 6:7; 7:11, 17).

Hosea also began his ministry during Jeroboam II’s reign. His wife’s adulterous heart mirrored the spiritually adulterous heart of idolatrous Israel (1:2). A large and memorable earthquake during Jeroboam II’s reign (ca. 760) was perhaps another divine warning to hopefully shake the kingdom to its senses (Amos 1:1). It was not to be! Instead, the time had come to punish the house of Jehu (of which Jeroboam II was a member) and to bring the Kingdom of Israel to a close (Hos. 1:4). The end of Israel was now in sight.

(SK) Judah, however, as we have mentioned, was entering into a golden age under King Uzziah. Uzziah (also known as Azariah) sought the Lord and walked in a fear of Him (II Chron. 26:4-5). God turned his enemies into tributaries, and he became very strong and prosperous (v. 15). What eventually felled the mighty Uzziah was not an enemy without but an enemy within: his pride (v. 16). He arrogated to himself the priestly prerogative to enter the holy place and offer incense. God struck the haughty Uzziah with leprosy. He spent his final ten years (ca. 750-740) in isolation while his son Jotham “governed the people of the land” (v. 21).

(NK) Those ten years were no doubt tough on Uzziah but they were even tougher on Israel. In 753, Jeroboam II finished his illustrious and long reign, and Zechariah his son succeeded him to the throne. God had promised Jehu only four generations, and the hands of God’s clock ticked quickly to make the fourth (Zechariah) a short one. After only six months, Zechariah—and the dynasty of Jehu with him—fell into the hands of a conspirator by the name of Shallum. Shallum, son of Jabesh, could only hold the throne for one month before falling himself into the hands of the assassin, Menahem, the son of Gadi.

(NK) Menahem’s ten-year reign (752-742) began with a show of excessive cruelty against those that had opposed his accession (II Kings 15:16). Perhaps this was, in part, Menahem’s response to some exasperating circumstances. Not all of Israel had hailed him as king and, in fact, a man named Pekah had set up a rival kingdom in the Transjordan area.⁸⁶ Israel *itself* divided into two. Hosea, who lived through these turbulent times, suggests as much when he alludes to both Israel *and* Ephraim (5:5).

(NK) Toward the end of his reign, Menahem was forced to pay Tiglath-pileser III (“Pul,” KJV) a large tribute payment equivalent to about 37 tons of silver. Possibly, Menahem intended the tribute payment to “confirm the kingdom in his hand” (II Kings 15:19) vis-à-vis Pekah in the Transjordan.⁸⁷ Pekah may have feigned submission to Menahem at this time in exchange for a position as a military officer of some kind (15:25). Menahem died shortly after, and his son Pekahiah followed him to the throne. When the timing seemed right, Pekah crossed the Jordan River with fifty hand-picked Gileadite soldiers, slew Pekahiah, and proclaimed himself king of all Israel (v. 25). The year was 742 BC.

ASSYRIAN KINGS AND THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

| Assyrian King | Clashes with the Northern Kingdom |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Ashurnasirpal II (883-859) | Marched as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. Unclear whether Omri paid him tribute, but for the first time Israel is mentioned in Assyrian records. |
| Shalmaneser III (858-824) | Stalemated by Ahab and an alliance of eleven kings at the Battle of Qarqar in 853, but King Jehu sent him tribute in 841. |
| Adad-nirari III (810-783) | Believed to be the “savior” of Jehoahaz . Jehoash paid tribute to him about 796 BC. |
| Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) | Received tribute from Menahem . Captured and exiled large segments of northern Israel, including Galilee, during Pekah ’s reign. Also known as “Pul” (or Tiglath-pilneser) in the Bible. |
| Shalmaneser V (727-722) | Imprisoned Hoshea , the last king of Israel, and brought about the fall of Samaria. |
| Sargon II (722-705) | Evidently finished up some of the repopulating of Israelites to other places after the fall of Samaria. |
| Esarhaddon (681-669) | His repopulating of peoples in and out of “Samaria” marks the ending point of the 65 years of Isa. 7:8; cf. Ezra 4:2. |

THE BEGINNING OF ASSYRIA'S GREATNESS (CA. 740 BC)

The years right around 740 BC were years of transition for Israel, Judah, and the ancient Near East. The year 743 was the year that Tiglath-pileser III first campaigned against Syria and began to bully the whole region into submission. Assyria was the “axe” appointed by God to topple the Northern Kingdom, and Tiglath-pileser III began the process. The next one hundred years would be Assyria’s greatest. It was in 742, as we have observed, that Pekah crossed over from the Transjordan, liquidated Pekahiah, and began his reign as sole monarch of Israel. This may be the time when Pekah and the Syrian king Rezin struck up the friendship that ultimately blossomed into the anti-Assyrian “Pekah-Rezin” alliance (735-732). Right around the year 740 was also when King Uzziah died, and the year in which the “prince of prophets,” Isaiah, began his long ministry spanning about sixty years (Isa. 6:1). It was also the year that Jotham, the son of Uzziah, began his “sole” reign.

(SK) Not a lot is recorded about Jotham’s reign. Jotham followed his father’s good ways but avoided his bad ones (such as entering the Temple without authorization). Jotham, however, could not turn the people of Judah from their corrupt ways (II Chron. 27:2). This is perhaps the reason that Micah began his prophetic ministry during Jotham’s reign (Mic. 1:1). Jotham reigned officially for sixteen years but is credited with twenty (cf. II Kings 15:30, 33). It may be that the threat of the Pekah-Rezin alliance (15:37) led Jotham to make his son Ahaz regent with him before his death.

(SK) Ahaz brought Judah to a level of idolatry unparalleled in its history. He is the first king of Judah *or* Israel who practiced child sacrifice. Syria, Israel, Edom, Philistia, and Assyria all took their turns pummeling Ahaz’s Kingdom of Judah without shaking him from his spiritual bankruptcy. “In the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that King Ahaz” (II Chron. 28:22, NKJV). The greatest threat Ahaz faced during his reign was the Pekah-Rezin alliance (Isa. 7). The Pekah-Rezin alliance was an effort by the nations of the Levant to present a united front to the growing threat of Tiglath-pileser III. Syria and Israel were the leaders, but other kingdoms had joined in. When Ahaz refused to join the alliance, they attacked, with the express goal of deposing Ahaz (Isa. 7:6). God had not been slow to punish Ahaz on many occasions, but He now moved to protect the house of David from extinction. He sent Isaiah the prophet to alleviate Ahaz’s fears and assure him that Pekah and Rezin were nothing but two “smoldering stumps of firebrands” (Isa. 7:4, ESV).

True to God’s promise, the Pekah-Rezin alliance sputtered and died. They were unable to take Jerusalem or unseat Ahaz, and within two years both of them were

political history (Isa. 8:4). In 732 BC, Tiglath-pileser III captured Damascus, deported its inhabitants, and killed Rezin. In the same campaign, Tiglath defeated Pekah and took most of northern Israel, including Galilee, into captivity (II Kings 15:29). Perhaps this is one reason Hosea sometimes refers to Israel as “Ephraim” (Hosea 7:8)—that was about all the Northern Kingdom had left! Shortly after Tiglath’s conquest, Hoshea conspired against and killed Pekah (II Kings 15:30).

(NK) Hoshea’s reign of nine years was Israel’s last. He was actually one of the better of Israel’s bad kings (17:2) but lived his entire reign in the shadow of Assyria’s expanding empire. When the mighty Tiglath-pileser died about five years into Hoshea’s reign, Hoshea outwardly submitted to Shalmaneser V, Tiglath’s son, and paid him tribute. Evidently though his heart was not in it, and when he thought he could get away with it, Hoshea foolishly turned traitor and sought help from Egypt (possibly from Pharaoh Osorkon IV; “So,” KJV). It was futile. After all, Assyria was the rod of *God’s* anger and the staff in their hands was *God’s* fury (Isa. 10:5). His patience exhausted, Shalmaneser V threw Hoshea into prison (II Kings 17:4). “*All their kings are fallen,*” Hosea testifies (7:7). Shalmaneser then besieged the city of Samaria, destroyed it three years later in 722 BC, and scattered the remaining Israelites all over Assyria and Mesopotamia.⁸⁸ The few survivors who remained in the land intermingled with the various Gentile peoples that Assyria resettled into the land of Israel. The resulting mixed race was the predecessor of the Samaritans, whom the Jews of Jesus’ day detested and treated as mongrel dogs. The Kingdom of Israel had ceased to exist.

(SK) It was during the reign of King Hezekiah⁸⁹ that Hoshea was carted away to prison and Samaria fell to the Assyrians. Hezekiah, one of the godliest kings of Judah, reigned under some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. Thanks to the wickedness of his father Ahaz, he inherited a Judah that had been thrashed and beaten (Isa. 1:6-7). Furthermore, Ahaz had plunged Judah deep into idolatry and had sold out to the Assyrians. Judah was, for all purposes, a vassal of the Assyrian empire.

The very first thing Hezekiah did as sole king of Judah (715) was to put the Temple back in working order (II Chron. 29). He then issued an invitation to *all* Israel and Judah to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem. The few of Israel’s remnant who responded joined the assembly of Judah and enjoyed a time of celebration that the nation had not seen since the days of Solomon (30:26).

Politically, Hezekiah was the reverse of his father and threw off the yoke of Assyria (II Kings 18:8). His decision was severely tested in 701 BC, when Sennacherib invaded Judah and systematically destroyed its fortified cities. Even Lachish,

second in fortifications only to Jerusalem, fell before the mighty Assyrian war machine.⁹⁰ In a stumble of faith, Hezekiah sent Sennacherib the payment he demanded in an attempt to buy protection for Jerusalem (II Kings 18:14-16). Sennacherib accepted the gift but moved relentlessly upon Jerusalem (v. 17). Hezekiah repented, headed to the Temple (which he had just stripped of its gold), and sent an urgent message to Isaiah (19:1-4). In answer to Hezekiah's prayers, an angel of Yahweh killed 185,000 of Sennacherib's soldiers, and he fled home with his tail between his legs like a whipped dog (19:35).

ASSYRIAN KINGS AND THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

| Assyrian King | Clashes with the Southern Kingdom |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) | Ahaz refused to join any alliance against him and paid him a large sum of money in order to obtain protection. |
| Sargon II (722-705) | Mentioned in Isa. 20:1 with reference to his conquest of Ashdod (Philistia). Hezekiah , in spite of his anti-Assyrian stance, managed to keep out of Sargon's cross-hairs. |
| Sennacherib (705-681) | His 701 BC invasion of Judah crippled it significantly and only God's supernatural intervention spared Jerusalem (and Hezekiah) from destruction. |
| Ashurbanipal (668-627) | Imprisoned Manasseh in Babylon (and then returned him to his throne). During his reign, Assyria conquered Thebes, an event to which Nahum refers (Nah. 3:8). |
| Ashur-uballit II (612-609) | The Assyrian king that Pharaoh Necho II was on his way to help when Josiah unwisely intervened and was killed. |

As if Sennacherib's invasion was not worry enough, Hezekiah had evidently been deathly ill sometime shortly before (20:1). If we are correct in proposing that Hezekiah died in 686 BC, then the last fifteen years of his life would have been 701-686. He was therefore sick shortly before Sennacherib's 701 invasion, and his prayer of desperation was heard and recovery granted in the same year of

Sennacherib's ferocious assault upon Judah. Perhaps no king of Judah was ever tested in the crucible of such extremely challenging circumstances. His response was not perfect, but God commended Hezekiah highly: "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *any* that were before him" (18:5).

Manasseh followed his father, Hezekiah, to the throne, and perhaps a son was never more opposite his father. Manasseh undid all the good his father had labored so hard to bring about (21:3). Like his grandfather, Ahaz, Manasseh burned his children in the fire and proliferated altars of pagan worship (vv. 4-7). Manasseh refused to listen to God's voice of correction through His prophets and is, according to tradition, the perpetrator for having Isaiah "sawn asunder" (Heb. 11:37). History or Scripture has not recorded whether he committed any similar atrocities against Nahum the prophet, who uttered his prophecies against Nineveh during his reign. Manasseh's wickedness was so great that God's decision to punish the Kingdom of Judah became unalterable (II Kings 21:11-14; 23:26). Late in his reign,⁹¹ Manasseh was taken into captivity, where he (surprisingly) repented and was restored to his kingdom (II Chron. 33:11-13). His remaining years were few, however, and his change of heart evidently made no impact upon his son, Amon, who followed him to the throne about 642 BC.

Amon's reign was wicked but mercifully brief. Conspirators placed him in an early grave and set his son Josiah on the throne of Judah. Josiah's reign was Judah's last highlight. He was the last king to walk in the ways of David (II Kings 22:2). Astonishingly Josiah began his reign without any access to the Law of the Lord. When, at twenty-six years of age, he first heard the Book of the Law, he turned to it with all his heart and persuaded Judah to join him (23:1-3). He celebrated a Passover that surpassed even that of Hezekiah's almost one hundred years earlier (II Chron. 35:18). He was privileged to have godly mentors in the form of two writing prophets, Zephaniah (1:1) and the better-known Jeremiah, who began his ministry about 627 BC in Josiah's thirteenth year (Jer. 1:1).

THE BIRTH OF THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE (626 BC)

The year(s) 627/626 marks another one of those important transition years that deserves a brief mention. The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal died in 627 BC. During his long reign (668-627), Assyria became the largest empire in world history to that time. Even the ancient Egyptian city of Thebes fell to the Assyrians during Ashurbanipal's time—an event referenced in the prophecy of Nahum (3:8; "No,"

KJV, is Thebes). When Ashurbanipal died, civil wars broke out from which Assyria never really recovered. Ashurbanipal's death marks the end of Assyria's "century of greatness."

In addition, the year 626 is when Nabopolassar dared to challenge Assyria's hold on Babylon. He claimed Babylon's throne for himself, allied himself with the Medes, and founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire. His son, Nebuchadnezzar II, would become the empire's shining star. As early as 627/626 BC, an astute observer of the times might have seen the handwriting on the wall for the Kingdom of Assyria, and the power that would emerge to fill its place in the ancient Near East.

The year 627/626 was important for another reason. It was the year that Jeremiah began his long but tumultuous ministry (Jer. 1:1-2). Perhaps his easiest years were those that coincided with Josiah's reign (640-609 BC). After Josiah, Judah's remaining kings were all evil and quickly plunged the kingdom into a spiritual and political quagmire that sucked the life out of it.

But all of this was still future in 627 BC. Josiah's reign was still on the rise, his reformer's spirit about to spill over the boundaries of Judah into what was formerly the Kingdom of Israel, where he would defile every high place and pagan altar he encountered (II Kings 23:15-20). Not even Josiah, however, could alter God's fixed purpose of punishing Judah for Manasseh's sins (v. 26).

God's mercy to Josiah was in removing him before the punishment fell (II Chron. 34:28). In an event shrouded somewhat in mystery, Josiah was killed in battle against the Egyptian pharaoh, Necho II.⁹² Necho was actually on his way to Carchemish to fight a battle whose outcome would reverberate throughout the ancient Near East. (We know it as the Battle of Carchemish, in which Nebuchadnezzar defeated the combined forces of Assyria and Egypt, and Babylon became the uncontested power of its day.) Josiah's attempt to stop Necho was unsuccessful, and he paid for it with his life (II Kings 23:29).

Three sons of Josiah followed him to the throne, all of them evil. The first, Jehoahaz, reigned only three months before being taken captive to Egypt (II Chr. 36:1-3). Then Pharaoh Necho put his brother Jehoiakim on the throne. His eleven-year reign was one of cruelty and oppression that frustrated the sensitivities of the prophet Habakkuk and led him to prayer (1:2-4). God's answer further exacerbated Habakkuk's frustrations: God would use the Babylonians to deal with Jehoiakim and Judah (1:6). Not even Jehoiakim's calloused burning of Jeremiah's words could change his future (Jer. 36:29-30). Come the Babylonians did in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish and then

chased the Egyptians south. In the process, he forced Jehoiakim into submission (but left him on his throne).⁹³ Nebuchadnezzar carried away some of the Temple vessels and deported some of Jehoiakim’s leading citizens, including Daniel and his three friends (Dan. 1:1-2).

NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

| Date | Event |
|--------|--|
| 605 BC | King Jehoiakim submits to Nebuchadnezzar; Daniel (and many others) are taken captive to Babylon. |
| 597 BC | King Jehoiachin carried away to Babylon as a captive, along with many others (including Ezekiel). |
| 586 BC | King Zedekiah is blinded and taken captive to Babylon. Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed; The Kingdom of Judah ceases to exist. |
| 582 BC | About 4,600 persons are carried away captive (Jer. 52:30). |

Jehoiakim turned traitor after about three years (II Kings 24:1)—when Nebuchadnezzar’s 601 invasion of Egypt failed—but died before Nebuchadnezzar could deal with him. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar’s wrath fell upon Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim’s son, who was deported to Babylon in 597 BC (II Chron. 36:10). Also deported at this time was the prophet Ezekiel who consistently dates his various prophetic oracles to the years of Jehoiachin’s exile (Ezek. 1:2). Jeremiah delivered God’s words to Judah all during these unsettled years but his voice was largely unheard.

Among those who refused to give heed to Jeremiah’s words was Judah’s last king, Zedekiah (II Chron. 36:11-12). Zedekiah was actually another son of Josiah and the uncle of Jehoiachin, whom Nebuchadnezzar had deported to Babylon. Zedekiah was a weak king, largely controlled by Jerusalem’s elite, who vacillated according to the prevailing political winds. When he broke his treaty with Nebuchadnezzar, to which even God held him accountable (II Chron. 36:13), and looked to Egypt for help, Nebuchadnezzar decided that he had had enough and marched against Jerusalem once again. Even in Jerusalem’s last days, Zedekiah was given another chance. If he would submit to the Babylonians, the city would not be burned and he would not lose his throne. Otherwise, Zedekiah would become Babylon’s

hostage and Jerusalem would fall. Fear of reprisals from his own people, however, kept Zedekiah from banking on God's promises (Jer. 37:17-23). He ends pathetically. Cowardly running away the night that Jerusalem was breached, Zedekiah was captured by the Babylonians, exactly as Jeremiah had foreseen. He watched helplessly as his sons were cruelly butchered, and then his own eyes were put out (39:4-7). His end fulfilled Ezekiel's prophecy exactly: he would *go* to Babylon but not *see* it (Ezek. 12:13).

Nebuchadnezzar burned the Temple down and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. The monarchy of Judah had come to an end. Judah had so despised God's words that they had brought down upon them His wrath until "there was no remedy" (II Chron. 36:16). Seventy years of captivity were decreed upon the land (v. 21). Had God's purposes ended for His people? Specifically, were His promises to David null and void? Our last picture (in both Kings and Jeremiah) tells us otherwise. Jehoiachin's unexplainable exaltation in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity (II Kings 25:27-30) is surely a portent of good things ahead for the line of David, a suggestion that God had not abandoned His sure mercies to Jesse's son. Night had fallen upon David's throne but a morning would rise when the booth of David would be rebuilt as in days of old and the nations would take shelter in its shadow (Amos 9:11-12).

Review It

1. What complaint did the Northern Kingdom have against Solomon and the house of David?
2. What are the other names for the “Northern Kingdom” and the “Southern Kingdom”?
3. How many kings ruled in each of the two kingdoms?
4. What sin did almost every king of the Northern Kingdom commit?
5. What Gentile nation did God use to send the Northern Kingdom into captivity in 722 BC?
6. Who were the four best kings of Judah?
7. During whose reign did God’s decision to punish Judah become “unalterable”?
8. Name some of the prophets God used to speak to the Northern Kingdom.
9. Name some of the prophets God used to speak to the Southern Kingdom.
10. Explain how the time period around 740 BC was a time of transition in Israel, Judah, and the ancient Near East.
11. What significant events took place around 627/626 BC?
12. What Gentile nation did God use to bring an end to the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC?

CHAPTER SEVEN



EXILE AND RETURN

Date It! (All dates BC)

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| • Cyrus' Decree | 538 |
| • First Return | 537 |
| • Temple Finished | 515 |
| • Story of Esther | 482-473 |
| • Second Return (Ezra) | 458 |
| • Third Return (Nehemiah) | 445 |

Can You Believe It?

- The “Verse Account of Nabonidus” (an ancient cuneiform text) describes **Belshazzar** as the oldest son of King Nabonidus, entrusted with authority to run the kingdom. This explains why he offered **Daniel** the position of *third* ruler in the kingdom (Dan. 5:29).
- The Persian Empire reached its zenith during the reign of **Darius I** (522-486). He established a network of roads that enabled royal couriers to travel the 2700 kilometers (1700 miles) from Asia Minor to the imperial seat in Susa in only one week. Fire signal relays from mountaintop to mountaintop communicated messages requiring greater urgency.
- **Vashti**, wife of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), is known in history as Amestris. Her son, Artaxerxes I, was possibly born the same year as the grand feast of Xerxes recorded in Esther 1. If so, one reason for Vashti not appearing before the king may have been that she was pregnant.

- A cache of silver vessels found in Egypt contains an inscription that alludes to “Gashmu,” king of the Qedarite Arabs. This “Gashmu” is the **Geshem** mentioned in Nehemiah who was one of the chief opponents of the reconstruction efforts (Neh. 2:19; 6:1-2).

WE SOMETIMES REFER TO THE Babylonian Captivity as the Babylonian Exile, the Exilic Period, or the Seventy Years Captivity. Jeremiah the prophet had predicted that the Babylonian Captivity would last seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10). This was not a popular message. Even during Zedekiah’s reign, there was wishful thinking on the part of some that God would shortly break the yoke of Babylon from off Judah’s shoulders (28:1-4). It was a blatantly false message, and one false prophet who uttered it was struck dead the same year he spoke it (v. 17). Jeremiah’s counsel was instead that the exiles were to build houses in Babylon and otherwise seek the welfare of the city where they were living (29:7). Seventy years were to pass before God would again bring them back to the land of Judah (vv. 10-13).

EXILIC LIFE IN JUDAH—FURTHER DISINTEGRATION

With the deportation of Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, the Kingdom of Judah ceased to exist. However, Judean remnants continued in the land, primarily made up of the poor (II Kings 25:12). To oversee these remnants, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a man by the name of Gedaliah to act as governor of the area (v. 22). Gedaliah was from a well-known family. His father Ahikam had supported Jeremiah (Jer. 26:24), and so Nebuchadnezzar felt Gedaliah could be trusted as his deputy in the land. Jeremiah backed Gedaliah (40:6), and even some Judean guerilla leaders and other refugees seemed comfortable with his leadership (vv. 7-11).

Unfortunately, what could have developed into a peaceful exilic community there in Judah was nipped in the bud by a certain naiveté on Gedaliah’s part. A descendant of David named Ishmael (41:1) was in cahoots with the Ammonite king, Baalis, to assassinate Gedaliah and revive the Kingdom of Judah. Gedaliah did not listen to the cautions of Johanan, a key Judean guerrilla leader, and was assassinated. Ishmael avoided apprehension by escaping to Ammon (41:11-15).

Johanan and the Jewish remnant then came to Jeremiah for counsel as to whether they should flee to Egypt or stay in Judah (42:1-3). At issue, of course, was fear of

what Nebuchadnezzar would do to them since his appointed governor had been killed. The Jewish remnant's request seemed sincere but, as circumstances would shortly prove, it was not.⁹⁴ When Jeremiah counseled them to stay in the land of Judah and not fear Nebuchadnezzar (42:7-12), Johanan and all the leaders accused Jeremiah of lying about what God had told him. They gathered all remaining fragments of the Jewish populace and marched off to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them (43:5-6). Our last "picture" of Jeremiah is of his being dragged down to Egypt against his will and against the word of the Lord. We assume he died there.

Johanan and company's retreat into Egypt is almost a reverse Exodus. Israel had left the land of Goshen in Egypt in 1446, about 860 years before. Now, in 586, the remaining vestiges of the Jewish nation journey to Tahpanhes, not far from the area of Goshen. This incident illustrates once again the fierce rebellion of Judah to the word of the Lord as voiced through His faithful prophets. Even after the fiery end to their beloved city of Jerusalem, God's people will still not listen to His voice. It demonstrates the necessity of the Babylonian Captivity. Judgment had to fall upon such a rebellious people (5:7-9), and even the godly in the nation would feel it.

Jeremiah understood and agreed with God's verdict of judgment but wept over it (9:1-10). He lived through the horrendous events of Jerusalem's fall and, although himself righteous, suffered along with his people because of their sins. His book, Lamentations, a response to Jerusalem's fall, gives us a window into the emotions that he and so many others felt during Judah's darkest hours.

EXILIC LIFE IN BABYLONIA—DANIEL AND EZEKIEL

Both Ezekiel and Daniel lived out their exilic years in Babylon. Daniel and his three friends were taken captive during Nebuchadnezzar's first campaign against Jerusalem in 605 (Dan. 1:1-6). All four were evidently from the tribe of Judah and possibly part of the extended royal family (vv. 3, 6). Daniel spent the remainder of his life in Babylon, where he rose to prominence in the kingdom because of his exemplary service and walk with God.

Daniel lived the entire seventy years of the Captivity (9:2).⁹⁵ When he perceived the seventy years were up, he prayed and asked the Lord not to delay extending mercy upon the city of Jerusalem (vv. 17-19). That was in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, whom we will shortly meet in more detail.

The few episodes recorded in Daniel 1-6 give us a little picture of what life was like in exile. It shows how the Jewish exiles could be used of God, even in Babylon,

and it discloses some of the unique challenges that they faced and the great temptations to compromise. Daniel 7-12 records four prophecies given to Daniel during his years in Captivity. These prophecies reveal God's sovereign purpose for the Gentile nations, the great struggles ahead for His people the Jews, and the coming of a future Messianic kingdom.

Ezekiel also lived his life in exile. Of priestly lineage, he was taken captive to Babylonia about eight years after Daniel and lived until at least 570 BC (29:17). Ezekiel and Daniel may have been about the same age. Ezekiel was thirty years of age in 592 (Ezek. 1:1-3). If Daniel were about sixteen when he was taken captive in 605, he also would be about thirty years old in 592. The two knew of each other, since Ezekiel refers to Daniel in his book (14:14, 20). Ezekiel, however, did not live in the city of Babylon as Daniel did but lived south in the area of ancient Nippur (1:3).

Ezekiel reveals that even in exile the elders of Israel were by and large idolatrous (14:1-8). A deep work of purging still needed to be done (20:34-38). Ezekiel was mute until the day he received news of Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians (33:22); before that fateful day, only when given a direct word from the Lord was he able to speak (3:27). Like so many of God's prophets, his life mirrored the message he was preaching: the delight of his eyes, his wife, died at the very same time that Jerusalem, the delight of Israel's eyes, was fatally besieged by the Babylonians (ch. 24).

THE RESTORATION ERA

Just as God had promised, Judah began to return to the Promised Land after His decreed seventy years. The time of the Jewish return to the Promised Land is called the Restoration Era or the Post-Exilic Era. The former name communicates that their return to the Land was a time of rebuilding, since the city of Jerusalem and many other Jewish institutions had been destroyed. "Post-exilic" indicates that it is a section of biblical history that takes place after the Babylonian exile. Three historical books (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther) and three prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) tell the story of the Restoration Period.

The natural starting point for discussing the Restoration Era is Daniel's prayer in chapter nine of his book. An aged Daniel (possibly in his mid- to upper-80s) realizes, from his reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, that the seventy years of Israel's captivity have ticked away and he earnestly takes the matter to the Lord in prayer (9:1-19).

RESTORATION ERA AT A GLANCE

| Date | Event | Reference |
|-------------|---|------------------|
| 538-515 | First Return: rebuilding of Temple | Ezra 1-6 |
| 482-473 | Interlude: Story of Esther | Esther 1-10 |
| 458 | Second Return: back to the Law of God | Ezra 7-10 |
| 445 | Third Return: Jerusalem's walls rebuilt | Nehemiah 1-6 |
| 445-433 | Nehemiah's first term as governor | Nehemiah 7-12 |
| ca. 430 | Nehemiah's second term as governor | Nehemiah 13 |

The timing of Daniel's prayer is the "first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of Median descent" (Dan. 1:1). This "Darius the Mede" is first mentioned in Daniel 5:31 as the man who received the Kingdom of Babylon on the night that Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians.⁹⁶ The fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians marks a major transition in the ancient Near East, similar to the Battle of Carchemish in 605, when the balance of power irreversibly shifted from the Assyrians to the Babylonians. The fall of Babylon to Cyrus, king of Persia, in October of 539 marks the beginnings of what is called the Medo-Persian or Persian Empire. The Persian Empire is the setting of the Jewish Restoration Era. The biblical books that tell the story of the Restoration Period mention the names of several Persian kings. The events of the Restoration Era are inextricably interwoven with the history of these Persian kings.

THE EDICT OF CYRUS AND THE FIRST RETURN

The first king of the Persian Empire was Cyrus II, known in history as Cyrus the Great. Already King of Persia when he conquered Babylon, his conquest of Babylon catapulted his kingdom to empire status. It was in Cyrus' first year that he issued a decree that set the Jewish Restoration in motion. Cyrus followed a more enlightened policy than that of the Assyrians and Babylonians. They deported conquered peoples and resettled them throughout their sprawling empires. Cyrus reversed this trend and sent his conquered vassals back home. Behind this policy was the thought that contented people make for a peaceful empire, and what could make people more content than to be allowed to live in the land of their own

nativity? At the same time, Cyrus “resettled” the various gods of the empire in their chapels.⁹⁷ This was a calculated attempt to make the gods happy with him, since it was *his* great generosity that had funded the rebuilding of their places of worship. Of course, guiding Cyrus was the sovereign hand of God who was using him to free His own people, the Jews, in direct fulfillment of His words through Jeremiah the prophet (Ezra 1:1). In the first year of his reign (538/537), Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland in order to rebuild the Temple to their God, Yahweh (1:2-4).⁹⁸

PERSIAN KINGS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

| King | Reign | Old Testament Reference |
|----------------------|------------|--|
| Cyrus the Great | 539-530 BC | His edict freed the Jews from the Captivity Era (II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2, 7-8; Isaiah 44:28). |
| Cambysses | 530-522 BC | Not mentioned in Scripture. |
| Darius I (the Great) | 522-486 BC | Temple rebuilding completed during his reign (Ezra 4:5, 24; 5:5-7; 6:1, 12-15; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1). |
| Xerxes (Ahasuerus) | 486-465 BC | King who made Esther his queen (Esther 1-10). Mentioned once in the book of Ezra (4:6). |
| Artaxerxes I | 465-424 BC | King of Ezra and Nehemiah who initially did not allow Jerusalem to be rebuilt (Ezra 4:7-8, 19-23). |

Over 42,000 exiles responded to Cyrus’ decree by returning to Judah and Jerusalem (1:5; 2:64). Their return from Babylon is referred to as the “First Return” from Captivity. Ezra 1-6 tells their story. Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were the leaders of this Return, and their primary purpose was to rebuild the Temple. Sheshbazzar was perhaps an older man who passed away and left Zerubbabel in charge.⁹⁹ No doubt it took some time for the exiles to wrap up the details of their lives in Babylonia and prepare for the four-month journey back to Judah. By the time they returned to Judah, it was probably mid-537 BC. By the seventh month (September-October), they had set up the Temple Altar, and sometime in their second year (536) they finished laying the Temple foundation. Precisely seventy years had passed since the first wave of captives had been taken to Babylon in 605.¹⁰⁰

During the years that the Jews were absent from Judah, other surrounding peoples had absorbed much of the land and made it their own. The Phoenicians, for example, had taken over the Mediterranean coast, and the Edomites had taken over the Negev (southern desert) as far north as Hebron. These nations were obviously not eager to share the land with the returnees and they oppressed the returned exiles at every opportunity (Ezra 4:1-5). Their opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple actually caused the work to grind to a halt for about sixteen years, from 536-520 BC (4:4-5, 24). The ministries of Haggai and Zechariah date to the time of the First Return, and it was really their preaching that enabled the Temple to be completed (5:1-2). Haggai and Zechariah began to preach to the exiles in the second year (520) of Darius I, King of Persia, and work subsequently resumed on the Temple. At the end of Darius' sixth year (516/515¹⁰¹) it was finally finished, over twenty years after Cyrus' initial decree.

INTERLUDE—THE STORY OF ESTHER

The next recorded event of the Restoration Period is actually the story of Esther, which fits chronologically in the fifty-eight-year gap between Ezra 6 and 7. Ezra 6 mentions "Darius the king" (vv. 1, 13, 15). Ezra 7 mentions King Artaxerxes (v. 1). Artaxerxes was actually the grandson of Darius. The son of Darius was named Xerxes (also known as Xerxes I or Xerxes the Great). In biblical history, he is known as Ahasuerus, the Persian king who took Esther as his bride. The story of Esther, then, falls between the First Return (Ezra 1-6) and the Second Return (Ezra 7-10), which Ezra leads in 458 BC. Xerxes (Ahasuerus) reigned for almost twenty-one years—from October 486 until his assassination in August 465. The story of Esther unfolds over about ten of Xerxes' twenty-one years (482-473).

When the story of Esther opens and Vashti refuses to appear before the king (Esther 1:3-12), Xerxes is in the third year of his reign (about 482 BC). Four years pass before Esther is crowned as Vashti's replacement in 478 BC (2:16). Xerxes' search for a queen was no doubt a welcome diversion to help him forget his humbling loss to the Greeks at the Battle of Salamis (September, 480), which had happened during the interim. Some five years pass between the time that Esther is made queen and Haman's plot against the Jews in Xerxes' twelfth year, 473 BC (3:7). The bulk of the book of Esther tells the story of how God delivered His people, the Jews, in the time of one of their greatest perils. Haman's plot against Mordecai and the Jews was turned to failure in a deliverance that is still commemorated by Jews in the Feast of Purim. Mordecai went on to take Haman's place as second in the entire Kingdom of Persia (10:1-3).

EZRA AND THE SECOND RETURN

When Xerxes (the biblical Ahasuerus) died in 465, his son Artaxerxes I came to the throne of the Persian Empire. Artaxerxes I is the king of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In 458, Artaxerxes' seventh year, Ezra returned from Babylonia to Jerusalem as the leader of what we call the "Second Return." His primary focus was on returning the Jews to the Law of God, but he also worked diligently on behalf of the "house of God" (Ezra 7:18-20; 8:17, 30, 32, 36). As a descendant of Aaron the high priest (7:1-6), Ezra had made the study of, obedience to, and teaching of the Law of God his life's passion (7:10). He was especially concerned over the mixed marriages between the Jews and their pagan neighbors (chs. 9-10).

Ezra evidently stayed on in Jerusalem long after his return in 458 BC. He was still working zealously for reform during the time of Nehemiah (Neh. 8:1; 12:36), and according to tradition he is the scribe who put many of the final touches on the Hebrew Old Testament about 425 BC. His zeal for the Law of God is seen in an exaggerated manner in the New Testament Pharisees, who are the successors of his reforms. We often despise them for their excessive self-righteousness, but we have to admit that they are far from idolatry or any other traces of paganism. Ezra is to thank for this.

BACKGROUND BEHIND NEHEMIAH AND THE THIRD RETURN

Before we discuss Nehemiah and the "Third Return" from Captivity, we should mention a series of events that took place between the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra 4 alludes to these events in a somewhat enigmatic way. Ezra 4, as we have seen, is set in the context of the First Return and the rebuilding of the Temple. But a careful reader will note that the middle of chapter four is actually discussing various oppositions to the Jewish rebuilding efforts at a time *after* the Temple was rebuilt.

In other words, Ezra 4:6-23 is a parenthesis that details persecution directed at the Jews at later times in their history, especially during the reigns of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Artaxerxes, both of whom reigned after Darius and after the rebuilding of the Temple was completed. Ezra is not "chronologically challenged" or otherwise mixed up in his historical retelling of these events. He is actually describing events contemporaneous with his own life. His purpose is to show the sustained opposition that the Jews faced in virtually every effort of theirs to re-establish life in post-exilic Judah.

More to our purpose at hand is Ezra's reference to opposition against the Jews that came from Artaxerxes, Ezra's own king (4:7-23). Some of the Jews' enemies brought to the attention of Artaxerxes the work of the Jews on Jerusalem's walls and foundations (v. 12), and Artaxerxes ordered the rebuilding stopped (vv. 17-23). Although the date for this event is unclear, it apparently took place sometime after Ezra's return in 458 BC.¹⁰² Perhaps it was Ezra's own efforts at reformation that led to others' efforts to rebuild Jerusalem itself. It was these later efforts that Artaxerxes vetoed—and for good reason, politically speaking. Artaxerxes' early years were full of rebellions in the “West,” particularly from Egypt and Greece. Strategically important to Artaxerxes' hegemony over the region was to ensure that Judah remained in his control. A strong Jerusalem could potentially rebel and join Egypt and Greece in their rebellions against him. These Greco-Persian wars continued until around 449 BC, when the Treaty of Callias brought the mutual hostilities to a compromise acceptable to both sides.

NEHEMIAH AND THE THIRD RETURN

This background is helpful in better understanding Nehemiah's return in 445 BC. The news he received from his brother Hanani about Jerusalem's broken down walls (Neh. 1:3) does not refer to the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 but to the more recent events during the time of Artaxerxes, for whom Nehemiah was cupbearer. Further, it heightens what Nehemiah was up against in receiving permission from Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Nehemiah would surely have known (from his brother Hanani and from his position as a palace insider) of Artaxerxes' decree to stop all rebuilding of Jerusalem. This is why Nehemiah labored in prayer for four months before he dared to make himself appear sad in the king's presence (cf. 1:1; 2:1).¹⁰³ It is why even when in the pagan king's actual presence he offered up one of his “prayer flares” (2:4) and why the favorable response was indeed a striking confirmation of the fact that the “good hand of my God was upon me” (2:8). God had turned the heart of King Artaxerxes, as Proverbs 21:1 indicates He can and does, in answer to Nehemiah's prayers.

Nehemiah, the leader of the “Third Return,” traveled from the palace in Susa to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (445 BC). Nehemiah's focus was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and he left an important position as Artaxerxes' cupbearer in order to fulfill his mission (Neh. 1:11). Nehemiah evidences outstanding leadership qualities and in a remarkable 52 days he (with the help of many) completed the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls (6:15). The next month, he and Ezra worked together to read the Law of God to the people and cause

them to understand it (ch. 8). He then ruled as governor of Jerusalem for at least twelve years before returning, by his own testimony, to Artaxerxes the king in 433 (13:6). After an undisclosed amount of time—perhaps a couple of years at most—Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and helped to purge it once again of ongoing compromise (13:7).

The book of Malachi probably dates to about the time of Nehemiah.¹⁰⁴ We know that Malachi prophesied sometime after the Temple was rebuilt (1:10; 3:1). He also uses the technical term for governor common during the Persian times (1:8). He addresses some of the same sins that Nehemiah does when the latter returned for his second governorship: sins such as a contemptible priesthood (Mal. 2:1-9; Neh. 13:28-29), mixed marriages (Mal. 2:11-15; Neh. 13:23-27), and failures in tithing (Mal. 3:9-12; Neh. 13:10-12). For this reason, some have placed his ministry during the time of Nehemiah’s absence from Jerusalem.

THREE RETURNS FROM BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

| Reference | Date | Summary |
|--------------|------------|--|
| Ezra 1-6 | 538/537 BC | Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel overcome opposition to rebuild the Temple. |
| Ezra 7-10 | 458 BC | Ezra the scribe works for spiritual reformation by calling the Jews back to the Law of the Lord. |
| Nehemiah 1-6 | 445 BC | Nehemiah evidences considerable leadership skills by rebuilding Jerusalem’s walls in only 52 days. |

CONCLUSION

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi bring us to the end of Old Testament history. Tradition tells us that Ezra was the last writer of the Old Testament Period. Josephus records that the time of prophecy—when God was speaking through the OT Hebrew writers—ended with the reign of King Artaxerxes, who died in 424 BC. The next four hundred plus years are what we call the Intertestamental Period or the “Silent Years.” We call them the silent years because they were years when God was not speaking through prophets. No Scripture was being given or recorded. Although silent in terms of prophetic revelation, these years are not silent in terms of Jewish history or God’s ongoing providential oversight of His people, the Jews.

Review It

1. From what three Old Testament prophets do we learn about life in the Exilic Period?
2. Technically, how many years was the Babylonian Captivity?
3. In what year did the Babylonian Captivity end?
4. Whose decree freed the Jews to return to their homeland?
5. What was the primary rebuilding project during the First Return? How many years did it take them to finish?
6. Name the two Old Testament prophets who ministered to the Jews during the First Return.
7. Who was the leader of the Second Return and what was his primary focus?
8. Who was the leader of the Third Return and what was his primary rebuilding project?
9. Explain why Nehemiah knew that it would be a miracle for Artaxerxes to give him permission to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.
10. Who is probably the last writer of the Old Testament?

CHAPTER EIGHT



BRIDGING THE TESTAMENTS

Date It! (All dates BC)

- Death of Artaxerxes I (end of OT) 424
- Grecian Empire begins 333
- Antiochus IV's Great Blasphemy 167
- Maccabean Era 166-143
- Hasmonean Era 143-63
- Roman rule in Palestine from its beginnings until the death of Herod 63-4

Can You Believe It?

- **Herod the Great** was a fantastic builder whose handiwork can still be seen all over Palestine. ("Herodian" stone is clearly identifiable because of the lip around its perimeter.) One of the foundation stones of the Herodian Temple weighs an estimated 570 tons and is almost 45 feet long.
- Ptolemy V (the Egyptian king to whom the king of the north gave his daughter in marriage—Dan. 11:17) commissioned a stele in honor of his official coronation in 196 BC. That stele was discovered in 1799 and is now referred to as the **Rosetta Stone**. The stele contained a decree written in three languages (Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian demotic, and Greek), which provided the clues necessary for scholars to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics.

- The **Pharisees** (literally, “separatists”) come into existence during the Intertestamental Era. They held to an Oral Law that, they believed, God gave Moses at Mount Sinai in addition to the Pentateuch.
- The **Dead Sea Scrolls**, discovered in 1947, contain many ancient OT manuscripts. Some of these (like the Isaiah Scroll found in Cave One) date to at least the second century BC.

THE TIME BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS (called the “Intertestamental Period”) is about 420 years in length (424-6 BC) and is sometimes referred to as the four hundred “silent years.” This designation is both true and false. It is true in that those years were void of any direct revelation from God. There were no prophets speaking and no Scriptures given. Even those within the period itself acknowledged that it was not a time of direct prophetic revelation (I Macc. 4:44-46; 9:27; 14:41-42).

However, it was not silent in that God was still working on behalf of His people. Furthermore, God had foretold some of the events of those four hundred years. The most detailed of these predictions are found in the book of Daniel. The last six chapters of Daniel contain four prophecies. The first two (chs. 7-8) mention four Gentile kingdoms: after Babylon would arise the Medo-Persian Empire, to be followed by the Grecian empire, and then ultimately the Roman. The last two of Daniel’s prophecies (chs. 9, 10-12) concentrate more on the state of the Jews during the *times of the Gentiles*. His seventy weeks’ prophecy (9:24-27) gives some idea of the timeframe of upcoming events for the Jews.

Daniel’s final prophecy (chs. 10-12) is the most detailed in Scripture about the “silent years” or the Intertestamental Era. In astonishing detail, Daniel 11 depicts upcoming wars between kings north and south of Palestine, tussles which would involve the Jews caught in between (vv. 1-34). It also shows how some of the crimes that would be perpetrated against them in the second century BC will mirror end-time events, when an even greater Anti-Semite, the Anti-Christ, arises to a position of power (v. 35ff). The accuracy with which the prophecies in Daniel 11 were fulfilled in history has led many critics to deny that Daniel could have written the chapter.

Another major source for understanding intertestamental events is the book of I Maccabees. I Maccabees does not claim to be Scripture. It is a book of Jewish history that many regard as historically accurate, but it is not canonical. It does,

however, give us a window into what life was like during some of the very troublesome times that Daniel predicted.

The events that happened in the Intertestamental Era are important because developments in Judaism during these years explain certain phenomena that we find in the New Testament which have little or no presence in the Old Testament, such as Samaritans, Sadducees, Pharisees, scribes, lawyers, the Sanhedrin, and synagogues. Tracing events of the Intertestamental Era enables us to better understand the world of our New Testament. To get an even clearer picture—a kind of “running start”—we will go back to the Fall of Samaria in 722 and the Fall of Jerusalem in 586, as both of these events contribute to what we see in the pages of our New Testament.

SAMARIA’S FALL AND THE RISE OF THE “SAMARITANS”

The Assyrians conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. Their political policy was to deport conquered peoples from their homeland in order to prevent mass uprisings. Many Jews of the Northern Kingdom were deported to Mesopotamia (II Kings 17:6). Conquered peoples from other parts of the Assyrian empire were then brought to the Northern Kingdom to colonize it (17:24). These foreign peoples and the remaining Israelites intermarried and formed the initial nucleus of those later termed “Samaritans.”¹⁰⁵

The clear breach between the Jews and the Samaritans began when the Jewish exiles returned from Babylonian Captivity to rebuild the Temple in 537 BC (Ezra 1:5). The “people of the land” (Ezra 4:4), which included those from Samaria (Ezra 4:10, 17), opposed the rebuilding of the Temple. In Nehemiah’s day, the Samaritans were among those who opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls (Neh. 4:2).

Later in intertestamental history, a kinsman of Johanan the high priest, Manasseh by name, eventually married the daughter of Sanballat, the Samaritan. Banished from Judah, Manasseh erected a temple on Mount Gerizim, which stood until 128 BC when John Hyrcanus destroyed it. It was this practice of worshipping on Mount Gerizim that the Samaritan woman refers to in John 4:20, and another of the reasons the Jews maintained a great antipathy toward the Samaritans (John 4:9).

JERUSALEM’S FALL AND THE BIRTH OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC was not just a national disgrace; it was also a spiritual catastrophe. Nebuchadnezzar leveled the Temple and

deported thousands of Jews to Babylon. Strict adherence to the Law's ceremonial and ritual requirements, which required a temple, was impossible. In place of the Temple arose the synagogue, with its associated emphasis on the study of the Scriptures.¹⁰⁶

The synagogue (literally, “assembling together”) allowed devout Jews to gather for prayer and the reading of the Old Testament. The synagogue attained such a firm place in Jewish life that even after the rebuilding of the Temple in 516 BC, it was still a dominant feature of Jewish life. According to the Mishnah, the synagogue service consisted of five parts: (1) reading of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9); (2) recitation of prayers, such as the “eighteen benedictions”; (3) a reading from the Law; (4) a reading and exposition from the Prophets; and (5) final benediction.¹⁰⁷

JEW, JUDAISM, AND ITS SCRIBES

The Babylonian exile exerted a major influence upon OT Israel. God's chosen people went into Exile as “Israelites” or “the inhabitants of Judah.” They emerged as “Jews.” Many of those who returned from the Babylonian Captivity were from Judah—thus the designation *Jews*, a shortened form of the word for Judah. Pre-exilic Israel had long struggled with idolatry and perennially intermingled with the pagans around them. The Exile helped to cure the Jews of this fault. A new concern for national and racial purity, a zeal for the stipulations of the Law of God, and a concern for ritual and ceremonial purity marked the Jews that emerged from the Exile. That rekindled concern came to be known as Judaism.¹⁰⁸

Judaism's concern for the nation, the Law, and the priesthood¹⁰⁹ actually owes much to the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra the scribe gave a concerted impetus to the study of the Law of God, with his mission to “seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:6, 10). Both men reflect their unique personalities in expressing their frustration with the Jews for their repeated marrying of pagan foreigners: Ezra pulled his own hair out and Nehemiah pulled others' hair out (Ezra 9:3; Neh. 13:25). Every issue they dealt with—obedience to God's law, maintenance of the Temple staff and system, a strong Jerusalem, and a pure Jewish race and language—was crucial preparation for the coming Messiah.¹¹⁰

Ezra's example birthed a class of scribes or rabbis, professional students of the Law of God, who gave themselves to its interpretation, preservation, and application. These scribes or rabbis were much more influential in the religious life of the people than the priests. Their detailed pursuit of the Law naturally allied them with the

Pharisees, with whom they usually appear in the New Testament (Luke 5:30). The scribes’ devoted study of God’s Law also earned them the designation of *Lawyer* (Luke 7:30; 11:45, 46, 52).

THE RISE OF HELLENISM

We do not know exactly when Ezra died, but he seems to have been one of the final “editors” of the Old Testament. His work takes us right up to the end of the reign of Artaxerxes I (424 BC) when, according to Josephus, the OT era of revelation ended. Within less than one hundred years after the death of Artaxerxes I, the Persian Empire fell. In its place—just as Daniel predicted—rose a power from the West, the Greeks, whose culture and language would tremendously impact the New Testament.

When Philip I of Macedonia (359-336) died, he left the Kingdom of Greece to his son Alexander III, also known as Alexander the Great. With lightning speed, Alexander conquered the world of his day (see Daniel 8:5-7). His defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Issus in 333 BC marked the beginning of the end of the Persian Empire. Alexander then marched south and added Egypt to his growing kingdom. In Egypt, he selected the location for Alexandria, a city that would grow to have great Jewish and Biblical significance. The conqueror of the known world could not conquer himself, however; excessive drinking contributed to his death by fever in Babylon in 323 BC.¹¹¹

No one man was strong enough to hold the domains of Alexander the Great together, and his kingdom was ultimately divided among his four generals (see Daniel 8:8), the partitions of which were settled at the Battle of Issus in 301 BC.

ALEXANDER’S FOUR GENERALS

| General | Location |
|------------|---------------------|
| Cassander | Macedonia & Greece |
| Ptolemy | Egypt |
| Seleucus | Syria & the East |
| Lysimachus | Thrace & Asia Minor |

Alexander's kingdom lasted only ten years, but the Greek influence he disseminated exists to this day. Greek became the international language. "For the first time, a common language began to link the Near East with the Mediterranean world."¹¹² More importantly, it became the language of the New Testament. No human language can better express the rich subtleties of Christian theology than the Greek language.¹¹³ However, Greek influence, called Hellenism, also had a negative side. Although the Jews in the Greek empire enjoyed racial tolerance and freedom of religion, the Hellenistic emphases of philosophy (e.g., Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates), entertainment, humanism, and polytheism could not but affect Intertestamental Judaism and became, in fact, one of its principal dangers.

THE BENEVOLENT RULE OF THE PTOLEMIES (301-198 BC)

One of the four generals of Alexander the Great, among whom his sprawling empire was divided, was Ptolemy I. Ptolemy was given Egypt but soon added to it Jewish Palestine. Although repeated fighting broke out between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids in Syria (see Daniel 11:5-12), Palestine remained a vassal to the Ptolemies for over one hundred years (301-198 BC). During these years, Judea was "treated as a sacerdotal province under the leadership of the high priest and was comparatively unmolested."¹¹⁴

THE EARLY DYNASTY OF PTOLEMY

| Name | Date |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Ptolemy I | 304-285 BC |
| Ptolemy II Philadelphus | 285-246 BC |
| Ptolemy III Euergetes | 246-222 BC |
| Ptolemy IV Philopator | 222-204 BC |
| Ptolemy V Epiphanes | 204-180 BC |

Ptolemy I deported a number of Jews to Egypt and formed a Jewish colony in Alexandria. There, he treated them with kindness, gave them their own section of

the city, and allowed them a measure of independence and freedom of religion. Under the benevolent rule of their captors, the Jews “learned the Greek language and absorbed Greek culture.”¹¹⁵ This steady Hellenization of the Jews, especially those outside of Palestine, led to the call for a new translation of the Old Testament, one understandable to the Greek-speaking Jews. The result was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, translated from 250-150 BC and most likely begun in Alexandria.

Concern over the increasing Hellenism in Judaism led to the establishment of the *Hasidim*, a “faithful remnant who abjured all things Gentile, and continued to demand the absolute supremacy of the Mosaic code and labored ardently to perpetuate the race of Israel.”¹¹⁶ The Hasidim revived the reforming spirit of Ezra the scribe and served as a bridge, in a sense, between him and the Pharisees of the New Testament.

FORCED HELLENISM UNDER THE SELEUCIDS (198-168 BC)

Antiochus III finally wrested Palestine from the grip of the Ptolemies in 198 BC (see Dan. 11:13-16), and for the next thirty years the Jews suffered under the heavy hand of the forceful Hellenization policies of the Seleucids. Persecution reached its height under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose lofty ambition was to completely Hellenize the Jewish nation (see Dan. 11:28-32). Antiochus IV auctioned off the high priestly office to the highest bidder.¹¹⁷ The Jews were forbidden to practice their religion.

Sadly, many embraced Hellenism, as one author notes:

The attractiveness of Greek culture and practices, in their contrast with the far more sober and restricted life under the Law, won many Jews away from their allegiance to the traditions of Israel. Many Jewish children were given Greek or Greek-sounding names. A Greek amphitheater was erected at Jerusalem, and an academy established for instruction in Greek literature and philosophy. Judean youths were trained for participation in the Greek games, and Jewish leaders applied for admission as enrolled citizens of the Syrian kingdom.¹¹⁸

Antiochus IV’s brutality only increased. Jerusalem’s walls were leveled, thousands in Jerusalem were massacred, and copies of the Law were burned. Antiochus’ crowning act of infamy came in December of 167 BC, when he placed an altar or statue of Zeus on the altar of burnt offering and sacrificed swine on it a few days

later.¹¹⁹ Daniel actually predicted this persecution of the covenant people (11:30) and refers to Antiochus’ profaning of the Temple altar as the abomination of desolation (Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15).

THE EARLY SELEUCIDS OF SYRIA

| Name | Date |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Seleucus I | 312-280 BC |
| Antiochus I Soter | 280-261 BC |
| Antiochus II Theos | 261-246 BC |
| Seleucus II Callinicus | 246-225 BC |
| Seleucus III Soter | 225-223 BC |
| Antiochus III The Great | 223-187 BC |
| Seleucus IV Philopator | 187-175 BC |
| Antiochus IV Epiphanes | 175-164 BC |

As bitter as these years were, they were God’s providential means of rescuing His chosen people from the subtle enemy of Hellenism. The Hellenism of the gentler Ptolemies was one thing, but the cruel domination of Antiochus IV was another and demanded a reaction, now known as the Maccabean revolt. Daniel was probably referring to the Maccabees and their revolt against Hellenistic compromise when he describes the “people that do know their God...and do exploits” (Dan. 11:32b).

RELIGIOUS INDEPENDENCE UNDER MACCABEES (166-143)

The Maccabean revolt began in the village of Modein, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) northwest of Jerusalem. Mattathias, a devout man of priestly descent, was asked by government authorities to offer pagan sacrifice. He refused. When another Jew offered the sacrifice, Mattathias killed both the offending Jew and the government official, tore down the altar, and fled to the hills. As he fled, he cried out, “Let everyone who is jealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me” (I Macc. 2:27). Numbers of devout Jews followed Mattathias and his five

sons, and the resistance began. The aged Mattathias died in the first year, but bequeathed the leadership of the resistance movement to his five sons.

The mantle first fell upon Judas, known as Judas Maccabeus (“the Hammerer”), who succeeded in delivering one military victory after another. Against unbelievable odds, Judas managed to throw off the yoke of the Seleucids and win a measure of independence, including access to the Temple so severely desecrated by Antiochus IV. His cleansing of the Temple and restoration of its service on the twenty-fifth of Kislev (December 14) in 164 BC became a permanent Jewish celebration, called the Feast of Dedication in the New Testament (John 10:22) and commemorated by Jews today as *Hanukkah*.

When Judas died in battle in 160 BC, his brother Jonathan (160-143) assumed the leadership of the movement. What Judas won by military strategy, Jonathan won by diplomacy. Internal disputes and civil war in Syria aided Jonathan in consolidating and adding to the gains won by Judas. Eventually, he was killed in an unsuccessful effort at diplomacy with Tryphon, a Syrian general.

INCREASING HELLENIZATION (143-63 BC)

Jonathan’s death brought Simon (143-135), the only surviving son of Mattathias, to the head of Judea. Simon begins the Hasmonean¹²⁰ Era in which Judea became, for all practical purposes, an independent nation. Like his brother Jonathan, Simon consolidated in himself both the office of governor and that of high priest. “The land had rest all the days of Simon. He sought the good of the nation; his rule was pleasing to them....He established peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great joy” (I Macc. 14:4, 11).

Upon Simon’s death, his son John Hyrcanus assumed the leadership (135-104). Hyrcanus marks the real transition from the Maccabees to the Hasmoneans. The Maccabees were religious patriots, who combined zeal for the Law with nationalistic fervor. Since the days of Jonathan, the Maccabees had functioned in the dual office of leader and high priest. They had always enjoyed the support of the Hasidim, the strict religious sect of Judaism.¹²¹ With John Hyrcanus, however, the Hasmonean military and political ambitions come to the forefront, and any religious overtones all but disappear. When some Hasidim questioned whether John Hyrcanus should continue as high priest, Hyrcanus irately broke with the Hasidim and gave his support to the Hellenizers. “In connection with this incident, Josephus first speaks of these parties as Pharisees and Sadducees, so it is likely that these designations originated within the reign of John Hyrcanus.”¹²²

The Pharisees were the religious descendants of the *Hasidim*, the pious Torah-keeping Jews who sought to immortalize Ezra's reforms. Foundational to the beliefs of the Pharisees—and in Judaism until the present—is the idea that not all that God said to Moses at Mount Sinai was written down in the first five books of the Old Testament. The many other things that God spoke to Moses were passed down orally for generations and referred to as the Oral Torah or the Oral Law. The Pharisees viewed themselves as guardians of this oral tradition and, in fact, exalted this tradition until it came to have the same level of dogma as the Pentateuch itself.

The Pharisees' conflicts with Christ in the Gospels primarily stemmed from this stubborn adherence to oral tradition. A main source of conflict was over the Sabbath. Already in Jesus' day, we see a known body of Sabbath taboos governing the actions of the Jews. These taboos, policed by the Pharisees, dictated what one could carry on the Sabbath, how far one could travel, what constituted work, and to what extent one could practice medicine. Christ did not disagree with Sabbath observance, but with the Pharisees' dogmatic applications of Sabbath law (see Luke 6:1-11). They focused on minute details and disregarded other equally valid religious duties (Matt. 23:23). Nevertheless, Christ commended them for their commitment to teaching the Law of Moses (23:2-5).

Eventually, well after the time of Jesus, these Sabbath regulations and many other oral traditions would come to be codified in the Talmud. In one version of the Talmud, the section on the Sabbath fills 156 double-column pages. What constitutes work is divided into thirty-nine categories—any work falling under these thirty-nine categories was illegitimate on the Sabbath day. Lengthy discussion under each category tediously specifies what may or may not be done in multiple situations.

- One could not write with ink two letters at one sitting. One could write one large letter but may not erase it (because that would suggest intent to write two normal-sized letters).
- One should not read by lamp-light on the Sabbath because one would be tempted to snuff the wick when finished.
- One should not ride on horseback on the Sabbath because you would be tempted to break a branch from a tree to use as a switch on the horse (and that would be reaping).
- One could only carry the equivalent of one mouthful of milk on the Sabbath.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, were the descendants of the Hellenists and tended to be aristocrats from the ruling upper classes. The Sadducees held to the

written Law only (not the oral traditions of the Pharisees), and seem to have given “greater weight to the Torah than to the prophets.”¹²³ They denied resurrection and immortality (Matt. 22:23-33; Acts 23:6-8). They tended to be anti-supernaturalists and materialists. They involved themselves in politics and were far more willing to compromise with Greek culture than were the Pharisees. The high priest and most of the priests belonged to the Sadducean party (Acts 5:17). Their “chief stronghold” was in the Temple, while the Pharisees’ was the synagogue.¹²⁴

Hyrchanus’ break with the Pharisees eradicated “the last vestige of real religious patriotism” from the Maccabees.¹²⁵ His son, Aristobulus I, reigned only for a year but was the first to claim the title of king, despite his lack of Davidic qualifications. Alexander Jannaeus (103-76), who followed Aristobulus, expanded the Intertestamental Jewish Kingdom to its greatest height, but was a drunkard who cruelly butchered thousands of Pharisees and enthusiastically allied himself with the Hellenizing Sadducees. Upon his deathbed, however, Alexander urged his widow, Salome Alexandra, to ally herself with the Pharisees, more for reasons of political expediency than religious zeal. Alexandra followed his counsel, and her nine-year reign (76-67) marked a turn of fortune for the party of the Pharisees. “Under the regime of Alexandra they won a place of supremacy which they have not lost to this day.”¹²⁶

The rest of Hasmonean history is largely one of intrigue and family infighting. Alexandra’s two sons, Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II, repeatedly vied with each other for the throne. Their mutual appeal to Rome for help brought an end to Hasmonean political independence. The Roman general, Pompey, answered their appeal in 63 BC by annexing Palestine to the growing Roman Empire. The Jews were once again the vassal of a foreign nation.

ROMAN RULE AND LOSS OF JEWISH INDEPENDENCE (63-4 BC)

When Pompey claimed Judea for Rome, he allowed the Hasmonean, Hyrcanus II, to continue as high priest, but the real governor of Judea was an Idumean (think Edomite) by the name of Antipater. Antipater, governor of Idumea, had helped Hyrcanus in his conspiracy against his brother, Aristobulus II, and had won the favor of the Romans. Antipater had four sons, one of whom (Herod) he appointed governor of Galilee in 47 BC. The next several years of Roman history were turbulent. Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Cassius and Brutus, who assassinated Julius Caesar, were in turn defeated in 42 BC at Philippi by Mark Antony. Octavian defeated Mark Antony, his former colleague, in 31 BC. Through

all of these political changes, Antipater (until his death in 43 BC) and his son Herod managed to maintain the good will of the reigning Roman emperor. In 40 BC, a revolt broke out in Judea, led by Antigonus (the son of Aristobulus II) and the Parthians. Their effort to depose Hyrcanus II succeeded, and Herod fled to Rome, seeking support. There at Rome, Antony designated Herod King of Judea. Herod (“the Great”) returned to Judea and was able to quell the revolt in 37 BC and install himself as king. Herod beheaded Antigonus (the last of the Hasmoneans) and continued as King of Judea until his death in April of 4 BC. This is the Herod who figures so prominently in the birth of Jesus Christ, as the interviewer of the Magi and the attempted murderer of the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:3-9, 13, 16).

The origins of the Sanhedrin evidently date to this era of Jewish history.¹²⁷ First mentioned in 55 BC, the Sanhedrin served as the local court of Jewish authority during the Roman occupation. “It was Julius Caesar who...extended the power of the Sanhedrin once again over all Judaea.”¹²⁸ According to tradition, the Sanhedrin consisted of seventy elders and was presided over by the High Priest. The Sanhedrin appears numerous times in the New Testament (“council,” KJV, ESV, NKJV; “Council,” NASB; “Sanhedrin,” NIV). The “Council,” for example, that sought to put Jesus to death (Mark 14:55) was the Sanhedrin.¹²⁹ The Council that so often opposed the work of the disciples and the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts was also the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:15; 5:21, 27, 34, 41; 6:12, 15; 22:30; 23:1). The Sanhedrin disappeared with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

All this prepares us for what we see as we open the pages of the New Testament. God had promised to send His Anointed One, the Messiah, when the time was right (Gal. 4:4). That time had come.

Review It

1. In what sense is the Intertestamental Era rightly called the “Silent Years”? In what sense were they not “silent”?
2. What Old Testament book gives us the most details about the Intertestamental Period?
3. What is Hellenism?
4. What is the Septuagint?
5. Explain the background behind the Maccabean revolt.
6. Who was Antiochus Epiphanes IV?
7. What led to the birth of the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees*?
8. When did Judea lose its independence to Rome?
9. What was the ethnic background of Herod the Great?
10. How is the term “Sanhedrin” normally translated into English?

CHAPTER NINE



MESSIAH IS BORN

Date It! (All dates BC)

- Herod declared “King” by Rome 40
- Herod conquers Jerusalem 37
- Octavian declared “Augustus” 27
- Herod’s Temple Rebuilding Begins 20/19
- Birth of Jesus Christ 5
- Death of Herod 4

Can You Believe It?

- **Herod the Great’s** multiple sons by his ten wives tormented him with their constant plotting for his throne and jockeying for his favor. He executed three of his sons for alleged attempts on his life, which led Caesar Augustus to quip that it was better to be Herod’s pig (*hus*) than Herod’s son (*huios*)
- *Et tu, Brute?* (“You, too, Brutus?”) are the famous last words that Shakespeare puts in the mouth of Julius Caesar on the occasion of his assassination (March 15, 44 BC). Upon his death, Julius Caesar left his fabulous wealth to his grand-nephew Octavius, better known as **Caesar Augustus**.
- Rarely did the doors of the Temple of Janus in Rome close, signifying peace in the empire. But they did three times during the lengthy reign of

Augustus (27 BC – AD 14), who inaugurated the *Pax Romana*. What a fitting time for the real Prince of Peace, Immanuel, to be born!

- Ever heard the saying *All Roads Lead to Rome*? Roads originating from Rome stretched across the Empire in every direction. The official start of these roads was a monument in Rome called the *Millarium Aureum* (“golden milestone”) and perhaps led to the famous saying.

THE EVENT THAT SHATTERS THE SO-CALLED “Four Hundred Silent Years” is not the birth of Jesus Christ. It is not even the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary. It is the appearance of Gabriel to the aged priest, Zechariah. Gabriel’s announcement to Zechariah that his wife would give birth to the Voice who would “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17) is the first direct word from God in over four hundred years, and it introduces the burst in revelatory activity that accompanied the birth of Messiah.

Matthew and Luke are the only two Gospels that record the events surrounding Jesus’ birth. Of the two, Luke is much more comprehensive than Matthew. Without Matthew’s Gospel, however, we would have no record of the coming of the wise men nor of the events that led Jesus and His parents from Bethlehem to Nazareth. Stitching together the material of both Gospels results in the chronological sequence that follows.

ANNUNCIATION TO ZECHARIAH

The annunciation to Zechariah occurred, Luke records, in the days of Herod, King of Judea (1:5). Herod (“the Great”) was one of the most complex and colorful characters to ever rule Palestine. A courageous soldier, an adept diplomat, a born politician, and a renowned builder, Herod was also a “ruthless enemy” and “insanely jealous.”¹³⁰ His political savvy enabled him to stay on the right side of Cassius, Mark Antony, and Octavian, as they fought for supremacy in the civil wars that ended the Roman Republic.

Herod was one of the greatest builders of the ancient world. In 20/19 BC, he began a magnificent reconstruction of the Temple, which was not completed until 64 AD, just six years before its destruction by Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian. He also built Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast in honor of Caesar Augustus (Octavian); he constructed an artificial harbor, an amphitheater, and an aqueduct to supply the city with water—all three are still visible today. He also enlarged Samaria,

maintained a summer palace at Jericho, built the man-made hill fortress of Herodium, and turned rugged, mesa-like Masada into one of his palace-residences.

His building projects, however, could not keep at bay the jealousy, intrigue, and domestic killing that plagued his final years. Herod never really recovered from the execution of his favorite wife, Mariamne, on the grounds of alleged plotting against him. Two of her sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, were later executed in 7 BC for similar reasons, largely because of the accusations of another son, Antipater. Antipater himself eventually fell prey to suspicion, was imprisoned, and was executed only five days before Herod's death. Such a frenzied, almost insane, suspicious protection of his kingdom fits well with the picture of Herod found in Matthew 2: one who would kill three sons and a wife would have no qualms in killing all of Bethlehem's infants, especially if the one born was rumored to be "King of the Jews."

Thus history portrays the Herod who was king when Gabriel appeared to Zechariah. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth were of priestly descent (Luke 1:5), reminding us of the impeccable origins (lineage-wise) of John the Baptist. Zechariah would have been viewed as especially favored of God since he had married a daughter of Aaron. In addition, both Zechariah and his wife were living a spiritually blameless life (1:6).

Zechariah was of the course of Abia ("Abijah" in the OT). David was the one who first organized the priests into twenty-four divisions (I Chron. 24:1-19), allowing for an orderly rotation for ministering in the Temple. His organizational work was still in place one thousand years later. The division of Abia was the eighth of the twenty-four divisions. Each division ministered for one week twice a year. Some have tried to ascertain the exact week when Zechariah would have been on duty, in order to determine when John and Jesus were born. Any such effort to identify precisely Zechariah's week of Temple service requires assumptions that are difficult to prove with certainty given current information.¹³¹

What is more certain is that Zechariah was one of about eighteen thousand priests who served in rotation. In order to preserve fairness, their choice of duties was determined by lot (Luke 1:9). Each priest would be allowed the opportunity to burn incense in the Temple only once in his lifetime.¹³² Zechariah, thus, was entering upon the highlight of his priestly career, and it was on this momentous occasion that God chose to send His angel Gabriel. It was a time of prayer (1:10)—this was the symbolism of burning incense—and Gabriel's appearance inaugurated a sequence of events that would lead to THE answer to thousands of years of expectant prayer.

The angelic appearance took Zechariah by surprise (1:12). His response was one of disbelief and as a result he was smitten dumb (1:18-20). When he came out of the Temple, the waiting crowd of worshipers knew something special had happened, but Zechariah was unable to explain the details. He finished his week of service, went home with his wife to the hill country of Judea, and there his wife conceived just as the angel Gabriel had said (1:24).

ANNUNCIATION TO MARY

Six months later, the angel Gabriel entered a household in Nazareth of Galilee and surprised a young Jewish virgin by the name of Mary (Luke 1:26-27). Nazareth was a smallish town which, some have estimated, did not exceed 500 in population. Nothing is said in Scripture about Mary's family background, only that she was engaged to a man named Joseph who was of the house of David. Matthew devotes the majority of his first chapter to prove that Joseph was a descendant of David and had a legal right to the throne. "Legally, since Mary at the time of her engagement is Joseph's wife, any child born to Mary would be regarded as Joseph's, if he accepted care for the child."¹³³

Mary submitted to the angel's pronouncement that she would give birth to a Child Who would be called the "Son of the Most High," although she did not understand how it could be. The result was that Mary became pregnant supernaturally (Luke 1:35). We usually term this miracle the "virgin birth," but technically it is the "virgin conception."

MARY'S VISIT TO ELIZABETH

We presume that Mary visited Elizabeth shortly after she conceived (1:35). Mary was related to Elizabeth in some way. The word translated "cousin" (1:36, KJV) is a generic term for *relative* or *kinswoman*. We do not know the exact nature of their relationship, but it raises the question (which we cannot answer definitively) of whether Mary also had some "Aaronic blood."

When Mary arrived at Elizabeth's house, the fetus in Elizabeth's womb (John the Baptist) leaped for joy upon hearing Mary's greeting (1:41). In some ways this "leap for joy" marks the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry of pointing to the coming Messiah (1:44). Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months before returning to her home (1:56).

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

If we strictly follow Luke’s record of the story, Mary returned home before the birth of John the Baptist. He does not tell us why she would have returned home so shortly before the birth. What Luke emphasizes is the naming of the child and the prophecy that followed. Zechariah had been dumb the entirety of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. On the eighth day, when the newborn son was to be circumcised, Zechariah confirmed via writing that their son was to be named John (1:59-63). Zechariah’s mouth was “opened,” and the Holy Spirit filled him with a prophecy (1:67-79). This prophecy sees the unfolding events as the fulfillment of God’s purposes to bring salvation through the house of David (1:69). It also singles out John as the “prophet of the Most High” who will prepare the way (1:76).

JOSEPH GIVEN DIVINE GUIDANCE

| Guidance | Reference |
|--|---------------|
| Joseph enlightened as to why his fiancée Mary was pregnant | Matt. 1:20-22 |
| Joseph warned to flee to Egypt | Matt. 2:13 |
| Joseph notified that Herod had died | Matt. 2:19 |
| Joseph cautioned to settle in Galilee | Matt. 2:22 |

JOSEPH TAKES MARY AS HIS WIFE

To this point we have largely followed Luke’s account. Now the story of Messiah’s birth takes us to Matthew’s Gospel. It was probably after Mary’s three-month visit to Elizabeth that Joseph is informed that his fiancée is pregnant (Matt. 1:18). This would be startling news and would naturally bring accusations of unfaithfulness on Mary’s part. (After all, she had been away from home for three months.) Joseph had every reason to suspect foul play and, if he were to follow the law precisely, to call for Mary’s death (Deut. 22:23-24). In a dream, an angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph the truth of the situation (Matt. 1:20-23). In some ways, Joseph is the “unsung hero” of the Christmas story. By faith, he accepts the angelic revelation, consents to his difficult role in the unfolding drama, and takes Mary as his wife (v. 24). However, he does not physically consummate the marriage—perhaps in light of the clear wording of the prophecy (“a virgin shall conceive *and bear a son*”).

BIRTH OF THE CHRIST

Matthew reports that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King (2:1), but it is Luke's Gospel that explains *why* Mary and Joseph, who were both from Nazareth in Galilee, were even in Bethlehem when Mary's time to deliver her Child arrived. The hand of the Lord that turns the heart of kings (Prov. 21:1) stirred Caesar Augustus to call for an empire-wide census or registration ("taxed," KJV; Luke 2:1). These censuses were a regular feature of Augustus' rule and were part of his effort to further meld widespread provinces into one Empire.¹³⁴

Augustus is the first of the many Roman emperors whom the New Testament will mention. Born Gaius Octavius, Augustus managed to come out on top in a series of escalating civil wars that had begun after the murder of his grand-uncle Julius Caesar in 44 BC. Four years after his decisive victory over Marc Antony at the Battle of Actium (31 BC), the Senate honored him with the title Augustus (the "majestic" or "exalted" one), and he became known officially as Caesar Augustus.¹³⁵ His reign essentially marks the end of Rome's Republic and the beginning of its Empire. During his long reign (27 BC – AD 14), Augustus transformed the Empire.¹³⁶ Some of his final words are reputed to be, "I found Rome of clay; I leave it to you of marble."

What occasioned Augustus' call for the census mentioned in Luke 2 is currently unknown, but this does not give us any reason to doubt Luke's accuracy. Even the fact that Herod the Great was still alive and King of Judea does not render the census impossible. Herod's last few years fell more than ever under Augustus' watchful eye and their previous friendship deteriorated. Furthermore, Herod was very sick and his demise no doubt seemed imminent. Augustus may have called for a census *before* Herod's death as preparation for what would follow *after* Herod's death, when the Kingdom of Judea would be divided among his sons. Another theory connects the census with the silver anniversary of Octavian's becoming *Augustus* in 27 BC. (This is favored by those who date Christ's birth to 3/2 BC.)

Most commentators regard Luke's reference to Quirinius (2:2) as the most difficult to accept historically of all his statements.¹³⁷ Quirinius was governor of Syria from AD 6-9, and he is associated with the census to which Luke alludes in Acts 5:37. That census is not the one in view here in Luke 2:1-2, which took place before the death of Herod. The census in Acts 5:37 took place in AD 6, after Herod's son Archelaus was deposed. Some critics assume that Luke confused his facts. Clearly, however, Luke goes to great pains to show that he is *not* confused, when he clarifies that this was the *first* census when Quirinius was governor of Syria (2:2).¹³⁸ Luke is letting us know that the two censuses are *different*.

ROMAN EMPERORS OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

| Emperor | Description of Reign |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Augustus Caesar (31 BC – AD 14) | Emperor at Christ’s birth (Luke 2:1); ushered in the <i>Pax Romana</i> , so helpful to the spread of Christianity; greatest Roman emperor ever. |
| Tiberius (AD 14-37) | Emperor of Christ’s public ministry; appointed Pilate as procurator of Judea (3:1). |
| Caligula (AD 37-41) | Irrational and insane; viewed himself as deity; banished Herod Antipas from his tetrarchy in AD 39. |
| Claudius (AD 41-54) | Partially paralyzed; the Emperor of Paul’s early ministry; many famines during his reign (Acts 11:28); expelled Jews from Rome in AD 49 (18:2). |
| Nero (AD 54-68) | Renowned for his brutality; suspected of starting a fire in Rome; Emperor of Paul’s later ministry, who probably decreed his death; lighted his gardens by burning Christians alive; committed suicide on June 9, AD 68. |
| Galba, Otho, Vitellius (AD 68-69) | Three Roman generals who attempted to seize the Roman throne. |
| Vespasian (AD 69-79) | General of Judea and Syria, who finally established himself as Emperor; his son Titus crushed Jerusalem in AD 70. |
| Titus (AD 79-81) | Mastermind of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. |
| Domitian (AD 81-96) | Competent but cruel; implemented intense persecution of Christians; exiled the Apostle John to the Isle of Patmos. |

The truth is that our knowledge of Roman politics in Syria/Palestine during the years 6-1 BC is unusually fragmentary. The governor of Syria from 4-1 BC remains unknown. Furthermore, Luke 2:2 does not demand that Quirinius was the “official procurator,” but that he was governing *in some way* during the census in question.¹³⁹ We need not jump to the conclusion that Luke the “historian” made a mistake. Far better to assume—given Luke’s proven track record on virtually every other point—that some piece of information known to Luke has until now evaded archaeology’s shovel.

What we know is that the “registration” brought the couple from Nazareth to Bethlehem. We do not know whether Mary was required to register separately from her husband or whether Joseph took her with him knowing that she might need him shortly. (Another possibility is that they knew the Old Testament prophecy that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and saw in the decree of Augustus the hand of God in ordering their circumstances toward that prophecy’s fulfillment.)

Luke says that Mary was Joseph’s “espoused” wife (2:5), leading some to think that they made the 140-kilometer (90-mile) journey as an engaged couple. It is clear from Matthew’s account that Joseph took Mary as his wife almost immediately after the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream (1:24). Luke terms her here as Joseph’s *espoused* wife to make clear that the marriage had never been consummated physically.

Mary was evidently in the advanced stages of her pregnancy, and the journey that would have normally taken only three to four days may have taken them longer. Virtually every picture of Joseph and the pregnant Mary en route to Bethlehem shows her riding on a donkey. The Scripture does not state this; we hope for her sake that it was true. While in Bethlehem, Mary’s time came to deliver the Child (2:6). The only place available was in a stable of some kind, and so the Son of God first nestled His head in a manger.

The exact nature of the “stable” is still debated. Tradition says it was a cave, and one early Christian apologist (Justin Martyr, d. 165 AD) even identified the very cave (the same one that pilgrims still visit under Bethlehem’s Church of the Nativity). Others have focused on the word *inn* (“lodging place”), which was often a kind of courtyard with walls on four sides.¹⁴⁰ Travelers slept on the second story, while their animals milled around below. Because the second story was maxed out, Joseph and Mary were forced below with the animals. Either way, lowlier beginnings for the Messiah can hardly be imagined.

ANGELS' APPEARANCE TO THE SHEPHERDS

Nearby, shepherds were keeping a night watch over their sheep when an angel appeared to them and announced the birth of Jesus (2:8-14). Numerous hills surround Bethlehem, any one of which could have been the site of the activities that evening. Shepherds would naturally take turns watching at night to protect their flocks from roving marauders, such as robbers, lions, or bears. Some have argued the impossibility of Christ being born in winter since the shepherds were keeping watch *in the field* and winter was a time to pull the flocks inside out of the cold. It does seem that shepherds normally pastured flocks only from April to November. On the other hand, Edersheim says that was only true (the pasturing from April to November) *in the wilderness*.¹⁴¹ Watching flocks on the hills surrounding Bethlehem would not be considered being in the wilderness of Judea. Further, if the winter were a mild one, the flocks may have very well been out in the fields anyway. One other consideration is that because of Bethlehem's proximity to Jerusalem, sheep were kept available year-round for Temple purposes.¹⁴² Luke's account does not prove or disprove Christ's "midwinter" birth. What it does prove, though, is the specialness of the birth of this Child. How fitting that His birth was first announced to shepherds! Bethlehem sheep were often headed for slaughter at the Temple. So was the Lamb born that night.

CIRCUMCISION AND NAMING OF JESUS

According to the Mosaic Law, Mary would have been unclean for the first seven days after giving birth to a boy (Lev. 12:2). On the eighth day, the Child would have been circumcised and given the name Jesus ("Jehovah saves"), in light of His mission to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21; cf. Luke 2:21). This was the name that Gabriel had commanded Joseph to give to Mary's Baby (Matt. 1:21).¹⁴³ Mary would then have continued "purifying" for thirty-three days following Jesus' circumcision (Lev. 12:4).

About forty days after Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph travelled the 10-kilometer (6-mile) journey from Bethlehem to the Jerusalem Temple. Here Mary offered up the necessary sacrifice for her uncleanness, and Christ, as the firstborn male that opened the womb, was presented to the Lord (Luke 2:22-24). Evidently Mary offered up for her ritual cleansing two turtle doves or pigeons (2:24).¹⁴⁴ A lamb was preferred for the required burnt offering, but the option to sacrifice birds was acceptable for those unable to afford the former (Lev. 12:6-8). This attests to the relative poverty of Joseph and Mary.

It was during Mary's visit to the Temple that two elderly saints—Simeon and Anna—publicly testified that her forty-day-old Infant was the Messiah (Luke 2:25-38). At this point, Luke records that Mary and Joseph proceeded to Galilee, to the city of Nazareth (2:39). Matthew's Gospel reveals to us a whole series of events that took place between Jesus' presentation in the Temple and Joseph and Mary's *eventual* return to Nazareth (Matt. 2). (That Luke is silent where Matthew expands no more indicates a conflict than when Luke expands where Matthew is silent!)

VISIT OF THE MAGI

Magi is essentially a transliteration of the Greek word translated "wise men" (Matt. 2:1, KJV). The Septuagint translates it *astrologers* (Dan. 2:2, 10). In the New Testament it is used of the Jewish false prophet and sorcerer, Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6, 8). Matthew uses the term to refer to a class of wise men, typically Persian or Babylonian, who were experts in astrology and in interpreting dreams.

Tradition has identified these *Magi* who spotted Messiah's star as three kings, but they may have been neither three nor kings! The gifts they brought, though, were fitting for a king. Gold, of course, has always been highly valued (Gen. 2:11). "Frankincense is a glittering, odorous gum obtained by making incisions in the bark of several trees; myrrh exudes from a tree found in Arabia and a few other places and was a much-valued spice and perfume."¹⁴⁵

Assuming that the star they had seen pointed to the birth of a Jewish king, the *Magi* traveled to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:1). We are not informed as to why the *Magi* linked the star with the birth of a Jewish king. An ongoing Jewish presence in Babylon may have given them access to the Hebrew Scriptures. At least one OT Messianic prophecy does refer to Him as a "Star that will come out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17).

If the *Magi* came from Babylonia, they journeyed at least 800 kilometers (500 miles).¹⁴⁶ When Ezra traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem in 458 BC it took him four months, but this was with a large body of travelers (Ezra 7:9). The *Magi* may have traveled by camel right across the Arabian Desert. The duration of their journey would depend entirely on the speed with which they traveled (which is why any estimate of their travel time is really guesswork). If hurried, a camel can carry a rider at least 100 kilometers (62 miles) in a single day, but a typical rate of travel is closer to 40 kilometers (25 miles) per day. Whatever the speed of the *Magi*'s trip, their arrival in Jerusalem troubled Herod. Herod was, at this point, in the twilight of his reign and some kind of physical disorder was adding to his considerable paranoia about who would be his successor.

The *Magi*'s questioning of Herod elicited the answer they sought: Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matt. 2:5). At this point, the star "re-entered" the story and began to lead them clearly to Bethlehem.¹⁴⁷ Theories abound as to what type of star it was: (1) it was not a real star but a supernatural one "created" by God for this special occasion, (2) it refers to some kind of special junction of planets or stars, or (3) it was a new star (called a nova or supernova), which do occur at rare intervals.¹⁴⁸ For those who prefer to see it as a special junction of stars or planets, one of the most sane (or at least simplest) statement is that of Hoehner's:

A triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation Pisces in 7 BC, which occurs every 900 years, and the massing of Mars, Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces in 6 BC, which occurs every 800 years (much less frequently in Pisces), may have alerted the Magi of the birth of Israel's Messiah. Finally, in 5 BC a comet appeared in the E in the constellation of Capricornus that could well have caused the Magi to go to Bethlehem (Mt. 2:2) where it hovered (Mt. 2:9–10).¹⁴⁹

The Gospel of Matthew, the only Gospel that records the coming of the *Magi*, does not record how old Jesus was when the wise men came. We do know that they found Him in a house, not in a manger (v. 11). They likely arrived after His presentation at the Temple, when He was forty days old.¹⁵⁰ Just how long after is not known. Herod's killing of all infants two years old and under need not mean that Jesus was already two years old. Herod no doubt rounded *up* the estimated time the *Magi* gave him in order to ensure that he eliminated the feared Baby (v. 16). One author estimates that Jesus was between six and twenty months of age when they arrived.¹⁵¹ The date for Jesus' birth proposed in this chapter suggests He was younger than that.

When the *Magi* failed to return to Herod as he had instructed them, he decreed the death of every male baby in Bethlehem two years of age or younger. Those who question the historicity of Herod's slaughter of Bethlehem's infants have not digested what history has shown us of Herod. Any man who would kill his favorite wife and his own sons would not hesitate to eliminate even a babe-in-arms if it posed any danger to his throne. Bethlehem was not a large city, and only about a dozen households would have suffered the cruel loss.

FLIGHT TO EGYPT

The wise men were, of course, warned and sent home a different way (2:12). Joseph also was warned and escaped to Egypt, where he stayed until hearing that Herod

the Great had died (vv. 13-15). Very possibly what sustained the family during this time were the gifts providentially given to them by the wise men. The text does not specify how long Joseph, Mary, and the Child stayed in Egypt, except to say that it was after the death of Herod. Their stay could have been anywhere from a few weeks to several months in length. Another God-given dream informed Joseph that Herod had died and that the way was now clear for him to return to his homeland. The angel did not specify exactly where in the land of Israel Joseph should return to (vv. 19-20).

RETURN TO NAZARETH

Joseph returned to the land of Israel with the plan of resettling in Bethlehem. Maybe he felt this unique Davidic Child should be brought up in David's city. When he heard, however, that Archelaus had become his father Herod's successor, Joseph changed his plan and returned to Galilee (2:22). In so doing, Joseph fulfilled a prophecy of which he was probably unaware. Old Testament prophets had decreed that Christ be called a Nazarene (v. 23). No *one* Old Testament prophecy utters these words, but the word *nezer* ("Branch") is used in Isaiah 11:1 of Messiah. Not only does this word sound like the word *Nazarene* but this word (*nezer*) refers to a sprig or shoot, suggesting the unpretentiousness of Messiah's origins. Anybody from Nazareth would be considered of lowly origin. Nathanael's question in the gospel account, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* (John 1:46), no doubt reflects the common opinion of the day.

CHRONOLOGICAL MATTERS

Our current calendar system is based on the work of a sixth-century monk named Dionysius Exiguus, who devised a new system for his Easter table so that it no longer calculated years according to the reign of the Christian-hating Emperor Diocletian. Based on his calculations, Dionysius estimated Jesus' birth as happening 525 years earlier; thus he dated the year as *Anno Domini* 525. With the information now available, we realize that Dionysius' estimate was close but off by a few years. Just how many years was he off?

The traditional date for Christ's birth is 5/4 BC—usually December 25, 5 BC or January 6, 4 BC. The most important single factor in determining Christ's birth is determining *when* Herod died. Since the publication of Emil Schurer's *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* in the 1880s, an uneasy consensus

has reigned that Herod died in March or April of 4 BC. This is based largely on information from Josephus who places Herod's death between an eclipse of the moon and the Jewish Passover. If the eclipse is the one that occurred on March 12/13, 4 BC, then Herod died between March 13 and April 11, 4 BC (the first day of the Jewish Passover that year).

Christ's birth, obviously, must occur before Herod's death. However, it cannot occur *too far* before Herod's death for the following reasons. First, Jesus was less than two years old when the wise men had their interview with Herod (Matt. 2:16), and Herod does not seem to have lived a long time after that. Second, Jesus was *about* thirty years of age when He began His ministry (Luke 3:23). A date too far into "BC territory" stretches the credibility of Luke's *about*-thirty-years-of-age statement. All of this suggests that Christ was born sometime in 5 BC.

December 25 has become the traditional day of celebration. It has some basis in church tradition but so do some other dates. One difficulty with December 25 as the date of Christ's birth is that it does not leave enough time between His birth and Herod's death in late March/early April of the next year.¹⁵² The *Magi* did not arrive in Bethlehem until at least six weeks after Christ's birth (this gives time for His mother's forty days of purifying, His presentation in the Temple, and the family's journey back to Bethlehem). This would be the beginning of February *at the earliest*. By March 12, an eclipse took place, and Herod's condition worsened. It soon became apparent that Herod was dying and within less than a month he was dead. Many of his final days were spent at Jericho. This leaves a very small window of time for the *Magi* to have had their interview with Herod in Jerusalem. For this reason, it seems prudent to back Jesus' birth up to sometime between November and early December 5 BC, rather than the traditional December 25.¹⁵³

A minority of scholars have opted to move the date of Herod's death to 1 BC and, in the process, shifted Christ's birth to 3/2 BC. The first major impetus to the shift was an article written by W. E. Filmer,¹⁵⁴ and it was then furthered along by Ernest Martin's *The Birth of Christ Recalculated* (1980). By reinterpreting and harmonizing some comments made by Josephus, they shift the reign of Herod the Great down by one year. Thus his official reign begins in 39 BC (instead of 40 BC) and his conquest of Jerusalem was in 36 BC (instead of 37 BC). Furthermore, they note, there was a *full* eclipse of the moon on January 10, 1 BC.¹⁵⁵ That eclipse occurred ninety-two days before the Jewish Passover (instead of just twenty-nine days), which gives time for all of Herod's *known* final activities to take place.¹⁵⁶

There is also a majority opinion among early Christian writers that Christ was born in 3/2 BC (see chart), and this "new view" squares well with that ancient Christian

belief. Christ was born in either December, 3 BC, or January, 2 BC. A year later (January 10), a full eclipse occurred, after which Herod died. This makes Christ about a year old when Herod dies, if we assume a “mid-winter” day for His birth.

SIX EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS ON THE YEAR OF CHRIST’S BIRTH

| Writer | Date Suggested |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Irenaeus (d. 202) | 3-2 BC |
| Clement of Alexandria (d. 215) | November 18, 3 BC |
| Tertullian (d. 220) | 3/2 BC |
| Hippolytus of Rome (d. 236) | 3/2 BC |
| Julius Africanus (d. 240) | 3/2 BC |
| Origen of Alexandria (d. 253) | 3/2 BC |

The greatest challenge to this view that Herod died in 1 BC is the date of his successors’ reigns. Archelaus (Herod’s son) ruled Judea for ten years before he was deposed in 6 AD. This fits perfectly with Herod’s 4 BC death. The same could be said about the reigns of Herod Antipas and Herod Philip.¹⁵⁷

In response, advocates for Herod’s death in 1 BC argue for co-regencies between him and his sons, which his sons then regarded as the first years of their respective reigns. Various pieces of correspondence that have survived do suggest that Herod granted his sons some royal authority while he was still alive,¹⁵⁸ but they come short of proving a co-regency. Archelaus, in fact, was not even made Herod the Great’s “first heir” until shortly before his father’s death!

In addition, archaeologists have uncovered coins minted by Archelaus that date to 4 BC.¹⁵⁹ It is one thing to postulate that Herod allowed a quasi co-regency; it is quite another to suggest that he permitted Archelaus to mint coins *in his own name while he (Herod) was still alive*.¹⁶⁰

This last observation pushes me to hold still to the traditional date of March/April 4 BC for the death of Herod. As fascinating as some of the evidence is and as much

as I would like to side with the early church's writers, clearer evidence of a co-regency between Herod and his sons must come to light before the 1 BC date for Herod's death can be accepted.

Jesus, then, would have been born, as we have observed above, sometime in November or early December 5 BC.¹⁶¹ John the Baptist, six months his senior, would have been born earlier in the year 5 BC, and the angel Gabriel's unexpected appearance to Zechariah would have occurred sometime in 6 BC.

Review It

1. What event officially ends the four hundred “Silent Years”?
2. What do we learn about Herod the Great from history?
3. What unusual event happened when Mary greeted her pregnant relative Elizabeth?
4. How many times is Joseph guided by either an angel or a dream?
5. How old was Jesus when He was presented in the Temple?
6. How old was Jesus (approximately) when He was visited by the wise men?
7. Who were the *Magi*?
8. What indications do we have that Joseph and Mary were rather poor? How (probably) did God provide for them to journey to Egypt?
9. What is the most widely accepted date for the death of Herod the Great?
10. In what year was Jesus most likely born?

CHAPTER TEN



MINISTRY AND DEATH OF MESSIAH

Date It! (All dates AD)

- John's Ministry Begins 28/29
- Jesus' Baptism 29
- First Passover of Jesus' Ministry April 7, 30
- Jesus' Death (on Nisan 15) April 3, 33

Can You Believe It?

- “**Jesus (or his crucifixion)** is mentioned by the Roman historians Cornelius Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius; by non-Roman historians Thallus and Phlegon; by the satirist Lucian of Samosata; by the Jewish Talmud, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus.”¹⁶²
- An ossuary (“bone box”) was discovered with the following inscription: “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.” Some allege this a possible evidence for **Jesus' resurrection** (if it belongs to James, the brother of Jesus). Would the family have added “brother of Jesus” to the ossuary inscription if Jesus had been crucified but not resurrected?
- Underneath the current white limestone synagogue in **Capernaum**, the city where Jesus made His Galilean headquarters, are remains of a synagogue from the time of Jesus (first century AD). In addition, a private house has been discovered that was used early (ca. 50-100 AD) as a place for Christian

gatherings, leading some to believe that this may have been Peter’s house (Matt. 8:14).

THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and the Gospel of John recount all we essentially know about Jesus’ life and ministry. Their records enable us to reconstruct the periods or phases of His ministry based roughly along geographical lines as he traveled about in His native Palestine. Not every Gospel talks about every phase. One must patch the various Gospel accounts together like a multi-piece quilt in order to see the whole.¹⁶³ But once having done so, these phases unfold sequentially as in the chart below.

**THE PHASES OF JESUS’ MINISTRY
(AS FOUND IN THE FOUR GOSPELS)**

| Phase | Matthew | Mark | Luke | John |
|--|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Early Judean ministry (from His baptism by John the Baptist) | 3:1-4:11 | 1:1-13 | 3:1-4:13 | 1:19-3:36 |
| Public Galilean ministry (including trip through Samaria) | 4:12-14:12 | 1:14-6:30 | 4:14-9:10a | 4:1-5:47 |
| Private ministry in and around Galilee | 14:13- 18:35 | 6:31-9:50 | 9:10b-9:62 | 6:1-7:1 |
| Later Judean ministry | | | 10:1-13:21 | 7:2-10:39 |
| Ministry in and around Perea | 19:1-20:34 | 10:1-52 | 13:22- 19:28 | 10:40- 11:54 |
| Passion Week | 21:1-27:66 | 11:1-15:47 | 19:29- 23:56 | 11:55- 19:42 |
| Resurrection & Ascension | 28:1-20 | 16:1-20 | 24:1-53 | 20:1-21:25 |

JOHN'S BAPTISM AND THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Other than one brief incident when Jesus was twelve (Luke 2:41-50), the Gospels record nothing about Jesus' activities from the time of His infancy until the time of His public ministry. John's ministry was the official prelude to that of Jesus. Jesus did not just stand up and suddenly announce Himself (as so many false teachers have done). God raised up a Voice to prepare the "spiritual remnant" of Israel to receive their Messiah. John was that Voice, rightly alluded to as the Forerunner of Jesus (vv. 3-6; John 1:19-23).

According to Luke 3:1, John began his ministry sometime during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar which, later in this chapter, we will date to AD 28/29. Our guess is that John began his ministry in the spring of AD 29, with Jesus' baptism following about six months later in August/September of the same year.

John primarily ministered in the wilderness of Judea and in the adjoining area beyond the Jordan River known as Perea ("beyond Jordan," KJV). His preaching drew multitudes of people, and both Pharisees and Sadducees came to him for baptism (Matt. 3:7). The Scripture does not specify how long John preached and baptized before Jesus appeared. It would have taken some time for him to gain popularity and so we assume a period of at least several months. At some point, Jesus arrived from Galilee and requested to be baptized by John. This was the moment for which John had been sent. With some reluctance because of his own sense of unworthiness, he baptized Jesus. The Spirit descended upon Jesus and the Father voiced from heaven His approval of His beloved Son (vv. 14-17). This momentous occasion marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

EARLY JUDEAN MINISTRY

Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan for forty days (4:1-2; Luke 4:1-2). The threefold temptation recorded by Matthew (4:3-11) and Luke (4:3-13) was the finale after these grueling forty days. After His temptation, Jesus did not return immediately to Galilee. Mark records that Jesus did not return to Galilee until *after* John was arrested (1:14). The period between Jesus' temptation and His return to Galilee is a time of ministry that we refer to as His early Judean ministry.

John's Gospel is our primary source for Jesus' early Judean ministry. Early during this time John the Baptist pointed His disciples to Jesus as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 35). Two of his disciples (John the Apostle and Andrew) took him seriously

and began to follow Jesus. Three others—Peter, Philip, and Nathanael—soon followed suit (vv. 41-51).

**AN IMPORTANT WEEK:
EVENTS LEADING UP TO JESUS’ FIRST PUBLIC MIRACLE**

| Day | Event |
|-------------------------|---|
| Day 1 (John 1:19-28) | John the Baptist explains who he is (and is not), and testifies that One greater than he is coming. |
| Day 2 (John 1:29-34) | John sees Jesus coming and declares Him to be the Lamb of God. |
| Day 3 (John 1:35-42) | John points two of His disciples (John and Andrew) to Jesus as the Lamb of God. They begin to follow Jesus. Andrew brings His brother Simon (Peter) to Jesus. |
| Day 4 (John 1:43-51) | Jesus purposes to head toward Galilee. Philip and Nathanael become disciples of Jesus. |
| Days 5-6 | Not mentioned in the text, but no doubt days of travel from Perea (“beyond Jordan”) to Galilee. |
| Day 7 (John 2:1-11) | Jesus attends a wedding in Cana, where He performs His first public “sign.” |

Jesus then made a trip to Galilee to attend a wedding in Cana, where He performed His first miracle (2:1-11). From Cana, He journeyed to Capernaum, where He stayed a few days before returning to Jerusalem for Passover (vv. 12-13). This Passover, April 7, AD 30, by our reckoning, was the first of Jesus’ ministry. His cleansing of the Temple at this time (vv. 14-20) is different from a *later* cleansing of the Temple during His final Passover season. During this first Passover, Jesus performed other signs (v. 23) and these led Nicodemus to seek a secretive night-time interview with Jesus (3:1-21).

After the Passover, Jesus retired with His disciples into the land of Judea, where He spent time with them and “was baptizing” (3:22). This begins an indefinite period of anywhere from a few weeks to several months in length.¹⁶⁴ Two things brought this time in Judea to a close: Jesus’ rising fame (4:1) and the imprisonment of John the Baptist (Mark 1:14). The time had come for Him to head to Galilee.

GREAT GALILEAN MINISTRY

For His trip from Judea to Galilee, Jesus felt divinely constrained to travel through Samaria (John 4:3-4).¹⁶⁵ At Sychar, He conversed with a Samaritan woman, which brought her and a host of her fellow townspeople to faith in Him (vv. 5-42). He then continued His journey to Galilee, where He was eagerly received by the Galileans who had seen His mighty works at the most recent Passover (v. 45).

During this time of ministry in Galilee, many of Christ's best-known miracles and teachings took place. His first miracle (at this time) was to heal a nobleman's son. The nobleman's son was sick in Capernaum but Jesus spoke the words of healing while at Cana. This was Jesus' second "sign" (4:54). During this Galilean ministry, Jesus moved His "headquarters" from Nazareth, where He had grown up, to Capernaum (Luke 4:16-31; Matt. 4:13-16).¹⁶⁶ He called His earlier disciples to a more permanent companionship with Him (vv. 18-22), cast a demon out of a man on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-28), healed Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39), cleansed a leper (Matt. 8:2-4), healed a paralytic (9:1-8), and called Matthew the tax collector to become His disciple (v. 9). An unnamed Jewish feast (John 5:1) compelled Jesus briefly to Jerusalem after which He returned to Galilee and resumed where He left off. Increasingly he butted heads with the religious leadership of His day, especially over the issue of the Sabbath day (Mark 2:23-3:6). His many miracles swelled His popularity, and great multitudes from all over Palestine followed Him (3:7-8).

After spending all night in prayer (Luke 6:12), Jesus chose twelve to be with Him more intimately and be His apostles (Mark 3:13-14). He then delivered the Sermon on the Mount, in which He expounded the righteousness of Kingdom citizens. Other miracles followed, such as healing a centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10) and raising a widow's son from the dead (vv. 11-17). A sinful but repentant woman anointed His feet (vv. 36-50). For the first time, Jewish leaders publicly labeled His actions as satanically empowered (Matt. 12:22-24); in response, Jesus began to speak more in parables (ch. 13). He crossed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where He healed the demoniac of Gerasa (Gedara, KJV) and was then asked to leave (Mark 5:1-18).

Upon his return to Capernaum, Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Luke 8:40-56), healed two blind men (Matt. 9:27-30), and was once again blasphemed by the Pharisees (v. 34). Moved with compassion for the multitudes who had religious leaders but no true spiritual shepherds (vv. 36-38), Jesus organized His twelve disciples into teams of two (Mark 6:7) and sent them off to preach, heal, and cast out demons. Their actions, combined with those of Jesus, caught the eye of

Herod Antipas, alarming his imagination with the fear that John the Baptist, whom he had killed, had risen from the dead (Matt. 14:1-2).

MORE PRIVATE MINISTRY IN AND AROUND GALILEE

News of the death of John the Baptist triggered a change in Jesus' ministry, in which He withdrew from the thronging crowds and invested His time in mentoring His twelve disciples (14:13-14; John 6:1-3). It was about Passover season (v. 4) and only one year remained before He would be crucified.

MATTHEW'S PREDICTIONS OF JESUS' SUFFERINGS AND RESURRECTION

| Reference | Summary |
|---------------------------------|--|
| First Prediction (16:21) | He will go to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and be raised again the third day. |
| Second Prediction (17:22-23) | He is about to be delivered into the hands of men, they will kill him, and he will be raised again on the third day. |
| Third Prediction (20:17-19) | At Jerusalem, he will be condemned by the chief priests and scribes; delivered over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, and crucified; and be raised up on the third day. |
| Fourth Prediction (26:2, 32) | He will be delivered up to be crucified.... after which he will be raised up. |

A very significant event occurred right around this transition time: the feeding of the five thousand. It is the only miracle Jesus performed that is recorded by all four Gospels. The feeding of the five thousand led into the Bread of Life discourse (6:26-58), which caused a permanent downturn in Jesus' popularity (v. 66). Animosity toward Him continued to accelerate. Pharisees who had traveled all the way from Jerusalem accused Him of breaking hand-washing traditions (Matt. 15:1-20). Jesus subsequently withdrew to places outside of Galilee proper, such as Tyre, Sidon, and

the Decapolis¹⁶⁷ (15:21-38; Mark 7:24-8:9). When He did return to Galilee, a combined coalition of Pharisees and Sadducees—their mutual hatred toward Jesus overriding their many other differences—pressed him for a sign (Matt. 16:1-4).

Jesus next removed Himself further north, near Caesarea Philippi, where Peter famously confessed Him as the Messiah, the Son of God (vv. 13-20). Now that His disciples understood who He was, Jesus proceeded to deepen their understanding of what He came to do by predicting His coming death and resurrection (16:21-26).

A week later, Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John (17:1-9; Luke 9:28-36). At this event, Peter wrongly equated Jesus with Moses and Elijah by suggesting a tent be made for each; the Father quickly corrected Peter's mistake by singling out Jesus uniquely as His beloved Son. Thomas and Gundry rightly summarize, "Within a one-week period came Peter's confession, the first prophecy of the church, the first prophecy of crucifixion and resurrection, and now this confirmatory revelation of the King and His Kingdom."¹⁶⁸

LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY

Not too long after this important week, Jesus resolutely set His face toward Jerusalem (9:51). The time was the Feast of Tabernacles (September 10-17, AD 32), and it was for this feast that Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, although not on His brothers' timetable (John 7:2-10). On the last day of the Feast, Jesus invited all those spiritually thirsty to come to Him (vv. 37-38). The next day (or shortly thereafter) Jesus delivered His Light of the World sermon (8:12) and equated Himself with the Father by referring to Himself as the *I am* (8:58). Only seven months remained until His crucifixion, and His thoughts were increasingly preoccupied with the events about to take place in Jerusalem. This explains Luke's emphasis in his Gospel on Jesus' journeying toward Jerusalem (9:53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28).

Jesus' attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles begins His later Judean ministry, a period of about three months (September-December, AD 32). Jesus' sending out of the Seventy (10:1-24) probably takes place during this phase of His ministry, as does His telling of the Good Samaritan parable (vv. 25-37), His visit with Martha and Mary in Bethany (vv. 38-42), His activities and extended discourses in Luke 11:1-13:21, and His healing of the man born blind (John 9). On the heels of His healing the man born blind, Jesus identified Himself as the Good Shepherd who will lay down His life for His sheep (10:1-18). Growing divisions formed over who He really was (vv. 19-21). The grand finale of these three months came during His

discussion with the Jews at the Feast of Dedication (December 18, AD 32) when He proclaimed Himself one in essence with the Father. They futilely attempted to seize Him, and Jesus decided it best to leave Judea for the present (vv. 22-40).

MINISTRY IN AND AROUND PEREA

Jesus' departure from Judea and arrival "beyond Jordan" began a period of about three-and-one-half months often referred to as His Perea ministry. In a sense, Jesus returned to where His Messianic ministry had begun some three years earlier (John 10:40). His travels during this time form the backdrop for events that only Luke records (13:22-17:10). On the other hand, only John records Jesus' coming in from Perea in order to heal Lazarus at Bethany (ch. 11). This, one of Jesus' most remarkable miracles, had a very mixed response: many believed on Him (11:45), but others began to lay plans to kill Him (vv. 46-53). Caiaphas, the high priest, spoke better than he knew when he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation that year (v. 51). Such venomous hatred against Him caused Jesus to isolate Himself even more at a city called Ephraim in northern Judea, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) from Jerusalem (v. 54).

He then chose a very circuitous route to head to Jerusalem for His last Passover: He traveled north through Samaria and Galilee in order to join the Pilgrims traveling from there through Perea to Jerusalem (Luke 17:11). This final journey included the healing of the ten lepers, the thankful one of whom was a Samaritan (vv. 12-17). He also taught on prayer (18:1-14), came into conflict with the Pharisees over divorce (Matt. 19:1-12), exposed the rich young ruler's avarice (vv. 16-30), and brought salvation to Zacchaeus of Jericho (Luke 19:1-10). He ascended up the Jericho road toward Jerusalem, teaching as He went (vv. 11-28), and arrived at the hospitable home of Martha and Mary in Bethany six days before the Passover (John 12:1). Jesus was now entering the week of His Passion.

JESUS' PASSION WEEK

The last week of Jesus' earthly ministry, the week of His Passion, receives more attention in the Gospels than any other single week in His ministry. It has been rightly labeled "the most important week of the most important person who ever lived."¹⁶⁹ Both Mark and Luke devote six chapters to this one week, Matthew devotes eight, and John an astounding nine! John, in fact, pens seven of those 9 chapters about one 24-hour period of the Passion Week. To summarize, 29 of 89

chapters in the Gospels focus on one week in Christ's life.¹⁷⁰ It is also one of the most studied weeks in all of biblical history—no “single matter of chronology has been examined so thoroughly as the date of the death of Jesus of Nazareth.”¹⁷¹

The Passion Week begins with Jesus' arrival at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus six days before the Passover (John 12:1). It was **Saturday**.¹⁷² A dinner was held in His honor during which an event took place that overshadowed the dinner itself: Mary's anointing of Jesus. This anointing was, Jesus says, a deliberate preparation for His burial (vv. 3-8). Mary alone, of all Jesus' disciples, seemed to have some inkling of what lay ahead for Him.

On **Sunday**—what we refer to as Palm Sunday—Jesus entered Jerusalem to the accolades of the multitudes. Jesus was something of a celebrity, after all. His miracles, His confrontations with the religious leaders, and His authoritative teaching had all served to swell the popular interest in who He was. His journey into Jerusalem began on the Mount of Olives, the mountain immediately to the east of Jerusalem, near the summit of which His disciples found a young donkey and its mother in the village of Bethphage (Matt. 21:1-2). Jesus then rode down the Mount of Olives, crossed the Kidron Valley, and ascended the hill, Mount Moriah, on which the Temple itself sat. His choice of mount was an intentional fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy that Jerusalem's King would enter her riding on the foal of a donkey (Zech. 9:9). From the moment of His descent down the Mount of Olives, the waiting throng began to publicly and joyfully acclaim Him as the Messianic deliverer and heir to the throne of David (Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:38). The crowds were very possibly disappointed when, given the lateness of the hour, He entered the Temple only long enough to look around before heading back up the slopes of the Mount of Olives to Bethany. They had anticipated much more.

The next day (**Monday**), on His way back into Jerusalem from Bethany, Jesus cursed a fig tree that had leaves but no fruit (Mark 11:13-14). The tree did not fulfill the expectations it raised, and “He condemned it as a vivid illustration of a fair profession without performance.”¹⁷³ He then entered the Temple complex and drove out the merchandisers (Luke 19:45-48), accusing them of turning God's House into a den of robbers (Mark 11:17). The events and discourse of John 12:20-50 also took place on this day.

As Jesus' disciples journeyed with Him on **Tuesday** back into Jerusalem, they noticed that the fig tree had completely withered (Mark 11:19-21). Jesus seized the opportunity to speak to them about the power of faith when praying (vv. 22-26). Jesus spent much of the day in the Temple, where religious leaders questioned Him over the source of His authority, the legality of paying taxes to Caesar, the nature

of marriage in heaven, and the Greatest Commandment (Matt. 21:23-22:40). This day marks the end of Jesus' recorded public teaching with a pronouncement of woe against the scribes and Pharisees and a lament over Jerusalem's spiritual choices (23:1-39). He then sat and watched those giving to the Temple treasury, remarking especially on the widow and her mite (Mark 12:41-44). Afterward, He left the Temple, crossed the Kidron Valley, sat down on the Mount of Olives, and delivered to His disciples the "Olivet Discourse" (Matt. 24-25).

Wednesday of the Passion Week is curiously silent in the Gospel accounts. Jesus may have continued His teaching in the Temple or He may have rested in Bethany, knowing the ordeal that lay before Him. This also may have been the day when Judas Iscariot sealed his agreement with the chief priests to betray Jesus (Mark 14:1-2, 10-11).

Thursday was Nisan 14, the beginning of a week of festivities referred to as the Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Although technically two separate feasts, in practice the celebration of the two ran together, and the names of each were sometimes even used interchangeably. Thus, the Synoptic Gospels refer to the "first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb" (v. 12). In Jesus' day, the Passover lambs were typically slain from 3 to 5 pm and the meal itself eaten in the evening.¹⁷⁴ It was this Passover meal that Jesus earnestly desired to eat with His disciples one last time and for which He commanded them to make preparation. Given Jesus' celebrity status, this "Last Supper" had to be held in an undisclosed location so as to avoid interference or possible arrest (Luke 22:7-15).

Jesus took this meal as the opportunity to identify Himself as the fulfillment of the Passover. The bread that He broke that night before them was actually the picture of His own body about to be broken. The wine in the cup which they shared was actually His blood, about to be shed for many as the basis for a new covenant. Thousands of Passovers had been celebrated, but this one would be special. It was the fulfillment to which all the Passovers had pointed (vv. 16-20).

John 14-17 preserves Jesus' lengthy discourse and prayer following the Passover meal. Jesus then went with His eleven disciples—Judas had already left to do His nefarious deed—to a place called Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Matt. 26:30-36; John 18:1). Here Jesus prayed while His disciples slept (Matt. 26:37-46). Sometime that night, Judas guided a torch-lit mob to the spot, evidently well-known to him, and betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

That night and into the wee hours of Friday, Jesus endured six trials: three Jewish and three Roman. His first two Jewish trials took place that night: the first before

Annas (father-in-law to Caiaphas and the previous high priest), and the second before the Sanhedrin at Caiaphas' house. Peter evidently denied Jesus at least once during the trial before Annas (John 18:17), and then three times at the house of Caiaphas (Matt. 26:69-75).¹⁷⁵

JESUS' SIX TRIALS

| Trial | Reference |
|--|---|
| First Jewish Trial (before Annas) | John 18:13-24 |
| Second Jewish Trial (before Caiaphas) | Matt. 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-65 |
| Third Jewish Trial (before the whole Sanhedrin) | Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71 |
| First Roman Trial (before Pontius Pilate) | Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1b-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38 |
| Second Roman Trial (before Herod Antipas) | Luke 23:6-12 |
| Third Roman Trial (before Pontius Pilate) | Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-19:16 |

As **Friday** dawned in earnest, Jesus' third Jewish trial took place. An early morning gathering of the Sanhedrin met for consultation, rendered an official verdict of guilty, and then led Jesus to Pontius Pilate for the first of His Roman trials (Matt. 27:2; Luke 23:1). It was Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a day on which no work was to be done. Although the Passover meal had been eaten the night before, additional sacrifices were offered on this day, which marked it as special. It was this continuation of the Passover festivities that John has in mind when he mentions the reluctance of the Jewish leaders to enter the Praetorium where Pilate was for fear that they would become unclean and unable to "eat the Passover" (John 18:28).¹⁷⁶

From the very first of Jesus' Roman trials, Pilate concluded that He was innocent (Luke 23:4; John 18:38). Upon hearing that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate, being

in somewhat of a quandary as to what to do with Jesus, sent Him to Herod Antipas, who had long desired to see Jesus (Luke 23:6-12). This was Jesus' second Roman trial. Jesus, however, did not respond to Herod's questioning, and so He was sent back to Pilate (v. 11).

During this final trial, Pilate proclaimed Jesus' innocence at least twice (23:14, 22). He clearly wanted to release Jesus, but his political career could not afford the insinuations forthcoming from the Jewish leaders that his loyalty to Caesar was in question. So he delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Jesus was now the subject of extreme brutality and mockery. He was scourged for the second time (Mk. 15:15).¹⁷⁷ A crown of thorns was placed on His head, then driven further into His scalp by repeated striking with a reed (v. 19). He was spit upon and ridiculed as the "King of the Jews." He was stripped and made to bear His own cross, which He was physically unable to carry (John 19:7; Luke 23:26).

The place of His execution was called the "Skull" (Golgotha) and here He was crucified between two criminals sometime between 9 am and noon.¹⁷⁸ Seemingly all scorned Him—passersby (Mark 15:29), the chief priests and scribes (Matt. 27:41), the soldiers (Luke 23:36-37), and *both* robbers crucified with Him (Matt. 27:44). One of the two robbers, however, experienced a change of heart, embraced Him as Israel's true Messianic King, and was assured paradise (Luke 23:40-43).

The three hours on the cross from noon until 3 pm took place under the cover of a supernatural darkness (Matt. 27:45). The silence that prevailed during those three hours was finally shattered by Jesus' cry of abandonment, *My God, My God, Why did you forsake me?* Jesus' final three sayings¹⁷⁹ followed in short order, after which He gave up His spirit. An earthquake shook Jerusalem, the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom, and many dead saints came back to life. The eeriness of it all convinced the centurion on duty that Jesus was truly the Son of God (27:46-54). He had probably seen many men die, but none quite like this Man!¹⁸⁰

Even still, this long Friday dragged on. Jesus was pierced in His side to ensure that He was really dead (John 19:33-37). Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, requested the body of Jesus from Pilate. Helped by Nicodemus, he quickly prepared the body of Jesus for burial by anointing it with spices and wrapping it in linen (vv. 38-42). Joseph's unused tomb was nearby and Jesus' body was laid in it. The location of His grave was carefully noted by Jesus' female disciples, and everyone scurried home (Luke 23:54-56).

On **Saturday**, remembering Jesus' predictions that He would rise from the dead *after three days*, the chief priests and the Pharisees sent a delegation to Pilate. (It

seems as if everybody rested on the Sabbath except the religious leaders!) Pilate ordered a guard placed, and the stone was sealed (Matt. 27:62-66).

RESURRECTION!

The movements of the male and female disciples of Jesus on Resurrection morning are difficult to trace with exactness.¹⁸¹ Each Gospel writer condenses the frenzied excitement of that morning and records only those details pertinent to his (inspired) theme and aim. Our challenge in harmonizing all the details does not make any one of their four accounts false. (All are based on eyewitness reports.) To the contrary, it establishes the lack of collusion on the part of the four gospel writers and demonstrates conclusively that their story was not manufactured.

The resurrection of Jesus is actually one of the most historically verifiable of all His miracles. All four Gospels agree on at least four things: 1) the unexpectedness of the resurrection (*all* the disciples were surprised), 2) the empty tomb, 3) the announcement of the resurrection to women, and 4) the appearance of Jesus to His disciples.¹⁸²

The order in which the risen Jesus appeared to His disciples occurred as follows:

1. **Mary Magdalene**, who was one of a small company of women who came very early on Sunday morning to visit the Tomb, was the first to see Him (John 20:14-16; Mark 16:9). Mary Magdalene had evidently run ahead of her other female companions. Seeing the empty tomb, she hurried to Peter and John with the distressing news (John 20:2). When Peter and John rushed to the Tomb, she followed them back (vv. 11-12). It was on this second visit to the tomb that she saw Jesus.
2. Sometime shortly after this, Jesus appeared to the **other women** and reminded them of His promise to meet them in Galilee (Matt. 28:9-10; Luke 2:8-11).
3. Next, it seems,¹⁸³ Christ appeared to **Peter** individually (I Cor. 15:5). No further details are recorded, but it evidently happened sometime before Jesus appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus.
4. As **Cleopas and his companion** journeyed to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to them (Luke 24:13-32). They did not realize who He was until they reached their destination about 11 kilometers (7 miles) from Jerusalem and they were eating together. They immediately returned to Jerusalem, although it was already around 6 pm, in order to inform the other disciples.

5. As Cleopas and his companion relayed their exciting news to the **Ten Disciples** (Thomas was absent), Jesus Himself appeared in the room where they were reclining for dinner (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36).
6. One week later, Jesus again appeared to the **Eleven**. This time **Thomas** was present. His initial doubt gave way to a confession (John 20:28) that surpassed even Peter's earlier one in Caesarea Philippi.
7. Sometime later,¹⁸⁴ Jesus appeared to **seven of His disciples** who had returned to fishing. John first recognized that it was Jesus, but impetuous Peter was the first to reach Him on the shore (21:1-25). This was the time when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?"
8. Jesus appeared to the **Eleven** on a mountain in Galilee, a place that He had pre-arranged with them (Matt. 26:32; 28:16).¹⁸⁵ Here He gave the Great Commission as it is recorded in Matthew (28:17-20). This may coincide with His appearance to **five hundred of the brethren** at one time (I Cor. 15:6).
9. Jesus appeared to **James**, His half-brother (v. 7), an event that convinced James of Jesus' claims.
10. Jesus appeared many other times to **His disciples** during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension (Acts 1:3).

ASCENSION

Jesus' final appearance and ascension took place on the Mount of Olives. Among His last words were those recorded in Acts 1:4-8, followed by a final blessing (Luke 24:50). He was then taken up and a cloud took Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9). Two angels appeared with the reminder that Jesus would return just as He had left. The disciples responded in worship, joyfully returned to Jerusalem, and daily gathered in the Temple praising God for what had transpired (Luke 24:52-53).

MATTERS OF CHRONOLOGY

Ironically, the "most important week about the most important person who ever lived" remains one of the most enigmatic of all weeks to date with precision. This same lack of precision applies to dating the years of Jesus' earthly ministry. The chronological issues surrounding the date of Jesus' death is actually so challenging that I have devoted Appendix E to a more detailed discussion of it. Below is a brief overview of the chief difficulties involved and the position taken on each one.

- 1) How to reckon the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, which Luke 3:1 uses to synchronize the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry

The fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar was AD 28/29, in line with "normal" Roman reckoning of the reigns of their emperors. Since Tiberius' official fifteenth year would not have begun until August or September of AD 28, my assumption is that John the Baptist's ministry actually began during AD 29, perhaps in the spring when the vast majority of the winter's rains had ceased and people had begun to move about more freely.

- 2) The length of Jesus' earthly ministry

Jesus' earthly ministry was three-plus years in length. Guessing that His baptism, and thus the beginning of His ministry, began about six months after John commenced his, we date the beginning of His ministry to the late summer/early fall of AD 29. Jesus died at Passover in AD 33, which means His ministry lasted three-plus years.

- 3) Whether Jesus died on a Thursday or Friday (Wednesday has also been suggested by some, but has relatively few advocates)

Friday was the day of the crucifixion. The Thursday view has much merit and is held by men that I highly respect, but it requires a double-conjecture in order to make it work.¹⁸⁶ This, in my opinion, weakens the theory and places the onus on its advocates to provide hard evidence, since a straightforward reading of the Gospels implies clearly that Jesus died on Friday.

- 4) Whether Jesus died on Nisan 14 or Nisan 15 (and whether the Last Supper was a true Passover meal)

Jesus held a real Passover meal with His disciples on Nisan 14 and was crucified on Nisan 15. I have taken my cue from the mouth of Jesus, when He told His disciples that He earnestly desired to eat the Passover meal with them *before* He suffered (Luke 22:15). Rather than die at the same time as the Passover lambs, He chose instead to declare Himself THE Passover Lamb to the men who would shortly help Him in building His church.

- 5) How to reconcile the account of the Passion week in John's Gospel with the account of the same events in the Synoptic Gospels

The above discussion regarding whether Jesus died on Nisan 14 or Nisan 15 is actually related to harmonizing John and the Synoptics. The Synoptics seem to place Jesus' death on Nisan 15, John's Gospel on Nisan 14. A very creative

solution, set forth by some, is to view the apparent discrepancy as due to calendrical differences. Galileans reckoned their days from sunrise to sunrise, while Judeans did so from sunset to sunset. This would lead to an offset of 12 hours. Jesus, then, could have eaten the Passover meal on Nisan 14 by Galilean reckoning and, simultaneously, been crucified on Nisan 14 by Judean reckoning. This has the effect of retaining the Passover typology and reconciling John with the Synoptics. The view is worthy of consideration but falters from lack of hard evidence as to whether any such dual celebration of the Passovers was ever kept. It is a conjecture, and admitted as such by honest proponents of it. Much simpler, and more textually based in my opinion, is to view John's references to "eating the Passover" (John 18:28) as not a reference to the Passover meal itself, but to the Passover festival. This is consistent with John's usage in his Gospel. He never uses the expression *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, as the Synoptics do. Rather, his use of the term *Passover* encompasses the whole Passover season, composed of the pre-festivities on Nisan 14 and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed.

6) Harmonizing astronomy with conclusions regarding Jesus' death

Astronomy plays a part in dating Jesus' ministry and death due to its ability to calculate with precision in what year Nisan 14 or Nisan 15 could have fallen on a Friday. The Jews followed a lunar calendar. A new month started in connection with the appearance of a new moon. Given the essentially unchanging nature of our solar system, new moons for thousands of years can be calculated with astonishing accuracy, including the new moon that started the month Nisan in which Jesus was crucified. Astronomers can then deduce on what day of the week Nisan 14 would have fallen and whether the crucifixion could have happened that year.

I have actually opted for AD 33 as the year for the crucifixion even though astronomy does not really support my conclusions. Most astronomers agree that Nisan 14 fell on Friday in AD 33, but according to the view I have adopted Jesus died on Friday, **Nisan 15**, one day too late astronomically. More discussion occurs in Appendix E, but essentially I have made astronomy a very minor plank in my dating decision, since astronomers have to make so many assumptions in their work. Astronomy itself is, of course, very precise, but the Jewish lunar calendar was based not on the scientific location of the new moon but on the actual sighting of the new moon plus a few other things such as, believe it or not, the condition of the crops and the lambs. These and a few other factors impacted Jewish calendar decisions to the point that we cannot be absolutely sure of when Nisan 14, or Nisan 15, for that matter, fell on a Friday. My starting point in arriving at a date was not astronomy, but rather the biblical text, specifically Luke's reference to Tiberius'

fifteenth year (3:1) and the apparent three-plus years of Jesus’ earthly ministry. To be honest, anybody who sets forward dates for Jesus’ ministry has to make a few guesses—such as exactly when John’s ministry began and how long it lasted. Thus, we may ultimately find that our conclusions are off by a year or two. Thankfully, the factuality of Jesus’ ministry and death are by no means impacted by our exact knowledge of when they occurred.

This discussion demonstrates the complexity involved in dating events in the life and ministry of Jesus and why godly scholars come up with varying conclusions. The chart below, with dates related to the life and ministry of Jesus, reflects the decisions that I have made above.

DATING THE EARTHLY LIFE OF JESUS¹⁸⁷

| Event | Time |
|--|---------------------------|
| Birth of Jesus | November/December, 5 BC |
| Jesus in the Temple at age 12 | Passover (March 28), AD 8 |
| Jesus begins His ministry | Summer/Autumn AD 29 |
| First Passover of Jesus’ ministry (John 2:13) | April 7, AD 30 |
| Second Passover of Jesus’ ministry (not mentioned in Scripture) | April 25, AD 31 |
| Jesus’ Third Passover (John 6:4) | April 13, AD 32 |
| Jesus at Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 10) | September 10-17, AD 32 |
| Jesus at Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-39) | December 18, AD 32 |
| Jesus’ triumphal entry | Sunday, March 29, AD 33 |
| Jesus’ death | Friday, April 3, AD 33 |
| Jesus’ resurrection | Sunday, April 5, AD 33 |
| Jesus’ ascension | Thursday, May 14, AD 33 |
| Jesus sends the Holy Spirit from Heaven | Sunday, May 24, AD 33 |

Review It

1. Name the various “phases” of Jesus’ ministry in chronological order.
2. What event marks the technical beginning of Jesus’ ministry?
3. Name two or three key events during Jesus’ early Judean ministry.
4. During which ministry phase did Jesus choose the Twelve and preach the Sermon on the Mount?
5. Which miracle of Jesus is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels?
6. What events moved Jesus to more private ministry in and around Galilee?
7. Where was Perea? What was perhaps the most remarkable event of Jesus’ Perea ministry?
8. Briefly summarize what Jesus did on each day of His Passion Week.
9. Name Jesus’ six trials.
10. What five appearances of Jesus took place on Resurrection Sunday?

CHAPTER ELEVEN



THE CHURCH'S FIRST 30 YEARS

Date It! (All dates AD)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| • Pentecost | May 24, 33 |
| • Paul's Conversion | 34/35 |
| • First Missionary Journey | 47-48 |
| • Jerusalem Council | 48-49 |
| • Second Missionary Journey | 49-51/52 |
| • Third Missionary Journey | 52/53-57 |

Can You Believe It?

- Paul traveled **by night** on his heavily-escorted transfer from Jerusalem to Caesarea (Acts 23:23, 31). Roman road construction sometimes embedded white stones in order to reflect moonlight and enhance visibility.
- An inscription found at Delphi mentions **Gallio** (18:12) as friend of Claudius and proconsul of Achaia in AD 51/52. This has become one of the most important discoveries for establishing Pauline chronology.
- The population of **Ephesus** in the first century was an estimated 200,000-250,000. The theater there, which seats about 24,000, is still visible today.
- Construction on the Temple of the Greek goddess Artemis (Roman name, **Diana**) in Ephesus began in 323 BC. It was 450 feet long, 225 feet wide, and 60 feet high, with 127 columns. One ancient traveler (Antipater of Sidon) praised it above the other seven ancient wonders of the world.

AFTER THE ASCENSION OF JESUS, the disciples waited ten days in Jerusalem for the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost He came, and the New Testament church age began. Acts recounts the church's first thirty years (AD 33-62) and has been aptly referred to as the first church history. In addition, it is Luke's sequel to his Gospel: although now ascended to heaven, Jesus continued His work through the witness of Spirit-empowered disciples who led the church into remarkable growth and expansion.

YE SHALL BE WITNESSES... (OUTLINE OF ACTS 1:8)

| Sharing the Gospel | Description |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| In Jerusalem | Acts 1-7 |
| In Judea and Samaria | Acts 8-12 |
| To the uttermost part of the earth | Acts 13-28 |

Acts 1:8 provides an outline which we will adhere to loosely in this chapter. Acts 1-7 relates the events leading up to and including the Day of Pentecost and the resulting advance of the gospel in Jerusalem. Acts 8-12 records the scattering of the church into Judea and Samaria and even beyond. By the end of these chapters, the gospel had advanced to Antioch in Syria, 500 kilometers (300 miles) north of Jerusalem. The church established at Antioch would serve as the headquarters for the next stage of the gospel's advance as it progressed to the "uttermost parts of the earth" (chs. 13-28). The total time covered in the book of Acts is about thirty years (AD 33-62), and divides into two almost-equal chronological segments:

- Acts 1-12: the first fifteen years (AD 33-46/47)
- Acts 13-28: the next fifteen years (AD 46/47-62)

If Jesus died in AD 33, as argued in the previous chapter, then His ascension took place on May 14, AD 33, forty days after His resurrection. Ten days later, on Sunday, May 24, the Holy Spirit came, ushering in a new era of prophecy and power (2:1ff). He filled all those waiting and they began to speak in languages they had never learned. This naturally caught the attention of those in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. Peter attributed the phenomenon to the work of the ascended Jesus (v. 33). Three thousand believed and were baptized. Only ten days had elapsed since Jesus' ascension but the number of His disciples had already increased 2300%.

TIMELINE OF THE CHURCH'S FIRST THIRTY YEARS

| | |
|----|---|
| 33 | Holy Spirit descends on Day of Pentecost Stephen killed/Saul converted (34/35) |
| 38 | Saul in Tarsus Cornelius converted Church at Antioch begins |
| 43 | Saul brought to Antioch (45/46) Famine Relief Visit to Jerusalem (46/47) |
| 48 | First Missionary Journey (47/48) Jerusalem Council (48/49) Second Missionary Journey (49-51/52) |
| 53 | Paul at Ephesus (53-56) Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (57) |
| 58 | Paul shipwrecked en route to Rome (59) Acts ends (62) |
| 63 | |

WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM

Three events in Acts 1-7 detail the gospel's continued advance in Jerusalem. The first of these was the healing of a lame man sitting at the Temple Gate (3:1-10). A crowd gathered, Peter preached to them, and an additional five thousand joined the Jerusalem church (3:11-4:4). This led to opposition, a pattern repeated in Acts. The high priestly family interrogated Peter and John (4:5-12), but there was little they could do to contain the excitement created by the healing of the lame man (vv. 13-22). During the interrogation, Peter and John displayed noticeable boldness (v. 13) before the same Council that had condemned Jesus just weeks earlier.

The second event is actually a threat from within (4:32-5:42). A couple named Ananias and Sapphira pretended to possess the genuine generosity found in the other members of the Jerusalem church, most noticeably in Barnabas (4:32-5:2). Their fraud threatened the unity of the early church, and God killed them (5:3-10). Fear shook those who heard of their death, more signs were done by the apostles, and “multitudes both of men and women” were added to the church (vv. 11-14). Envious, frustrated religious leaders then imprisoned the apostles and forced them to stand trial before the Sanhedrin (“council,” v. 27), but nothing could stop the teaching and preaching about Jesus the Messiah (v. 42).

The third event is the appointment of the “Seven,” often referred to as the first deacons (6:1-6).¹⁸⁸ The Greek-speaking Jewish segment of the disciples felt their widows were being neglected, and the apostles wisely appointed seven Greek-speaking Jewish men to oversee the problem. Again, the Word of the Lord continued its spread, this time catching many priests in its triumphal push (v. 7).

Stephen, one of the Greek-speaking Jews tapped to solve the widow problem, was especially full of the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 8). He began to evangelize fellow Greek-speaking Jews like himself, particularly those in the synagogue of Freedmen (v. 9).¹⁸⁹ They responded to his preaching with deceitful tactics that landed him before the Sanhedrin (vv. 11-15). His sermon before that eminent body is the longest speech in Acts, and it ends with his stoning (7:58-60). The church had suffered its first martyr. Opposition, however, did not kill the church but rather helped it in fulfilling its mission. The church’s first blood became the seed of its ongoing advance (to paraphrase Tertullian’s famous line).

WITNESSES TO JUDEA AND SAMARIA

Stephen’s death was like the grain of wheat that *when it dies brings forth much fruit* (John 12:24). To this point the church, which numbered in the tens of thousands, had lingered in Jerusalem; the persecution resulting from Stephen’s death now scattered them throughout Judea and Samaria, fulfilling God’s plan as outlined in Acts 1:8. Everywhere they went, they preached the Word (8:4). The advance, as recorded in chapters 8-12, is fourfold:

- To Samaria (8:5-25)
- To an Ethiopian eunuch (vv. 26-40)
- To the Gentile centurion Cornelius (10:1-11:18)
- To the largely Gentile city of Antioch (11:19-26)

PAUL'S CONVERSION AND EARLY YEARS

Stephen's death bore fruit in another way by powerfully impacting one of those approving of his death, Saul of Tarsus. His death pricked Saul's conscience like a sharp-pointed goad on a thick-skinned ox (Acts 22:20; 26:14). Saul's initial response was to intensify his anti-Christian persecution (8:1-3), but this was only to assuage the conviction that Stephen's words and death had aroused in his fervent young¹⁹⁰ heart.

Knowing the conflict raging in Saul's heart, Jesus Himself appeared to Saul as he journeyed to Damascus. The rest is history: the early church's greatest persecutor would become its greatest emissary—but not right away.

From Paul's autobiographical details in his letter to the Galatians (1:16-18), we learn that Luke's "when many days had passed" (Acts 9:23) was actually about three years in duration. Paul spent these three years in Arabia (probably in the region of Nabatea) *before* making the escape from Damascus and trip to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 9:23-29. It was on this trip to Jerusalem that he met with Peter for fifteen days (Gal. 1:18). While in Jerusalem, his effective preaching of Jesus so maddened the Greek-speaking Jews that his life was threatened. Rather than see this newly-lit candle snuffed out prematurely, the disciples sent him off to Tarsus (Acts 9:30)—Paul says the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:21)—and there he remained for several years. Persecution eased somewhat, and the church (now established in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria) continued to advance spiritually and numerically (Acts 9:31).

From almost the moment of Saul's conversion, Jesus revealed to him that he would be a "chosen vessel" to proclaim His name to the Gentiles (9:15). But a couple of necessary precursors must transpire. The first was the conversion of Cornelius which, assuming Acts to be chronological here, occurred after Saul's brief but turbulent fifteen days in Jerusalem. Cornelius' conversion represents the opening of the door to the Gentiles to become full partakers in the gospel and the growing church of Jesus Christ. It was important that Peter be the one to open the door since he was the clear leader of the apostolic company and the one to whom Christ had given the "keys" (Matt. 16:19). The Jews in general shared Peter's reticence to associate with "unclean" Gentiles (Acts 10:14, 28), and only by *his* being convinced was the church as a whole also persuaded that God was including Gentiles in what the Holy Spirit was doing (11:1-18).

Another precursor to Saul's mission to the Gentiles was the establishing of the church at Antioch (11:19-30).¹⁹¹ This church began when certain of the Christian

diaspora radically changed their *modus operandi*. Instead of preaching to Jews only, they broadened their preaching to include Gentiles. A new, predominantly-Gentile church was born. Since the special signs that had accompanied Cornelius' conversion had already convinced the Jerusalem church that God was granting eternal life to Gentiles (v. 18), it was deemed enough to send Barnabas to ensure that the work at Antioch was going forward on a solid foundation.

Under Barnabas, the work prospered to the point where he needed help. He knew the man for the job—Saul of Tarsus (vv. 23-25). He retrieved Saul from Tarsus and together their work of teaching bore so much fruit that the disciples in Antioch earned a new name: *Christian* (v. 26). No longer Jew or Gentile—they were *Christ-followers*. Although intended by the pagan populace to be derogatory, the name instead became (and still is) a badge of honor (I Pet. 4:16).

At this point, Acts departs from a strict chronology of events in order to prepare the way for the clear transition that takes place in chapter 13. Agabus' prophecy regarding an upcoming famine and the famine-relief visit of Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30) actually take place *after* the events recorded in Acts 12. The Herod in Acts 12:1 is Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great. Agrippa I was granted rule over Judea in AD 41, when Claudius became emperor, a position in which he continued until his painful and gruesome death in AD 44.¹⁹² His execution of James (v. 2) and imprisonment of Peter (v. 3) must therefore take place between AD 41-44, perhaps in AD 42 or 43.

The exact date of the famine to which Agabus refers is unknown (Acts 11:28); there were many famines during the reign of the Emperor Claudius. However, a couple factors suggest that the relief visit of Saul and Barnabas (v. 30) probably took place around AD 46/47. First is that this visit took place fourteen years after Paul's conversion (Gal. 2:1).¹⁹³ A date for the visit any *earlier* than 46/47 would effectually place Paul's conversion before the ascension of Jesus in AD 33, a chronological impossibility.

Second, a date much *later* than 46/47 is unlikely because Paul was in Corinth on his second missionary journey by AD 50—based on the Delphi inscription that mentions one Gallio (cf. Acts 18:11-12)—and a number of events that must squeeze chronologically between the aforementioned famine relief visit and Paul's arrival in Corinth sometime early in AD 50. These events include the entire first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-14:28), the Jerusalem Council (15:1-29), a time of ministry in Antioch (vv. 30-35), and the first part of Paul's second missionary journey (15:36-17:34). Making room in Pauline chronology for these activities forces us to choose the earliest date possible for the famine relief visit

(AD 46/47). Paul's conversion fourteen years earlier would then date to AD 34/35.¹⁹⁴

Thus, when Saul and Barnabas made their famine relief visit to Judea in AD 46/47, James had already been executed (12:2), and Peter had already experienced his miraculous deliverance from prison (12:6-19).¹⁹⁵ Agrippa I had died (AD 44), and Peter was therefore available to talk freely with Saul and Barnabas during their visit. Also during this same visit, Paul unburdened his heart to Peter, James, and John regarding his apostolic calling to take the gospel to the Gentiles and received their blessing (Gal. 2:7-10). Sometime after this, on an unknown occasion, was when Peter was in Antioch and was confronted by Paul for his hypocritical actions toward Gentile believers (vv. 11-14).

WITNESSES TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH

Acts 12 also serves a literary purpose as a kind of curtain call for Peter, who bows out of the book of Acts and virtually disappears (his name will only appear again in 15:7). The stage is now set for the great forward advance described in Acts 13-28. About fifteen years have elapsed in Acts 1-12 (AD 33-46/47), and we can summarize what has happened so far as follows:

- The Spirit's descent on the Day of Pentecost and the inauguration of the New Testament church.
- The radical increase of disciples in Jerusalem until they number in the tens of thousands.
- The death of Stephen and the resulting persecution that effectively scattered the church.
- The planting of churches throughout Samaria and Judea.
- The conversion of God's choice vessel (Saul) to become an apostle to the Gentiles.
- The "official" inclusion of Gentiles as equal members in the body of Christ.
- The planting of a largely Gentile church at Antioch, the base for future missionary operations.

The curtain then lifts again, and Acts 13-28 begins. Without any real fanfare, Luke gets right to the point: Saul and Barnabas, as two of the leaders of the church at Antioch, are set apart by the Spirit of God for a special work. The church obeys and sends them off (13:1-3). The first *major* thrust of the church outside the Levant had begun.

FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul (along with their assistant, John Mark¹⁹⁶) head off on what we now call Paul's first missionary journey. The three first sailed for Cyprus (13:4), a logical place to begin since Barnabas was a native of this island (4:36). Here, a transition took place. They arrived as Barnabas and Saul (13:7); when they left, Saul had become Paul, and Barnabas was one of *his* companions (v. 13). Paul's God-ordained gifting as an apostle to the Gentiles had propelled him to the forefront of the missionary team, and Barnabas graciously took the second position.

PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

| Journey | Acts Reference | Date |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| First Missionary Journey (primarily Galatia) | 13:4-14:26 | AD 47/48 |
| Second Missionary Journey (focus on Macedonia and Achaia) | 15:36-18:22 | AD 49-51/52 |
| Third Missionary Journey (focus on Ephesus) | 18:23-21:17 | AD 52/53-57 |
| Fourth Missionary Journey (to Rome) | 27:1-28:31 | AD 59-60 |

From Cyprus, the three journeyed to the province of Pamphylia on the mainland, where John Mark left them and returned home to Jerusalem. The reason is not cited, but Paul evidently did not think it a good one (15:38). In the province of Pisidia, north of Pamphylia and west of Galatia, Paul preached at a city called Antioch (different from Antioch in Syria). As was his custom, Paul used the Sabbath-day synagogue service as his starting point (13:14). His sermon resulted in converts and a desire on the part of many to hear more. However, it also resulted in intense opposition from the Jews, jealous over the excitement that Paul and Barnabas were attracting. Paul responds to the opposition by announcing their intention to turn to the Gentiles and quotes from Isaiah 49:6 as his biblical basis for doing so (Acts

13:46-47). In quoting this passage from Isaiah, Paul uses the same Greek words as those translated in Acts 1:8 as *unto the uttermost part of the earth*. According to the “outline” in Acts 1:8, Jesus’ witnesses had now entered the third phase of their task.

Driven out of Antioch-Pisidia by the Jews, Paul and Barnabas traveled 145 kilometers (90 miles) to Iconium in the province of Galatia (13:51). Many believed, but opposition once again forced the missionary team out of town, this time further south to Lystra and then east to Derbe (14:6). Both of these cities were located in Lycaonia, part of the larger province of Galatia. At Lystra, Paul was stoned (v. 19), but it was also there that he made the acquaintance of Timothy, who became one of his dearest sons in the faith. Derbe, where they also made many disciples (v. 21), seems to have been the missionary team’s final stop. From there they backtracked through their itinerary, strengthening the disciples they had made and appointing native leadership for the newly established churches (vv. 22-23). They then made their way back down to the coast and sailed from Attalia back to Antioch, where they declared all that God had done with them (vv. 24-27). The first major initiative into predominantly Gentile territory had been successful.

THE FIRST TWO NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES WRITTEN

After giving the report of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas continued “no little time” with the disciples at Antioch (14:28). This interlude of time (between the first and second missionary journeys) was less than a year in length, but a few things of great importance took place. **James**, the half-brother of Jesus and a key leader in the Jerusalem church, wrote his epistle to the Jewish believers scattered abroad (James 1:1). He apparently wrote it before the Jerusalem Council in AD 48/49.¹⁹⁷ (He may even have penned it before the first missionary journey.) Also, Paul wrote the letter to the **Galatians**, his first letter to be included in the canon of the New Testament. This letter was addressed to the churches that he and Barnabas had just planted in the province of Galatia, churches like the ones at Antioch-Pisidia,¹⁹⁸ Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

JERUSALEM COUNCIL

The Jerusalem Council also took place during this interlude. This important Council was held about AD 49 and addressed the very controversial issue of Gentile circumcision (Acts 15:1-2). For Jews, circumcision was *the* sign of their covenant status and to be associated with those *uncircumcised* was unthinkable. Only after

deliberating on Peter's reminder about what God did in the "early days" with Cornelius (vv. 7-11), the reports of Paul and Barnabas (fresh from their recent incursion into Gentile territory, v. 12), and the timely biblical advice of James (vv. 13-21) did the church agree to forego the requirement of circumcision for Gentile believers. This was one of the most significant decisions of the early church and clearly reflected the mind of the Holy Spirit (v. 28). The Gentiles were now "officially" welcomed as fellow-heirs and co-equal members of the Church, the body of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:6).

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Sometime after the Jerusalem Council—and after its verdict had been delivered to the Gentile converts in Antioch¹⁹⁹—Paul approached Barnabas about retracing the steps of their earlier missionary journey. Barnabas was willing but a sharp disagreement erupted between them when Barnabas insisted on again including his cousin, John Mark, on the missionary team. Paul would have none of it, and so the two split, each going their separate ways. What Paul did not realize at the time was that the second missionary journey would become far more than merely retracing past travels; it would take him across the Aegean Sea to new provinces and new situations. Silas, whom Paul had chosen to replace Barnabas was, like Paul, a Roman citizen (16:37), a status highly advantageous given the widened scope of their travels. Furthermore, Barnabas had finished his work with Paul; it was time for him to use his gifts as an encourager to mold John Mark into greater fruitfulness.

Paul and Silas did not voyage by ship to Perga as the first missionary team had done but instead traveled overland from Antioch through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening churches, until they made their way back to Derbe and Lystra, where Timothy joined the missionary team (15:41-16:3). They continued traveling in a generally western direction through Galatia (e.g., Iconium and Antioch-Pisidia), delivering to the churches the verdict of the Jerusalem Council. At this point, the journey took an unexpected turn.

Having finished up his work of revisiting the churches in Galatia, Paul felt it was time to break new ground. The most natural place was the province of Asia, to the west of Galatia. Surprisingly, the Holy Spirit stopped him, forcing him instead into northern Galatia and Phrygia until he eventually reached Mysia (16:6-7). Since the Holy Spirit seemed to be leading him in a northerly direction, Paul assumed God's will was Bithynia, the adjacent province to the north. But, again, the Spirit stopped Paul. His only recourse, other than retrace his steps, was to continue west through

the province of Mysia until he arrived at the coastal town of Troas (16:8), about 644 kilometers (400 miles) “out of the way.” What should he do now?

The *Macedonian vision* (16:9) made everything clear: the Holy Spirit had prevented their way twice so that the missionary team would cross the Aegean Sea and bring the gospel into modern-day Europe. Incidentally, Luke joined the missionary team at Troas (“we,” 16:10). He continued with them until Philippi (16:12-17), but then does not clearly assert his presence again until later in the book of Acts (20:5). His joining marked the presence of the first full Gentile on the missionary team.

Paul’s first stop in Macedonia was at Philippi, a major Roman colony located on the very important road, the *Via Egnatia*. Here Paul made his first “European” convert, a woman named Lydia who was actually from Thyatira (in Asia). Here also the Philippian jailor and his family were converted—after a series of rather tumultuous events. These early converts became the nucleus of the church at Philippi.

THE EARLIEST NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

| Epistle | When | Where it was written |
|------------------|-------|---|
| James | 40-48 | Jerusalem? (before Jerusalem Council in 48/49) |
| Galatians | 48 | Antioch? (after first missionary journey) |
| I Thessalonians | 50/51 | Corinth (second missionary journey) |
| II Thessalonians | 50/51 | Corinth (second missionary journey) |
| I Corinthians | 54/55 | Ephesus (third missionary journey) |
| II Corinthians | 55/56 | Macedonia (third missionary journey) |
| Romans | 57 | Corinth (third missionary journey) |

Asked to leave Philippi, Paul and his companions ended up in Thessalonica where, in their short ministry of three weeks, many believed (17:1-4). Extreme opposition from the Jews, however, forced Paul and Silas to evacuate by night for Berea (17:5-10). Here the Jews responded more nobly by actually comparing what Paul was saying with the Scripture, and many became disciples (17:11-12).

Other Jews, however, arrived from Thessalonica and stirred up another riot against Paul and his companions, obliging him to flee again, this time to Athens (17:13-15). This pattern repeats itself: preaching the gospel results in disciples and opposition; opposition serves merely to drive the gospel preacher to a new area, where the cycle then repeats itself. Satan constantly overplays his hand.

At Athens, Paul awaited the arrival of Silas and Timothy. (He had left Berea alone.) While he waited, he preached—we would expect no less of him—first in the synagogue, then in the marketplace, and finally at the Areopagus (“Mars hill,” 17:19) to the distinguished body of philosophers who met there regularly. Timothy and Silas eventually made their way to Athens to join Paul (I Thess. 3:1); their comforting presence with him, however, was short-lived. Pressing concern for the fledgling church at Thessalonica and Satanic hindrance to Paul’s returning there (2:18) led him to send Timothy back to Thessalonica (3:2).²⁰⁰

Leaving Athens alone, Paul then journeyed to Corinth (Acts 18:1), the most important city in the entire province of Achaia where, as we mentioned earlier, he spent at least eighteen months (v. 11): from early AD 50 until late summer of AD 51.²⁰¹ In spite of opposition (vv. 12-17), Paul was able to leave behind a church at Corinth, a fulfillment of God’s promise that He had “much people” there (v. 10).

Early during Paul’s ministry in Corinth, Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia (v. 5). Their arrival greatly encouraged Paul, especially because of the good report that Timothy brought of the Thessalonian believers (I Thess. 3:6). Full of thanksgiving and in answer to some concerns Timothy had shared,²⁰² Paul wrote **I Thessalonians**, followed a few months later by **II Thessalonians**.²⁰³

Having finished his work in Corinth—perhaps in the autumn of AD 51—Paul set sail for Syria. Traveling with him were Aquila and Priscilla, and probably Silas and Timothy also. Passing by Ephesus to drop off Aquila and Priscilla, Paul lingered only briefly—perhaps just one Sabbath (Acts 18:19-20)—and then journeyed to Caesarea. From there, Paul went up and greeted “the church” before going down to Antioch (v. 22). Two things suggest that the church Paul greeted was actually the church at Jerusalem: the use of the geographical terms *go up* and *go down*, and the unqualified reference to *the* church. He then spent “some time” at Antioch (v. 23a).

THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul's next missionary journey starts rather inauspiciously, with Luke's passing reference to Paul traveling in the region of Galatia and Phrygia (18:23b) until he arrived at Ephesus (19:1). Paul's three-year ministry at Ephesus is actually the central focus of his third missionary journey. Stopped by the Holy Spirit from entering Asia on his second missionary journey (16:6), Paul is now given full liberty to minister in Ephesus, Asia's most important city. Here Paul rejoined his colleagues, Aquila and Priscilla, who no doubt had been busy during his absence. Paul followed his custom of beginning in the synagogue (19:8). When after three months this proved too contentious a venue to continue, he rented a lecture hall where he could mentor and disciple more freely (19:9). This proved a very fruitful ministry: within a space of about two years, the Word of the Lord Jesus spread all over Asia (v. 10). The church of Colossae, as well as other churches in Asia (e.g., Laodicea and Hierapolis; Col. 2:1; 4:13, 15-16), were probably founded at this time, not by Paul but by those he had mentored.²⁰⁴

Paul's ministry was also very successful in Ephesus itself. Many of the new disciples brought their books of magical incantations and burned them. Such books—which contained collections of various magic spells and sayings—were greatly valued in the ancient world. If the fifty thousand silver coins were *drachmas*, this would represent about 135 years' worth of wages.²⁰⁵

In addition, the number of those turning from idolatry threatened the income of the guild of silversmiths, who manufactured images of the goddess Artemis (called Diana by the Romans). Artemis' temple was in Ephesus and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The silversmiths started an uproar that led to a riot in the theater in which an angry mob cried out for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:23-34).

PAUL AND CORINTH

These years at Ephesus were very fruitful for Paul, but there were other circumstances at work, involving the church at Corinth, that made them burdensome and even heart-rending. Acts does not mention these circumstances, but I and II Corinthians do. While Paul was at Ephesus, word reached him of a few problems at Corinth. In response, he wrote a letter, to which he refers in I Corinthians 5:9. (This letter is not I Corinthians but was an "uninspired" letter that God never intended to be part of the New Testament.) This letter did not completely resolve the situation and may have even been partially misunderstood (5:10). Other

reports soon arrived, via one *Chloe*, of divisiveness (1:11). An official delegation (16:17) brought further disturbing reports as well as a letter with a number of questions (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 15:12; 16:1). In response, Paul wrote **I Corinthians**, in which he chided them for their divisive spirit (chs. 1-4), clarified his stance against those involved in immorality (chs. 5-6), and answered their varied questions (chs. 7-16).

About this time Paul realized his need to visit Macedonia and Achaia (where Corinth was), but sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of himself (Acts 19:21-22).²⁰⁶ Evidently he sent Timothy on his way *before* he wrote I Corinthians because Paul refers to Timothy's presumed soon arrival in their midst (I Cor. 4:17; 16:10). (Timothy took the more circuitous route through Macedonia and then to Achaia, whereas Stephanus and the others carrying I Corinthians sailed directly from Ephesus to Corinth.)

Timothy eventually arrived in Corinth and, one way or another,²⁰⁷ Paul learned that his letter (I Corinthians) had not been well received and matters were getting worse. Paul dropped everything and made an immediate visit to Corinth. This visit is not mentioned in Acts and is only hinted at in II Corinthians, but it was evidently very painful (II Cor. 2:1; 12:21; 13:2). The Corinthians did not respond well to Paul and seemed to have sided with some pseudo-apostles. Paul returned in grief to Ephesus.²⁰⁸ He then penned what is referred to as the "severe letter" (II Cor. 2:3-4, 9; 7:8), which caused the Corinthians grief but, thankfully, a grief that led them to repentance (II Cor. 7:9). This "severe letter" is probably not I Corinthians but yet another non-canonical letter of Paul to Corinth.²⁰⁹

Sometime after writing this severe letter, Paul finally left Ephesus (Acts 20:1). En route he paused at Troas, knowing God had opened a great door for gospel ministry there (II Cor. 2:12). In addition, Paul was hoping to meet up with Titus, whom he had entrusted with delivering the severe letter to Corinth. When Titus still did not make an appearance at Troas, Paul headed to Macedonia (2:13). Notwithstanding the great door at Troas, Paul could not continue his ministry there until he had heard how the Corinthians had responded to his severe letter. Titus was still not at Macedonia when Paul first arrived, thus the "fears within" (7:5). Thankfully, Titus soon arrived with news very refreshing indeed to the Apostle—the Corinthians had repented and all was well between them and Paul (7:6-9).

In response to the good news, Paul began to write **II Corinthians**. His joy, love, and relief permeate its opening nine chapters. Before Paul could finish the entire letter, however, additional news from Corinth arrived suggesting things were not as sanguine as Titus had first reported. Some of the Corinthians were still

embracing the imposter-apostles. This explains the change in tone of II Corinthians 10-13, as Paul now bares his heart to the Corinthians and urges upon them the genuineness of his apostolic ministry and credentials. He then sends the whole letter (what we know as II Corinthians) to Corinth via Titus and another unnamed brother (II Cor. 8:16-18).

In addition, Titus was to continue the work of taking up a collection that he had evidently begun with them the year before (II Cor. 8:6, 10). Perhaps eighteen months had elapsed since Paul had written I Corinthians. Paul himself then, at some point, journeyed to Corinth (“Greece,” Acts 20:2), where he continued for about three months.²¹⁰ Evidently, his relations with the church at Corinth had smoothed themselves out because he was able to write, during these three months, his **Epistle to the Romans**.

COLLECTION FOR THE JERUSALEM POOR

An additional project was occupying Paul during his travels on the third missionary journey: a collection for impoverished believers in Jerusalem. Paul desired that the Gentile church would show Christian love for their Jewish brethren by contributing to their physical needs (Rom. 15:27). Paul mentions the offering in I Corinthians (16:1), but he had brought it up even before that to the Corinthian church²¹¹ and had already sought contributions from the churches of Galatia (I Cor. 16:1).²¹² He was greatly blessed by the sacrificial giving of the Macedonian churches (II Cor. 8:1-5), and he used their example to motivate the Corinthians to similar generosity (II Cor. 8:6-11). The Corinthian believers responded well and Paul was able to testify to the believers at Rome of the contributions from both Macedonia and Achaia (i.e., Corinth; Romans 15:26).

The contributions that Paul was carrying to Jerusalem explain the large number of associates traveling with Paul as he leaves Corinth, headed for Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-5). It also explains why they are from so many different places (e.g., Berea, Thessalonica, Derbe, and Asia). They are official delegates of the churches who provided both security and accountability (I Cor. 16:3; II Cor. 8:18-23).

Once again, Paul is forced to revise his itinerary. His earlier plans were to sail directly to Syria from Corinth. Opposition, however, forced him to backtrack through Macedonia and Troas (Acts 20:3-5). At Troas, the traveling company tarried for seven days. Now in a hurry to arrive in Jerusalem before the Feast of Pentecost (May 29, AD 57), Paul cannot afford the time for a lengthy visit at Ephesus. From nearby Miletus, he calls for the elders of the Ephesian church, with

whom he discourses at length before exchanging a tearful farewell and boarding a ship headed ultimately for Caesarea (20:17-21:8).

At Caesarea Paul was accosted by Agabus, the same prophet who had predicted an earlier famine (11:28), with prophecies of impending imprisonment upon his arrival in Jerusalem (21:10-14). Evidently this was not the first time the Holy Spirit had revealed upcoming imprisonment (20:23). Unmoved by these prophecies, Paul continued his journey to Jerusalem, where he met with the leaders of the church and no doubt delivered to them the offering that he was carrying (21:17-19). At this point, Acts narrates a series of events that will launch Paul into what we will refer to as his fourth missionary journey.

FOURTH MISSIONARY JOURNEY—TO ROME

The leaders of the Jerusalem church informed Paul that many Jewish believers were critical of him for his ministry to the uncircumcised (21:21-22). They recommended that Paul show his ongoing personal observance of the Law of Moses by assisting four men who had made a Nazirite vow (vv. 23-24). In hindsight, we can fault the advice of the Jerusalem church leaders or criticize Paul for complying. The text, however, faults no one and Paul's actions are in concordance with his desire to become *under the law* in order to reach those Jews under the Law (I Cor. 9:20).

At any rate, Jews from Asia spotted Paul in the Temple and falsely accused him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple. The enraged mob seized Paul and prepared to dispatch him summarily (Acts 21:27-31). Only quick action by the Roman tribune on duty, Lysias, spared Paul's life. Plucked from the hands of the angry mob and bound instead by Roman soldiers, Paul was led up the steps of the Fortress of Antonia (located at the northwest corner of the Temple compound). Here Paul was given permission to make a defense before the angry mob gathered at the foot of the steps. His defense only incited them to renewed anger when he mentioned his call to minister to the Gentiles (22:21-23). The tribune decided to torture Paul in order to extract the truth but desisted once he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen (vv. 24-29).

Paul was then given a hearing before the Sanhedrin ("council," 22:30), at which Paul took advantage of the mixed nature of the Council (part Sadducee and part Pharisee) to make an assertion that he knew would stir up internal dissension (21:1-10). That night, the Lord revealed to Paul that he would witness of Him in Rome (23:11), giving Paul a kind of premonition of where these events would eventually land him.

Further plots against Paul's life on the part of the Jews led to his transfer to Caesarea. The heavy Roman guard (23:23) that accompanied this frail messenger of the cross borders on the ridiculous, but was thought necessary because of the excessive frustration of the Jews who had not succeeded in killing Paul. At Caesarea, the Jews officially laid their case against Paul before the governor Felix, who delayed giving a verdict until Lysias (the Roman tribune who first seized Paul) could give testimony (24:1-22). For less than noble reasons (v. 26), Felix allowed the case against Paul to drag on until he was eventually succeeded by Porcius Festus (probably in the summer of AD 59).

The Jews lost no time in voicing to Festus their case against Paul—even though two whole years had passed. Festus curried the favor of the Jews by going along with their suggestion to try Paul afresh in Jerusalem (25:9). Paul knew the threat to his own life such a trial would entail, no doubt knew that the trial would not be fair (Festus was obviously very desirous of keeping the Jews' goodwill), and knew furthermore that he had broken no Jewish or Roman law.

In addition, God had already intimated to Paul that Rome was his ultimate destination. Paul therefore availed himself of the privilege available to all Roman citizens, and he appealed to be tried before Caesar (vv. 1-12).

Festus, however, was somewhat at a loss as to what to write to Caesar (Nero) about Paul. The arrival of Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa I, extricated him from his difficulty by giving him someone more learned in Jewish affairs to help him in drafting charges against Paul. The trial manifested Paul's innocence, but he *had* appealed to Caesar: to Caesar he must go (26:31-32). Paul was placed in the custody of a centurion entrusted with seeing him escorted safely to Rome.

SHIPWRECKED EN ROUTE TO ROME

Travel on the Mediterranean became dangerous sometime in September and by November typically ceased for the winter. Travel resumed in March although it was not deemed perfectly safe until May.²¹³ Evidently, Paul and his companions set sail sometime in late summer. Already the winds were against the travelers (27:4) and there were inevitable delays. It was past the Day of Atonement (late September/early October of AD 59) when they finally arrived at a harbor on the island of Crete (v. 9). Travel was now positively dangerous.

Shrugging off Paul's seasoned advice²¹⁴ to stay put at Fair Havens, the majority decided to head for a better harbor. In the process, they fell into the grip of a

“northeaster” (i.e., the winds were blowing *from* the northeast) and were helplessly driven southwest.

Paul assumes the mantle of leadership in what follows (27:21ff)—he gently chides the majority’s refusal to follow his early advice but assures all of survival, he urges all to eat, and he prevents the cowardly attempt of some sailors to abandon ship. His mere presence decides the centurion against killing all the shipwrecked prisoners.

Those shipwrecked found themselves on the island of Malta, where there is still today a traditional “St. Paul’s Bay.” After about three months (now early spring, AD 60), they continued on their journey to Rome (28:11-14). There, Paul was incarcerated for two years (AD 60-62), but given much liberty; he spent the time profitably in “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 31).

CONCLUSION

With this rather inconclusive ending, Luke brings his narrative to an end. He has covered the first thirty years of New Testament church history (AD 33-62). As spectators, we have watched the Holy Spirit descend upon and sweep the church into a state of powerful proclamation of their risen Lord. We have observed the resulting exponential increase of the disciples in Jerusalem until they numbered in the thousands (or even ten thousands). We have traced the advance of the church first in Jerusalem (chs. 1-7), then in Judea and Samaria (chs. 8-12), and then to the uttermost parts of the earth (chs. 13-28). We have seen the church triumph in spite of internal problems (such as the turmoil caused by the neglected widows) and repeated persecutions from without.

What Luke intends to communicate through his narrative in Acts is patently obvious: nothing can daunt the church, when it is empowered with the Spirit of Jesus, nor halt its powerful and fruitful witness. Nothing can stop the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Luke’s “inconclusive ending” is surely intentional. It is as if the story is not done. The church had turned thirty but its task stretches out still before it like an endless beach of sand. Spirit-filled disciples of Jesus must continue to bring the news of their resurrected Lord to every tongue and tribe until He returns *in like manner as He ascended into heaven* (1:11).

Review It

1. How many years of early church history does the book of Acts cover?
2. Cite the threefold advance of the Gospel (according to Acts 1:8) and identify the chapters in Acts associated with each advance.
3. In what two ways did Stephen's death bring forth much fruit?
4. What two New Testament epistles were probably the first to be written?
5. What important transition took place at Cyprus on the First Missionary Journey?
6. Name some of the places where a church was established on the Second Missionary Journey.
7. What New Testament epistles were written during Paul's Second Missionary Journey?
8. Where did Paul minister for three years during his Third Missionary Journey?
9. What New Testament epistles did Paul write during his Third Missionary Journey?
10. Did Paul ever write letters that were not canonical (inspired)? Explain.
11. How long was Paul imprisoned in Caesarea before he was transferred to Rome?
12. How long was he imprisoned in Rome?

CHAPTER TWELVE



THE END OF AN ERA

Date It! (All dates AD)

- Paul's first Roman Imprisonment 60-62
- Writing of Prison Epistles 61-62
- Fire in Rome July, 64
- Peter killed 64-67
- Paul killed 67/68
- John exiled to Patmos 95/96

Can You Believe It?

- New Testament epistles actually follow the common format for letters in the first century: the writer identifies himself, greets his recipients, wishes them well, pens his message, sends greetings, and then bids farewell.
- After the fire in Rome in July of 64, Nero built his "Golden House," a colossal palace decorated with gold, ivory, and precious stones. It included a bronze statue of himself over 30 meters high that he may have intended to picture him as the sun god.
- Domitian (81-96), the emperor who exiled the Apostle John to Patmos, was the first Roman emperor to insist on being hailed as "Lord and God." Domitian's cousin, Flavius Clemens, may have been a Christian. He was tried and found guilty of "atheism," a common charge against Christians who refused emperor worship. Clemens' wife, Domatilla, was clearly a Christian, and the earliest Christian catacombs are named after her.

- Emperors Trajan (during whose reign the Apostle John allegedly died) and Hadrian adopted a policy of not hunting down Christians, but punishing any who admitted they were and refused to recant.

IN OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE CHURCH'S first 30 years, we were blessed to have Luke as our guide. His sure eye for detail and generally chronological re-telling of events allowed us to reconstruct in a somewhat orderly fashion the key events of the years AD 33-62. But we lose our sure-footed guide when Paul finally arrives in Rome and his subsequent two-year imprisonment in Rome begins. From here on, we are forced to assemble piecemeal Paul's itineraries from his final letters. These travels took place between the imprisonment recorded in Acts (28:14-30), which was Paul's first in Rome, and a second imprisonment that he mentions in his second letter to Timothy (1:17). The final years of the Apostolic Era do not revolve around Paul only, however. Peter was also traveling, ministering, and writing until his death sometime between AD 64 and 67. He and others wrote many of the New Testament's General Epistles during this time. By AD 67/68, death deprived the church of both Peter and Paul. The Apostle John, however, lived on and ministered in the city of Ephesus. His death about twenty years or so after that of Peter and Paul brought the Apostolic Era to an end.

DURING PAUL'S FIRST ROMAN IMPRISONMENT

In our last chapter, we left off with Paul imprisoned in Rome but, as we noted, making effective use of his time. He was not in an actual prison but under a kind of house arrest. He was surrounded by a number of Christian co-workers who served as his eyes, hands, and feet.²¹⁵ These years were filled with fruitful preaching and teaching, during which Paul encountered very little official resistance.

By comparing Paul's writings, we learn the name of at least one of those converted during these years, the slave Onesimus. The details are sketchy, not enough to satisfy our curiosity for a good story, but clearly Onesimus was converted through the labors of Paul during his Roman imprisonment (Philem. 9-10). Paul's **Letter to Philemon** alludes to Onesimus' conversion. We learn that Philemon was Onesimus' rightful owner. Onesimus had wronged him in some way and then fled to Rome. Onesimus is also mentioned in Paul's **Letter to the Colossians**, where he is referred to as a "faithful and beloved brother" (Col. 4:9). This would suggest that Onesimus had time to establish a good reputation among the brethren before he was sent with Tychicus back to Colossae. In his letter to Philemon, Paul tells of his plan

to come and visit him and requests that he prepare a guest room for him (v. 22). Evidently he has every reason to expect release from his imprisonment.

PAUL'S FIRST ROMAN IMPRISONMENT

| Date | Event |
|---------------------------|---|
| August/September AD 59 | Sails for Rome |
| October/November AD 59 | Shipwrecked onto Malta |
| February/March AD 60 | Arrives in Rome |
| AD 61/62 | Writes Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon |
| AD 62 | Writes Philippians |
| Spring (?) AD 62 | Released |

Paul wrote two other inspired letters while he was in prison:²¹⁶ The **Letter to the Ephesians** and the **Letter to the Philippians**. We assume that he wrote the Letter to the Ephesians about the same time as his letters to Philemon and the church at Colossae, since Tychicus was the carrier of all three (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7). Ephesus and Colossae are both located in Asia Minor and lie only about 200 kilometers (125 miles) distant from each other. Paul's letter to the Philippians was delivered by none other than Paul's dearest son in the faith, Timothy (Phil. 2:19, 23). Paul composed it shortly before his imprisonment came to an end and expected before long to visit the church at Philippi (v. 24).

PAUL'S RELEASE FROM HIS FIRST ROMAN IMPRISONMENT

Paul was then released—most assume in the spring of AD 62—and this is where our knowledge of his movements requires a good deal of sketch work from bare

mentions of places in I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus. During the four or five years between his release in AD 62 and his re-incarceration around AD 66/67, he visited Nicopolis, Corinth, Macedonia (probably Philippi), Crete, Troas, Ephesus, and Miletus. This list above does not purport to be chronological but is rather in rough order of closest to farthest from Rome. According to almost unanimous church tradition, Paul also fulfilled during this time his long-expressed desire (Rom. 15:24, 28) to minister in Spain.

PLACES PAUL MENTIONS IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

| Location | Reference |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| Nicopolis | Titus 3:12 |
| Corinth | II Timothy 4:20 |
| Macedonia | I Timothy 1:3 |
| Crete | Titus 1:5 |
| Troas | II Timothy 4:13 |
| Ephesus | I Timothy 1:3; II Timothy 1:18 |
| Miletus | II Timothy 4:20 |
| Rome | II Timothy 1:17 |

JAMES' DEATH AND PETER'S FIRST EPISTLE

Before we attempt to sort out Paul's above travels, we should probably pause to point out a few other early church developments. There is strong evidence that James, the half-brother of Jesus, was stoned to death in AD 61 or 62.²¹⁷ James was a pillar of the Jerusalem church and functioned as the *de facto* head pastor of the church there (Acts 21:18). He enjoyed a reputation for sterling character (thus his nickname "James the Just") and his knees were reported to be as hard as a camel's because of his much praying.²¹⁸

Within a year or so of James' passing, Peter probably wrote his **First Letter**. Addressed to Christians scattered in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, it was written during a time when harassment of Christians was more informal, a kind of social antagonism from pagan neighbors, work associates,

and loved ones. It, however, hints at an increasing time of maltreatment (4:12), which may refer to the intense persecution of Christians that began after the July, AD 64, fire in Rome.

Thus, I Peter was probably written about AD 63-64, shortly before the fire in Rome. The fire was blamed on Nero's desire to rebuild Rome according to his preferences. Nero needed a scapegoat and he found one in Christians, who were already a known but not necessarily liked entity in the Roman Empire.

PAUL'S ITINERARY BETWEEN HIS FIRST & SECOND ROMAN IMPRISONMENTS

We now return to the Apostle Paul's travels during the years between his first and second Roman imprisonments. We noted above the seven places Paul clearly visited during these years—eight, if we include Spain—but admitted the impossibility of dogmatically recreating his exact itinerary. What follows attempts a possible reconstruction.

Back to the Work (Journeys in I Timothy)

- (1) Assuming Paul's release from his first imprisonment (which is almost universally accepted by the early church), Paul probably proceeded with his plans as outlined in Philippians and Philemon.²¹⁹ As soon as his release appeared eminent, Paul sent Timothy off to Philippi (Phil. 2:19-23).
- (2) Paul had "promised" a visit to both the Philippian church and to Philemon in Colossae after his release (Phil. 2:24; Philem. 22). According to I Timothy 1:3, Paul apparently sailed directly to Asia from Rome,²²⁰ where he fulfilled his promise to Philemon to visit him in Colossae. Having completed his mission there, Paul traveled to Ephesus, where he waited until Timothy arrived from Philippi.
- (3) Paul then headed to Macedonia to fulfill his promise to the Philippian church (Phil. 2:24), leaving Timothy behind in Ephesus to settle affairs there (I Tim. 1:3). Planning a soon return to Ephesus but anticipating the possibility of delay (3:14; 4:13), Paul wrote **I Timothy** from Macedonia (or possibly Achaia). After a brief period of ministry in Macedonia and Greece, Paul returned to Ephesus.

To Crete and Beyond (Journeys in Titus)

- (4) Correlating the historical details of Titus with those of I Timothy is problematic. It is evident that Paul has ministered at Crete and left Titus behind (Titus 1:5).

When does the Pauline ministry to Crete transpire? Some have suggested that Paul dropped off Titus on the isle of Crete on his first post-imprisonment journey from Rome to Asia.²²¹ Crete, however, would have been a new mission field for the Apostle Paul. His immediate purpose following his release from Rome would most likely not be to pioneer new fields, but to hasten back first to his previous locations of ministry in Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Probably, Paul either passed by Crete on his way back to Ephesus²²² or on his way west to Nicopolis. If the latter,²²³ Paul left Ephesus in the fall of AD 63 with Spain on his heart. He stopped in Crete, left Titus behind to finish the task (1:5), and pushed on to Corinth.²²⁴

- (5) At Corinth, hearing that imminent travel plans of Zenas and Apollos would take them through Crete, Paul gives them a **Letter for Titus**. In the letter, Paul informs Titus that he will soon send a replacement to Crete. When the replacement arrives, Titus is to make every effort to join Paul at Nicopolis, where he has decided to winter (3:12).²²⁵
- (6) As we have said, it is likely that Paul achieved his long-desired plan of ministering in Spain (Rom. 15:24-28). If true, Nicopolis on the west coast of Greece would be a natural launching pad for such a journey.²²⁶ This seems the most plausible explanation for Paul's wintering at Nicopolis.²²⁷

To the Regions Beyond (Spain?)

- (7) Perhaps, then, in the spring of AD 64, Paul left Nicopolis for Spain. It may have been during his ministry in Spain that the Great Fire of Rome broke out and changed the status of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Formerly one of the many tolerated sects competing for supremacy in the Roman Empire, Christianity suddenly became an illegal sect (*religio illicita*). Persecution was fierce, and Nero's treatment of Christians barbarous. We do not know how long Paul ministered in Spain, but evidently when he returned to the East the mood toward Christians had changed drastically. When Paul pens **II Timothy** sometime after his return from Spain, his situation is radically different from that in I Timothy and Titus. The previous freedom to travel and minister has diminished. Paul is now imprisoned again in Rome. Persecution is the new norm; the watchword for Timothy is endurance (II Tim. 1:8, 17; 2:9). Paul is convinced that his own time of departure from this world is near (4:6).

The Last Chapter (Journeys in II Timothy)

- (8) In II Timothy, our only historical source for Paul's final travels, Paul implies visits to Troas, Miletus, Corinth, and possibly Ephesus. Did Paul's visits to

Corinth, Troas, and Miletus take place before or after his arrest (4:13, 20)? Certainty eludes us. Farrar makes a poignant argument for Paul's arrest in Troas (perhaps the result of a tip to the authorities from Alexander the coppersmith, v. 14),²²⁸ temporary detainment in Ephesus, and journey to Rome, accompanied by a small band of Asian Christians, with stops at Miletus and Corinth.²²⁹ We do know that Troas was where Paul had left behind his books and cloak (v. 13).

- (9) Paul is then brought to Rome and imprisoned in a difficult-to-find dungeon (1:17). He survives a first trial but knows that he may not fare so well at a second (4:16-18). Realizing his time is short, Paul writes to Timothy in late AD 66 or 67, urging him to hasten to him before winter (v. 21). We assume Timothy arrived before Paul's death and was there with his beloved mentor until the latter's death in AD 67 or 68.²³⁰

CHRISTIANS BECOME "ILLEGALS"

As previously observed, the Great Fire of Rome in July of AD 64 changed the status of Christianity in the Roman Empire. It ended the relative freedom of Christians to share their faith. Violent persecution had erupted before, but largely from the jealous Jewish community. Other than that, persecution was more verbal abuse and social harassment because of Christians' refusal to conform to the mores of Greco-Roman culture. The Fire, however, changed all that and swept the church into a time of fiery persecution that eventually, as we have seen, caught Paul up in its fatal, scorching embrace.

According to much church tradition, Peter also was swept up in the firestorm of Neronian persecution and martyred at Rome. Most agree that his life came to an end around AD 64-67. Being much more dogmatic is impossible since tradition is divided over whether he was crucified upside down in AD 64, during Nero's celebration of his tenth year as Emperor (in October, 64), or whether he was martyred simultaneously with the Apostle Paul in AD 67 or 68.²³¹ What is clear, though, is that his letter **II Peter** should be dated to his final months of ministry. Peter is aware that his departure is coming soon (1:14). Paul's letters have had ample time to circulate among the brethren and become established as Scripture (3:15-16). False teachers are threatening the church (2:1), and Peter lifts his pen one last time in order to warn those of likeminded faith of their great danger (1:1). The **Letter of Jude** contains a similar theme, and we may be warranted in assigning its writing to the same approximate time as that of II Peter.²³²

FINAL LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

| Book | Approx. Date |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| I Peter | 63/64 |
| I Timothy & Titus | 63/64 |
| II Peter & Jude | 64-67 |
| II Timothy | 67-68 |
| Hebrews | 68-69 |
| Gospel of John | 80-85 |
| Epistles of John | 90-95 |
| Revelation | 95/96 |

A “SECOND GENERATION” EMERGING

The Epistle to the Hebrews hints that a “second generation” is emerging. The unnamed author does not include himself among the eyewitnesses of the Lord Jesus but as among the recipients of their testimony (2:3-4). Paul is never mentioned; neither is Peter. If the writer is really in Rome, as Hebrews 13:24 suggests, Paul and Peter are either absent or dead. To not send personalized greetings from them, if they really were in Rome, is almost unthinkable. Given the significant church tradition that Peter spent much of his later ministry years in Rome, our assumption is that Hebrews does not mention Peter because he is dead.

The author of Hebrews mentions Timothy (13:23), but this furthers our impression of a transition toward a “second generation.” Timothy had just been released from prison. Where or why remains unknown. Evidently he was *not* imprisoned in Rome because the author of Hebrews is hoping that Timothy will make it to Rome in time to journey with him to visit the recipients of his letter (13:23). Various statements in Hebrews suggest that Temple sacrifices were still being offered (7:27-28; 8:3-5; 9:7-8, 25; 10:1-3; 13:10-11). From this, we conclude that Hebrews was written before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. We conjecture that Timothy’s release was partially the fruit of Nero’s death in June of AD 68, and that Hebrews was therefore written sometime in AD 68 or 69.

THE LAST OF THE APOSTLES

Unfortunately, not enough evidence remains to detail precisely the final ministries and deaths of the rest of the Twelve Disciples. Tradition records that all preached of their risen Lord and took the Gospel to far-flung places. All died violently as martyrs. The one exception was the beloved disciple of Jesus, the “elder” John (II John 1:1; III John 1:1). To re-create his final years of ministry we must fall back once again on church tradition, which is virtually unanimous in testifying to the length of his life. Tradition says that he wrote his Gospel during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96). Irenaeus says he lived until the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117), and Jerome asserts that he died 68 years after Christ’s death (ca. AD 98-101). Tradition places John at Ephesus for a lengthy time of ministry.²³³ This fits well with his book of Revelation. Ephesus is the first church he addresses (1:11; 2:1) and all of the other six churches singled out are also, like Ephesus, in the province of Asia Minor. Even the island of Patmos, where he was exiled (1:9), is in the Aegean Sea, not overly far from the city of Ephesus. His epistles **I, II, and III John** warn of theological heresy threatening the church. Most have hazarded the guess that these epistles were written sometime in the early 90s. **The Gospel of John** was perhaps written around a decade earlier (since it contains no reference to the theological heresy found in the epistles), and the **Book of Revelation** during his exile on Patmos (AD 95/96). After Domitian died, John was permitted to return to Ephesus where he died and was buried.

CONCLUSION

With the death of the Apostle John, the Apostolic Era comes to an end. However, they being dead *yet speak*. Vigorous and strategic missionary effort had effectively planted the church in provinces all over the Roman Empire and even beyond. Letters (and Gospels) were being circulated as clearly inspired and authoritative writings to aid the church in its ongoing push to disciple the world in the name of Jesus. Godly church leaders—the second and third generation—continued on the foundation established by the New Testament prophets and apostles. Conspicuous among these was Polycarp, leader of the church at Smyrna, who was evidently a personal disciple of the Apostle John. His bravery as he faced martyrdom at an advanced age shows how firmly the gospel of Jesus Christ had taken root in his heart. Through His apostles, Christ had built His church and neither Roman emperors nor the gates of hell could prevail against it. Yes, many have attempted to batter it into oblivion over the centuries: from within by false teachers and unworthy shepherds, from without by every imaginable criticism, ridicule, and

torment. It, nonetheless, has persevered until today essentially as it was in the first century—in its doctrine, its fellowship, its prayers, and its celebration of the Lord's Supper until He returns. Centuries of battering the church have only confirmed that you can kill its followers but you cannot touch its Head. You can burn its Book but you cannot tear its living message from the heart of its adherents. The church on earth marches on, bloodied and spent, battered and tried, until it joins the Church Triumphant. Until that glorious day, she continues to echo the final petition of the entire New Testament, *Even so come, Lord Jesus* (Rev. 22:20).

Review It

1. Describe some of Paul's activities during his first Roman imprisonment.
2. In what NT books do we find information about Paul's travels *after* his first Roman imprisonment?
3. What are the names of some places we know Paul visited after his first Roman imprisonment?
4. What happened in AD 64 that changed the status of Christianity in the Roman Empire? Explain.
5. Is Paul's imprisonment in II Timothy (1:8, 17) the same as his imprisonment at the end of the book of Acts? Explain.
6. Name the two leading apostles probably killed in the persecution under Emperor Nero.
7. Explain some reasons for dating Hebrews to AD 68-69.
8. What significant event happened in AD 70?
9. Who was the last of the Apostles to die?
10. Where did he most likely minister in his final years?
11. Where did he write the book of Revelation?

APPENDIX A



BASICS IN CHRONOLOGY

Chronology is the skeletal frame upon which everything in biblical history hangs. Admittedly, the Bible was not written to give us a chronology, but it records enough dates, synchronisms, and other kinds of numbers for us to be warranted in assuming that God intends to give us *some* chronological information. To be sure, mankind's innate fascination with chronology has no doubt taken to an excess what God intended in moderation. However, there remains a legitimate pursuit of the chronological details of the Bible.

One may wonder how we arrive at specific or "fixed" dates when the Bible does not give any. The Bible records plenty of numbers, such as Abraham's age of seventy-five when he left Haran for Canaan (Gen. 12:4) or the start of Ezekiel's ministry in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile (Ezek. 1:2). But it does not tell us *in what year* Abraham was seventy-five or Jehoiachin's captivity reached the five-year mark. Why, then, do we assign them dates such as 2091 and 592 BC, respectively? The answer in short is synchronisms.

Synchronisms are chronological notices that show how different events or people relate to each other in terms of *time*. For example, Daniel received his Vision of the Ram and Goat in the third year of Belshazzar's reign (Dan. 8:1). That is a synchronism. It synchronizes Daniel's vision with a specific year of a Babylonian king. Similarly, Luke tells us that John the Baptist began his preaching of repentance in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1-2).

EXAMPLE SYNCHRONISMS IN THE BIBLE

| Passage | Synchronizes |
|---------------|--|
| I Kings 6:1 | The fourth year of Solomon with the time of the Exodus from Egypt. |
| II Kings 18:9 | The reign of King Hezekiah of Judah, the reign of King Hoshea of Israel, and the attack of King Shalmaneser of Assyria upon Samaria. |
| Jeremiah 25:1 | The reign of Jehoiakim with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. |
| Daniel 8:1 | Daniel's vision with the reign of Belshazzar. |
| Luke 3:1-2 | The start of John the Baptist's ministry with the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. |
| Acts 18:12 | The ministry of Paul in Corinth with the proconsulship of Gallio. |

The Bible is actually full of such synchronisms. Some of these synchronisms are “internal,” meaning they show the chronological relationship between events within the Bible. For example, I Kings 6:1 makes a chronological connection between Solomon’s fourth year and Israel’s Exodus from Egypt centuries before. Other synchronisms are to events or people “external” to the Bible, such as to the reigns of Belshazzar or Tiberius. These “external” synchronisms are particularly helpful in establishing fixed dates for biblical events and people. By using ancient history sources, epigraphic²³⁴ discoveries, and astronomical calculations, historians have determined the dates for numerous kings and significant events in ancient kingdoms such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome. Bible scholars then use those dates from secular history and, via the “external” synchronisms mentioned in Scripture, arrive at fixed dates for biblical people and events.

Most significant in establishing fixed dates for the Israelite monarchy has been the Assyrian eponym list. The Neo-Assyrian Empire (ca. 911-609) matched almost exactly the length of Israel’s Divided Monarchy (931-586). The Assyrians were fairly meticulous record-keepers; their kings boasted of their achievements by keeping an annual list of accomplishments. Each year was named after a certain *limmu* (leading Assyrian official). In the year named after the *limmu* Bur Sagale, the Assyrians documented an eclipse, which astronomers have dated with precision

to June 15, 763 BC. Using this fixed date of 763 as a point of reference, historians have computed specific dates for the kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Biblical scholars can then assign fixed dates to Israelite kings who intersect with ancient Assyria, such as King Ahab who fought against Shalmaneser III at the Battle of Qarqar in Shalmaneser's sixth year (853 BC) and King Jehu of Israel who paid tribute to this same Shalmaneser in the latter's eighteenth year (841).²³⁵ From there, it was just a matter of calculating forwards and backwards using the reliable numbers given in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.²³⁶

Using these calculations to establish a date for Solomon's reign (971-931 BC), we can then make use of I Kings 6:1 to arrive at 1446 BC as the date of the Exodus. This is a very important date. It derives from a literal interpretation of I Kings 6:1, which says that the fourth year of King Solomon's reign (967/966 BC) was 480 years after the Exodus of Egypt. Many unfortunately have reinterpreted this number (480) to refer to an approximate time of twelve generations, largely in an attempt to conform to academic and archaeological pressure toward a thirteenth century BC Exodus from Egypt.²³⁷

However, nothing in the verse or context indicates that the number should be interpreted in any other way than as 480 literal years. This number, then, becomes our principal basis for working backwards through other numerical statistics recorded in the Pentateuch (i.e., Exod. 12:40-41; Gen. 47:9; 25:26; 21:5) and arriving at 2166 BC as the birth year of Abraham.

Our assigning of specific dates to people and events in the New Testament is similar. We rely heavily on the works of Josephus (a first-century Jewish historian), the writings of the early church historian Eusebius of Caesarea, and our knowledge of Roman history derived from historians like Suetonius and Tacitus, and from the autobiographical writings of Caesar Augustus. In addition, church fathers like Africanus, Hippolytus, Jerome, and many others contribute pieces to the overall chronological puzzle.

Epigraphic discoveries, such as recovered letters and ancient coins minted during the reigns of various emperors and kings, have also helped. One example of a significant epigraphic discovery is the so-called Delphi Inscription, fragments of a letter written by the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54). The letter clearly dates to AD 52 and alludes to Gallio as proconsul of Achaëa. Proconsuls normally served a one-year term, which means that Gallio probably began his proconsulship in AD 51. Since Acts 18:12 mentions Gallio in connection with Paul's ministry in Corinth during his second missionary journey, we can date with some confidence Paul's time of ministry there.

Lest we make it sound too easy, we should probably remind ourselves of the need for a “healthy cautiousness” when it comes to fixing dates, whether it be years, months, or even days. Case in point is the dating of one of the most important events of the Christian faith—the death of Jesus. The issues are so complex that all of Appendix E is devoted to it. Suffice it to say here that the Gospels indicate that Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples on the evening of Nisan 14, and died the next day, on a Friday. It would seem simple enough to work back through the astronomical records to the range of years that are even remotely possible (AD 26-36) and locate a Nisan 14 that fell on Thursday.

However, finding when Nisan 14 fell on a Thursday is not as easy as it sounds. The Jews followed a lunar calendar based upon their observation of the new moon. If poor visibility hindered them from seeing the new moon’s silver sliver, they waited a day before announcing the new year. So in any given year, Nisan 14 could be a day later than what astronomy affirms. To make things even more challenging, the Jews would delay the month of Nisan (the critical month in dating Jesus’ death) if the harvest were not yet in sight.²³⁸ And we have not yet even factored into our dating of His death when His ministry began and how many years it lasted! Both of those are also much-debated topics in biblical chronology.

None of this discussion in any way lessens the certainty of the event under discussion. Nor am I undermining the value of biblical chronology or the need for it; for many dates we enjoy a level of certainty. I am simply underscoring the need for caution. Even fixed dates are somewhat tenuous—some more so than others. Do not sacrifice clear Scriptural numbers on the altar of archaeology, astronomy, or anything else. Before you buy into it, cross-examine a “new” chronological idea by reading widely and by thinking through all the ramifications for the proposed change. All biblical chronologists make assumptions and interpretations.

Above all, chronology is not the end-all of biblical study; do not burn up all your time with it. More important by far are the events themselves and how they reveal the One who orchestrated them.

APPENDIX B



PLEA FOR AN EARLY EXODUS

Debates rage over the date of the Exodus from Egypt. Two major dates are typically set forth: (1) a date in the fifteenth century (usually 1446, sometimes 1445 or 1447) and (2) a date in the thirteenth century (1290 or 1270-1260).²³⁹ The 1446 date is called the early date, and 1290 is called the late date.²⁴⁰ There are two vital issues at stake: (1) Should we give more weight to Scripture or archaeology (if the two seem in conflict)? and (2) Are the numbers and descriptions in Scripture to be taken literally?

BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS FOR 1446 DATE OF EXODUS

I Kings 6:1

I Kings 6:1 states that the fourth year of Solomon was 480 years after the Exodus. Scholars—liberal and conservative—agree that Solomon’s fourth year is around 966.²⁴¹ 966 plus 480 clearly equals 1446—the conservative date of the Exodus. Those who argue for the late date (1290-1260) must argue that the 480 years is figurative of 12 generations.²⁴² Twelve generations is actually closer to three hundred years, not 480—thus, a date of 1290. However, I Kings 6:1 nowhere indicates that 480 refers to twelve generations or is intended to be taken figuratively.

Judges 11:26

When confronted by the Ammonites, Jephthah reviews Israel’s history. He tells the

Ammonites that Israel has dwelt in the land 300 years. Jephthah probably ruled as judge around 1100 BC. Thus, Israel had dwelt in the land since approximately 1400, which matches perfectly the early date position.

Acts 13:19-20

Rightly translated and understood, this passage affirms that the Egyptian sojourning, the forty years in the wilderness, and the Conquest of Canaan fit into a period of about 450 years.²⁴³ (This, in turn, suggests that biblical numbers like those found in Exodus 12:40-41 are to be taken literally.)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR 1446 DATE OF EXODUS

The Tell El Amarna Tablets

The Amarna Letters consist of approximately 380 clay tablets discovered in Egypt at the former site of the city of Amarna. Written in Akkadian cuneiform, they record correspondence between various city-states in Palestine and Egypt. Included in these Amarna letters are pleas for help from various cities in Palestine. They complain that they are being overrun by a people called *Habiru*, and they ask the King of Egypt for help against these invaders.²⁴⁴ One letter asking for help is from the King of Jerusalem, one of the kings defeated and put to death by Joshua. These letters date to the same approximate time as the Israelite conquest of Palestine (1400-1370). Many scholars have concluded that the *Habiru* referred to in the Amarna Letters are none other than the children of Israel, who later come to be known as Hebrews.²⁴⁵

The Merneptah Stele

Merneptah reigned as Pharaoh of Egypt from 1213-1204 BC.²⁴⁶ In the fifth year of his reign (1208), Merneptah invaded the land of Palestine and successfully conquered many peoples. He listed those whom he conquered on a stone pillar, referred to as the Merneptah Stele. Among the conquered peoples listed on his stele is Israel.²⁴⁷

Thus, Israel was an established presence in the land by 1208, which is hardly possible with the late date of the Exodus. If the Exodus took place in 1260, the Conquest, in its final stages, would still be underway in 1208 BC. Furthermore, it is difficult biblically to concede the possibility that Merneptah defeated Joshua (who would have still been alive in 1208). It is more likely that the Merneptah Stele records a defeat of Israel sometime during the period of the judges.

The Dream Stele of Thutmose IV²⁴⁸

On his Dream Stele, Thutmose IV claims to have a dream in which the Great Sphinx grants him the throne of Egypt. If Thutmose IV needed a dream to authenticate his claim to the throne, he must not have been the firstborn son (since the firstborn son of the pharaoh was automatically awarded the throne). The firstborn son of Amenhotep II died—perhaps as a result of the Plague of the Firstborn. Thutmose then used the “revelation” from the Sphinx to validate his claim against any other possible contestants.

ALLEGED BIBLICAL EVIDENCE AGAINST 1446 DATE

Galatians 3:16-17

The Mosaic Law was given 430 years after God’s covenant with Abraham. The Exodus is not 430 years after Jacob’s migration but 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant. The 430 years includes 215 years of patriarchal wanderings and 215 years of living in Egypt.²⁴⁹

However, Galatians 3:16 says the covenant was given to Abraham *and his seed*. One could date the Abrahamic covenant then from the last time that it was given to the seed of Abraham, which was to Jacob at Beersheba on his way down to Egypt in 1876. Furthermore, Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 clearly indicate that the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt approximately four hundred years.

Exodus 1:11

Proponents of a thirteenth century Exodus (1290) identify Rameses II as the Pharaoh of the Exodus on the basis of Exodus 1:11 (which says that the Israelites built the city of Rameses). The great pharaoh, Rameses II, came to the throne about 1279.

However, the pharaoh who ordered the building of Rameses in Exod. 1:11 cannot be the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Moses only returns to Egypt (from the land of Midian) after the death of Pharaoh (Exod. 2:23). Thus, Rameses II cannot be the pharaoh of both Exodus 1 and the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Exod. 3-11). The best explanation is that this city, Rameses, derives its name from the Egyptian god Ra, not from Rameses the pharaoh, and had long been in use in Egypt (see Genesis 47:11, which speaks of the “land of Rameses”).

ALLEGED ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE AGAINST 1446 DATE

The date of the destruction of Jericho

British archaeologist John Garstang first dated Jericho's destruction (Level D or City IV of Tell Es-Sultan) to about 1400.²⁵⁰ Later, archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon re-dated Level D to between 2000-1800 BC due to the antiquity of the pottery pieces found in the walls of the city. However, is it not possible that a wall built at that time was still in use in the fifteenth century BC?²⁵¹ Furthermore, Garstang's work has never really been refuted. Garstang discovered a cemetery connected with Level D in which he found no scarabs dating later than the reign of Amenhotep III (1386-49 or 1412-1376 BC). His evidence suggests the city ceased to exist about 1400,²⁵² precisely when the Israelites would have conquered Jericho.

Thirteenth-century destruction dates for other cities in Palestine

Archaeologists believe the cities of Lachish, Debir, and Hazor were all destroyed by fire in the thirteenth century. This seems to correlate with the late date of the Exodus (1290-1260 BC) and a thirteenth-century Israelite Conquest. However, Joshua did not burn Lachish and Debir; he only captured them (Josh. 10:31-32, 38-39). Israel, in fact, was not commanded to destroy most cities; God had promised Israel already built cities (Deut. 6:10). One would, then, be surprised to find much archaeological evidence of destroyed cities.²⁵³ Hazor was destroyed by fire in the thirteenth century BC, but archaeologist Yigael Yadin has cited evidence suggesting that Hazor was also destroyed in the fifteenth century.²⁵⁴

APPENDIX C



THE NUMBERS IN NUMBERS

The fourth book of the Old Testament is aptly titled *Numbers* in the English Bible. It opens with a remarkably detailed census, which records the number of men in Israel's twelve tribes that were twenty-years-old and up and able to go to war (Num. 1:1-46). When the count is all said and done, 603,550 men are recorded as fit for war (v. 46). These same numbers appear in chapter two as God prescribes the arrangements for Israel's camp (vv. 1-32).

Numbers 26 records a second census taken 39 years later. The same detailed numbering of fit fighting men in each tribe occurs as in chapter one, in this case totaling 601,730 (v. 51).

These are not the only numbers in Numbers. Other lists in the book include the number of male Levites (3:39), the number of firstborn of all Israel (3:43), and a census of the Levites between thirty to fifty years of age (ch. 4). In addition, Numbers 7, the longest chapter in the book, lists with unnecessary redundancy (in the thinking of the average reader) the offering of every tribe on the occasion of the Tabernacle's consecration. Where applicable, the exact weight of each dish, plate, or basin is carefully noted. Toward the end of Numbers, two chapters delineate the exact number of lambs, bulls, and rams to be offered in connection with Israel's daily offerings, Sabbath offerings, monthly offerings, and the various festival offerings (chs. 28-29).

A fair amount of these numbers in Numbers have escaped the knife of the critics, but the census numbers have not been so fortunate. The thought, regrettably voiced

by many, is that such large numbers cannot possibly be accurate and must be symbolic, representative, or erroneous. The goal of this appendix is to defend, albeit briefly, the numbers in Numbers as trustworthy.

THE NUMBERS AT STAKE²⁵⁵

| Migration to Egypt Gen. 46:8-25 | First Census (Num. 1:17-46) | Second Census (Num. 26:1-51) |
|--|--|---|
| Reuben (5) ²⁵⁶ | Reuben (46,500) | Reuben (43,730) |
| Simeon (7) | Simeon (59,300) | Simeon (22,200) ²⁵⁷ |
| Levi (4) | Gad (45,650) | Gad (40,500) |
| Judah (6) | Judah (74,600) | Judah (76,500) |
| Issachar (5) | Issachar (54,400) | Issachar (64,300) |
| Zebulun (4) | Zebulun (57,400) | Zebulun (60,500) |
| Gad (8) | Ephraim (40,500) | Manasseh (52,700) ²⁵⁸ |
| Asher (7) | Manasseh (32,200) | Ephraim (32,500) |
| Joseph (3) | Benjamin (35,400) | Benjamin (45,600) |
| Benjamin (11) | Dan (62,700) | Dan (64,400) |
| Dan (2) | Asher (41,500) | Asher (53,400) |
| Naphtali (5) | Naphtali (53,400) | Naphtali (45,400) |
| Total: 67 | Total: 603,550 | Total: 601,730 |

EVANGELICAL CONCESSIONS

Sadly, disparaging comments about the veracity of Numbers' numbers have not just come from the critical camp but also from evangelicals.

K. A. Kitchen: "It is plain that in other passages in the Hebrew Bible there are clear examples where '*eleph*' makes no sense if translated 'thousand' but good sense if

rendered otherwise, e.g., as ‘leader’ or the like. So in 1 Kings 20:30, in Ahab’s time a wall falling in Aphek could hardly have killed 27,000 men; but 27 officers might well have perished that way. In the previous verse (29) we may equally have record of the Aramean loss of 100 infantry officers in one day...rather than the loss of 100,000 troops overall.”²⁵⁹ Kitchen continues by discussing several different interpretations of the census numbers in Numbers. The conclusion he seems to like is that of approximately twenty thousand Israelites.

Ronald B. Allen: “For the above reasons, I suggest for consideration the possibility that the large numbers in the census lists in the Book of Numbers are deliberately and purposefully exaggerated as a rhetorical device to bring glory to God, derision to enemies, and point forward to the fulfillment of God’s promise to the fathers that their descendants will be innumerable, as the stars. It appears to me that the figure given in the two census lists for the army of Israel may possibly be a magnification by a factor of ten. An army of about 60,000 men would fit what we know of the criteria of the region and the times.... now we can also deal with the large numbers, not as problem words, but as power words. The deliberate exaggeration was not for misrepresentation nor for simple bombast. This rhetorical use of numbers...was a mark of faith in the Lord who had provided great increase to a family of seventy persons and who one day would make his people as the stars in number. One day they would truly be innumerable—except to him, who counts them all and knows their names! These ‘embarrassing numbers’ are not embarrassing at all. These numbers celebrate Yahweh. They are numbers of worship!”²⁶⁰

Timothy Ashley: “In short, we lack the materials in the text to solve this problem. When all is said and done one must admit that the answer is elusive. Perhaps it is best to take these numbers as R. K. Harrison has done—as based on a system familiar to the ancients but unknown to moderns.”²⁶¹

R. K. Harrison: “None of these attempts to scale down the Old Testament numbers is able to account satisfactorily for all the data involved, and hence the suggestions made cannot be taken as uniformly valid for purposes of interpretation. If other evidence from Near Eastern sources concerning numbers generally is of any value in this connection, it would imply that the Old Testament numerical computations rest upon some basis of reality which was quite familiar to the ancients, but which is unknown to modern scholars. In the view of the author, the numbers in the census-lists and in such narratives as the Exodus from Egypt are used as symbols of relative power, triumph, importance, and the like, and are not meant to be understood either strictly literally or as extant in a corrupt textual form.”²⁶²

Gordon Wenham: “Since these numbers claim to be census figures, the natural presumption is that they are to be taken literally, and that their symbolic significance is a matter of divine providence. However, given the difficulties of taking them literally...we appear to be forced to take them as purely symbolic, unless it is postulated that the original census figures have been inflated by a factor of 100 in each case. But even this runs into problems with an odd 50 in Gad in the first census, and an extra 30 in Reuben in the second census. In short, there is no obvious solution to the problems posed by these census figures.”²⁶³

LARGE NUMBERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

| Reference | Approximate Date | Number |
|---|------------------|------------------------------|
| Numbers 1 (First Census) | 1446 BC | 603,550 |
| Numbers 26 (Second Census) | 1406 | 601,730 |
| I Chronicles 21:5 (David) | ca. 975 | 1,570,000 |
| II Chronicles 13:3 (Abijah & Jeroboam) | ca. 913-911 | 1,200,000 |
| II Chronicles 14:8 (Asa) | ca. 900 | 580,000 (Judah only) |
| II Chronicles 17:14-19 (Jehoshaphat) | ca. 860-870 | 1,160,000 + (Judah only) |
| II Chronicles 25:5 (Amaziah) | ca. 795 | 300,000 (Judah only) |
| II Chronicles 26:12-13 (Uzziah) | ca. 760-770 | 310,100 (Judah only) |
| II Kings 19:35 (Sennacherib) | ca. 701 | 185,000 (no. killed only) |

ARGUMENTS FOR THE CENSUS NUMBERS

There are, however, some very convincing reasons why the numbers in Numbers—and the large numbers in other biblical passages—should be taken at face value.

(1) The consistency of the various totals for the census figures—both in Numbers and other places.

First, the census figures for the individual tribes add up to the total given in Numbers 1:46. Secondly, the same total occurs in other passages and contexts (Exod. 38:26; Num. 11:21—rounding off to 600,000).

(2) The difficulty of *eleph* meaning “family,” “clan,” or “chief” instead of one thousand.

Scholars sometimes suggest translating *eleph* as “clan” instead of “one thousand”—which is plausible in some contexts (e.g., Num. 1:16; Josh. 22:14; Judg. 6:15; I Sam. 10:19; 23:23; Mic. 5:2). Thus, Reuben’s census entry would read as follows: 46 clans (families) + 500 men (Num. 1:21). However, if one tallies the tribal numbers according to this theory, the result is 598 clans (families) + 5,550 men—not 603 clans (families) + 550 men. In other words, it does not work. Furthermore, *eleph* is placed (in the census figures) in a *waw*-construction that normally indicates addition of numbers, and it occurs in the typical Hebrew order for addition—thousands + hundreds + tens. In the face of such difficulties, even some who reject the literal numbers concede that the *eleph* = family/clan theory has insuperable difficulties.²⁶⁴

(3) The unlikelihood of reducing Hebrew numbers by a factor of ten or one hundred.

In light of the difficulties with the above theory, some propose reducing the census numbers by a factor of ten (or, some allege, of one hundred). In terms of a list of English numerals, this suggestion may sound simple and feasible. However, the Hebrews knew nothing of numerals; their numbers were spelled out. Reducing the numbers by a factor of ten would require either (1) a massive emendation to the entire list, or (2) a presupposition that the exaggeration was deliberate.²⁶⁵ Neither of these options fits the character of the Scripture nor its remarkable preservation over the millenia.

(4) The half-shekel redemption price.

Another sticky point—perhaps the Gordian knot of the whole matter for the critics—is the half-shekel redemption price (Exod. 38:25-27). The total collected

equaled 100 talents and 1,775 shekels. $100 \times 3,000$ (the number of shekels in a talent) + 1,775 = 301,775. Multiplied by two (since each man paid a half-shekel), this equals exactly 603,550.

(5) The consistency of large numbers in the OT.

There are actually many large numbers throughout the Old Testament, none of which deserve to be dismissed outright as inconsistent or impossible. Once one stands as arbiter over some of them, *any* large number that the modern mind thinks untenable becomes suspect. When it comes to the census numbers specifically, no alternative theory really holds any weight, driving doubters to statements as far-fetched and ludicrous as Allen's (cited above) that these are "numbers of worship."

APPENDIX D



CHRONOLOGY AND THE MONARCHY

Numerical discrepancies in the chronologies of the kings of Judah and Israel have perplexed students of the Bible for centuries.²⁶⁶ Even the casual observer of the chronological data²⁶⁷ given for the Hebrew kings will stumble across numerous, troubling “contradictions.” For example, the chronicler states that Ahaziah began to reign when he was forty-two (II Chron. 22:2), but the author of Kings says he was twenty-two (II Kings 8:26).²⁶⁸ There are even (what appear to be) conflicting reports given by the same author. In one place, for example, Kings records that Ahaziah, King of Judah, began to reign in the eleventh year of Joram of Israel (9:29), but in another it dates it as the twelfth year (8:25). There are also certain difficulties when one attempts to synchronize the reigns of the Hebrew kings with other events or kings in the ancient Near East. For example, how does one reconcile the fourteenth year of Hezekiah with Sennacherib’s 701 invasion of Judah (18:13) when Hezekiah’s sixth year was the year Samaria fell to the Assyrians (722/721; v. 10)? Many such discrepancies surface repeatedly in the chronological data. Are there tenable solutions for conservatives to these discrepancies?

THE CONTRIBUTION OF EDWARD R. THIELE

Attempts to harmonize these numerical discrepancies only seemed to render their mystique more impenetrable—or so it seemed—until the work of Edwin R. Thiele, who fittingly titled his ground-breaking book in this field *The Mysterious Numbers*

of the Hebrew Kings.²⁶⁹ Thiele approached the chronologies with the presupposition that they were essentially trustworthy. The apparent discrepancies, according to Thiele, were largely the result of a failure to understand the “chronological procedure” of the ancient world.²⁷⁰ Based on this presupposition, Thiele set forth several principles which resolved many of the alleged discrepancies. These principles have received widespread acceptance.²⁷¹

ABSOLUTE DATES AND BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

Before proceeding, it is necessary to briefly review the method by which archaeologists and historians arrive at fixed dates for biblical events.²⁷² With the help of documents like the Assyrian eponym list, which named every calendar year after an important official and briefly inventoried key events during his year, scholars have been able to pinpoint certain “absolute” or fixed dates in history. One of the most important of these is 763 BC, arrived at on the basis of a solar eclipse recorded during the year named after Assyrian official Bur-Sagale. Using this date, archaeologists have been able to fix other dates. These absolute dates are of supreme importance since both Assyrian and Babylonian documents occasionally refer to Israelite kings in connection with certain events, such as:

- **853:** the year of the Battle of Qarqar (in which, according to Shalmaneser’s Monolith Inscription, Ahab participated²⁷³)
- **741:** the year Jehu²⁷⁴ of Israel paid tribute to Shalmaneser III
- **722:** the fall of Samaria
- **701:** the year of Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah
- **605:** the Battle of Carchemish (which helps to date the first phase of the Babylonian exile²⁷⁵)
- **586:** the fall of the city of Jerusalem to the Babylonians

These absolute dates serve as fixed boundaries within which the figures given for the kings of Judah and Israel fall. Utilizing these “absolute dates” and the principles enumerated below, one can find tenable solutions to many of the apparent discrepancies within the chronologies of the kings.

PRINCIPLES FOR SOLVING THE ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES

A first principle to observe is that Judah and Israel used two different methods of counting a king’s regnal years: the accession-year system and the non-accession

year system.²⁷⁶ The accession-year system did not start counting the years of a king's reign until the start of the new year. It labeled the year in which he came to the throne his accession year. The non-accession system began counting from the very first year a king came to the throne, even if it was only a part of the year. Thus, a year in which a king died and a new king came to the throne would be counted twice.

This system inflated the *actual* number of years by one for each king who reigned. This difference in counting explains the difference in the reign totals between Israel and Judah. For example, II Kings makes it clear that the accession of Jehoram in Israel took place in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat (3:1). Since Rehoboam and Jeroboam I began ruling at approximately the same time, the totals for each kingdom for this period should be the same. But adding the numbers given in Kings yields a total of seventy-nine years for Judah and eighty-six for Israel. The number of kings in the Northern Kingdom during this period was seven. This would account for the extra seven years, since Israel was using the non-accession system while Judah was not. Thus, while the official years for Israel were eighty-six, the actual years—like Judah—were seventy-nine.²⁷⁷

The difference in counting systems is further complicated by the fact that both kingdoms switched systems at certain points in their history.²⁷⁸ According to Thiele, Judah used the accession system until the reign of Jehoram, during whose reign the switch was made to the non-accession system,²⁷⁹ probably due in part to the fact that his wife was the daughter of an Israelite king. Further evidence suggests that both kingdoms changed to the accession system sometime during the reign of Jehoash and Amaziah.²⁸⁰ Although this changing back and forth seems arbitrary, it nevertheless seems to accord best with the numbers given in the Scriptures.²⁸¹

A second principle involves the observation that Israel and Judah seem to have based their counting on different annual calendars. That is, Israel counted from the month of Nisan, whereas Judah counted from the month Tishri.²⁸² Thus, to give an example, early 885 BC in Israel would have been late 886 BC in Judah. This makes a dual date (e.g., 885/886) necessary for some events. This would also provide an explanation for certain dates being one year off. For example, I Kings 15:25 states that Nadab came to the throne in the second year of Asa. After reigning two years, Baasha assassinated him and usurped the throne.

Putting all the facts together, it would seem that Baasha must have come to the throne in the fourth year of Asa. But the author of Kings says he (Baasha) came to the throne in the third year of Asa. By recognizing the difference in the counting system between Israel and Judah, as well as the difference in their calendars, it is

apparent that Nadab came to the throne early in Asa's second year (910). Since his first year, although partial, counted as year one, and since his year started earlier than Judah's, his second regnal year also fell in Asa's second year and part of Asa's third. Thus, Baasha came to the throne late (according to Israel's calendar) in 909.²⁸³

Another principle essential for solving these numerical problems is to recognize the frequent use of co-regency,²⁸⁴ particularly by the kings of Judah. This principle alone solves many difficulties raised when a king's accession is synchronized, seemingly erroneously, with the years of another king. For example, Kings cites both the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat and the second year of Jehoram, his son, as the accession year of Joram the son of Ahab (II Kings 1:17; 3:1).²⁸⁵ This can only be true if one presupposes a co-regency of Jehoram with his father Jehoshaphat.²⁸⁶

A fourth principle is the employment by the author of Kings of what Thiele terms "dual dating."²⁸⁷ In dual dating, a king's regnal years include his *total* years (as co-regent and as sole ruler), but his accession year is the year when he begins his sole reign.²⁸⁸ As an example, Kings synchronizes the accession of Jehoshaphat with the fourth year of Ahab (I Kings 22:41). But careful observation indicates that although this is the year in which Asa's reign ended, it is not the year from which one should begin counting Jehoshaphat's twenty-five regnal years. Jehoshaphat's twenty-five years actually began in the thirty-ninth year of Asa, probably due to Asa's diseased feet (II Chron. 16:12).²⁸⁹

Another very troubling discrepancy which Thiele solved using "dual dating" involves the reign of Pekah.²⁹⁰ Thiele demonstrated that the synchronism of Pekah with the fifty-second year of Azariah refers to his accession as the sole monarch of Israel. At this time (740/739), he had already reigned twelve years. This allows another eight years for his reign, at which time (732/731) Hoshea took the throne and reigned nine years until the fall of Samaria in 722/721. Although this solution resolves all the dating problems, it has one major drawback: Scripture seems to be completely silent about a dual Northern Kingdom.²⁹¹

A final principle, when all other solutions fail, is to consider the possibility that a number has been miscopied. This in no way reflects on the reliability of the original, but it is a testimony to the challenge of copying lengthy documents by hand. In such situations, the correct number has been preserved in a parallel biblical text, ancient translation (such as the Septuagint), and/or variant Hebrew reading. This best accounts for the apparent discrepancy in the ages of Ahaziah and Jehoiachin (II Chron. 22:2; 36:9). The correct reading is twenty-two and eighteen, respectively.²⁹²

THE WEAK POINT IN THIELE'S CHRONOLOGY

With the use of these principles set forth by Thiele, scholars have largely solved the enigma formerly attached to the numerical data of the Hebrew kings. However, the weak point in Thiele's chronology is his treatment of the reign of Hezekiah. Instead of using his principles, as detailed above, to solve the difficult synchronisms connected with the reign of Hezekiah, Thiele abandoned his own methodology.

II Kings 18:13 places Hezekiah's fourteenth year in the year Sennacherib invaded Judah, 701 BC. This would mean that Hezekiah began to reign in 715. But in the same chapter, the author of Kings dates the first year of Hezekiah to the third year of Hoshea—approximately 728 or 727. To further complicate matters, Kings synchronizes the beginning of the reign of Hoshea (732/731) with the twelfth year of Ahaz (17:1). Since Ahaz reigned sixteen years, this would place the start of Hezekiah's reign in 728 or 727. Thus, it seems that all the Hezekiah synchronisms cannot be correct. Either II Kings 18:13 is correct or the synchronisms with Hoshea are correct (18:1, 9-10). Thiele's solution to the problem—that II Kings 17 and 18 are the work of a "late Hebrew editor"²⁹³—is unacceptable for conservatives.²⁹⁴

Conservatives have set forth several alternative explanations acceptable to those who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. Each of these has its strengths and weaknesses.²⁹⁵ Some conservatives, such as Gleason Archer, "solve" the problem by proposing a scribal error in II Kings 18:13.²⁹⁶ He emends the "fourteenth year" of Hezekiah to his twenty-fourth year. Another solution, set forth by J. Barton Payne, is to suggest that Hezekiah's fourteenth year is not 701, but 712. Taking into account "Isaiah's overall literary structure," Payne proposes that Hezekiah's sickness and the messengers from Merodach-baladin all happened in 712, not 701, but were linked together with Sennacherib's invasion of 701 for ideological purposes.²⁹⁷ A third solution, held by Eugene Merrill, presupposes a co-regency of some thirteen years of Hezekiah under his father Ahaz.²⁹⁸ II Kings 18:1, 9-10 are synchronisms with the co-regency of Hezekiah, while II Kings 8:13 counts from his first year as sole regent (715). A final solution re-translates "began to reign" in II Kings 17:1 as a pluperfect ("had reigned"). Thus, Hoshea had already reigned nine years in the twelfth year of Ahaz. This allows the twelfth year of Ahaz to be 722 and his sixteenth and final regnal year, 718; it presupposes only a minimal co-regency of Hezekiah with his father before his accession in 715.²⁹⁹ Although each of these views seeks to preserve the accuracy and integrity of the biblical text, the most plausible to date is the view set forth by Merrill.

APPENDIX E



DATING THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

As I mentioned in chapter ten, “The Ministry and Death of Messiah,” it is rather ironic how difficult it is to date with precision the ministry and death of the most important Person who ever lived. There are so many issues involved that I thought it best to cite only my conclusions in chapter ten itself, and provide more detailed information in this appendix. Even this will not be as thorough as it could be. It truly is a very complex issue, and the scholar spoke rightly who said that no “single matter of chronology has been examined so thoroughly as the date of the death of Jesus of Nazareth.”³⁰⁰

There are at least six issues that go into dating the ministry and death of Jesus. I will list them again here as I did in chapter ten.

- 1) How to reckon the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, which Luke 3:1 uses to synchronize the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry.
- 2) The length of Jesus’ earthly ministry
- 3) Whether Jesus died on a Thursday or Friday (Wednesday has also been suggested by some, but has relatively few advocates)
- 4) Whether Jesus died on Nisan 14 or Nisan 15
- 5) How to reconcile the account of the Passion Week in John’s Gospel with the account of the same events in the Synoptic Gospels
- 6) Harmonizing one’s above conclusions regarding Jesus’ death with astronomy

Let’s now address each of these in a little more detail than we did in chapter ten.

THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF TIBERIUS CAESAR

First of all is the matter of Luke 3:1 and its synchronism of John the Baptist's ministry with the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Luke 3:1-2 is actually remarkably precise in that it synchronizes John's ministry with five other individuals in addition to Tiberius. One scholar even calls it the most precise dating in the entire Bible.³⁰¹ With such a clear date, especially with the reference to the fifteenth year of Tiberius, it would seem that the discussion would be final. Augustus, Tiberius' predecessor, died in August of AD 14. Tiberius' reign would begin either immediately or in September, when the Roman Senate made his role as emperor official. However, there are at least five ways for dating the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Others have done a fine job of listing the available options and assessing the relative merits of each, relieving me of the need to wade into all of this in great detail.³⁰²

A very popular theory, however, among conservatives has been to date the beginning of Tiberius' reign not with the death of Augustus in AD 14, but with Tiberius' co-regency with Augustus in AD 11 or 12. This has the effect of placing the beginning of John's ministry in AD 26 and the crucifixion in AD 30.

The primary motivation for this position is not so much the strength of the evidence for the co-regency but the felt need to preserve the accuracy of Luke 3:23, where the text says Jesus was about thirty years of age when He began His ministry.³⁰³ If He was born in 4 or 5 BC and began His ministry in AD 26, then He was almost exactly thirty when He began.

However, a reassessment of the primary sources used to support the alleged co-regency has served only to weaken the evidence for it.³⁰⁴ There is no undisputed evidence that Tiberius was officially created an equal regent with Augustus before the latter's death. In addition, Roman historians, such as Tacitus and Suetonius, and the Jewish historian Josephus, typically date the beginning of Tiberius' reign to AD 14, making AD 28/29 his fifteenth year.³⁰⁵ This in no way jeopardizes Luke's "about 30 years." If Jesus was born in November or December of 5 BC, and He was baptized in August or September of AD 29, He would have been thirty-two years of age, going on thirty-three, at the time of His baptism. That fits Luke's appraisal of Jesus as *about* thirty years of age perfectly.

LENGTH OF JESUS' EARLY MINISTRY

Another issue connected to dating Jesus' death relates to the length of His earthly

ministry. The Gospels, perhaps surprisingly, do not state its length explicitly. We do get some sense of its length by noting the passing of three Passovers as recorded in John's Gospel (2:13; 6:4; 12:1ff). From this we gather that Jesus' ministry was at least two-plus years in length. This, of course, assumes that the unnamed feast in John 5:1 is not the Passover but one of the other annual Jewish feasts.

However, as one harmonizes the Synoptics with John, it becomes apparent that they assume an additional spring in the life of Jesus, one not mentioned in John's Gospel.³⁰⁶ Since Passover was always in the spring, this implies an additional Passover that John chose not to mention.³⁰⁷ For this reason, most conservative scholars argue that Jesus' ministry was three-plus years in length. Consequently, if Jesus began His ministry in August/September of AD 29, then His final Passover season (the one during which He was crucified) would have been the one in March/April of AD 33. Thus, Jesus' earthly ministry extended from AD 29-33.

THURSDAY OR FRIDAY CRUCIFIXION?

A third issue related to dating Jesus' death is whether the crucifixion occurred Thursday or Friday. Assuming our scenario above to be correct—that He died in AD 33—on what day of the week was His death?

A straightforward reading of the Gospels points to Friday as the day of the crucifixion. They state explicitly that Jesus died on the "Day of Preparation," the day before the weekly Sabbath (Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14). But those who press the three days and three *nights* of Matthew 12:40 argue for a Thursday crucifixion. As my seminary-days pastor once quipped to me, "You can get three days from Friday to Sunday, but you cannot get three nights." Commentators from B. F. Westcott to James Montgomery Boice have argued for Thursday.³⁰⁸

In order to make Thursday work, one has to posit that the Gospels refer to two Sabbaths during the Passion Week: the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the normal weekly Sabbath. The Thursday view results in something like this:

- **Thursday:** Crucifixion (on Day of Preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread)
- **Friday:** First day of Feast of Unleavened Bread (a special Sabbath)
- **Saturday:** Regular weekly Sabbath
- **Sunday:** Resurrection (on Jewish Feast of Firstfruits)

There is some biblical evidence that special Jewish festival days could be referred to as Sabbaths. Leviticus 16:31 uses the exact same terminology (“Sabbath of solemn rest”) to refer to the Day of Atonement as Leviticus 23:3 does to refer to the weekly Sabbath. A related word to the technical term *Sabbath* is used of both the Feast of Trumpets and the opening and closing days of the Feast of Tabernacles (23:24, 39). On both the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Day of Pentecost, no servile work is to be done (vv. 7, 21).

But a couple challenges still confront the Thursday issue. One is that in a couple instances, it seems definite that the Sabbath in view is the weekly Sabbath (Luke 23:56; John 19:31).³⁰⁹ It then becomes a bit tough on the reader and damaging to the theory when one has to alternate in his reading of the Gospel accounts (without any real textual clues) between *the* Sabbath and *a* Sabbath.

More difficult still is the usage of the term Day of Preparation. The Thursday view must prove that it can refer to a day of preparation before a Feast Day. Mark 15:42, for one, makes that unlikely, with its use of a compound word to refer to the Preparation Day as the day *before-Sabbath*.³¹⁰ Frankly, there is little historical support that the term Preparation Day was ever used to refer to a day of preparation before a festival Sabbath; it, in fact, becomes a technical term for Friday. In my opinion, this is where the Thursday view founders. It is a noble effort to defend the literal three days and three nights of Matthew 12:40, but it has to conjecture an unproven theory in the process.

In addition, there are a number of indications that when the Bible counts days it does so inclusively. Think of these words of Jesus:

And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected (Luke 13:32).

The third day is plainly the third day (inclusively) from “today.” In other words, if “to day” in the text were Friday, the “third day” would clearly be Sunday.

Another helpful passage is the example of Cornelius in Acts 10, where he sees a vision of an angel on what we will call “Day One” (v. 3). He immediately sends messengers to Peter, and they arrive at Simon the Tanner’s house on “Day Two” (vv. 9-18). On “Day Three,” they escort Peter towards Caesarea and the abode of Cornelius, and they arrive the next day, “Day Four” (vv. 23-24). When Cornelius explains to Peter why he has summoned him so unexpectedly, he begins by saying the vision took place “four days ago” (v. 30). If—for argument’s sake—the original vision took place on Thursday, Peter and company would have arrived on a “Sunday.” This makes it seem as if Thursday to Sunday would not be viewed as

“on the third day” biblically but rather “on the fourth day,” language which no Gospel uses in reference to the day of Jesus’ resurrection.

Often cited as well is the example of Esther, who instructed Mordecai to ask the Jews to fast for three days and three nights (Esther 4:16) before she went in to the king’s presence. The text goes on to say that she went in to the king’s presence *on the third day* (5:1). Similarly, a famished Egyptian whom David and his men resuscitated on their way to rescue their captured wives and children from the hands of the Amalekites confessed that he fell sick three days ago and had eaten nothing for three days and three nights (I Sam. 30:11-13).

These biblical references suggest something that seems to be a matter of uniform Jewish practice: any part of a day or night is considered, in Jewish terms, a day *and* night. When Jesus says three days and three *nights* in Matthew 12:40, He is to be interpreted according to the Jewish understanding of three days and three nights, not according to how we think of it in modern terms.

DID JESUS DIE ON NISAN 14 OR NISAN 15?

The issue of whether Jesus died on Thursday or Friday is somewhat related to whether He died on Nisan 14 or Nisan 15. Nisan 14 was, of course, Passover. It was actually not a full holiday because the Passover meal was not officially eaten before twilight (Lev. 23:4). In Jesus’ day, however, the Passover lambs were killed in the late afternoon in preparation for the dinner later that night.

The next day, Nisan 15, began a full-scale seven-day celebration called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. During these seven days, Israelites were to eat no leavened bread of any kind and were to offer a food offering every day. The first day, Nisan 15, and the last day, Nisan 21, were special holidays, in that no ordinary work was to be done on them (vv. 7-8).

It is clear from the Synoptics that the Last Supper was a true Passover meal, which means that it was on Nisan 14 that Jesus directed His disciples about the Preparations for their final meal together, and it was later that evening that they gathered in the Upper Room for a final time of celebration and instruction. Later that night, He was betrayed by Judas and seized as a prisoner of the religious leaders.

This means that Jesus was crucified on Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and a very sacred holiday to boot. However, this seems to destroy the parallelism of Jesus being the Passover lamb. If Jesus is our Passover (I

Cor. 5:7), does this necessitate His dying at the same time that all the Passover lambs were being slain?

The answer comes from the lips of Jesus Himself, when He told His disciples, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you *before* I suffer” (Luke 22:15, ESV; emphasis mine). Rather than suffer on Passover night, Jesus chose to use the Passover meal to identify Himself to His disciples as the fulfillment of the Passover. The bread He broke before them actually pictured His body about to be broken for them. The cup which they shared that night symbolized the blood which He was about to pour out as the basis for a new covenant. Every Passover was special, but this one more so: it was the occasion to which all Passovers had pointed.

Later that very night, Jesus was arrested and arraigned before His Jewish accusers: the high priest Caiaphas, the former high priest Annas, and others of the priestly family, elders, and scribes. Some of these men had literally spent the majority of the afternoon overseeing the slaughter of thousands and thousands of Passover lambs. The meat of the Passover lamb was still in their bellies, while before them stood the fulfillment of it all. Nothing could be more incongruous nor more perfectly timed. To summarize, Jesus’ sufferings did begin on Nisan 14, the night of the Passover meal, with the spiritual anguish He felt in the Garden of Gethsemane, as the weight of what He was about to encounter as our sin-bearer fell upon Him. His sufferings involved much more than just His actual crucifixion on a cross. Jesus Himself had stated that He must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes (Mark 8:31). They (the Jewish leaders) would condemn Him and deliver Him over to the Gentiles who would then have their fun at His expense (10:33-34). Yes, Jesus died on Nisan 15, but His sufferings began on Nisan 14 and dragged on for almost 24 hours.

HARMONIZING JOHN’S GOSPEL WITH THE SYNOPTICS

Part of the reason there is even any question as to whether Jesus died on Nisan 14 or Nisan 15 is the seeming contradiction between the Synoptics and John. As we have seen, all the Synoptics connect the Last Supper with the Passover meal and place it on the night of Nisan 14. In John’s Gospel, however, it seems that the Jewish leaders intent on crucifying Jesus had not yet eaten the Passover (18:28). Can the two accounts (that of the Synoptics and John) be reconciled?

One theory set forth by some conservatives is that the seeming discrepancy was due to calendrical differences.³¹¹ It is typically held that in Jesus’ day, those from Galilee reckoned days from sunrise to sunrise, while those from Judea reckoned

them from sunset to sunset. This would naturally create an offset of twelve hours. Jesus, thus, ate the Passover on Nisan 14 according to the Galilean reckoning, while His accusers, who were following the Judean reckoning, had not yet eaten their Passover. Both parties ate the Passover on Nisan 14; they just reckoned the beginning of Nisan 14 differently. This theory has the advantage both of reconciling John with the Synoptics as well as allowing Jesus to die on Nisan 14 (according to the Judean way of viewing days).

But it also faces some daunting challenges. First of all is that we have no evidence that such a difference in reckoning holidays existed during the time of Jesus. We have evidence that sects such as that at Qumran celebrated the Passover differently, evidence that the Jews squabbled over the calendar from time to time, evidence that Judeans and Galileans disagreed over when to stop working on Nisan 14, and even evidence that in one year the Pharisees and Sadducees celebrated the Passover on successive days because a bribe had altered the start of the month Nisan by a day.³¹² But we have no evidence that any dual Passover celebration existed during the time of Jesus' Passion. It is a conjecture.

In fact, some valid objections can be raised against it. Two of the Synoptics refer to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the time when the Passover lambs were customarily slain (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). It seems that Jesus celebrated the Passover according to the Jewish custom of the day. Nowhere do we get any sense that He prioritized one sectarian way of doing things over another. Even though He disagreed with the practices of the Pharisees and the priests, He upheld their authority because of their position. Was it not crucial that His celebration of the Passover be according to the "norm"?

In addition, why is it that the Synoptics present the Galilean mode of reckoning days, when two of the three (Mark and Luke) were not even Galileans, while John, who was from Galilee, presents the Judean? Also, the theory posits that the Galileans started their day twelve hours earlier than the Judeans. But how could they consistently celebrate correctly when the month did not begin until the day after the first sighting of the new moon? Obviously, in a month like Nisan, where the first festival celebration did not occur until Nisan 14, they would have had ample time to prepare. But what about the celebration of the Feast of Trumpets, which occurred on the first day of the seventh month? That first day was a day of solemn rest, on which no ordinary work was to be done (Lev. 23:24-25). How could the Galileans possibly have celebrated that day twelve hours earlier than the Judeans, when the first day of the month would not be known until the first sighting of the new moon the evening before?

A much simpler way of reconciling John and the Synoptics is to understand that John uses the term Passover in his Gospel to refer to the entire Passover festivities, that is, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.³¹³ The truth is the two were often viewed interchangeably (see Luke 22:1). John, in fact, never uses the term Feast of Unleavened Bread. He prefers the term Passover but has in mind the entire festival. In addition, John is writing with the Synoptics in mind. He deliberately includes material not covered by them in order to present a fuller picture of all that happened in the life and ministry of Jesus. Thus, John is in no way contradicting the Synoptics. They have already made clear the timing and nature of the Last Supper. When he states that the Jewish leaders did not themselves enter into the Praetorium lest they be defiled and not be able to eat the Passover (18:28), he is to be understood as meaning that they would be defiled from continuing to partake of the Passover festivities. As we have already mentioned, every day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread involved food offerings, and the first day (Nisan 15) in particular had a very special sacrifice and celebration (called *hagigah*) that the Jewish leaders would not have wanted to miss out on and that was considered a continuation of the Passover meal itself.

Another strength of this interpretation is its consistency: it fits other references of John to the Passover in the immediate context (18:39; 19:14). In summary, everything in the Synoptics and John meshes together well if one realizes that when John 18:28 refers to the Passover, it is referring not just to the one Passover meal but to the whole week of festivities. The discrepancy between the two (Synoptics and John) is perceived, not real. As always, the four Gospels are working together to give us the full and most accurate view of what happened.

ASTRONOMY AND THE PASSION WEEK

A final issue related to dating Jesus' Passion Week has to do with astronomy. The Jews in Jesus' day followed a lunar calendar. A new month started upon the first sighting of the new moon. Because the moon follows a precise orbit and has done so for thousands of years, modern astronomers can ascertain when a new moon would have been most likely visible in Palestine and from this deduce when Nisan 14 would have fallen in a given year.

We mentioned above our preference for AD 33 as the year of the crucifixion and Friday, Nisan 15, as the day of the crucifixion.³¹⁴ However, according to most astronomical charts today, Nisan 14 fell on Friday, April 3, in AD 33. Does this automatically negate my preference above? Not at all.

Although astronomy is precise, the Jewish means of reckoning months was not.³¹⁵ For example, the new month began on the evening when the new moon was actually sighted (not on the evening when it was scientifically visible). Thus, if an evening were cloudy and the moon not visible, the start of the new month could be delayed by as much as a day. This would shift the whole month by a day.

In addition, the Jews occasionally inserted an intercalary month in their year. A lunar calendar is shorter than a solar calendar by about eleven days. Over time, the two get so out of whack with each other that the time of year no longer matches the crop cycle. By the calendar it would be spring, but the unripened grain and delicate lambs would suggest it was still winter. Since lambs and a firstfruits offering were a necessary part of the annual Passover celebration, if neither of the two looked like they would be ready by Passover, the Jewish religious leaders would insert an extra month before Nisan, the first month of the year and the month during which Passover just happens to fall.³¹⁶ So, for example, in AD 33, if an intercalary month was added that year, Nisan 14 would have fallen on Saturday, May 2. If for some reason that year, Nisan were allowed to fall unseasonably early, even before spring equinox, Nisan 14 would have fallen on Thursday, March 5.³¹⁷

To further complicate things (from our way of looking at it), history has not passed down to us the months when clouds made the new moon invisible or the years when an extra month was added. All of this, of course, plays havoc with our modern efforts to nail down with precision an exact year and date for the crucifixion. It is also why I have chosen not to make astronomy the major plank of my decision regarding the date of Jesus' crucifixion.

A safer approach is to follow, in general, our line of attack above. Start with biblical date information, such as the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Work through the Gospels and determine the length of Jesus' ministry. Wrestle over the three days and three *nights* of Matthew 12:40. Decide whether Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples on Nisan 14 and how to best reconcile the Synoptics with John. These biblical data are unchanging and are the most reliable facts we currently have available for setting forward a day and date for the crucifixion. Astronomy is helpful and can be confirmatory, but when all the biblical data above line up on a given date, I am not going to alter that date on the basis of a science that, because of its distance from the actual event and its lack of precise information as to the situation during the year in question, must make a number of assumptions.

Is it possible that the crucifixion was not in AD 33? Absolutely! You may remember above that we proposed that John's ministry began in early AD 29. What if it did not? What if it began late in AD 29, and Jesus' ministry actually began in

AD 30? That would delay the crucifixion by a year. Or what if the beginning of John's ministry coincided almost exactly with the commencement of Tiberius' fifteenth regnal year in August and only three to four months elapsed before he baptized Jesus? Jesus' ministry would have begun in AD 28. Or what if our assessment that an additional spring (unmentioned by John) elapsed during the earthly ministry of Jesus is wrong? Then Jesus' ministry would only be two-plus years in length and that would again affect the exact date of the crucifixion.

But given the conclusions above (and the state of our current knowledge), I have dated the crucifixion of Jesus to Friday, April 3 (Nisan 15), AD 33.

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ENDNOTES

NOTES

CHAPTER 1: BEGINNINGS

¹ Jack Finegan in his *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) devotes over one hundred pages to the subject of “The Reckoning of Time in the Ancient World.”

² Anyone who doubts the challenge, thinks they have mastered all the data, or has become enamored with some new riveting explanation that seems to unlock the secrets of the centuries, should begin by reading Book One of *The Discoverers* by Daniel J. Boorstin (New York: Random House, 1983) and realize man’s painstakingly slow journey to calculate time. He should then read books like *Chronos, Kairos, Christos II*, ed. E. Jerry Vardaman (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press), 1998, where highly credentialed biblical chronologists cannot even agree with each other. See also Roger Beckwith’s article, “Cautionary Notes on the Use of Calendars and Astronomy to Determine the Chronology of the Passion,” *Chronos, Kairos, Christos* (hereafter *CKC*), ed. E. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin Yamauchi (Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, 1989), 183-208.

³ K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 426.

⁴ See Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 393-394, for an excellent discussion of the Hebrew word *yom*.

⁵ John S. Feinberg comments, “What I find particularly troublesome in too many presentations on the doctrine of creation is that a primary goal (if not *the* primary goal) in interpreting the biblical text is to harmonize it with the prevailing scientific understanding of our world.” *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 579.

⁶ This remains one of the strongest arguments against theistic evolution or the day-age theory of Creation. Even the day-age position is forced to concede that animals lived and died for thousands (millions?) of years before the creation of man, the Fall, and the entrance of the curse. It is a bit troubling that a good God who made a good creation would have sprinkled it with death before He even finished it! Although Romans 5:12 specifically speaks of human death, Romans 8:18-22 shows the curse extends to *all the rest of creation*. Thus, there is an explicit Biblical connection between Adam’s sin, the fall of man, the human death that followed as a consequence, and the “bondage of corruption” which has enslaved the entire world. *Ibid.*, 622.

⁷ It depends, in part, on whether the rivers divide *after* the Garden or merge together *before* flowing through the Garden. Both are possible textually. See Kitchen, 429; and William D. Reymond and Euan Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis* in the UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 66. See Barry J. Beitzel, *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 74-75, for a mapping of possible northern and southern Mesopotamia locations of Eden.

⁸ John C. Whitcomb Jr. and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Grand Rapids: 1966), 476.

⁹ See, for example, T. C. Mitchell, “Flood,” *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., ed. D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 372-373; and

the *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 62.

¹⁰ For other charts of the chronology of the Flood, see Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 99; and Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, edited by John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 39.

¹¹ The 150 days that the waters prevail include the forty days of rain. Compare Genesis 7:11 with 8:4. The Ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat exactly five months after the rains began. All calculations assume thirty-day months.

¹² In other words, Noah sent out the raven *on* the fortieth day ("at the end of forty days," 8:6). The Hebrew method of counting is inclusive, that is, it includes the final day of the calculation (see Deut. 14:28; 15:1; Gen. 19:34). Also note that the forty days *includes* 10.1.600. Thus, 11.10.600 must be the 264th day of the Flood, not the 265th day, in order to avoid counting 10.1.600 twice.

¹³ Some debate whether Noah sent out the dove and the raven at the same time. But "waited yet another seven days" (8:10, NKJV) indicates that this was the *second* time Noah had waited seven days. The first time was the seven-day period between the sending out of the raven and the dove. See Kidner, 99.

¹⁴ Henry M. Morris estimated the Ark's capacity at 1.4 million cubic feet, capable of carrying 125,000 sheep. *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers, 1976), 181.

¹⁵ Beitzel (pp. 76-79) contains a good discussion of the Table of Nations, including a detailed listing of what we know about the fourteen descendants of Japheth, the thirty descendants of Ham, and the twenty-six of Shem.

¹⁶ Nimrod is probably not being praised when he is called a "mighty hunter before the Lord." He is the first recorded man to attempt to set himself up as a king and "hunt down" ("mighty hunter," KJV) any opposition.

¹⁷ The primary purpose of a ziggurat was to provide a staircase for the god to whom the ziggurat was dedicated to descend from heaven to earth.

¹⁸ Whitcomb and Morris, 477.

¹⁹ A good article summarizing arguments for and against gaps in the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies is David Mcgee, "Creation Date of Adam from the Perspective of Young-Earth Creationism" (Nov. 28, 2012), <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-characters/adam-and-eve/creation-date-of-adam-from-young-earth-creationism-perspective> (accessed October, 2015).

²⁰ The name Cainan is found in the Septuagint (LXX) of Genesis 11:13.

²¹ Whitcomb and Morris (pp. 474-483) cite eight reasons why there are gaps in the Genesis 11 genealogy. See also Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1949; 1973 reprint), 295-298.

²² Eugene H. Merrill, *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament* (Nutley, NJ: The Craig Press, 1966), 66. He references data from Whitcomb and Morris in arriving at that conclusion.

²³ Archaeologist Robert Braidwood's discoveries in Mesopotamia yielded an alleged date of around 7000 BC for the beginnings of village life. *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 6. William W. Hallo and William Kelly Simpson say the so-called Neolithic Revolution began in the Ancient Near East about 7000 BC. *The Ancient Near East: A History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 11. Other biblical scholars produce similar numbers. Kitchen (p. 421) contends the beginnings of "recognizable human civilization" date to roughly 10,000 or 9,000 BC. John J. Davis claims that "[s]tratifed mounds in Mesopotamia and Palestine show an unbroken sequence of occupation as far back as 7000 B.C.," *Paradise to Prison* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 30-31.

²⁴ John MacArthur Jr., *The Battle for the Beginning: The Bible on Creation and the Fall of Adam* (Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group, 2001), 62-63.

CHAPTER 2: FROM UR TO EGYPT

²⁵ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1987), 50.

²⁶ Genesis 11:26 is not telling us that Terah had all three of his sons at age seventy, but that at age seventy he *began* to have sons. Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran to journey to Canaan. Acts 7:4 tells us that Abraham did not leave Haran until *after* his father died. Terah was 205 years old when he died. If the seventy-five-year-old Abraham left Haran shortly after his 205-year-old father Terah died, then he was born when Terah was 130 years old. Abraham, presumably, was the youngest of the three; Haran, who died in Ur before the family left for Haran (Gen. 11:28), was perhaps the oldest.

²⁷ A period of roughly 125 years between Egypt's Old and Middle Kingdoms, when the country was divided between two competing rulers.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 35. Thirty Dynasties ruled ancient Egypt. The Tenth ruled from *ca.* 2130-2040 BC.

²⁹ Since his name is similar to that of a future King of Jerusalem, Adonizedek, who is identified as an Amorite (Josh. 10:1, 5), Melchizedek may also have been of Amorite origins.

³⁰ *Negev* means "south" in Hebrew and is often used to refer to the extremely arid desert area in southern Palestine.

³¹ Calculated as follows: Jacob was 130 years old when he stood before Pharaoh; Joseph was at that time thirty-nine years of age (Gen. 41:46; 45:6). Therefore, Jacob was ninety-one years old when Joseph was born. Joseph was born right at the end of Jacob's fourteen years of service for his two wives (30:24-26), which would make him about seventy-seven years old when he left home. Jacob worked for Laban twenty years (31:38) and was therefore about ninety-seven years of age when he fled from Laban homeward (31:21).

³² Genesis 38 reveals just how great a danger the Canaanites really were to the family of Jacob. Although the chapter is about Judah, Simeon also married a Canaanite woman (Gen. 46:10).

³³ A *round character* is a literary term for a character that develops over the course of the story.

³⁴ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, trans. James Martin (T&T Clark, 1866-1891; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 220.

³⁵ Leah's six sons and their descendants, plus Dinah, add up to thirty-two (not counting Er and Onan). The number thirty-three either includes Jacob himself (see v. 8) or an additional unnamed daughter ("daughters," v. 15).

CHAPTER 3: OUT OF EGYPT

³⁶ This is actually a highly contested date. Some evangelicals hold to what is called a "thirteenth century" or *late* date of the Exodus. The date above (1446) is referred to as the fifteenth-century or *early* date of the Exodus. The issue, to oversimplify a little, is whether one takes the number "480" in I Kings 6:1 literally. See Appendix B for further discussion.

³⁷ Although some conservatives argue for further north at the Bitter Lakes or at Lake Timsah, I Kings 9:26 actually employs the term *yam suph* ("Red Sea") with reference to the Gulf of Aqaba, the eastern extension of the Red Sea. It could then likely refer also to the western extension of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez.

³⁸ If most of these 603,550 men were married with an average of two children, the two million person estimate is easily surpassed.

³⁹ Apparently Miriam was the leader since her name is mentioned first and she was the one punished with leprosy.

⁴⁰ Israel began preparations to cross the Jordan River early in the first month, but they *first* mourned Moses' death thirty days (Deut. 34:8). This means that Moses died either sometime in the eleventh month or early in the twelfth month of the fortieth year.

⁴¹ Adapted from Ronald B. Allen, "Numbers," in vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing

House, 1990), 757; and Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 91.

CHAPTER 4: CONQUERORS AND JUDGES

⁴² This chapter will actually cover Joshua – I Samuel 8.

⁴³ We know Israel crossed the Jordan River on the tenth day of the first month. There were at least three days of preparation prior to this crossing (Josh. 1:11; 3:2).

⁴⁴ One of the accomplishments of the fierce Gadite warriors who joined David's band of men was that they crossed the Jordan *in the first month when it had overflowed all its banks* (I Chron. 12:15).

⁴⁵ In the poem "Retribution" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

⁴⁶ Cisjordan literally means "on this side of the Jordan [River]" and refers here to the tribes living west of the Jordan River.

⁴⁷ Even the author of Judges emphasizes this when he reiterates that *there was no king in those days* (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

⁴⁸ When Samuel was old, they asked him for a king *to judge* them.

⁴⁹ Paul N. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 94.

⁵⁰ He made a sacred golden ephod that ensnared him and his family (8:27).

⁵¹ When Merrill refers to these judges as "charismatic," he means they were divinely gifted individuals. *Historical Survey*, 171.

⁵² Read, for example, Judges 18:30 in the ESV and NIV (cf. the NASB and NKJV marginal readings). The reading Manasseh was created by the Masoretic scribes in order to protect the reputation of Moses. It seemed dastardly to them that Moses could have had an idolatrous grandson. This *is* unthinkable and is the exact point of the author of Judges.

⁵³ Samuel, according to Jewish tradition, was the author of both Judges and Ruth.

⁵⁴ The Northern Kingdom only lasted 209 years (931-722), but the years of its kings add up to almost 242. Similarly, the Southern Kingdom lasted 345 years (931-586) but its kings reigned for 387.5 years. Far worse is the situation in Egyptian history where no fewer than 508 years of pharaohs' reigns have to fit in 255 years. Early Mesopotamia had three dynasties whose total regnal years are 787 while only 410 years of actual time are available. See Kitchen, 204.

CHAPTER 5: GOD SAVE THE KING!

⁵⁵ This includes the book of Job. See note 69 below.

⁵⁶ I Samuel 9 does not actually name "the city," but most believe it be Ramah, the city of Samuel. The full name of Ramah (Ramathaim) means place of two hills. The city was built on one hill and its high place built on the other (I Sam. 9:14).

⁵⁷ This is not regeneration but Saul's receiving the empowering to be a king.

⁵⁸ The Masoretic text of I Samuel 13:1 has not been preserved well. The NIV "fixes" it as follows: "Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years." This is not completely arbitrary. The Septuagint supplies thirty, as the age of Saul when he came to the throne, and the "forty two" is a combination of the forty from Acts 13:21 and the two from the Masoretic text of I Samuel 13:1.

⁵⁹ I Samuel 10:8 is our best guide in understanding Saul's disobedience in I Samuel 13. Samuel had evidently set up an agreement with Saul that whenever he needed his help, Samuel would meet him within seven days at Gilgal.

⁶⁰ Jonathan has courage, as the story shows, but Saul does not. Does Saul have any real relationship with God? He brought the Ark of God to the battle but did not even prioritize hearing from Ahijah, the priest of God, once circumstances made his way clear (vv. 16-19). The altar he built in this chapter was his *first* (v. 35).

⁶¹ The word "enquired" in I Chron. 10:14 is different from that in I Samuel 28:6. The latter admits

that Saul sought the Lord for help; the former reveals that Saul never really sought after the Lord *relationally*.

⁶² That is, God gave them what *they* were looking for. In David, God gives the people what He was looking for. This is what the text means when it calls David the man “after God’s own heart” (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

⁶³ Solomon was “young” when he came to the throne (I Chron. 29:1; cf. I Kings 3:7). We assume that makes him less than twenty. If Solomon were eighteen years of age when he began his reign and he was born about two years after David and Bathsheba’s act of adultery, then the adultery took place about half-way through David’s forty-year reign.

⁶⁴ God’s name for Solomon was Jedidiah (“beloved of the Lord,” II Sam. 12:25).

⁶⁵ In addition, we find out from II Chron. 3:1 that the threshing floor was actually Mount Moriah where, one thousand years earlier, God had revealed to Abraham that He would provide another substitute Lamb in the future (Gen. 22:2, 14).

⁶⁶ David’s organization of the priests into twenty-four divisions was still being followed in the days of Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father! Compare Luke 1:5 with I Chronicles 24:10.

⁶⁷ I am using *personal* as a technical term to distinguish it from other kinds of types, such as *historical events* (e.g., the Exodus, lifting up of the bronze serpent, etc.) or *rituals* (e.g., sacrificial system, scapegoat ceremony, etc.).

⁶⁸ The Lord appeared to David only once (II Chron. 3:1). He primarily communicated to David through prophets like Samuel, Nathan, and Gad. Nothing is recorded of any visions or dreams.

⁶⁹ Job lived long before Solomon, but Solomon was possibly the main author of the book itself.

CHAPTER 6: THEN THERE WERE KINGS

⁷⁰ *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 1028.

⁷¹ A later King of Israel was also named Jeroboam, whom we will refer to as Jeroboam II. We will only refer to Jeroboam as Jeroboam I if clarity demands it.

⁷² A dynasty occurs only when there is a *succession* of rulers from the same family.

⁷³ To make the following history easier to read, I have chosen to label each paragraph that belongs clearly to either the Southern Kingdom of Judah (SK) or the Northern Kingdom of Israel (NK).

⁷⁴ Jezebel would later throw Zimri’s failure in Jehu’s face: “*Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?*” (II Kings 9:31).

⁷⁵ Over one hundred years after the death of Omri, Sargon II (722-705) still referred to Israel as “Omri-land.”

⁷⁶ Merrill, *Kingdom* (p. 346), argues that Elijah stood before Ahab about 860 BC.

⁷⁷ Levant is the technical term for the area south of modern Turkey that includes Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

⁷⁸ If we are right in assuming just one Ben-Hadad, he reigned for about sixty years (*ca.* 900-842).

⁷⁹ In his brief “two-year” reign, he managed to worship Baal, follow in Jeroboam’s sin, *and* inquire of the god of Ekron.

⁸⁰ Here are just a few of the many suggestions: Uzziah’s reign, the minority of Joash, Jehoram’s reign, about the time of Jeremiah and Zephaniah, and during the Babylonian exile.

⁸¹ Ahaziah was a descendant of Ahab through Athaliah.

⁸² His reign began in either 842 or 841.

⁸³ Although Hosea (1:4-5) predicted the punishment coming upon Jehu’s house “for the blood of Jezreel,” most likely because of the gloating, selfish manner in which Jehu fulfilled his commission.

⁸⁴ Probably not this time Hazael, but Hazael’s son, Ben-Hadad.

⁸⁵ Evidently, Jeroboam II even subdued Syria, since Hamath was actually *beyond* Damascus (Syria’s capital) to the northeast.

⁸⁶ This rival kingdom theory is not as “wild” as it may at first sound. It actually pieces together a number of details. Shallum’s father was Jabesh (II Kings 15:13), leading us to the assumption that he was from Jabesh-Gilead in the Transjordan. Menahem’s assassination of Shallum would naturally have created resentment among the Gileadites. When Pekah later assassinated Menahem’s son Pekahiah he did so with the help of fifty Gileadites (v. 25). Furthermore, Menahem’s tribute payment to Pul was explicitly to “confirm the kingdom in his hand” (v. 19), suggesting a possible rival. Hosea 5:5 actually mentions three kingdoms: Israel, Ephraim, and Judah. Finally, the synchronisms of Pekah’s reign with the three Judean kings Uzziah (II Kings 15:27), Jotham (15:32), and Ahaz (16:1) only work if Pekah’s twenty-year total reign includes twelve years as Menahem’s rival.

⁸⁷ Pekah was definitely anti-Assyrian in his sentiments (see II Kings 15:29).

⁸⁸ Sargon II actually took over at some point and finished the process that Shalmaneser started.

⁸⁹ These were actually the years (729-716) when Hezekiah co-reigned with his father Ahaz. His sole reign began about 715 BC.

⁹⁰ Sennacherib was so proud of his defeat of Lachish that he “pictured” it in full on the walls of his palace in Nineveh.

⁹¹ Sometime *after* 648 BC when Ashurbanipal was finally able to bring Babylon into submission.

⁹² Josiah was warned not to tangle with King Necho (II Chron. 35:21-22). Prov. 26:17 is appropriate!

⁹³ Nebuchadnezzar bound Zedekiah in chains *in order to* take him to Babylon (II Chron. 36:6) but changed his mind when his father’s death necessitated a hasty return to Babylon to secure the throne.

CHAPTER 7: EXILE & RETURN

⁹⁴ Even before they came to Jeremiah they were already congregating near Bethlehem, preparing to head to Egypt (41:17).

⁹⁵ We do not know exactly when Daniel died, but he dates his last prophecy to 535 BC (10:1), three years after the fall of Babylon.

⁹⁶ John C. Whitcomb has argued persuasively that this “Darius the Mede” was a man named “Gubaru,” whom Cyrus made governor of Babylon. He is to be distinguished from “Ugbaru,” the general of Cyrus who aided in the defeat of Babylon but then died shortly after. See his *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959).

⁹⁷ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 316.

⁹⁸ The language in his edict does not imply that Cyrus had embraced the God of the Jews.

⁹⁹ Others have argued that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were two names for the same individual.

¹⁰⁰ In every regard, God’s seventy-year captivity promise is astoundingly precise. Babylon ended the Assyrian empire around 609 BC at a battle fought near Harran. (The Battle of Carchemish in 605 was a failed attempt to undo the disastrous defeat of 609.) God had decreed that the nations would serve Babylon for seventy years, which came to an end in October of 539, exactly seventy years later. Also seventy years in length was the time from Jehoiakim’s submission to Babylon in 605 until the rebuilding of the Temple altar in 536. Still another seventy years was from the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 until the Temple was finally rebuilt in 516/515.

¹⁰¹ The date is variously given as 516 or 515 because the month “Adar” (Ezr. 6:15) is the twelfth month of the Jewish calendar. It corresponds to our February/March, and thus technically (by our way of keeping records) the year 515 was in its first quarter.

¹⁰² Eugene H. Merrill disagrees with this assessment, but I do not find his arguments convincing. See *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary* (Spokane, WA: Biblical Studies Press, 2003), 325.

¹⁰³ Chislew (1:1) is the ninth month; Nisan (2:1) is the first. Thus, four months had passed.

¹⁰⁴ Merrill (pp. 328-329) disputes this, placing the ministry of Malachi before Ezra or Nehemiah. I think Merrill overstates the differences between Malachi and Nehemiah. Most students of this period agree that Malachi and Nehemiah shared similar burdens for the spiritual condition of the post-exilic community.

CHAPTER 8: BRIDGING THE TESTAMENTS

¹⁰⁵ The only use of the word *Samaritans* in the OT is in II Kings 17:29, but clearly refers to the original citizens of Samaria, not to its new inhabitants.

¹⁰⁶ We do not know exactly when the synagogue originated, but the idea of assembling together for stated prayers and study of the OT got its start during the Babylonian exile.

¹⁰⁷ Charles L. Feinberg, "Synagogue," in *New Bible Dictionary* (hereafter *NBD*), 3rd ed. (1996), 1143.

¹⁰⁸ Judaism from the rebuilding of the Temple (516/515 BC) until its destruction by the Romans in AD 70 is known as Second Temple Judaism. Post-AD 70 Judaism continues until today and is known as Rabbinic Judaism.

¹⁰⁹ H. E. Dana lists these three components of Judaism in *The New Testament World*, 3rd ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1937), 68.

¹¹⁰ See Robert Bell, "The Theology of Nehemiah," *Biblical Viewpoint* 20, no. 2 (1986): 56-61.

¹¹¹ Whether he was poisoned will never be known for sure. If he was not, years of hard drinking were no doubt a contributing factor to his early demise.

¹¹² Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 410.

¹¹³ Dana, 22.

¹¹⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, "Between the Testaments," in vol. 1 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1979), 182.

¹¹⁵ Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Times* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965), 29.

¹¹⁶ Dana, 78.

¹¹⁷ Antiochus IV removed the high priest Onias III when Onias' brother, Jason, offered more money. Jason, in turn, was outbid by a certain non-Aaronic descendant named Menelaus, who became high priest in 171 BC.

¹¹⁸ Dana, 80.

¹¹⁹ According to Josephus' account in his *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.5.4 (trans. William Whiston).

¹²⁰ The term *Hasmonean* derives either from the name Asamoneus, an ancestor of Mattathias that Josephus mentions, or from the Hebrew name of Simon.

¹²¹ The Hasidim were not thrilled with the union of the high priest and governor in one office, since the Maccabees were not descendants of David; but they tolerated it as the best option given the current situation.

¹²² Dana, 86.

¹²³ Tenney, 94. Whether they accepted *only* the Pentateuch and rejected the rest of the OT is a matter of debate.

¹²⁴ Dana, 121.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹²⁷ Although it may have begun to take shape during the reign of Salome Alexandra (76-67 BC).

¹²⁸ J. A. Thompson, "Sanhedrin," in *NBD* (1996), 1060.

¹²⁹ See also John 11:47.

CHAPTER 9: MESSIAH IS BORN

¹³⁰ Tenney, 53.

¹³¹ Finegan argues that November 10-17 was the week that Zechariah was on duty, which would in turn put Christ's birth about January/February of the year following. Another scholar has

Zechariah's week commencing on May 16, which would place Christ's birth in August. Finegan, 275-279. Alfred Edersheim, on the other hand, argues for October 2-9. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 705 (Appendix 7).

¹³² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1, 1:1–9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 79.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹³⁴ There is evidence, for example, that Augustus conducted a census in Egypt every fourteen years.

¹³⁵ Caesar was a family name and indicated his connection to Julius Caesar.

¹³⁶ Octavian was actually high up in Roman politics from the time of Julius Caesar's death in 44 BC. He became sole leader after he defeated Mark Antony in 31 BC at the Battle of Actium. Four years later (27 BC) he was titled *Augustus*.

¹³⁷ Harold W. Hoehner says it is the "most formidable objection" to Luke's historicity. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 1, Location 138-140.

¹³⁸ Some have set forth the explanation that "first" could be translated as "before": "This was the census that took place *before* Quirinius was governing Syria." Even its advocates admit that it is a grammatical (or lexicographical) stretch. I am not sure that we need be that desperate!

¹³⁹ The NKJV, for example, accurately reflects the Greek text when it says that "Quirinius was *governing* Syria" (my emphasis).

¹⁴⁰ Although the word used is not that of an "official inn," but rather that of some kind of lodging place or guest room.

¹⁴¹ Edersheim, 1:186-187 (Book 2, Chapter 6); see also 2:704 (Appendix 7).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 1:186-187.

¹⁴³ The Messianic Servant affirms that He would be named from His mother's womb (Isa. 49:1).

¹⁴⁴ The text stops short of saying this explicitly, but it quotes the part of the Law about offering two turtledoves or pigeons.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁴⁶ The exact distance would depend on the route they took. If they chose the typical caravan route, which traveled north along the Euphrates River before crossing it and heading south into the Levant, then their journey would have been closer to 1300 kilometers (800 miles).

¹⁴⁷ Their initial sighting of the star alerted them to the birth of a Jewish king. They then traveled to Jerusalem assuming that this is where one would find a Jewish king. After their interview with Herod, the star reappeared and began to guide (inceptive imperfect) them more specifically toward Bethlehem. See Carson, 88.

¹⁴⁸ Henry M. Morris argues for this in a brief tract, "When They Saw the Star," http://www.icr.org/home/resources/resources_tracts_when_they_saw_the_star (accessed August 19, 2015).

¹⁴⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronology of the New Testament," in *NBD* (1996), 194.

¹⁵⁰ Surely Joseph did not travel to Egypt during Mary's days of purifying. Also, the Magi's gifts would have enabled Joseph and Mary to offer up for her cleansing a lamb instead of a bird.

¹⁵¹ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in vol. 8 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1984), 94.

¹⁵² On the other hand, the shortness of the time does not bother Edersheim, 2:704 (Appendix 7).

¹⁵³ Interestingly, Clement of Alexandria, the earliest of the church fathers to attempt a date for the birth of Jesus, places it on November 18, 3 BC. He got the year wrong, but what if he correctly nailed the month or even day? See discussion in Paul Maier, "The Date of the Nativity and the Chronology of Jesus' Life," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, 113-130, especially 128-129.

¹⁵⁴ W. E. Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (October 1966), 283-298.

¹⁵⁵ The traditional March 12/13, 4 BC, eclipse was only a partial one.

¹⁵⁶ Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 17.6.4-17.8.1.

¹⁵⁷ Although a variant reading in Josephus about Herod Philip's reign seems to support the 1 BC date for Herod's death. Andrew Steinmann, "When Did Herod the Great Reign?" *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 51, Fasc. 1 (2009), 23-24.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁵⁹ William Metcalf, *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 487.

¹⁶⁰ This is essentially Carson's conclusion ("Matthew," p. 84).

¹⁶¹ Hoehner, *NBD* (1996), 194, says "sometime in the spring or summer of 5 BC." In his book *Chronological Aspects*, however, Hoehner says that a "midwinter date is most likely" (Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 1, Location 259). His article in *NBD* seems to reflect his revised opinion.

CHAPTER 10: MINISTRY AND DEATH OF MESSIAH

¹⁶² Mark Water, *The Life of Jesus Made Easy* (Alresford, Hampshire: John Hunt Publishing Ltd, 2001), 56.

¹⁶³ The harmony of the Gospels that this chapter follows most closely is that of Robert Thomas and Stan Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels, With Explanations and Essays: Using the Text of the New American Standard Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978).

¹⁶⁴ The welcome he received from the Galileans (in John 4:45) suggests that only a few weeks had elapsed since the recent Passover (2:13ff). On the other hand, if John 4:35 is making a statement as to actual time—that only four months remained before *their* harvest time—then Jesus journeyed to Galilee (through Samaria) in the months of January/February about 9-10 months after the aforementioned Passover.

¹⁶⁵ The Jews of Jesus' day generally avoided travel through Samaria. When traveling from Judea to Galilee, they would take the Jericho road to the Jordan River, cross the Jordan into the region of Perea, and then journey north to Galilee, bypassing Samaria altogether.

¹⁶⁶ He had visited Capernaum earlier in His ministry (John 2:12). Now He made it the hub of His Galilean ministry.

¹⁶⁷ The Decapolis consisted of an alliance of ten Greek cities south and east of Galilee that had a largely Gentile population.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas and Gundry, 119.

¹⁶⁹ It is the subtitle of Andreas Kostenberger and Justin Taylor's book, *The Final Days of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

¹⁷⁰ I am indebted to Layton Talbert, professor of theology at Bob Jones University, for these calculations (accessed in unpublished Bible Doctrines notes).

¹⁷¹ Leo Depuydt, "The Date of Death of Jesus of Nazareth," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 122, No. 3 (Jul-Sep, 2002): 466.

¹⁷² This assumes the inclusive reckoning of days commonly employed by the Jews in biblical times. If Passover fell on Thursday in AD 33 (as I argue), then Saturday was six days before *inclusively speaking*.

¹⁷³ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1994), 318.

¹⁷⁴ Colin J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, A Lunar Eclipse and the Date of Christ's Crucifixion," *Tyndale Bulletin*, Vol. 43, Issue 2 (1992): 332.

¹⁷⁵ "Jesus' prediction of a threefold denial by Peter need not exclude a fourth denial." Gundry and Thomas, 229.

¹⁷⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1959), 252.

¹⁷⁷ The first scourging (John 19:1) was actually after Pilate had just declared Him innocent and was no doubt intended to create empathy in the heart of His Jewish attackers. The second scourging was after the sentence of execution had been uttered (Mark 15:15). The first scourging was probably the lightest kind of Roman scourging, called the *fustigatio*; the second scourging was probably the *verberatio*, the most brutal form of Roman scourging. This kind of beating was so severe that “victims sometimes died. Eyewitness records report that such brutal scourgings could leave victims with their bones and entrails exposed.” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester; Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press; Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 597-598.

¹⁷⁸ Mark 15:25 says the “third hour” (9 am), whereas John says it was the “sixth hour” (noon). Ancient reckoning of time was not precise. The two Gospels actually clarify each other: it was probably somewhere around 10:30 am—past the third hour but before the sixth hour.

¹⁷⁹ “I am thirsty,” “It is finished,” and “Father, into Thy hands I commit my Spirit.”

¹⁸⁰ One startling difference was surely how quickly Jesus died, after only four to five hours on the cross. Crucifixion was actually a highly sophisticated form of torture, specially designed to keep a person alive as long and as miserable as possible. A crucified victim could hang on for days. Even Pilate was surprised to learn that the man he had just sentenced to death that morning was already dead (Mark 15:44).

¹⁸¹ Some valiant efforts include Westcott’s analysis in *The Gospel according to St. John: Introduction and Notes on the Authorized Version* (London: J. Murray, 1908), 288. He even suggests the approximate time of the day in which each event occurred. More recently (and highly regarded) is the work of John Wenham in *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict?* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). Michael J. Wilkins provides a simple, helpful summary of Wenham’s reconstruction in *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 935-936. Darrell L. Bock makes his own effort to reconstruct Mary Magdalene’s movements on Resurrection morning in *Luke*, vol. 2, 9:51–24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 1886ff.

¹⁸² The last three come from a commentator named Dietrich, quoted in Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids; Leicester, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans; InterVarsity Press, 1992), 733.

¹⁸³ Westcott (p. 288) disagrees and places the appearance on the road to Emmaus before the appearance to Peter.

¹⁸⁴ Wilkins (p. 935) asserts that it was possibly three days after Jesus’ previous appearance. It seems to me that more time surely must have transpired. The disciples needed time to journey back to Galilee and to decide to go fishing.

¹⁸⁵ Early tradition holds this to be Mount Tabor.

¹⁸⁶ The version of the Thursday view with which I am familiar conjectures that the word Sabbath in the Passion Week narratives refers always or at least sometimes to something other than the normal weekly Sabbath and that calendar differences existed between the Galileans and the Judeans.

¹⁸⁷ Adapted from Hoehner’s summary in “Chronology,” ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 122.

CHAPTER 11: THE CHURCH’S FIRST 30 YEARS

¹⁸⁸ The noun *deacon* does not occur, but the verb form does (6:2).

¹⁸⁹ Members of the Jewish *diaspora* who had at one point been enslaved but had since gained their freedom.

¹⁹⁰ Acts 7:58 refers to Paul as a “young man,” which means he was probably somewhere between twenty-five to forty years of age.

¹⁹¹ Antioch was actually a very important city in the Roman Empire. It was the capital of the Roman province of Syria and boasted one of the largest populations in the entire Roman Empire (an estimated 300,000 in the first century AD).

¹⁹² Acts 12:23 says he died of worms. Josephus also reports that Agrippa I died suddenly and painfully of an illness that lasted only about five days.

¹⁹³ I do not personally find persuasive the idea that Galatians 2:1 refers to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

¹⁹⁴ Remember that fourteen years can actually be twelve years and a few months according to “inclusive” reckoning. For further study, see Hoehner, *NBD*, 197; Stanley E. Porter, “Chronology, New Testament,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 207; and John Piper, “Chronology, New Testament,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 447.

¹⁹⁵ A couple years clearly satisfies Luke’s chronological statement *about that time* (Acts 12:1).

¹⁹⁶ The name “John Mark” never occurs in this format in the New Testament. John was his Jewish name, Mark his Roman. Somehow, he has come to be known in church history—without his explicit approval—as “John Mark.”

¹⁹⁷ The thinking is that James would surely have mentioned the Jerusalem Council or its conclusions if it had already transpired.

¹⁹⁸ Pisidia can be considered as part of the larger province of Galatia.

¹⁹⁹ After all, this is where the conflict had begun (Acts 15:1).

²⁰⁰ Paul evidently sent Silas on another errand to Macedonia (Berea or Philippi), since he mentions being left behind *alone*.

²⁰¹ Paul could not have arrived in Corinth *before* Claudius’ expulsion of Jews from Rome (18:1), which most date to about AD 49. Gallio began as proconsul of Achaia (18:12) in the summer of AD 51 *after* Paul’s eighteen months of ministry in Corinth.

²⁰² The death of some believers had evidently raised questions about the coming of Christ and the fate of those who died before His return. The Thessalonians were also reeling somewhat from the unrelenting persecution.

²⁰³ Paul graciously includes Silas (“Silvanus”) and Timothy as co-authors with him (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1).

²⁰⁴ The church at Colossae, for example, was started by Epaphras, who was apparently converted through Paul’s ministry in Ephesus and then returned to Colossae to evangelize his home area.

²⁰⁵ *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, 4th ed., ed. D. A. Carson, R. T. France et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1097. A *drachma* was a day’s wage.

²⁰⁶ The travel itinerary that Luke mentions in Acts 19:22 matches the one Paul himself outlines in I Corinthians 16:5.

²⁰⁷ Either Timothy himself returned to Ephesus to report on the situation or Paul was informed some other way.

²⁰⁸ This may be when Paul abandoned his revised plan (II Cor. 1:16) of visiting them before and after his trip to Macedonia.

²⁰⁹ Some respected conservatives, however, believe that this letter is our I Corinthians. See Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962), 54-58; and D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), 139-142.

²¹⁰ In this reconstruction of Paul’s dealings with Corinth, I have relied most heavily upon D. A. Carson, *A Model of Christian Maturity: An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 10–13* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 13-28; and Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the*

Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids; Milton Keynes, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 101-105.

²¹¹ In his very first correspondence with them (the now-lost letter referred to in I Cor. 5:9-10).

²¹² Perhaps during his earliest travels on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23).

²¹³ Ramsay specifies that the only risk-free time for sea travel was May 26 to September 14. W. M. Ramsay, "Roads and Travel (in NT)," in *A Dictionary of the Bible: Extra Volume*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 376.

²¹⁴ Paul had already been in at least three shipwrecks (II Cor. 11:25).

CHAPTER 12: THE END OF AN ERA

²¹⁵ With Paul at one point or another during his imprisonment are Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Onesimus, Justus, Aristarchus, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Tychicus, and John Mark (see Phil. 2:25; Col. 4:7, 9-12, 14; Philem. 24).

²¹⁶ He wrote at least one more, the epistle to the church at Laodicea (Col. 4:16), which was not canonical and thus not preserved. John MacArthur, on the other hand, argues that the letter "from Laodicea" may actually have been the canonical Letter to the Ephesians. *Colossians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 198.

²¹⁷ The tradition is that he was thrown from the top of the Temple first, then stoned, then finished off with a fuller's club.

²¹⁸ According to Hegesippus, "Fragments from His Five Books of Commentaries on the Acts of the Church," in *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: The Twelve Patriarchs, Excerpts and Epistles, the Clementina, Apocrypha, Decretals, Memoirs of Edessa and Syriac Documents, Remains of the First Ages*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. B. P. Pratten, vol. 8, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 762. No works of Hegesippus survive. The fragment referred to above is quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, 2:23.

²¹⁹ W. J. Coneybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of Paul* (Hartford, CT: S. S. Scranton Company, 1905), 808.

²²⁰ See William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 4, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953–2001), 39; Homer A. Kent Jr, *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 48; Hiebert, *Introduction*, 322. Coneybeare (p. 808), however, suggests Paul took the land route—via the Appian and Egnatian Highways—to Macedonia before crossing the Aegean Sea into Asia.

²²¹ Hendriksen, 39.

²²² The anticipated return to Ephesus suggested to Timothy in I Timothy 3:14.

²²³ According to Coneybeare (p. 821), Paul had already returned to Ephesus (as promised in I Timothy 3:14) and was headed west when he passed by Crete.

²²⁴ This assumes that Apollos, mentioned in Titus 3:13, was at Corinth at this time. That Paul was in this general vicinity is also suggested by his plan to winter at Nicopolis, located approximately 150 miles northwest of Corinth.

²²⁵ Is Paul summoning Titus to Nicopolis because he desires Titus to join him on the trip to Spain?

²²⁶ "The selection of Nicopolis reveals that Paul was planning a trip to the West in the spring." Hiebert, *Introduction*, 323.

²²⁷ Although some have suggested that this was where (Coneybeare, p. 828) or near where (Hoehner, *NBD*, p. 197) Paul was arrested. But II Timothy, which records travels of the Apostle Paul later than those found in I Timothy and Titus, renders such improbable.

²²⁸ "It is at least a fair conjecture that he would not have left at the house of Carpus his precious books, and the cloak which was so necessary to him, unless his departure had been hasty and perhaps involuntary." Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul* (London: Cassell & Company Limited, 1898), 666.

²²⁹ Farrar, 668. Trophimus, falling sick, was forced to remain at Miletus (4:20). Erastus stayed behind once they reached his native city of Corinth (4:20; cf. Rom. 16:23). The key weakness of Farrar’s theory is that as a prisoner of state, it seems doubtful that Paul would be allowed to have traveling companions. If not, perhaps Paul was arrested in Rome. Some of those who had traveled there with him (from Asia) then began to show their true colors.

²³⁰ Finegan (pp. 388, 401-402) makes a strong case for June of AD 67.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

²³² Whether Jude or II Peter was written first is frankly speculative.

²³³ Remember that by AD 70, Jerusalem was essentially “no more.” Most Christians fled Jerusalem before the attack on it began in AD 66 and re-settled in Pella. Perhaps it was about this time that John relocated to Ephesus, Asia’s most important city, where he served with or replaced Timothy.

APPENDIX A: BASICS IN CHRONOLOGY

²³⁴ *Epigraphic* refers to an archaeological item, such as a monument, tablet, pot, or coin, that has writing on it.

²³⁵ Both of these events are mentioned by Shalmaneser III himself.

²³⁶ The most helpful (and most-cited) treatise on these numbers is Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983). Most of the dates for the Israelite kings employed in this book reflect the analyses or conclusions of Thiele.

²³⁷ See Appendix B for further discussion about the date of the Exodus from Egypt.

²³⁸ Beckwith, “Cautionary Notes,” *CKC*, 190.

APPENDIX B: PLEA FOR AN EARLY EXODUS

²³⁹ A date of 1225 BC was popular for a time but is quickly losing support. For a defense of 1270-1260, see the article by K. A. Kitchen and T. C. Mitchell on the “Chronology of the Old Testament” in *NBD* (1996), 186-193. Kitchen arrives at this date by moving the date of Abraham’s birth to approximately 2000 BC. Jacob then migrated to Egypt about 1700, and the children of Israel departed from Egypt 430 years later—approximately 1260 BC.

²⁴⁰ For an excellent layout in chart form of the arguments for each of these dates, see John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 29-30.

²⁴¹ Although there is some disagreement, it is minor. Some prefer 966, others 967, 958, 962, or 961. For details, see Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 239 (footnote at bottom of page). With Archer, I follow the 966 date.

²⁴² Walton, 29. Kitchen and Mitchell (p. 192) argue that the 480 years of I Kings 6:1 do not refer to 480 consecutive years, but 480 years of *events* “packed into” 210 *actual* years. I Kings 6:1, however, gives every indication that these are 480 actual years.

²⁴³ Archer, 239.

²⁴⁴ The correspondence comes only from cities in Palestine that Israel conquered *later* in its conquest (e.g., Megiddo, Jerusalem, Ashkelon, Akko, and Gezer). It never comes from such cities as Jericho, Gibeon, or Hebron. These cities had no time for correspondence but were conquered early in the Israelite conquest of Palestine. *Ibid.*, 293.

²⁴⁵ At this point in history, the term *Habiru* is not being used as an ethnic designation (to refer solely to the Jews). The term *Habiru* was used throughout the ancient Near East. The term, for example, is used by the Egyptians to refer to servants, prisoners, quarry workers, and warriors. *Habiru* also sometimes referred to a foreigner, wanderer, or migrant. The Israelites were *Habiru* to the Canaanites in that they were foreigners attacking their land. Only later does the word *Hebrew* designate only the Jews. See Archer, 289-95; Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 82-84; and Hoerth, 216-217.

²⁴⁶ There are alternative dates for the reign of Merneptah. Archer, for example, gives the dates for the reign of Merneptah as 1234-1225 (p. 244). I prefer the later date for both Merneptah (1213-1204) and Ramesses II (1279-1213 instead of 1290-1234 BC). The result with regard to the date of the Exodus is largely the same either way. Either set of dates prevents Ramesses II from being the pharaoh of Exodus 1 or the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Exod. 2:23).

²⁴⁷ The Merneptah Stele contains the earliest nonbiblical reference to Israel.

²⁴⁸ Kenneth A. Kitchen, a leading Egyptologist, has since revised the chronology of the pharaohs of Egypt. According to the “new chronology,” Thutmose III reigned from 1479 to 1425. If Kitchen is correct, Thutmose III would be the Pharaoh of the Exodus, not his son Amenhotep II, which would, in turn, negate the value of the Dream Stele of Thutmose IV for dating the Exodus. It does not, however, contravene the death of Pharaoh’s firstborn because Amenhotep II was also not Thutmose III’s firstborn. There is so much room for variation in Egyptian chronology (depending upon whether one goes with high or low chronology) that the debate is ongoing.

²⁴⁹ Hoerth unfortunately argues for this position (p. 58). This interpretation is also based on a textual variant of Exodus 12:40. The Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch both suggest that the 430 years includes not only the sojourning in Egypt but also the sojourning of the patriarchs in Canaan. The Hebrew text is to be preferred. Both Acts 7:6 and Genesis 15:13 demand four hundred years of slavery *in Egypt*. See Kitchen and Mitchell, 190.

²⁵⁰ Here are Garstang’s words following his 1930-1936 excavation of Jericho: “In a word, in all material details and in date the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative. Our demonstration is limited, however, to material observations: the walls fell, shaken apparently by earthquake, and the city was destroyed by fire, about 1400 B.C. These are the basic facts resulting from our investigations. The link with Joshua and the Israelites is only circumstantial but it seems to be solid and without a flaw.” Quoted in Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 109-110. See also Kaiser’s discussion in support of a fifteenth-century Exodus (pp. 109-118).

²⁵¹ Archaeologist Bryant Wood studied Kenyon’s work at Jericho. He concluded that Kenyon was right in dating a certain double wall as Early Bronze Age, but City IV’s walls were still “destroyed at the end of Late Bronze Age I (approximately 1400) as Garstang had maintained. . . . Wood found that Kenyon had largely based her conclusions on the absence of certain imported pottery and that she had ignored the considerable local pottery.” Hoerth, 209-210. See also Wood, 74-78; and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998, 151-152.

²⁵² Archer, 247. For a contrasting opinion, consult Kitchen and Mitchell, 191-92.

²⁵³ See Merrill, *Kingdom*, 73-74.

²⁵⁴ Wood, 78-80.

APPENDIX C: THE NUMBERS IN NUMBERS

²⁵⁵ Really, all large numbers are at stake. Even numbers in Chronicles have come under attack. J. Barton Payne, e.g., writes on I Chronicles 21:5 (which contains the number of military men in David’s ill-advised census): “Second, on the basis of the noun *‘alapim*, denoting either ‘thousands’ or ‘chiefs,’ ‘specially trained warriors’ . . . we should probably think in terms of a muster of 1,570 outstanding military figures and not necessarily of over a million and a half ‘men . . . who could handle a sword.’” “1, 2 Chronicles,” in vol. 4 of *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (1988), 407.

²⁵⁶ The numbers in this column include the son of Jacob mentioned, their sons, and any grandsons listed. Only sixty-seven are listed here (seventy in Gen. 46:27) because the number does not include Dinah (Leah’s daughter), Serah (Asher’s daughter), and Jacob.

²⁵⁷ Note the large decrease in the descendants of Simeon. Our supposition is that they were heavily involved in the worship of Baal-Peor and suffered the tragic consequences (Num. 25:14-15).

²⁵⁸ The change in the listed order of the sons of Joseph may be due to the growth of Manasseh.

²⁵⁹ Kitchen, *Reliability*, 264.

²⁶⁰ Allen, "Numbers," *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:688-689.

²⁶¹ Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 66.

²⁶² R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1969), 633.

²⁶³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 75. J. N. Oswalt reaches a similar conclusion in his article on the book of Numbers in volume 4 of *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 4:465.

²⁶⁴ Ashley, 66; Allen, 2:682. Another related theory takes *eleph* as *eluph* ("chieftain" or "commander"). It also runs into snags (*Ibid.*).

²⁶⁵ The latter is argued by Allen, 2:688-691.

APPENDIX D: CHRONOLOGY AND THE MONARCHY

²⁶⁶ The church father Jerome was just one among many puzzled by these numbers: "Read all the books of the Old and New Testament, and you will find such a discord as to the number of the years, such a confusion as to the duration of the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, that to attempt to clear up this question will rather appear the occupation of a man of leisure than of a scholar." Hieronymus, *Traditio catholica*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1864), vol. 1, Ep. 72, *Ad Vitalem*; Quoted in Thiele, 39.

²⁶⁷ This data includes such information as the age at which a king began to reign (for the kings of Judah only), a synchronism with another Hebrew king, a synchronism with a foreign king, and the number of years the king reigned.

²⁶⁸ A similar problem occurs in reference to Jehoiachin, where his age at his accession is given as both eight (II Chron. 36:9-10) and eighteen (II Chron. 24:8).

²⁶⁹ Originally his 1943 dissertation for a Ph. D. degree in biblical archaeology at the University of Chicago, it was published as *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). Unless otherwise indicated, however, all references in this paper to Thiele's work are to his 1983 third edition.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vi.

²⁷¹ One noteworthy conservative, however, who disagrees with some of Thiele's conclusions is Oswald T. Allis. Allis seems to prefer Ussher's chronology as defended by the great Assyriologist George Smith and rejects some of the synchronisms Thiele and others advance between Assyrian dates and biblical chronology. *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Critics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 398-430.

²⁷² See discussion in Appendix A. For a more detailed presentation of absolute dating and its relevance to biblical chronology, see Thiele, 39-52. Consult also Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 28-32.

²⁷³ Allis, 414-417, disagrees that the king mentioned in this inscription is Ahab, King of Israel.

²⁷⁴ But see P. Kyle McCarter, "'Yaw, Son of 'Omri': A Philological Note on Israelite Chronology," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 216 (1974): 5-7. McCarter argues that it may have been Jehoram who paid the tribute to Shalmaneser. Thiele responds to McCarter by saying that even if it were Jehoram, the tribute payment still took place in 741—the last year of Jehoram and the first year of Jehu. "An Additional Chronological Note on 'Yaw, Son of Omri,'" *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 222 (1976): 19-23. For additional discussion on the identity of "Yaw, son of Omri," see Allis, 417-419.

²⁷⁵ See D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1956), 23-26.

²⁷⁶ For fuller discussion of these two systems of regnal counting, consult Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 23-27.

²⁷⁷ Thiele, *Chronology*, 18.

²⁷⁸ Elihu Schatz, however, argues that Judah never switched, but always used the accession-year system. *Proof of the Accuracy of the Bible* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1973), 72.

²⁷⁹ Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 68-69. A possible indication of this switch is the dual synchronism of Joram's reign with the accession of Ahaziah. His accession in Joram's eleventh year (II Kings 9:29) follows the accession system, while the recording of his accession in the twelfth year (8:25) is in keeping with the non-accession system.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

²⁸¹ As Thiele, 38, says, "the best argument for the correctness of the above outline of chronological procedure among the Hebrews is that it works."

²⁸² There is some debate on this score. See *Mysterious Numbers*, 27-30, for Thiele's position. He defends Judah's use of a Tishri calendar with examples from the reigns of Solomon and Josiah. He readily admits, however, that he has no Scriptural basis for counting Israel's regnal years from the month of Nisan. For contrasting opinions, see S. Talmon, "Divergences in Calendar-Reckoning in Ephraim and Judah," *Vetus Testamentum* (1958): 48-74; John H. Hayes and Paul K. Hooker, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 13, 17-18; and Schatz, 65-72. Talmon, Hayes, and Hooker all argue that the Northern Kingdom counted from the eighth month (Marheshvan), based on I Kings 12:32-33. Schatz agrees that Israel counted from the eighth month, but also contends that Judah counted from the month Nisan.

²⁸³ See chart in Thiele, 58.

²⁸⁴ Thiele counts at least nine co-regencies or "overlapping reigns," *Chronology*, 23-28. Many of these co-regencies are unstated or are implicit within the text. For this reason, Hayes and Hooker, 11-12, deny the existence of any co-regencies. They prefer to view overlapping reigns as either joint-regencies or forced abdications. For a defense of the prevalence of co-regency in the ancient Near East, particularly Egypt, see E. Ball, "The Co-Regency of David and Solomon (I Kings 1)," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 268-79.

²⁸⁵ This would also explain why II Kings 8:16 places the first year of Jehoram of Judah as the fifth year of Joram of Israel—it was the first year of Jehoram's sole reign.

²⁸⁶ Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 32, 64. A co-regency is also the answer to the problem involving the reigns of Azariah and Jeroboam II. Normal calculation would indicate that Azariah's accession took place in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam II (II Kings 13:10; 14:1-2). Instead, Kings reports that Azariah began to reign in Jeroboam's twenty-seventh year (15:1). It was Jeroboam's twenty-seventh year, not his fifteenth year, because he first co-reigned with his father for twelve years.

²⁸⁷ See Thiele's explanation of dual dating. *Chronology*, 33-38.

²⁸⁸ According to Thiele, dual dating is necessary in order to harmonize properly the reigns of Omri, Jeroboam II, Pekah, Jehoshaphat, and Azariah. See *Chronology*, 33-51, in which he details how dual dating applies to each of these five kings.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

²⁹⁰ II Kings 15:27 records that he came to the throne in the fifty-second year of Azariah of Judah and reigned twenty years. Since Azariah's fifty-second year falls in approximately 740/39 BC, the ending date for Pekah's reign should then be 720/19. But this does not allow time for the nine-year reign of Hoshea, which ended with the fall of Samaria in 722. In order to make Pekah and Hoshea fit into a 722 date, Thiele proposed that Pekah reigned, contemporaneously with Menahem, as an independent king over Transjordan Israel. Thus, both began to reign in 752. One should note, however, that this position is a revision on the part of Thiele. In the first edition of *The Mysterious Numbers*, 114, Thiele denied that Pekah could have reigned simultaneously with

Menahem. Thiele may have been influenced to adjust his original position by H. J. Cook's article, "Pekah," in *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964): 121-35, in which Cook argues for the position eventually adopted by Thiele.

²⁹¹ Careful study of the biblical text, however, produces surprising evidence in support of Thiele's (or Cook's) suggestion. We discussed some of this evidence earlier in note 86 above (chapter 6). One is the curious synchronism given in II Kings 15:30, where the author places the accession of Hoshea (732/31) in the twentieth year of Jotham of Judah. II Kings 15:32 further reports that Jotham came to the throne in the second year of Pekah. This would place the beginning year of Jotham at about 751 and the first year of Pekah about 752, making his twenty-year reign end around 732/31. A second piece of evidence is Hosea's reference to two Northern Kingdoms, Israel and Ephraim (5:5). Although these two terms are often used interchangeably, Hosea here uses a plural pronoun ("Israel and Ephraim stumble in *their* iniquity," NKJV). This implies that there were two Northern Kingdoms during at least a part of Hosea's ministry. Hosea's ministry does span the reigns of Pekah and Menahem (and beyond). For further discussion, see Cook, 121-35.

²⁹² Thus agreeing with the parallel passages in II Kings 8:26 and 24:8. See Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 206-207.

²⁹³ Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 140.

²⁹⁴ William Albright's alternative is no better. He gives the starting date for Hezekiah's reign as 715, ignoring the synchronisms of Hezekiah's reign with that of Hoshea. "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 100 (1945): 16-22. Almost twenty years later, he sets forth the possibility that the synchronisms in II Kings 18:9-10 originally referred to Shalmaneser V. The name "Hezekiah," originally located in the margin, accidentally found its way into the text. "The Original Account of the Fall of Samaria in II Kings," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 174 (1964): 66-67.

²⁹⁵ J. Barton Payne does an excellent job of summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of some of these views. "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 (1969): 40-52.

²⁹⁶ Archer, 211. E. J. Young also seems to favor this view. See Appendix I in his commentary, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969).

²⁹⁷ Payne, 46. Isaiah's structure influences II Kings in that the author of II Kings took his account of Hezekiah from Isaiah.

²⁹⁸ This view also presupposes a lengthy co-regency, unmentioned in Kings or Chronicles, of Ahaz with his father Joram. An excellent presentation of this view is found in Merrill, *Kingdom*, 402-405.

²⁹⁹ Leslie McFall sets forth this view in his article, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989): 393-404. This view, however, is more eisegesis than exegesis. The pluperfect rendering of the Hebrew verb *malakh* that McFall puts forward ("had reigned") does not work for any other of the regnal formulas of the kings of Israel. See, for examples, II Kings 13:10; 14:23; 15:17, 23, 27, where the Hebrew wording is exactly that found in II Kings 17:1. Notice that the second "and reigned" in these verses does not occur in the Hebrew but was added by the King James translators.

APPENDIX E: DATING THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

³⁰⁰ Leo Depuydt, "The Date of Death of Jesus of Nazareth," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 122, No. 3 (Jul-Sep, 2002): 466.

³⁰¹ Paul L. Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion," *Church History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (March 1968): 4-5.

³⁰² See especially Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, Chapter II, Location 274-364; and Bock, vol. 1, 910-913.

³⁰³ Maier, 5.

³⁰⁴ See, for example, Brian Messner, "'In the Fifteenth Year' Reconsidered: A Study of Luke 3:1," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 1 (1998): 201-11, who reassesses the primary sources often used to support a co-regency of Tiberius with Augustus.

³⁰⁵ Maier, 5; Messner, 203-204.

³⁰⁶ Essentially, it comes down to the plucking grain incident recorded in all three Synoptics (Matt. 12:1; Mark. 2:23; Luke 6:1). This incident had to have occurred around harvest time, which began in the spring. It cannot be the same spring as the Passover in John 2:13, which falls during Jesus' early Judean ministry, and is decidedly before the Passover connected with the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:4). Therefore, we assume an additional spring not mentioned by John in his Gospel but perhaps alluded to in 4:35, if the four months until harvest (spring) is literal and not proverbial.

³⁰⁷ Assuming that the unnamed feast of John 5:1 is not a Passover.

³⁰⁸ B. F. Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1862), 335-342; James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 929-932. See also Ernest L. Martin, "The Case for a Thursday Crucifixion" (May 2001), <http://www.askelm.com/news/n010501.htm> (accessed Nov. 17, 2015); Rusk, "The Day He Died," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 18, No. 19 (March 29, 1974): 4-6; and J. K. Aldrich, "The Crucifixion on Thursday—Not Friday," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 27, No. 107 (July 1870): 401-429.

³⁰⁹ Although many uses of *Sabbath* in the Passion Week are anarthrous and could perhaps refer to *a sabbath*, these two are articular and almost undoubtedly point to *the* (weekly) Sabbath.

³¹⁰ This term occurs elsewhere only in the apocrypha (Judith 8:6) and in the Septuagint's "title" to Psalm 93, in both of which it clearly refers to the day before the regular weekly Sabbath.

³¹¹ See Hoehner, 121. Other proponents include John MacArthur Jr. and Leon Morris. Morris argues excellently for this view in "Additional Note H: The Last Supper and the Passover," *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., in *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1995). The theory is a conjecture (both Hoehner and Morris admit as much), although we do have evidence that the Jews squabbled over calendar differences.

³¹² Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, Location 1055-1062; Morris, *ibid.*

³¹³ This is the view of Carson, *John*, 589-590; Edersheim, *Temple*, 218; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1213-1214; and Andeas J. Kostenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 524, 537-538.

³¹⁴ This same position is held by Kostenberger. See discussion at John 18:28; 19:14, also his timeline on pp. 11-13.

³¹⁵ Humphreys and Waddington (p. 334) note that "although astronomical calculations can accurately specify the times of new and full moons, we do not know with what skill the Jews of the first century could detect the first faintly glowing lunar crescent following conjunction with the sun (the new moon itself being invisible, of course)."

³¹⁶ An additional consideration for adding a month was to ensure that Passover fell after the spring equinox. *Ibid.*, 336.

³¹⁷ For further study, see Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. - A.D. 75* (Brown University Studies XIX), Brown University Press (Providence, RI: 1956); J.K. Fotheringham, "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 35 (1934): 146-62; and Beckwith, 183-205.