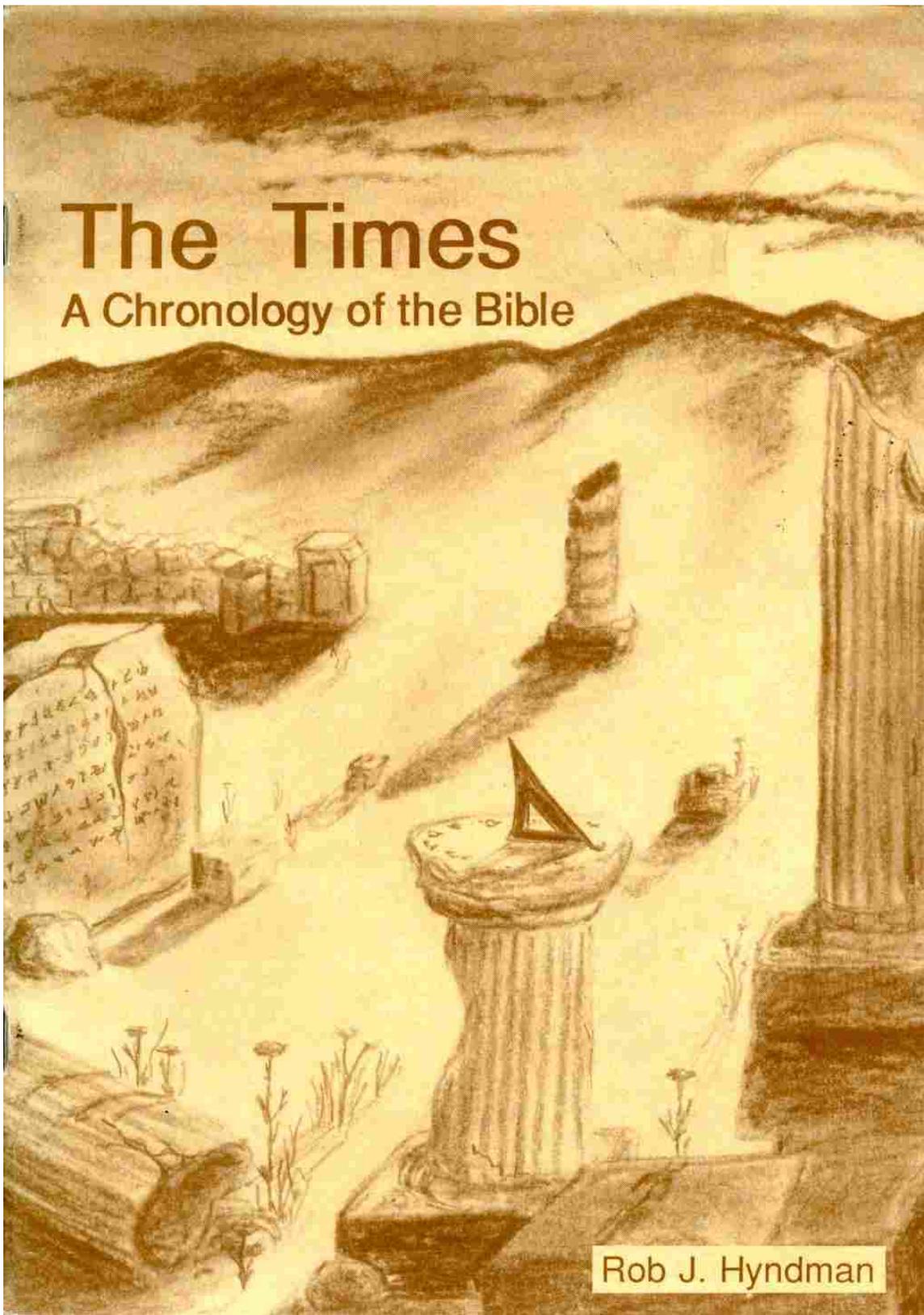


The Times

A Chronology of the Bible



Rob J. Hyndman

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Bethel Publications

P.O. Box 285, Beechworth, Victoria, Australia, 3747.

Internet edition. Published in 2000.

Previous print editions published in 1989 and 1991.

ISBN 0-646-02635-6.

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Preface

Every Bible student faces questions of chronology. When did Abraham live? Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus? How long did the period of the Judges last? What is the fulfilment of Daniel's 70 week prophecy? What was the sequence of events in the last week of Jesus' life?

This booklet is an attempt to present a completely harmonious solution to questions of biblical chronology. Over the past century, many archaeological discoveries have enabled biblical chronology to be determined much more accurately than had been previously possible. This booklet combines up-to-date archaeological research and the biblical statements to produce a chronology which is consistent with both sources. Of course, future archaeology may show aspects of this chronology in need of adjustment. However, no current knowledge conflicts strongly with the dates presented here.

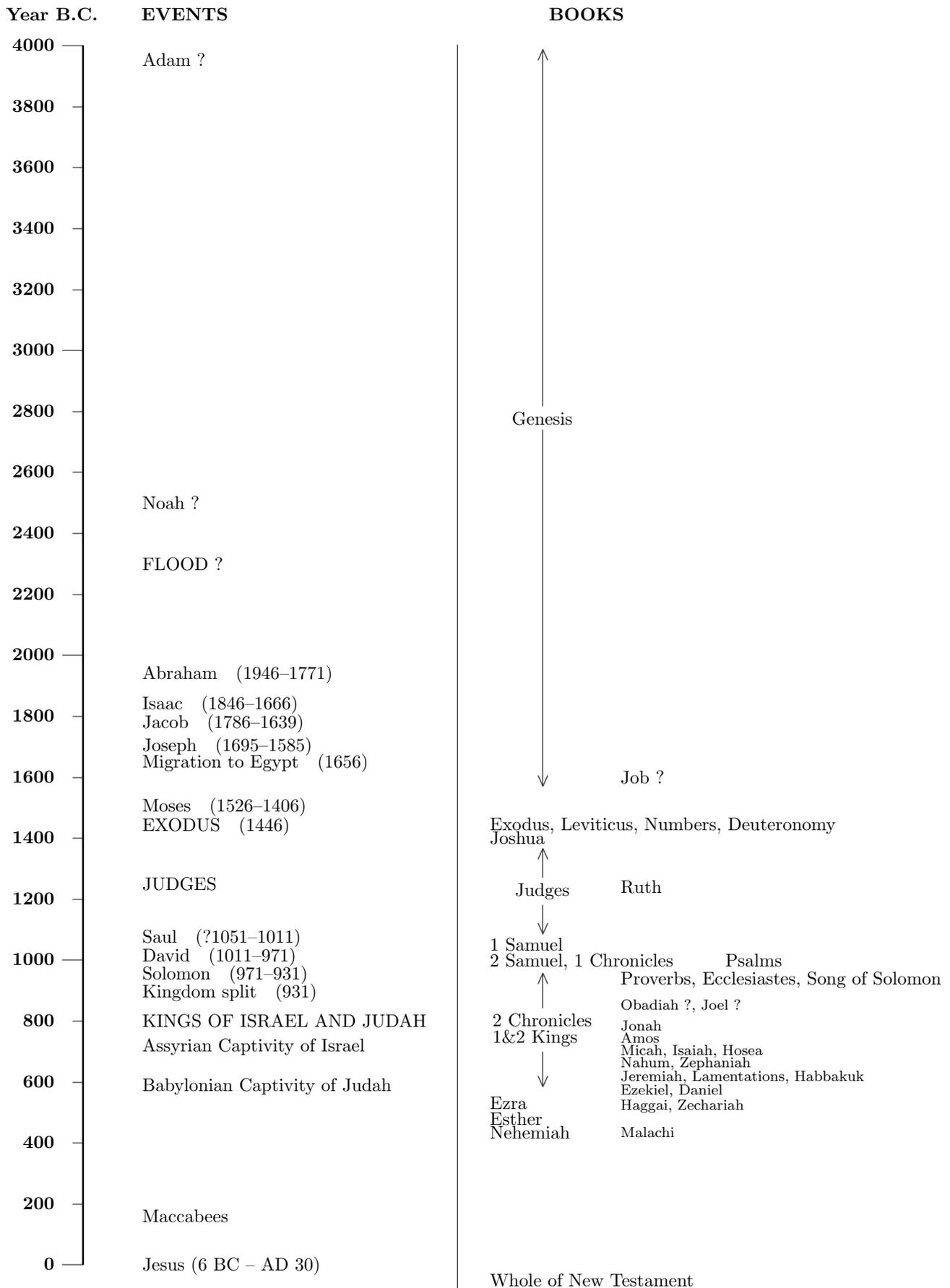
A distinguishing feature of this chronology is the graphical presentation of the results. Fifteen charts are provided displaying the chronology in an easy reference format; these are accurately to scale and have been produced using computer programs written by the author. It may be useful to copy these onto A5 paper and use them as Bible inserts. In addition, some notes are provided on the scriptural and archaeological evidence that supports the results. It is hoped that this presentation will enable the booklet to be used as both a quick reference and as a detailed study aid.

This internet edition is identical to the second printed edition (published in 1991) except that three new charts have been added.

Finally, thanks are due to Ian Hyndman, Mark Morgan and my wife, Leanne, for their helpful comments; to Stephen Marek for the artwork on the front cover; and above all to my Heavenly Father for all his blessings. I pray the results will be of value to many of God's saints in their studies of his Word.

Rob J. Hyndman
February 2000

The Bible Timeline



1. Introduction

Knowing about biblical chronology can help us understand why God said what he did and why God did what he did at each particular time. Sometimes it can also help us understand the relation of Bible events to other historical events. It is often crucial in determining when a particular prophecy was fulfilled. In short, any serious Bible student needs a good chronology.

The scriptures contain a large amount of chronological information. Some periods of time such as the times of the captivity and the life of Jesus are crucial in biblical history and are recorded in a great deal of detail. For other periods, such as the time between the Testaments, the Bible gives virtually no information.

The purpose of this chronology is to piece together the scriptural information using archaeological data where necessary, and establish the dates and sequence of events in the Bible. The whole of scripture is given some attention although some periods are presented in more detail than others depending on the quantity of available data.

Absolute dates

In most ancient records (including the Bible), a local event such as the year of a king's accession or a major natural disaster was the common reference point for dating. Using this contemporary information, it is relatively easy to give a correct sequence of events over a short period of time. However, it is much more difficult to establish dates in the modern format using A.D. 0 as the reference point.

In order to establish these 'absolute' dates, it is often necessary to resort to archaeological research. Babylonian tablets, Egyptian papyri and other contemporary records provide lists of kings, major events in each year and cross checks with contemporary monarchs. In particular, some major astronomical events were noted such as eclipses. Thus, reliable dates of Near Eastern history from about 2000 B.C. are available. From about 1400 B.C., these dates can be established to within a decade. From about 1100 B.C., dates can be estimated increasingly accurately with more contemporary information available. The Canon of Ptolemy provides an accurate framework from 620 B.C. and dates from that point are known often within a few weeks and even to the very day.

Much of this information has only been discovered in the past 50 years, so that Bible chronology is now much better understood than previously. Using the

extra-biblical information to fill in the holes in the biblical information, we can construct a fairly accurate chronology from Abraham to Jesus.

This chronology presents almost all dates in the modern Western format as most readers are unfamiliar with other calendars. That is, dates are quoted as B.C. or A.D. and the Gregorian calendar is used. The one exception to this is the last week of Jesus' ministry where the Jewish calendar has been used. Without the Jewish calendar, many aspects of the wonderful allegory of Jesus as the Passover lamb would be missed.

Problems

There are a number of notable complications that are often overlooked when establishing a chronology of the Bible.

Some events recorded in scripture are concurrent rather than consecutive. For instance the kings of Israel and Judah often reigned with their sons for a period of time. These co-regencies are not explicitly detailed in scripture.

Also, different calendar systems were used by different nations. For example, the Egyptians counted the time between a king's accession and the next New Year's day as his first year, while the Mesopotamians began counting the years of a king's reign from his first New Year's day in office. It appears that Judah usually (but not always) used the Mesopotamian system while Israel used the Egyptian method at first and changed to the Mesopotamian method in about 800 B.C.. Another calendar problem is the fact that two different calendars were in use in Israel and Judah—one used for religious purposes the other for secular purposes. The civil calendar began in the month Tishri while the religious calendar began in Nisan. It is not always clear which calendar is being used when the Bible gives a date.

Finally, there is uncertainty in some of the figures. For example, the Septuagint gives several numbers that are quite different from the Masoretic text.

These facts must be considered when attempting to produce an accurate chronology of scripture.

2. The Times of the Old Testament

A.M. and B.C. dates

Some writers use A.M. (after Creation) dates rather than B.C. (before Christ) dates. The latter are preferable as they can be accurately calculated back to the time of Abraham. A.M. dates are not accurate because of the uncertainty in the length of the period from Adam to Abraham.

Key dates

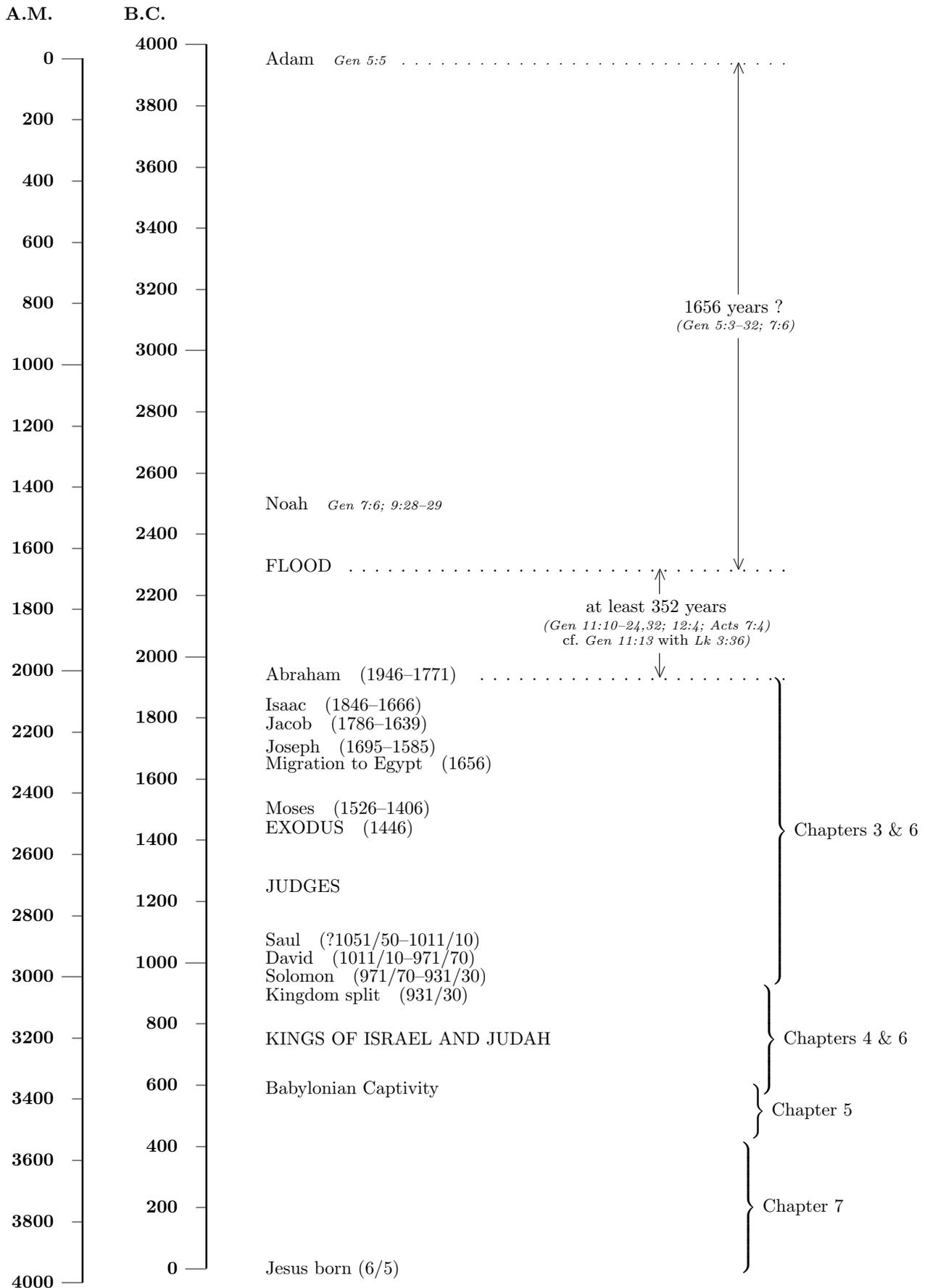
Two key dates in Old Testament chronology are 853 B.C. and 841 B.C.. From Assyrian data, it can be shown that 853 B.C. witnessed the battle of Qarqar and the death of Ahab, and that 841 B.C. saw Jehu as king of Israel in place of Joram. Using these key dates, scriptural data gives 931/30 B.C. as the year the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah split. All other earlier dates can be calculated purely from scripture although archaeological information can often be used to confirm the calculations.

The date of the Flood

Chapter 3 establishes 1946 B.C. as the year of Abram's birth. Prior to this point in time, dates become approximate due to apparent problems in the ancient manuscripts.

The genealogy given in Genesis 11 is the only information we have of the time span from the Flood to Abram. Yet it is fraught with problems. According to the Masoretic text of Genesis 11 (followed by almost all modern Bibles), there were 222 years between the Flood and the birth of Terah (see Gen 11:10–24). However, another ancient manuscript, the Samaritan Pentateuch, gives 872 years! This is because the age of a father at the birth of his first-born is usually recorded to be 100 years later in the Samaritan Pentateuch than in the Masoretic text. The Greek Septuagint is similar to the Samaritan Pentateuch but adds the generation of Cainan making the total time 1002 years. Luke's record of Jesus' genealogy seems to support the Septuagint by including Cainan (Lk 3:36). However, it is possible that other generations are also omitted.

The Times of the Old Testament



Abram probably left Haran soon after the death of his father (Acts 7:4). Using this information and comparing Genesis 11:32 and 12:4, it seems that Terah was 130 years old at the birth of Abram. This can be added to the time between the Flood and Terah to give the time from the Flood to Abram. Thus, using the Masoretic text we would date the Flood to 2298 B.C.. The Samaritan Pentateuch gives 2948 B.C. and the Septuagint 3078 B.C..

Genesis 11:26 indicates Terah was 70 years old at the birth of his first born giving 60 years between Abram and his oldest brother. Circumstantial evidence for this interpretation is the generation gap between Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 24:24). Since Nahor married the daughter of Haran (Gen 11:29), it is likely Haran was the eldest of the three brothers.

The date of Creation

The time from the Creation to the Flood is even more uncertain. Our information for this period is based on the genealogy of Genesis 5 and 7:6. Here there is even more variability in the numbers given in the ancient manuscripts, although the number of generations is consistent. The Masoretic text totals 1656 years from the Creation of Adam to the Flood. Again, the Septuagint usually adds 100 years to the age of a father at the birth of his first-born, giving a considerably longer period of 2242 years. The Samaritan Pentateuch gives 1307 years.

Thus, the Masoretic text indicates a date of 3954 B.C. for Creation, while the Septuagint indicates 5320 B.C. and the Samaritan Pentateuch 4255 B.C..

In the accompanying charts, the Masoretic figures have been used, but the data prior to Abram should not be taken with great confidence. They probably represent the minimum time span possible since some generations may have been omitted. Archaeological studies tentatively date the first indications of civilization between 9,000 and 7,000 B.C..

3. The Times from Abram to Solomon

This period covering the Exodus, the Judges and the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon has been one of the most difficult and debated areas of biblical chronology. Many have given up trying to reconcile the various scriptural statements concerning its chronology and dismissed them as unreliable or symbolic. Such an attitude to the inspired word of God is reprehensible. Here is a challenge! What follows is the only solution I know that harmonizes all scriptural statements.

The date of the Exodus

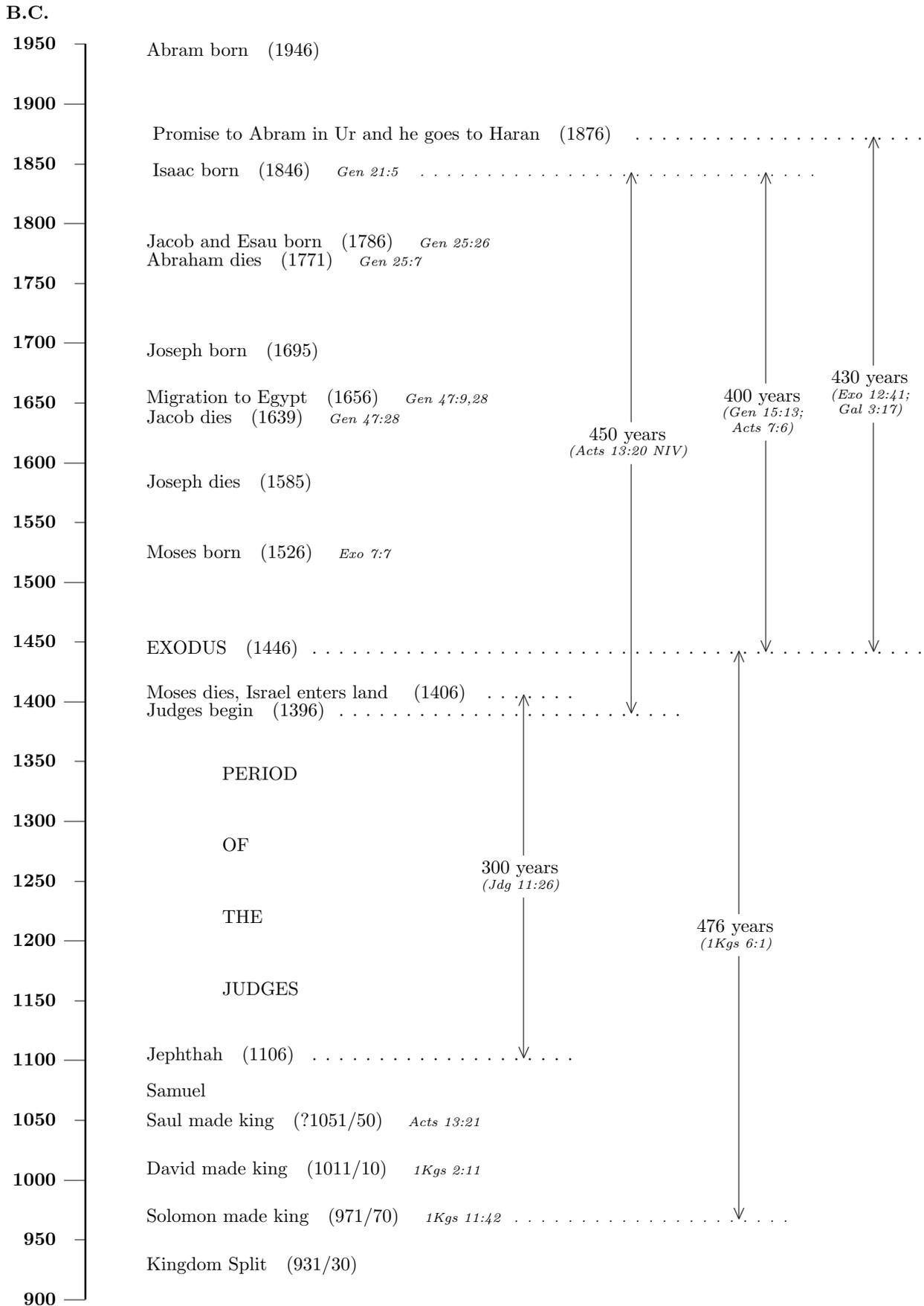
Starting from the key date of 931/30 B.C. (see p.8) when the Kingdom of Israel split into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, we can establish that Solomon commenced his reign in 971/70 B.C. (1Kgs 11:42). His fourth year marked the 480th year¹ from the Exodus (1Kgs 6:1), giving a date of 1446 B.C. to the Exodus. This date is consistent with Jephthah's statement (Jdg 11:26) that he lived 300 years after Israel took control of the land. Furthermore, what we know of the Egyptian Pharaohs of this time provides further evidence that this date is correct (see p.26).

Some would place the Exodus at the time of Rameses II (c. 1290 B.C.) largely because of the reference to the city of Rameses in Exodus 1:11. However, the name Rameses was used much earlier than the 13th century B.C. and there is no evidence that this city may be identified with the famous capital of the empire of Rameses II. Furthermore, the clear statement in 1 Kings giving 480 years from the Exodus to Solomon must be explained. There is no evidence that it has been corrupted in the manuscripts or that it is 'symbolic'.

Archaeologists have tended to favour the later date although the evidence uncovered is not as one-sided as many suggest. There are a number of archaeologists who think that the available evidence supports the biblical date in the 15th century B.C.. Perhaps the most famous archaeological site which should provide an answer to the problem is Jericho. However, while there is clear evidence for a major destruction of the city including its walls collapsing, the date of this destruction is disputed.

¹Septuagint: 440th year

The Times from Abram to Solomon



The Times of the Patriarchs

B.C.		AGES			
		Abraham	Isaac	Jacob	Joseph
1960					
1940	Abram born (1946)				
1920					
1900					
1880	Promise to Abram in Ur and he goes to Haran (1876) Leaves Haran (1871) <i>Gen 12:4</i>	70 75			
1860	Ishmael born (1860) <i>Gen 16:16</i>	86			
1840	Isaac born (1846) <i>Gen 21:5</i>	100			
1820	? Isaac offered on Mt. Moriah <i>Gen 22</i>				
1800	Isaac marries Rebekah (1806) <i>Gen 25:20</i>	140	40		
1780	Jacob and Esau born (1786) <i>Gen 25:26</i>	160	60		
1760	Abraham dies (1771) <i>Gen 25:7</i>	175	75	15	
1740	Esau marries Hittite women (1746) <i>Gen 26:34</i>		100	40	
1720					
1700	Jacob goes to Haran (1709) <i>Gen 30:25; 31:41</i> Jacob marries Leah and Rachel (1702) <i>Gen 29:14-30</i> Joseph born (1695) (since Joseph aged 39 in 1656 — <i>Gen 41:46,48; 45:6</i>) Jacob and family move to Canaan (1689) <i>Gen 30:25; 31:41</i>		137 144 151 157	77 84 91 97	
1680	Joseph sold and taken to Egypt (1678) <i>Gen 37:2</i>		168	108	17
1660	Isaac dies (1666) <i>Gen 35:28</i> Joseph given high position (1665) <i>Gen 41:46</i> Migration to Egypt (1656) <i>Gen 47:9,28</i>		180	120 121 130	29 30 39
1640	Jacob dies (1639) <i>Gen 47:28</i>			147	56
1620					
1600					
1580	Joseph dies (1585) <i>Gen 50:26</i>				110

Some problem passages

The periods of 400 years and 430 years given in Genesis 15:13 and Exodus 12:41 have proved two of the most difficult chronological problems in the whole of scripture. The 450 years of Acts 13:20 provides an additional difficulty in the chronology of this period.

a) 400 years

Genesis 15:13 says that Abram's descendants "will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and ill-treated 400 years". Stephen repeats this in Acts 7:6. However, the rest of biblical chronology and the genealogies do not allow that Israel was in Egypt for anything like 400 years. According to Bullinger, the phrase "and they will be enslaved and ill-treated" may be placed in parentheses. In this case, the 400 years is referring to the time that Abram's descendants would be in a foreign country. That is, **400 years from the time of Isaac's birth to the Exodus.**

b) 430 years

The 430 year period also concludes with the Exodus (Exo 12:41). According to the Masoretic text of Exodus 12:40, this period was the time Israel lived in Egypt, while the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch say it was the time Israel lived in Egypt and Canaan. From the above considerations, it would seem that the Masoretic text is incorrect. But there is no need to leave it at that. In Galatians 3:17, Paul gives the starting point of the 430 year period: "the law, introduced 430 years after (the Promise) did not set aside the covenant". Clearly this is the same 430 year period. The question is "what promise?" The promise was first made when Abram was in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen 12:1-2; Acts 7:2-3). Thus, **the 430 years are from the time Abram left Ur until the Exodus.**

c) 450 years

According to the King James Version of Acts 13:20, "he gave unto them judges about the space of 450 years". This is at odds with the rest of the chronology. Solomon was made king 476 years after the Exodus (1Kgs 6:1) and Saul and David each reigned for 40 years (Acts 13:21; 1Kgs 2:11) leaving less than 400 years for the judges. Another possible reading of the text, supported by the NIV and NRSV, assigns the 450 years to the events of the preceding verses. The NIV reads "All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges ..." This seems the most likely solution and gives **450 years from the time "God chose our fathers" to the conquest.** i.e. 400 (Gen 15:13) + 40 (wilderness) + 10 (conquest).

The times of Abraham and Isaac

Using the above information we can calculate the dates of Abraham and Isaac. Isaac was born 400 years before the Exodus in 1846 B.C. and Abraham's birth was 100 years earlier (Gen 21:5). Abraham was 75 (Gen 12:4) when he left Haran making the year 1871 B.C.. Since he left Ur 430 years before the Exodus (i.e. in 1876 B.C.), he was in Haran just 5 years. The other dates in the lives of Abraham and Isaac can now easily be calculated from their ages.

The times of Jacob and Joseph

Some mental gymnastics are necessary to establish the dates and ages of Jacob and Joseph. We need to work backwards from the time Joseph was in Egypt.

Joseph entered the service of Pharaoh at the age of 30 (Gen 41:46). He remained there for seven years of plenty and two years of famine before revealing himself to his brothers (Gen 41:48; 45:6). So Joseph was 39 when his family moved to Egypt. Jacob was 130 (Gen 47:9). This means Jacob was 91 at Joseph's birth. Now Joseph was six when Jacob took his family to Canaan (Gen 30:25; 31:41), making Jacob's age 97. Since Jacob had worked for Laban for 20 years (Gen 31:41), he was 77 when he left home.

See p.26 for contemporary Egyptian history during the time of Joseph.

The times from Samuel to Solomon

To establish dates for this period, it is necessary to work backwards from the split of the Kingdom of Israel and Judah in 931/30 B.C..

Solomon reigned for 40 years (1Kgs 11:42) and so became king in 971/70 B.C.. Still working backwards, it can be established that David began to reign in 1011/10 B.C. and was born in 1041/40 B.C. (2Sam 5:4-5). The other events of David's life are difficult to date exactly; there are insufficient data and it seems that the scriptural record is not always in strict chronological sequence. (For example, the events of 2Sam 8:1-14 probably occurred before 2Sam 7:1.)

It is even more difficult to form a chronology of Saul's life. Paul gives the length of his reign as 40 years (Acts 13:21) and this is followed in the accompanying charts. However, 1 Samuel 13:1 gives the figure as "... two years" the first figure has dropped out of the manuscripts. Possibly this was originally "forty-two years" and Paul uses a round number.

1 Samuel 13 apparently should also include Saul's age when he began to reign. This too has dropped out. A few late manuscripts of the Septuagint give the figure as 30 years old. If correct, this would date Saul's birth about 1080 B.C..

The dates and ages of Samuel are no clearer! We are not told when he was born or

when he died. The only hint is that he was an old man when the elders of Israel asked him to appoint a king (1Sam 8:1,5).

Archaeological references to Israel

The first apparent reference to the children of Israel in secular history occurs in The Armana Letters (1400 B.C.), discovered in 1887 by an Egyptian peasant woman. They contain a request from the governor of Jerusalem to the Pharaoh of Egypt to help supply military aid against the Habiru people. Many scholars think that this is a reference to the Hebrew invasion of Canaan.

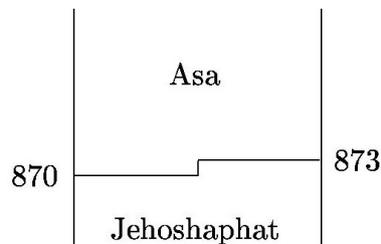
The only other known reference to Israel before the time of the kings is in the Stele of Merneptah (1220 B.C.). There, Merneptah, Pharaoh of Egypt (1236–1223 B.C.), mentions that “Israel is laid waste, his seed is not”; apparently referring to an Egyptian victory over Israel during the time of the Judges.

4. The Times of the Kings

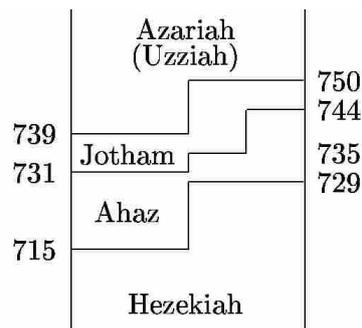
The chronology of the kings has been a problem to Bible students for many years. It is often not clear which system of coronation dating is used or whether the religious or civil calendar is used. This is particularly troublesome with references to kings from other nations.

However, it is possible to satisfactorily reconstruct the times of the kings, although the solution is rather complex. The scriptural dates have been harmonized with archaeological references by allowing for co-regencies and different calendar methods. The chronology given here is based largely on the work of E.R. Thiele in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (1983) and the article *Chronology of the Old Testament* in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Full details regarding the calculations may be found there.

Co-regencies are shown using a 'stepped' line rather than a straight line. For example, Asa reigned over Judah on his own until 873 B.C. when Jehoshaphat joined him. Three years later, Asa died and Jehoshaphat continued to reign on his own.



The case of Azariah, Jotham and Ahaz deserves some explanation. It seems Jotham became co-regent with his father Azariah in 750 B.C. (2Kgs 15:32). His twelve year old son, Ahaz, apparently joined them in 744 B.C. (2Kgs 17:1). Azariah died in 740/39 B.C. (2Kgs 15:2) leaving Jotham and Ahaz reigning. Jotham retired in 735 B.C. (2Kgs 16:1) and died four years later in 731 B.C. (2Kgs 15:30,33). This seems the only way to make sense of the conflicting dates concerning the reigns of these three kings of Judah. However, it still requires that Ahaz was only about fifteen when his son, Hezekiah, was born.



Alternative names

Some kings are known by more than one name. The following identifications may be helpful.

Abijah	=	Abijam	(Judah)	1Kgs 15:1–8; 2Chr 13:1 – 14:1
Jehoram	=	Joram	(Israel)	2Kgs 1:17; 3:1 – 8:15
Joram	=	Jehoram	(Judah)	2Kgs 8:16–24; 2Chr 21:1–20
Jehoahaz	=	Ahaziah	(Judah)	2Kgs 8:25–29; 2Chr 22:1–9
Jehoash	=	Joash	(Judah)	2Kgs 12; 2Chr 24
Joash	=	Jehoash	(Israel)	2Kgs 25:17–25; 2Chr 13:10 – 14:16
Azariah	=	Uzziah	(Judah)	2Kgs 14:21–22; 15:1–17; 2Chr 26
Joahaz	=	Jehoahaz	(Judah)	2Kgs 23:31–33; 2Chr 36:2–4
Jeconiah	=	Jehoiachin	(Judah)	2Kgs 24:8–37; 2Chr 36:9–10

The Bible Prophets

Year B.C.	EVENTS	PROPHET
1500		
1400	EXODUS	Moses
1300		
1200	JUDGES	
1100		Samuel
1000	Saul David Solomon Kingdom split	David
900		Elijah Elisha, Joel ?
800	KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH	Jonah Amos
700	Assyrian Captivity of Israel	Micah, Isaiah, Hosea Nahum, Zephaniah
600	Babylonian Captivity of Judah	Jeremiah, Habbakuk Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah Haggai, Zechariah
500		
400		Malachi
300		
200	Maccabees	
100		
0	Jesus born	Jesus

From "The Times", by Rob J. Hyndman

5. The Times of the Captivity

References scattered through the books of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther can be pieced together to obtain a fairly detailed picture of the captivity of Judah.

Once the times of the captivity was the playground of biblical critics, eagerly pointing out apparent discrepancies in the text. But now the authenticity of scripture is clear. Things that were once thought to be contradictions from copyist errors are now able to be reconciled due to an increased understanding of ancient calendar techniques. With the use of Mesopotamian data, often dates can be determined to the very day. God's word is once more vindicated—the critics are once more silenced!

A contradiction?

Critics have had a field day pointing out an apparent discrepancy in the date of the first attack by Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem. Daniel places the attack in third year of Jehoiakim (Dan 1:1), while Jeremiah places the same attack in Jehoiakim's fourth year (Jer 25:1,8–14; 46:2). However, Daniel and Jeremiah were simply using different calendars. Daniel used the calendar beginning with the month Tishri, while Jeremiah begins his year with Nisan. When this complication is allowed for, it is seen that both prophets are speaking of the same year, 605 B.C..

Such "inconsistencies" actually support our belief in the authenticity of scripture. Critics argue that Daniel was written by an unknown author 450 years after the Captivity. But why would a later writer introduce a statement that was known to conflict with other sections of scripture? Only a contemporary would assume his readers were familiar with both forms of dating and leave it to be understood.

Seventy years

There are two "70 year" prophecies concerning the times of the captivity. Both are given in Jer 25:11

This whole country will become a desolate wasteland and these nations will serve the king of Babylon 70 years.

See also Jer 29:10; 2Chr 36:21; Dan 9:2; Zec 1:12. Contrary to popular belief, there is no prophecy indicating the captivity itself would last seventy years.

From what point should we date the domination of Babylon over the surrounding nations? Although the capital of the Assyrian empire fell in 612 B.C., it wasn't until 609 B.C. that the Assyrian empire finally ended. Thus, Babylonian domination of the surrounding nations should be dated from this point. Seventy years later, in 539 B.C., the Babylonian empire fell to the Persian king, Cyrus. So 609–539 B.C. is the fulfilment of the 70 years “for Babylon”.

The desolation of Jerusalem must be dated from 586 B.C., the year Nebuchadnezzar ransacked and burned the city. Seventy years brings us to 516 B.C., the year the temple was completed. So 586–516 B.C. is the fulfilment of the 70 years “desolation of Jerusalem”; after all, the temple was the only important thing in Jerusalem.

These fulfilments are exact as we would expect. There is no “rough work” with the Almighty God.

The identity of Artaxerxes

Some have proposed that the “Artaxerxes” of Ezra and Nehemiah is a title rather than a name and should be identified with Darius I rather than the usual identification with Artaxerxes Longanimus.

The motivation for this change is due to:

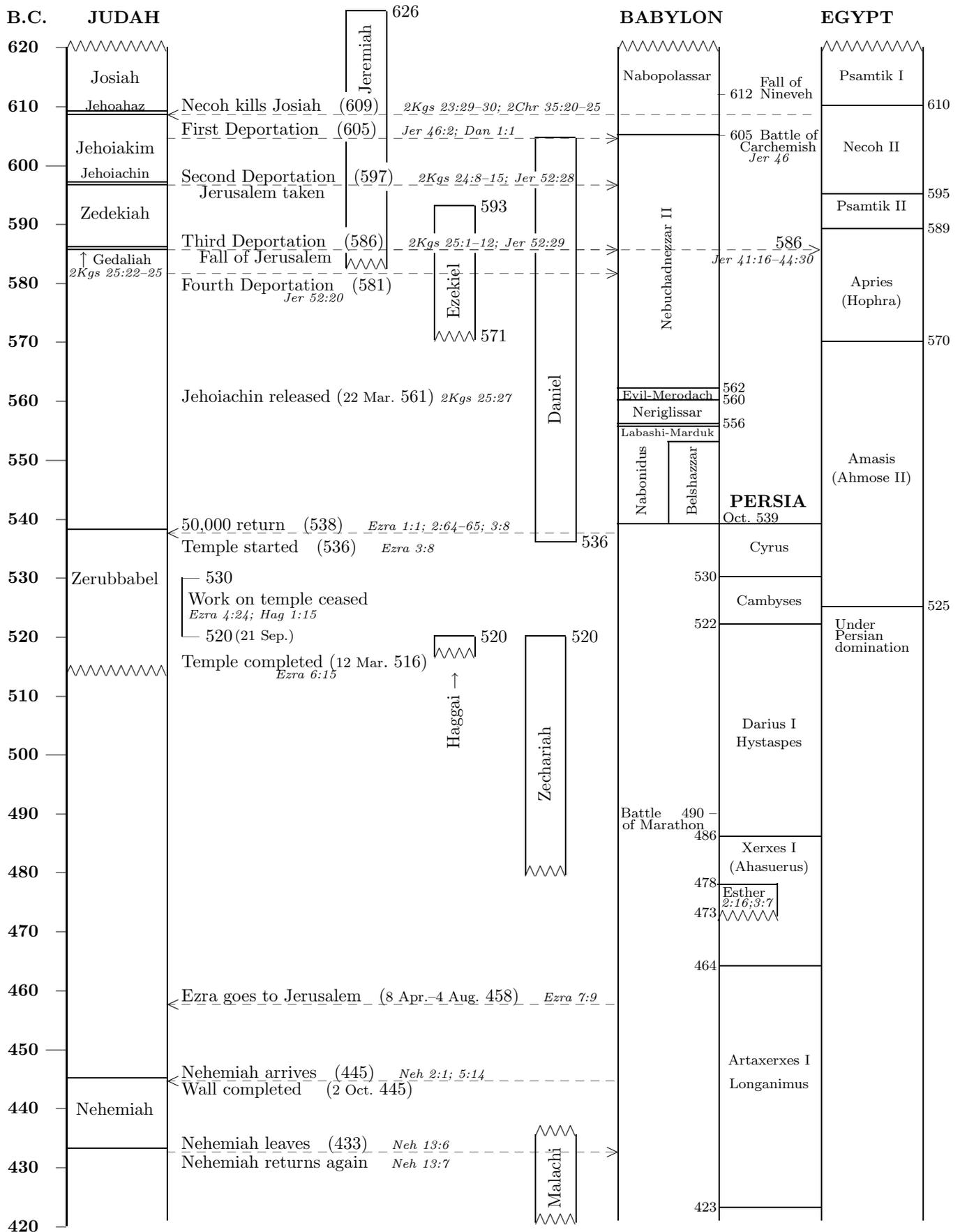
- a) The apparent gap of almost 60 years between Ezra 6 and 7.
- b) The number of names common to the list of priests and Levites who returned under Zerubbabel and the list of those who sealed the agreement and the list of those in the days of Joiakim (Neh 10 and 12). If the same people are named, they must have lived for over 120 years.
- c) The death of Seraiah in 586 B.C. (2Kgs 25:18–21). If Ezra was his son (Ezra 7:1), Ezra would have been over 140 years old at the dedication of the wall.

However, these ‘problems’ are easily solved. Time gaps occur frequently in scripture; the names in Neh.10 and 12 may be names of priestly families rather than individual priests; and Ezra could have been the descendant rather than the son of Seraiah.

In support of the more usual identification, it is doubtful if the name “Artaxerxes” may be read as a title here since it is frequently used to identify the time: “during the reign of Artaxerxes”. No one would identify the time by saying “during the reign of the king”. Also, the names ‘Artaxerxes’, ‘Darius’ and ‘Ahasuerus’ are all used in the space of 3 verses, clearly in reference to distinct kings, not vague titles that may apply to any Persian king (Ezra 4:5–7).

Finally, if Artaxerxes = Darius, the 70 weeks of Daniel’s prophecy would end before Christ was born, rather than extending to the time of Christ’s death in 30 B.C.. This final problem lends strong support to the traditional identification of Artaxerxes with Artaxerxes Longanimus.

The Times of the Captivity



The Last Days of Judah and Jerusalem

B.C.	JUDAH	Yr. of reign	NATIONS	Reference
612		28	Fall of Nineveh	<i>Nahum; Zep 2:13-15</i>
611		29		
610		30	Nabopolassar conquers Haran	
609	Battle of Megiddo; death of Josiah Jehoahaz king 3 months then taken to Egypt	31	Necoh comes to aid of Assyria	<i>2Kgs 23:29-30; 2Chr 35:20-25</i>
608	Necoh places Jehoiakim on throne Jeremiah threatened	1		<i>2Kgs 23:30-35; 2Chr 36:1-4; Jer 22:10-12; Eze 19:1-5</i>
607		2		<i>Jer 26</i>
606		3	Nebuchadnezzar fights Egyptians	
605	Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem (Jul.-Aug. 605) and makes Jehoiakim tributary	4	Nebuchadnezzar defeats Necoh in Battle of Carchemish (May-Jun. 605) Necoh retreats to Egypt	<i>Jer 46:2-12</i>
604	Jeremiah's speech and other activities	5	Nabopolassar dies (Aug. 605)	<i>Dan 1:1-2; 2Kgs 24:1,7</i>
603		6	Nebuchadnezzar's dream	<i>Jer 25; 36:1-8; 45</i>
602	Jeremiah's scroll burnt and rewritten (Dec. 604)	7		<i>Dan 2:1</i>
601		8		<i>Jer 36</i>
600	Jehoiakim rebels	9	Nebuchadnezzar fights Necoh	<i>2Kgs 24:1</i>
599		10		
598		11		
597	Jehoiakim dies during Babylonian campaign Jehoiachin king 3 months (18 Dec. 598-16 Mar. 597) then taken to Babylon with 10,000 others Zedekiah made king	1		<i>2Kgs 24:6; 2Chr 36:6; Jer 22:18-19; 36:30; Eze 19:9</i>
596	Jeremiah prophesies Jeremiah sends letter to Babylon	2		<i>2Kgs 24:8-16; 2Chr 36:9-10; Jer 29:1-2; 52:28</i>
595		3		<i>2Kgs 24:18</i>
594		4		<i>Jer 24; 27; 49:34-39</i>
593	International summit in Jerusalem Zedekiah visits Babylon	5		<i>Jer 29:1-3</i>
592	Haniah opposes Jeremiah and dies (Aug.-Oct. 593)	6	Ezekiel's first vision (31 Jul. 593)	<i>Jer 27:1-22; 28:1</i>
591		7	Ezekiel's vision of corrupted temple (17 Sep. 592)	<i>Jer 51:59</i>
590		8	Ezekiel's prophecy of Israel (14 Aug. 591)	<i>Jer 28:1-17; Eze 1:1</i>
589	Egypt incites Zedekiah to rebel	9		<i>Eze 8 - 11</i>
588	Nebuchadnezzar attacks Jerusalem (15 Jan. 588) Zedekiah's delegation	10	Ezekiel's wife dies Hophra comes to help Zedekiah	<i>Eze 20</i>
587	Jeremiah buys field Jeremiah thrown in cistern	11		<i>Eze 17:3-21</i>
586	Jerusalem taken (18 Jul. 586); temple burnt (Aug.) Gedaliah made governor and assassinated (Oct. 586)			<i>2Kgs 25:1; Jer 34:1-7; 39:1; 52:4</i>
585	Flight to Egypt			<i>Eze 24</i>
				<i>Jer 21:2-14; 37:5</i>
				<i>Jer 32:1-15</i>
				<i>Jer 38; Eze 26:1; 29:1; 30:20</i>
				<i>31:1</i>
				<i>2Kgs 25:4-9; Jer 39:1-7; 52:5-29</i>
				<i>Jer 40:7 - 41:15; 2Kgs 25:22-24</i>
				<i>Jer 41:16 - 44:30</i>

6. The Times of the Nations

Babylon

Babylon receives little mention in scripture until the eighth century B.C. when Merodach-Baladan was king. In fact he reigned twice, spending the time after each period as king in exile having fled from Sargon II, king of Assyria. It was probably during his second period (704 B.C.) when Merodach-Baladan sent his messenger and astronomers to Hezekiah. (2Kgs 20:12–19; 2Chr 32:31; Isa 39:1–8.)

Nabopolassar was the founder of the Second (New) Babylonian Empire. The dominance of Assyria was overthrown when the Babylonians and Medes joined forces at Nineveh in 612 B.C.. This relationship was greatly strengthened by the marriage of Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar II, with Cyaxares' (king of Medes) daughter, Amytis.

Under Nebuchadnezzar II, the Babylonians underwent a religious and cultural renaissance. The rest is history!

Assyria

Babylon's neighbour and rival was Assyria. The Assyrian empire grew slowly from about 1000 B.C. to its zenith around 700 B.C. before declining and finally ending in 609 B.C.. Because this period is almost identical to the time of the Kingdom of Israel (and Judah), Assyria played a major role in biblical history.

Many of the Assyrian kings are well-known to Bible readers. In particular, Shalmaneser IV attacked Samaria and died just before the city surrendered. His successor, Sargon II, was responsible for deporting the Israelites throughout his empire. Following Sargon came Sennacherib who is most famous for his threats against Jerusalem during the time of Hezekiah and the subsequent death of 185,000 of his army at the hand of the Lord.

Egypt

Joseph entered Egypt in 1678 B.C. (pp.13,15), four years before the Hyksos took control of the country. The Hyksos were largely a Semitic people who ruled Egypt from their capital in the Delta. They are held responsible for introducing the horse and chariot into Egypt. The fact that foreigners were ruling Egypt explains why Joseph, another foreigner, was able to rise to power as he did.

After the Hyksos were expelled from Egypt in 1565 B.C., the Egyptians regained control and established the "New Kingdom". Thus, "there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exo 1:8 RSV) and began to oppress Israel.

According to this chronology, Moses was brought up during the reigns of Tuthmosis I and II. It seems highly likely that the daughter of Pharaoh who adopted Moses was the famous Queen Hatshepsut (Exo 2:10). It was probably Tuthmosis III (reigning jointly with his step mother) who tried to kill Moses (Exo 2:15).

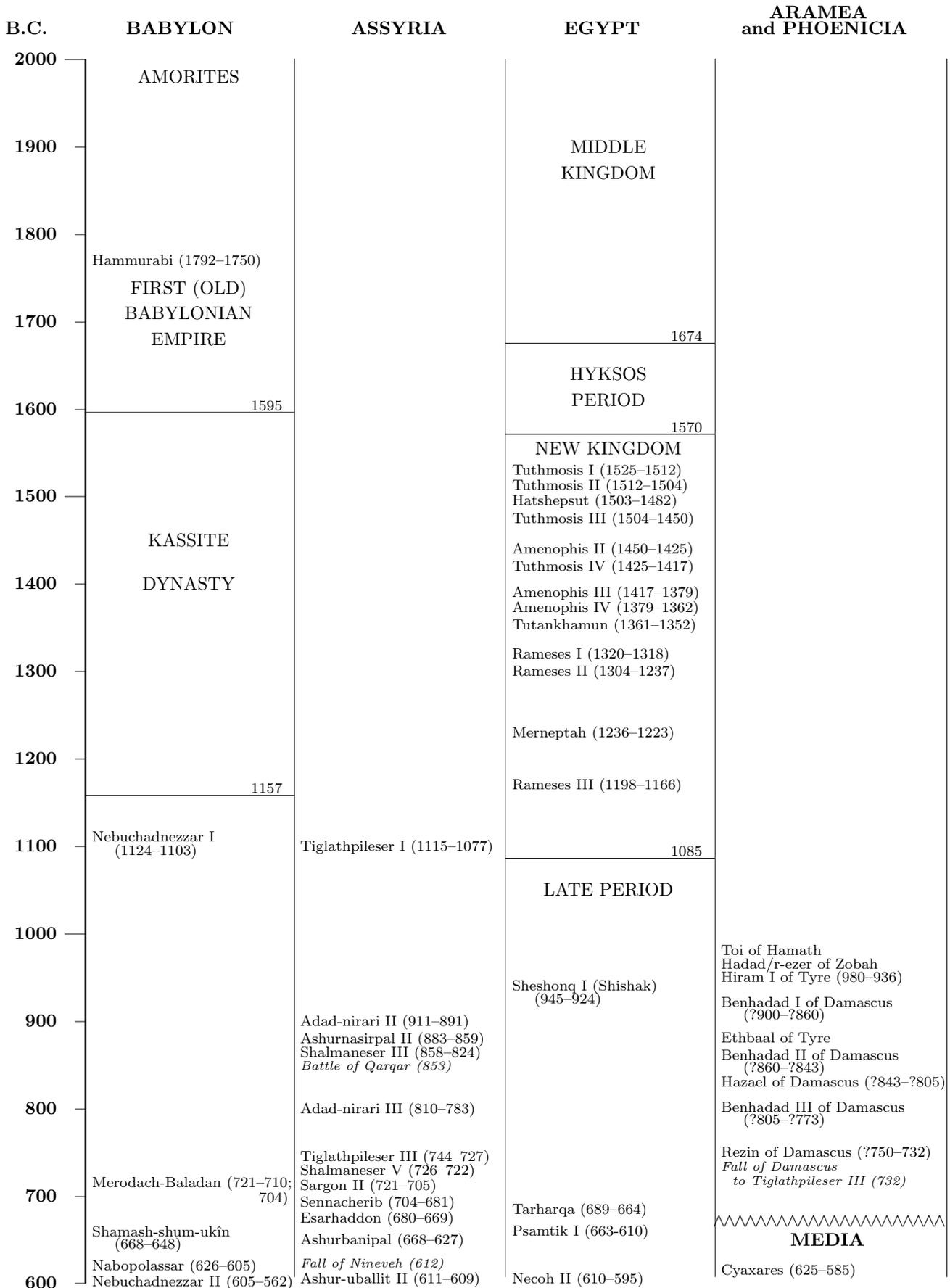
Tuthmosis III was the greatest military leader in Egyptian history and repeatedly led campaigns into Canaan and Syria. It may be that Moses was the general of his army as Josephus indicates (Jos Ant 2.5). Tuthmosis III was also a great builder and is known to have employed Semitic captives as brick layers (see Exo 5:6-19). In one inscription the taskmasters of these labourers are saying "The rod is in my hand; be not idle." This picture accords well with the biblical description of him oppressing Israel: "They put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour." (Exo 1:11)

A further piece of evidence that Tuthmosis III was the Pharaoh of the oppression is that he reigned for over 40 years. This is necessary since Moses returned to Egypt shortly after the death of the Pharaoh having been in Midian 40 years (Exo 2:23 - 3:10; Acts 7:30).

We should therefore expect a new Pharaoh to have begun to reign shortly before the Exodus. Our expectations are met in Amenophis II who began to reign in 1450 B.C., four years before the Exodus. So it was probably Amenophis II whose heart was hardened, who witnessed the mighty power of God in the plagues, and whose eldest son died in the plague of the first-born (Exo 12:29).

Again, archaeology provides circumstantial evidence for this identification. On the side of the Sphinx at Gizeh, the Dream Stela of Tuthmosis IV recounts a prophecy that the young Tuthmosis would one day be Pharaoh. If he was the first-born son and legal heir to the throne, such a prophecy would be obvious. But it rings true if his elder brother died in the tenth plague and Tuthmosis IV became Pharaoh in his place.

The Times of the Nations



Aramaea and Phoenicia

By Aramaea is meant the regions where the descendants of Aram settled; that is the area north east of Israel including the city of Damascus. Phoenicia was the narrow coast-land along the north eastern Mediterranean. It included the cities of Tyre and Sidon.

There are three kings of Damascus known to have had the name 'Benhadad'. From the dates of their reigns it can be deduced that the Benhadad mentioned in 1 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 16 is Benhadad I. The Benhadad, king of Aram, in 1 Kings 20 is Benhadad II, either a son or grandson of Benhadad I. Naaman was probably commander of the army of Benhadad II (2Kgs 5:1). Other references to Benhadad II are 2Kgs 6:8,24; 8:7-15. Hazael usurped the throne after murdering Benhadad II in 843 B.C. (2Kgs 8:7-15). He was succeeded by his son Benhadad III (2Kgs 13:3,24).

Rezin (not to be confused with Rezon in 1Kgs 11:23-25) was another king of Damascus who was constantly at war against Judah. He was finally killed by Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria, when Damascus was overthrown in 732 B.C. (2Kgs 15:37; 16:5-9; 2Chr 28:5; Isa 7:1-9).

7. The Times Between the Testaments

According to the prophet Amos, there would be a time of “famine of hearing the words of the Lord.” (Amos 8:11), and in Micah we read “the sun will set for the prophets . . . night will come over you, without visions.” (Mic 3:6).

This is the 400 years of silence from Malachi to Christ. It was a turbulent time in Jewish history, a time that shaped the world of the New Testament.

Persian period (539–332 B.C.)

After Nehemiah, there was about 100 years where Persia continued to control Judah. However, they did not interfere with the Jews and allowed them to carry on their worship and ritual. The high priest was the ruler of Judah during this time and was responsible to the Jewish government.

Hellenistic period (332–166 B.C.)

As prophesied by Daniel (Dan 8:1–8,21–22; 11:3–4), the Persians were overthrown by the great king of Greece, Alexander. In 334–333 B.C. the Persian armies were defeated at Granicus and Issus, and Alexander quickly established his empire. He too was considerate of Jewish religion to the point of granting them exemption from taxes during a sabbath year. At Alexander’s death (323 B.C.), his empire was divided among his four generals. Two of them founded dynasties the Ptolemies in Egypt (the king of the south in Dan 11) and the Seleucids in Syria (the king of the north in Dan 11).

The Ptolemies ruled Judah from 320 to 198 B.C.. Again, the Jews had the privilege of religious freedom. But in 198 B.C., the Seleucids took control. When Antiochus IV Epiphanes became ruler, he attempted to eradicate Jewish religion. He sought to destroy all copies of the Torah and killed anyone discovered in possession of such copies; he suppressed all observances of Jewish law; he made circumcision an offence punishable by death; he tortured Jews to force them to renounce their religion; he required offerings to the Greek god Zeus and he erected a statue of Zeus and sacrificed a pig in the Jewish temple. This was the first “abomination that causes desolation” (Dan 11:31).

Naturally, the Jews were outraged. In 167 B.C. they revolted, led by Judas the Maccabee (Dan 11:32). He re-conquered Jerusalem in 165 B.C. and purified and re-dedicated the temple. This was the origin of the Feast of Dedication (Jn 10:22).

Hasmonean period (166–63 B.C.)

The Hasmonean dynasty founded by Judas Maccabaeus followed the path all revolutions seem to take and soon became an aristocratic regime. Even orthodox Jews were out of favour and Pharisees were persecuted.

The Hasmonean period ended in 63 B.C when Pompey, the Roman general, took Jerusalem. The temple area was besieged for three months and priests were massacred as they performed their duties. The Jews would hate their Roman oppressors from this time forward.

Roman period (63 B.C. . . .)

Rome appointed princes and procurators to govern the provinces of Palestine. At the time of Christ's birth, Herod the Great was ruler of all Palestine.

The Times Between the Testaments

B.C.	JUDAEA	PERSIA	GREECE
420		Darius II Nothus (423-404)	<i>Peloponnesian Wars (431-404)</i> Socrates (470-399) <i>Fall of Athens; Sparta rules (404)</i>
400	Under Persian rule	Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-359)	Plato (428-348)
380			Aristotle (384-322)
360		Artaxerxes III Ochus (359-338)	
340		Arses (338-335) Darius III Codomannus (335-331) <i>Persian empire destroyed by Alexander (332)</i>	<i>Philip II of Macedon defeats Greeks (338)</i> Alexander the Great (336-323) Establishment of GREEK EMPIRE
320	<i>Ptolemy I Soter conquers Jerusalem (320)</i>		SYRIA
300	Under Egyptian rule		Seleucus I Nicator (305-281)
280			Antiochus I Soter (281-261)
260			Antiochus II Theos (261-246)
240			Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226/5)
220			Seleucus III Soter (226/5-223) Antiochus III Megas (223-187) ('the Great')
200	<i>Antiochus defeats Egypt (198)</i> Under Syrian rule		Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204)
180	<i>Judaism prohibited under Antiochus IV</i>		Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180)
160	<i>Maccabean revolt (167)</i> Judas Maccabaeus (166-160) Jonathan Maccabaeus (160-143)		Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145)
140	Simon Thassis (142-134) John Hyrcanus (134-104)		Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (restored) (145-116)
120			Cleopatra III & Ptolemy IX Soter II (116-107)
100	Aristobulus I (104-103) Alexander Jannaeus (103-76)		Cleopatra III & Ptolemy X Alexander I (107-101) Ptolemy X Alexander I & Cleopatra Berenice (101-88) Ptolemy IX Soter II (88-81) Cleopatra Berenice (80) & Ptolemy XI Alexander II
80	Alexandra Salome (76-67) Aristobulus II (67-63)		
60	<i>Pompey establishes Roman protectorate (63)</i> Hyrcanus II (63-40)		<i>End of Seleucid Dynasty (63)</i> <i>Syria made a Roman province</i>
40	<i>Parthians conquer Jerusalem (40-37)</i> Herod the Great (37-4)		
20	<i>Herod's temple begun (20)</i>		<i>Egypt made a Roman province (30)</i>
0	<i>Jesus born (6/5)</i> <i>Archelaus succeeds Herod (4)</i>		

The Times of the New Testament

YEAR	EVENTS	BOOKS
5 BC	Jesus born (6) <i>Mt 1:18-25; Lk 2:1-40</i> Visit by the wise men; escape to Egypt (5) <i>Mt 2:1-18</i> Return to Nazareth (3) <i>Mt 2:19-23</i>	
1 BC		
AD 1		
AD 5		
AD 10	Jesus visits the temple (8) <i>Lk 2:41-52</i>	
AD 15		
AD 20	Caiaphas high priest (18-36)	
AD 25	Jesus begins his ministry (Oct. 26)	Matthew Mark Luke John
AD 30	Jesus crucified and resurrected (April 30) Pentecost (30) <i>Acts 2</i> Paul converted (33) <i>Acts 9:1-22</i>	
AD 35	Paul in Arabia and Damascus (33-36) <i>Acts 9:23-25; Gal 1:17-18</i>	Acts
AD 40		
AD 45	James the apostle beheaded (44) <i>Acts 12:1-2</i> Paul's first journey (46-48) <i>Acts 13:2 - 14:28</i>	James ?
AD 50	Jerusalem council (50) <i>Acts 15:2-29</i> Paul's second journey (50-52) <i>Acts 15:40 - 18:23</i>	Galatians 1 & 2 Thessalonians
AD 55	Paul's third journey (53-58) <i>Acts 18:23 - 21:17</i>	1 & 2 Corinthians Romans
AD 60	Paul imprisoned in Jerusalem and Caesarea (58-60) Paul imprisoned in Rome (61-63) James the Lord's brother stoned (62)	Philippians Ephesians, Colossians Philemon
AD 65	Jewish revolt against Rome (66) Jerusalem Christians flee Paul beheaded; Peter crucified (67/68)	1 Timothy, Titus Hebrews, 1 Peter 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Jude
AD 70	Jerusalem destroyed (14 Apr. - 8 Sep. 70)	
AD 75	Fall of Masada (73)	
AD 80		
AD 85	Persecution under Domitian (81-96)	1, 2 & 3 John ?
AD 90	John exiled on Patmos (90-96) <i>Rev 1:9</i>	
AD 95	Revelation received (95/96)	Revelation

8. The Times of the New Testament

Because of the scarcity of references in the New Testament to contemporary events or rulers, it is impossible to determine an accurate chronology. Hence, the dates presented here (and in any New Testament chronology) are mostly approximate. However they are probably no more than a year or two out.

B.C. and A.D. dates

A complicating feature in time periods spanning from B.C. to A.D. dates is the absence of the year 0. Apparently a Scythian monk, Dionysius Exiguus, forgot to include the year 0 between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1, when he was instructed to develop a new calendar in the 6th century A.D.. This anomaly must be accounted for when calculating time periods that begin B.C. and finish A.D..

This hapless monk also overlooked some years of the Roman emperor, Augustus. Thus, the birth of Jesus is actually dated B.C.!

The 'Seventy Weeks' prophecy of Daniel

The Seventy Weeks prophecy (Dan 9:24–27) has had a variety of interpretations, some of ingenious complexity. However, while the details are debated, everyone agrees it concerns a period of $70 \times 7 = 490$ years and is a prophecy about the Messiah.

The beginning of the time was "from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." (Dan 9:25) There are four decrees from Persia concerning Israel that are recorded in scripture:

- | | | |
|----------|--------------|--|
| 538 B.C. | Ezra 1:1–4 | concerning the rebuilding of the temple. |
| 520 B.C. | Ezra 6:1–12 | concerning the rebuilding of the temple. |
| 458 B.C. | Ezra 7:11–26 | concerning the restoration of worship in the temple and the authority of Ezra. |
| 445 B.C. | Neh 2:1–9 | concerning Nehemiah's safe travel and the rebuilding of the city. |

The last of these is not really suitable as it was a letter rather than a formal 'decree'. It will be seen that the third of these is the one intended.

There were to be “seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens’ ” until “Messiah the Prince” (Dan 9:25 NIV/KJV). Taking the ‘sevens’ to be seven year periods, this gives $7 \times 7 + 62 \times 7 = 483$ years from the decree to the coming of Messiah. Using the four ‘decrees’ above, this yields the dates 55 B.C., 37 B.C., A.D. 26 and A.D. 39 for the coming of Messiah (allowing for the absence of the year 0). Only the third of these dates can possibly fall within the life of Jesus and so the third decree is taken to be the one referred to in Daniel.

The fact that this decree does not mention the rebuilding of the city is interesting. The decree concerns the restoration of the temple with gold and silver and the purchase of sacrifices to restore worship. It seems that the restoration of Jerusalem means the restoration of worship in Jerusalem, in the same way that the destruction of Jerusalem meant the destruction of the temple in the seventy years prophecies (p.21).

The first seven ‘sevens’ or 49 years seems to refer to the period of restoration of Jerusalem. “It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.” (Dan 9:25) So the seven ‘sevens’ are the years 458 to 409 B.C. when Ezra and Nehemiah faced great opposition to their building program.

The next sixty-two ‘sevens’ brings us to the coming of Messiah in A.D. 26. This probably refers to the beginning of his ministry.

“After the sixty-two ‘sevens’, the Anointed One [= Messiah] will be cut off . . . He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’. In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.” (Dan 9:26–27) The most likely interpretation of these cryptic verses seems to be that the Messiah would be killed at the middle of the final ‘seven’; that is he was “cut off” in A.D. 30, three and a half years after he began his ministry.

Since Jesus died in April (= Nisan, the time of Passover), it seems probable that he began his ministry in October (= Tishri) exactly three and a half years earlier.

Again, there is no approximation necessary with God’s time periods. Nor is there need to recourse to such strange abstractions as the “lunar calendar”. God does not reveal things to the “wise and learned” but to “little children”.

What the second half of the seventieth week concerns is open to conjecture. It would appear that it is still future so that there is a large time gap between the crucifixion and this final three and a half year period. This is quite reasonable as many of the prophecies in Daniel contain a large gap in their fulfilment.

The date of Jesus' birth

There are a number of facts that help establish when Jesus was born:

- a) Herod the Great was still alive (Mt 2:1). Herod died in March 4 B.C., so that Jesus must have been born earlier than this. Furthermore, between the time of Jesus' birth and Herod's death, a number of events occurred: Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem and Jerusalem for at least 41 days (Lk 2:22; Lev 12:3-4); the wise men visited them—probably in Bethlehem (Mt 2:9-12); they escaped to Egypt until Herod died (Mt 2:13-23). All of this must have taken several months at least. It may have taken up to two years (Mt 2:7,16). Therefore, at the latest, Jesus was born in 5 B.C..
- b) Jesus began his ministry in late A.D. 26 (see below). This was when he was "about 30 years old" (Lk 3:23). So he was born in about 6/5 B.C. (allowing for the absence of year 0).
- c) At the time of Jesus' birth there was "the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria." (Lk 2:2) Some have thought that this reference should establish the date of Jesus' birth. However, Quirinius is known to have held this office in A.D. 6-9. Luke's reference simply leads to the conclusion that he held it at an earlier date as well. A census is associated with each of his terms (see Acts 5:37); this is implied by the words "first census".

From these facts, it can be deduced that Jesus was born in 6/5 B.C.. From point 1, late 6 B.C. is more probable.

The date of Jesus' ministry

The Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 indicates the beginning of Jesus ministry was October A.D. 26 (see p.34). A similar date can be deduced from Luke 3:1 which records that John began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Although Tiberius didn't begin to reign until A.D. 14, he had authority in the provinces in A.D. 11. Using the earlier date, John began to preach in A.D. 25 and Jesus shortly after this.

Further evidence for this comes in the comment of the Jews (concerning Herod's temple) at the beginning of Jesus' ministry: "It has taken forty six years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days" (Jn 2:20). Herod's temple was begun in 20 B.C., placing this event in A.D. 27. The temple was finally completed in A.D. 64, just six years before its destruction by the Romans. So all the evidence indicates that Jesus began his ministry in late A.D. 26.

Details of the chronology of Jesus' ministry are given in the following chapter.

The Times of the New Testament

		ROME	PALESTINE	
5 BC	Jesus born (6/5) <i>Mt 1:18-25; Lk 2:1-40</i> Visit by the wise men; escape to Egypt (5) <i>Mt 2:1-18</i> Return to Nazareth (3) <i>Mt 2:19-23</i>	Augustus (27 BC – AD 14)	Herod the Great king of Judea (37-4 BC)	
1 BC			Archelaus Ethnarch of Judea (4 BC – AD 6)	
AD 1				
AD 5			Herod Philip Tetrarch of Ituraea (4 BC – AD 34)	
AD 10	Jesus visits the temple (8) <i>Lk 2:41-52</i>		Herod Antipas Tetrarch of Galilee (4 BC – AD 39)	
AD 15		Tiberius (14-37)		
AD 20	Caiaphas high priest (18-36)			
AD 25				
AD 25	Jesus begins his ministry (Oct. 26)		Pontius Pilate Roman procurator (26-36)	} Chapter 9
AD 30	Jesus crucified and resurrected (April 30) Pentecost (30) <i>Acts 2</i> Paul converted (33) <i>Acts 9:1-22</i>			
AD 35	Paul in Arabia and Damascus (33-36) <i>Acts 9:23-25; Gal 1:17-18</i>			} Chapter 10
AD 35		Caligula (37-41)		
AD 40				
AD 40		Claudius (41-54)	Herod Agrippa I king of Judea (41-44)	
AD 45	James the apostle beheaded (44) <i>Acts 12:1-2</i> Paul's first journey (46-48) <i>Acts 13:2 - 14:28</i>			
AD 50	Jerusalem council (50) <i>Acts 15:2-29</i> Paul's second journey (50-52) <i>Acts 15:40 - 18:23</i>	<i>Jews expelled from Rome (49)</i>	Herod Agrippa II Tetrarch of Nth. Territory (50-93)	
AD 55	Paul's third journey (53-58) <i>Acts 18:23 - 21:17</i>	Nero (54-68)	Felix (52-60) Roman procurator	
AD 55	Paul imprisoned (58-63)			
AD 60	James the Lord's brother stoned (62)		Festus (60-62) Roman procurator	
AD 65	Jewish revolt against Rome (66) Jerusalem Christians flee Paul beheaded; Peter crucified (67/68)	<i>Fire of Rome (64)</i>		
AD 70	Jerusalem destroyed (14 Apr. – 8 Sep. 70)	Galba, Otho, Vitellius (68/9) Vespasian (69-79)		
AD 75	Fall of Masada (73)			
AD 80		Titus (79-81) Domitian (81-96)		
AD 85	Persecution under Domitian (81-96)			
AD 90	John exiled on Patmos (90-96) <i>Rev 1:9</i>			
AD 95	Revelation received (95/96)			

The life of Paul

The chronology of Paul's life is given in more detail in Chapter 10. Notes on the time from A.D. 30 to 70 are also contained there.

Fall of Jerusalem

According to Josephus, James (the Lord's brother) was stoned in A.D. 62. Four years later in 66, bad government in Judea led to a Jewish revolt. The Christians of Jerusalem, remembering the Olivet prophecy, fled to Pella east of the Jordan. After four years of war, Jerusalem fell as prophesied in A.D. 70.

The date of the Revelation

John was in exile on the island of Patmos when he received the Revelation (Rev 1:9). Therefore, it must have been written during a time when Christians were persecuted. The two periods that are most likely are A.D. 67/68 under Nero or A.D. 95/96 under Domitian. The latter date is supported by the early church historians, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius.

9. The Times of Jesus

Jesus began his ministry in late A.D. 26 (probably October) and was crucified $3\frac{1}{2}$ years later in April A.D. 30 (see p.34). We know of many things that he did during that time, but it is difficult to positively date many of them.

Feasts during the ministry of Jesus

The key to the chronology of Jesus' ministry is the series of feasts mentioned in the gospel of John. Since we know when the feasts took place under the law of Moses, it is possible to fix the dates of passages that refer to them. Other events can be slotted in accordingly.

John records three Passovers in his gospel (Jn 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). He also mentions a feast in 5:1 but doesn't name it. This unnamed feast was almost certainly one of the three great feasts: Passover, Pentecost or Tabernacles. The first of these is most likely since several ancient manuscripts refer to it as "*the* feast of the Jews". In any case, the three explicit Passovers of John cannot be consecutive as the other gospels require an extra year between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4. For example, Mark 6:39 indicates springtime (April according to Jn 6:4), but Mark 2:23 points to the harvest season (May) of the previous year.

The Passovers enable us to positively fix four points in Jesus' ministry. Two other feasts are also mentioned by John: the Feast of Tabernacles in October A.D. 29 (Jn 7:2); and the Feast of Dedication in late December A.D. 29 (Jn 10:22). The latter feast commemorated the dedication of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus in December 165 B.C..

Harvest?

One passage that has caused many commentators to form an incorrect chronology is John 4:35: "Four months and then the harvest." If this reference to harvest is taken literally, the time is December and the unnamed feast in John 5:1 must be Purim. However, Jesus said that the fields were already ripe for harvest! (Jn 4:35) If this latter comment is literal, the month would be May and the feast of John 5:1 would be the Passover of the following year.

The question is: which of the statements refers to the literal harvest? It seems more likely that the second statement is literal for the following reasons:

- a) The previous chapter took place in April, the time of Passover (Jn 2:23). It would seem more likely that there was a gap of one month rather than eight months between John 3 and 4.
- b) It seems highly unlikely that Jesus would journey to Jerusalem to take part in the frivolous celebrations at Purim. On the other hand, we know he went to Jerusalem for three other Passovers during his ministry.

Probably, the phrase “four months and then harvest” was a proverb meaning it is best to leave four months between sowing and harvest. Jesus was using the well-known proverb and the ripened fields about him to teach that we should always be ready to ‘harvest’ those that are called.

The last week

The timing and sequence of events in the last week of Jesus’ mortal life is very uncertain with nearly as many attempted chronologies as commentators. The one fixed time is the resurrection which occurred “on the first day of the week” before dawn (Lk 24:1; Mk 16:2–3); that is, early Sunday morning. But the day of Jesus’ death and the length of time he was in the tomb are the subjects of heated debates.

The traditional view is that he died on Friday although others argue that he died on Thursday and still others place the crucifixion on Wednesday. Several statements need to be considered in this context, some of which occur more than once:

“they will kill him and after three days he will rise” Mk 9:31

“he must be killed and on the third day raised to life” Lk 9:22

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Mt 12:40

The disciples on the road to Emmaus said: “today is the third day since these things were done.” Lk 24:21

To the Western mind, the last two of these passages seem irreconcilable. However, it must be remembered that Jews reckoned time periods inclusively (cf. 1Kgs 22:1–2; 2Kgs 18:9–10). That is, any part of a day is counted as a ‘day’. So the “three days” includes the crucifixion day. Similarly the “three nights” must include the night during which he was raised. It should also be noted, that Jews began their day at 6 p.m.. Using this information, it seems most likely that Jesus died on Thursday, as shown below. There seems no way to reconcile “three days and three nights” with the traditional Friday crucifixion or the idea of a Wednesday crucifixion.

Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
Night	Day	Night	Day	Night	Day	Night	Day
	←	Three days and three nights				→	

The phrase “*after* three days he will rise” also implies a Thursday crucifixion, again counting the crucifixion day. The statement of the disciples on the road to Emmaus specifically refers to days “*since*” the crucifixion. So Friday would be the ‘first’ day and Sunday the ‘third day’. The phrase “on the third day raised” clearly refers to the same days. Thus, the four passages can only be understood harmoniously if Jesus died on Thursday afternoon and was raised in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Another important factor to consider is the number of sabbath days that occurred during that week. The day after the Passover lamb was killed was always a special sabbath (Num 28:16–17). So if the Passover fell on a Thursday, there was a special sabbath on Friday (Jn 19:31) followed by the usual Saturday sabbath.

Luke indicates (Lk 23:55 – 24:1) that the women accompanying Jesus were kept from properly preparing his body for burial because of the sabbath day following his death. Yet he clearly says that they went to the tomb with the spices “on the first day of the week”; that is, two days after his death. Thus, it seems that they were kept from going to the tomb until the first non-sabbath day, Sunday. Then as soon as the sabbaths were over, on Saturday evening, they bought spices and prepared them during the evening. Then, rising before dawn on Sunday morning, they went to the tomb only to find it empty.

It should be noted that this passage wouldn’t make sense if Jesus died on Wednesday. In that case, Thursday would have been a sabbath and Friday an ordinary day. Yet the women did not go to the tomb until Sunday. The usual explanation is that they spent Friday “buying and preparing spices” (Mk 16:1). Then they rested again on the Saturday sabbath before they finally went to the tomb on Sunday, four days after the crucifixion. This seems incongruous given the haste in which they went to the tomb on Sunday morning. If they were in such a hurry to go to the tomb, why didn’t they go on Friday? It wouldn’t take all day to prepare spices.

The Times of Jesus

A.D.		Matt.	Mark	Luke	John	
26	Preaching of John in Bethany of Perea <i>Jn 1:28</i>	<i>3:1-12</i>	<i>1:2-8</i>	<i>3:1-18</i>		
	Jesus' baptism (Oct.) Temptation in the wilderness	<i>3:13-17</i> <i>4:1-11</i>	<i>1:9-11</i> <i>1:12-13</i>	<i>3:21-23</i> <i>4:1-13</i>		
27	Witness of John First disciples called Wedding at Cana, then to Capernaum				<i>1:15-37</i> <i>1:38-51</i> <i>2:1-12</i>	
	Trip to Jerusalem; first cleansing of temple (April) Teaches Nicodemus Preaches in Judea				<i>2:13-22</i> <i>3:1-21</i> <i>3:22 - 4:3</i>	
28	Leaves Judea for Galilee; talks to Samaritan woman First tour of Galilee; heals nobleman's son in Cana	<i>4:12</i>	<i>1:14</i> <i>1:15</i>	<i>4:14</i> <i>4:14-15</i>	<i>4:3-42</i> <i>4:43-54</i>	
	Moves to Capernaum to live; teaches in synagogue Call of 4 fishermen Day of miracles	<i>4:13-17</i> <i>4:18-22</i> <i>8:14-17</i>	<i>1:16-20</i> <i>1:21-34</i>	<i>4:31-32</i> <i>5:1-11</i> <i>4:33-41</i>		
	Second tour of Galilee; Leper cleansed Return to Capernaum; paralytic forgiven and healed Matthew (Levi) called	<i>4:23-25</i> <i>8:2-4</i> <i>9:2-8</i> <i>9:9-13</i>	<i>1:35-39</i> <i>1:40-45</i> <i>2:1-12</i> <i>2:13-17</i>	<i>4:42-44</i> <i>5:12-16</i> <i>5:17-26</i> <i>5:27-32</i>		
	Trip to Jerusalem for Passover (April) Sabbath controversy at Capernaum Healing and preaching in Galilee 12 apostles chosen Sermon on the mount Centurion's servant healed; widow's son raised John sends his disciples Anointed by sinful woman in Capernaum Third tour of Galilee; two active days in Galilee and Decapolis	<i>12:1-14</i> <i>12:15-21</i> <i>5:1 - 7:29</i> <i>8:5-13</i> <i>11:2-19</i> <i>12:22-13:52</i> <i>8:18-34</i> <i>9:18-34</i>	<i>2:23 - 3:6</i> <i>3:7-12</i> <i>3:13-19</i> <i>6:1-11</i> <i>3:7-12</i> <i>3:13-19</i> <i>3:20 - 5:43</i>	<i>6:1-11</i> <i>6:12-16</i> <i>6:17-49</i> <i>7:1-17</i> <i>7:18-35</i> <i>7:36-50</i> <i>8:1-3</i> <i>11:14-32</i> <i>8:19-56</i>	<i>5:1-47</i>	
	In synagogue at Nazareth Fourth tour of Galilee; 12 sent out	<i>13:53-58</i> <i>9:25-10:42</i>	<i>6:1-6</i> <i>6:6-13</i>	<i>4:16-30</i> <i>9:1-6</i>		
	Death of John the Baptist at Machaerus Apostles return; 5000 fed near Bethsaida; walks on sea (April) Speaks in synagogue at Capernaum Debate about defilement Retires to Tyre and Sidon; talks to Canaanite woman Visit to Decapolis; miracles; 4000 fed In Bethsaida: leaven of Pharisees; blind man Peter's confession and rebuke near Caesarea Philippi Transfiguration; epileptic boy	<i>14:1-12</i> <i>14:13-33</i> <i>15:1-20</i> <i>15:21-28</i> <i>15:29-39</i> <i>16:5-12</i> <i>16:13-28</i> <i>17:1-21</i>	<i>6:14-29</i> <i>6:30-53</i> <i>7:1-23</i> <i>7:24-30</i> <i>7:32 - 8:9</i> <i>8:14-26</i> <i>8:27-38</i> <i>9:1-29</i>	<i>9:7-9</i> <i>9:10-17</i> <i>9:18-27</i> <i>9:28-43</i>	<i>6:1-21</i> <i>6:22-71</i>	
	Trip to Jerusalem for Feast of Tabernacles (Oct.) Activities in Jerusalem Activities in Capernaum 70 sent out; many parables; visits Mary and Martha In Jerusalem for Feast of Dedication (late Dec.) Lazarus raised in Bethany; Jesus retires to Ephraim	<i>17:24-18:35</i>	<i>9:33-50</i>	<i>7:1-52</i> <i>8:1-10:21</i> <i>9:46-50</i> <i>10:1-17:19</i>		
	30	Final journey to Jerusalem; teaches near Samaria Teaches east of Jordan and near Jericho The last week in Jerusalem and Bethany (early April) Appears to 11 apostles in Jerusalem and Galilee Jesus ascends to his Father from Mt. of Olives Pentecost (May)	<i>19:1-20:34</i> <i>21:1-28:15</i> <i>28:16-20</i>	<i>10:1-52</i> <i>11:1 - 16:18</i> <i>16:19-20</i>	<i>17:11-18:14</i> <i>18:15-19:10</i> <i>19:29-24:43</i> <i>24:44-53</i>	<i>10:22-39</i> <i>11:1-54</i> <i>12:1-20:25</i> <i>20:26-21:25</i>

The Last Week of Jesus' Life

Nisan, A.D. 30	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John
6 pm —	Jesus arrives at Bethany			
				12:1
Monday 11	Anointed by Mary			
	26:6-13	14:3-9		12:2-8
6 pm —	Spends night at Bethany			
Tuesday 12	Jews come to see Jesus and Lazarus			
				12:9-11
6 pm —	Entry into Jerusalem			
	21:1-11	11:1-10	19:28-44	12:12-19
Tuesday 12	Spends night at Bethany			
		11:11		
6 pm —	Goes into Jerusalem; curses figtree			
	21:18-19	11:12-14		
Tuesday 12	Second cleansing of the temple			
	21:12-13	11:15-18	19:45-48	
6 pm —	Teaches in temple			
	21:14-16			
Wednesday 13	Spends night at Bethany			
	21:17	11:19		
6 pm —	Figtree withered			
	21:20-22	11:20-26		
Wednesday 13	Authority questioned; teaches in temple			
	21:23-22:14	11:27-12:12	20:1-19	
6 pm —	Challenged on paying taxes to Caesar			
	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
Wednesday 13	More questions from the Sadducees and Pharisees			
	22:23-45	12:18-37	20:27-44	
6 pm —	Widow's offering; Jesus denounces Scribes and Pharisees			
	23:1-39	12:38-44	20:45-21:4	
Wednesday 13	They plot against him; Greeks ask to see Jesus			
	26:1-4, 14-16	14:1, 2, 10, 11	22:1-6	12:20-36
6 pm —	Olivet prophecy			
	24:1-25:46	13:1-37	21:5-36	
Wednesday 13	Last supper (9pm)			
	26:17-35	14:12-31	22:7-38	13:1-17:26
6 pm —	In garden of Gethsemane			
	26:36-46	14:32-42	22:39-46	18:1
Wednesday 13	Jesus arrested (12 midnight)			
	26:47-56	14:43-51	22:47-53	18:2-11
6 pm —	Tried by Annas and Caiaphas (3am)			
	26:57-27:1	14:52-15:1	22:54-71	18:12-27
Thursday 14	Judas suicides; Jesus before Herod and Pilate (6am)			
	27:2-31	15:1-20	23:1-25	18:28-19:16
6 pm —	Crucified (9am)			
	27:32-44	15:21-32	23:26-43	19:17-27
Thursday 14	Darkness (12 noon)			
	27:45	15:33	23:44-45	
6 pm —	Died (3pm)			
	27:46-56	15:34-41	23:45-49	19:28-37
Thursday 14	Buried (before 6pm)			
	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
Friday 15	Passover eaten (9pm)			
Friday 15	Special Passover Sabbath			
6 pm —	Guard of soldiers posted on tomb			
	27:62-66			
Saturday 16	Weekly Sabbath			
6 pm —	Women buy and prepare spices			
		16:1		
Sunday 17	Resurrection			
	28:1-10	16:2-11	24:1-12	20:1-18
6 pm —	Mary Magdalene and others go to tomb; appears to Mary			
	28:11-15			
Sunday 17	On the road to Emmaus			
		16:12-13	24:13-32	
6 pm —	Appears to Peter in Jerusalem			
			24:34	
Sunday 17	Appears to some of the disciples in the upper room			
		16:14	24:36-48	20:19-25

Passover lamb

The Jewish calendar is used here to highlight the fact that Jesus was the true Passover lamb. He arrived in Bethany on 10 Nisan, the day the Jews were selecting their lambs (Exo 12:3; Jn 12:1,12); he died at 3 p.m. on 14 Nisan at the same time as the Jews were killing their lambs (Exo 12:6; Lev 23:5). According to our modern calendars, this means Jesus died on 6 April A.D. 30 and rose on 9 April.

This, of course, means that the Last Supper was not a true Passover meal. Jesus died as the Passover lambs were being slain, so any meal prior to that could not be a true Passover. Besides which, during his trial we are told the Jews had not yet eaten Passover (Jn 18:28). Further evidence for this is the description of the crucifixion day as the "day of Preparation" (Jn 19:31); that is, the day in preparation for the Passover meal and associated sabbath.

It seems that Jesus called the Last Supper a "Passover" to emphasise the fact that this was the New Passover and he was the new Passover lamb. No longer would they celebrate deliverance from Egypt through Moses, but deliverance from sin through Jesus. There is a difficulty here. Prior to the Last Supper, Jesus told his disciples to go and prepare the 'Passover' "on the day when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb" (Mk 14:12). However, it is quite possible that this occurred after 6 p.m. and so, legally, on the same day as the crucifixion (although in our Western sense, on the day before).

There is some extra-biblical support for this interpretation. Jewish tradition as early as the second century A.D. says that "Jesus was hanged on Passover eve". Similarly, for the first 300 years after the apostles, all the Christian writers say that the Last Supper was not a Jewish Passover.

Feast of Unleavened Bread

Under the law, the Feast of Unleavened Bread began the day after the Passover lambs were killed (Lev 23:4-7). So, in the year of Jesus death, the feast would have begun on Friday. However, it appears that in New Testament times, the day the lambs were killed was called "the day of Unleavened Bread" (Lk 22:7). Accordingly, the whole period from that day on was called "the feast of Unleavened Bread" (Mk 14:12; Mt 26:17) even though the feast did not legally begin until the following day.

10. The Times of Paul

Paul's conversion

Three years after Paul's conversion (Gal 1:18), he escaped from Damascus. Paul tells us "In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas had the city guarded in order to arrest me." (2Cor 11:32). It is thought that Aretas had possession of Damascus sometime after A.D. 33 until his death in A.D. 40. Hence, Paul's conversion was between A.D. 31 and 37.

Further information is found in Galatians 2:1–10 where Paul describes his visit to Jerusalem in A.D. 46 (see below). He describes it as "fourteen years later", but doesn't make it clear what is the beginning of this fourteen years. From the context, the fourteen years may be dated from Paul's conversion or from his first visit to Jerusalem three years after his conversion. Given the Jewish method of including part of year in such time periods, he is referring to an event in A.D. 33. However, Paul's first visit to Jerusalem took place after his escape from Damascus (Gal 1:18), and therefore after A.D. 33 (see above). Thus, the fourteen years must be dated from Paul's conversion. This gives A.D. 33 as the date of the conversion and A.D. 36 as the date of the first visit to Jerusalem.

Paul in Antioch and Jerusalem

Following his escape from Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18–19; Acts 9:26–30) and then to Tarsus via Antioch (Gal 1:21; Acts 9:30).

The next we hear of Paul is when he and Barnabas went to Antioch and taught for "a whole year". After this they travelled to Jerusalem to help the famine victims (Acts 11:25–30). Now the famine occurred in Judea in A.D. 45 and 46 during the reign of Claudius as prophesied (Acts 11:28). It is assumed that the Antioch trip was shortly before this in about 44 and they travelled to Jerusalem in 46.

Luke tells us that "about this time" Herod persecuted the church and then died (Acts 12:1–23). It is known that Herod died in A.D. 44, so the above dates seem to be at least approximately correct.

Paul's first and second journeys

Returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas began their first journey, probably toward the end of A.D. 46.

The next date we can establish is during the second journey, where Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. They had been expelled from Rome along with all the other Jews by Claudius (Acts 18:2). One ancient historian, Orosius, dates this edict to the ninth year of Claudius or A.D. 49. Hence, it is probable that Paul arrived in Corinth in about A.D. 50.

They stayed in Corinth for "a year and a half" (Acts 18:11). Towards the end of their stay, Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12). An inscription found at Delphi indicates that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in A.D. 51–52. So the second journey probably finished in late 51 or early 52. The events between the start of the first journey and the end of the second journey are fitted in accordingly.

Paul's third journey and journey to Rome

Paul returned to Antioch at the end of his second journey and remained there "some time" before setting out again (Acts 18:22–23). Therefore, the third journey probably began in about A.D. 53. Since it included a three month stay in Greece (Acts 20:3) and three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31), it must have finished no earlier than A.D. 56.

Two years after the third journey, Festus was made proconsul (Acts 24:27). There is some uncertainty about when this occurred although most commentators place it in about A.D. 60. Thus, the third journey finished in about A.D. 58.

Paul was then arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27 – 23:22), and taken to Caesarea (Acts 23:23 – 26:32). After Festus became proconsul, Paul was taken to Rome, arriving there in the spring of A.D. 61 and staying in the city for two years (Acts 27; 28).

Paul's final years

It seems Paul was released in early A.D. 63 and went on further journeys. He probably went to Spain (Rom 15:24,28) as many early writers record. It appears he also went to Crete (Tit 1:5), Miletus (2Tim 4:20), Colosse (Phm 22), Ephesus (1Tim 1:3; 2Tim 1:4), Troas (2Tim 4:13), Philippi (Php 2:23–24; 1Tim 1:3), Corinth (2Tim 4:20), Nicopolis (Tit 3:12) and back to Rome where he was imprisoned (2Tim 1:16,17; 2:9; 4:16). All this must have taken several years.

According to early church historians (Eusebius and Jerome), Paul was beheaded in A.D. 67 or 68 by the cruel and crazy emperor Nero (cf. 2Tim 4:6–8). Peter is said to have been crucified about the same time. In June 68, Nero suicided, ending one of the most difficult times Christians have ever endured.

The Times of Paul

A.D.	LETTERS	ROME	PALESTINE
30	Jesus crucified and resurrected (30) Pentecost (30) <i>Acts 2</i>	Tiberius (14-37)	Pontius Pilate Roman procurator (26-36)
32	Stephen stoned (32) <i>Acts 7</i> Paul converted (33) <i>Acts 9:1-22</i>		
34	Paul in Arabia and Damascus (33-36) <i>Acts 9:23-25; Gal 1:17-18</i>		
36	Paul's 2 week visit to Jerusalem (36) <i>Acts 9:26-30; Gal 1:18-19</i>	Caligula (37-41)	
38	Paul in Syria (Antioch) & Cilicia (Tarsus) (36-43) <i>Acts 9:30; Gal 1:21</i>		
40			
42		Claudius (41-54)	Herod Agrippa I king of Judea (41-44)
44	James the apostle beheaded (44) <i>Acts 12:1-2</i> Paul's trip to Antioch (44) <i>Acts 11:25-26</i>		
46	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem (46) <i>Acts 11:27-30</i> Paul's first journey (46-48) <i>Acts 13:2 - 14:28</i>		
48			
50	Judaist contention at Antioch (49) <i>Acts 15:1-2; Gal 2:12-14</i> Jerusalem council (50) <i>Acts 15:2-29</i> Paul's second journey (50-52) <i>Acts 15:40 - 18:23</i>	Galatians from Antioch (49) <i>Jews expelled from Rome (49)</i>	Herod Agrippa II Tetrarch of Nth. Territory (50-93)
52	Paul's third journey (53-58) <i>Acts 18:23 - 21:17</i>	1 Thess. from Corinth (51) 2 Thess. from Corinth (51/52)	Felix (52-60) Roman procurator
54		Nero (54-68)	
56		1 Cor. from Ephesus (55) 2 Cor. from Macedonia (55)	
58	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea (58-60) <i>Acts 23:23-26:32</i> Paul shipwrecked on Malta (60-61) <i>Acts 27:1 - 28:10</i>	Romans from Corinth or Cenchrea (57)	
60	Paul imprisoned in Rome (61-63) <i>Acts 28:11-31</i>	Ephesians, Colossians & Philemon from Rome (61) Philippians from Rome (62)	Festus (60-62) Roman procurator
62	James the Lord's brother stoned (62) Paul's later journeys (63-67)	1 Timothy and Titus from Philippi (64/65)	
64		<i>Fire of Rome (64)</i>	
66	Jewish revolt against Rome (66) Jerusalem Christians flee	2 Timothy from Rome (67/68)	
68	Paul beheaded; Peter crucified (67/68) <i>2Tim 4:6-8</i>	Galba, Otho, Vitellius (68/9) Vespasian (69-79)	
70	Jerusalem destroyed (14 Apr. - 8 Sep. 70)		

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