THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BIBLE

Determining the Dates of People and Events in the Bible

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Knowing the chronology is helpful when reading about people or events in the past. It keeps things in order and perspective.

Unfortunately, readers of the Bible are often not aware of the chronology. Oh, they usually understand that the Old Testament was before the time of Christ and that the New Testament is about the ministry of Christ and a brief time after His death, but for most, little beyond that is familiar. For them, a chronological overview is needed. Even students of Scripture are unaware of the exact chronology or the problems involved in biblical chronology. For them, a more detailed explanation would be useful.

What exactly is chronology? Chronology is the arrangement of events in time, which necessitates determining the sequence of events and establishing specific dates.

Why are readers and students of the Scripture not cognizant of its chronology? The Bible is more interested in *how* people lived than *when* they lived. It is more concerned with people's relationships with the Lord over time than with their relationship

to a time frame. Nevertheless, it does record chronology data.

What are the problems in formulating a biblical chronology? Developing a biblical chronology is problematic because: 1) In ancient times, there was no universally accepted reference point upon which all other dates were reckoned. History was not divided into BC and AD until AD 532, well after the Bible was written. Neither was there a universally recognized way of calculating a year. Some had a solar calendar; others used a lunar one. Furthermore, there were various methods for reckoning dates. Dates were often expressed by noting the number of years the present king had been in power. 2) Chronological details within the Scripture seem to be in disagreement with each other, especially in the books of Judges, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, and even between the synoptic Gospels (Mt., Mk., and Lk.) and the Gospel of John. 3) The chronology of Israel's neighboring nations is sometimes out of harmony with biblical chronology.

So, how did the people in the ancient world "tell time?" How did they date events? Using our dating system, what are the dates? The following attempts to answer those questions and develop an overall chronology of the people and events in the Bible.

Many dates can be established for sure, but there are problems. The purpose is not to solve all of the issues. It is to explain what is known for sure and how it is known, and to lay out the possibilities in several places where certainty cannot be established. The result should be an overall chronology of the Bible and an appreciation of the problems in several areas,

particularly Genesis 1-11 and the death of Christ.

May the Lord use an understanding of the timeframe in His Word to aid you in understanding better His Word and the spiritual truths it contains.

Chapter 2

OUR SYSTEM OF DATING

Our system of dating is based on a division of history into BC and AD, and years are defined as the length of time it takes the Earth to complete one full rotation around the sun. No one "thinks" about this today; it is assumed, but to develop a biblical chronology, some of the details concerning the division of history into BC and AD, as well as the definition of a year, need to be understood, and the dates for people and events in the Bible need to be "translated" into it.

The Division of History

Dionysius Exiguus, an abbot (the superior of a monastery), lived during the period when years were reckoned from the reign of Diocletian, a severe persecutor of the church. Dionysius Exiguus thought it was shameful that dates should be associated with such an enemy of the church. He wrote to his bishop, Petronius, suggesting that dates be reckoned from the incarnation of Christ so that "our Redeemer's Passion might appear with clearer

evidence." Higher church officials approved, and in AD 532, Dionysius Exiguus' dating system was implemented.

He fixed the year of Christ's birth at AD 1 (AD stands for *Anno Domini*, Latin for "the year of our Lord") and assumed, for unknown reasons, that it was the year 754 AUC (*ab urbe condita*, Latin for "from the founding of the city," that is, Rome). In this system, AD 1 is preceded by 1 BC. The year 0 does not exist. Thus, the first century begins on Jan. 1, AD 1 and ends exactly one hundred years later on December 31, AD 100. The second century begins on Jan. 1, AD 101.

This system is now universally used. All ancient dates are "translated" into it. The problem with it, as all now concede, is that the establishment of Rome was in 750 BC instead of 754 BC. In other words, according to our present chronological reckoning, the birth of Christ was in 4 BC (other considerations may push it back even further). At any rate, the universal use of BC and AD provides a unified dating system.

The Definition of a Year

From the beginning of recorded history, time has been divided into years. The Egyptians began their year when Sirius (the brightest star) first appeared at sunrise on the eastern horizon (July 19th today). In other words, they based their calendar on what is now called the solar year, the time it takes for the earth to make one complete revolution around the sun. They divided the year into 12 months of 30 days each, plus five sacred feast

days attached to the end of each year. The Egyptian year was a quarter of a day off the solar year. So it gains a full day every four years and a full year in 1460 years.

The Jews combined the solar and lunar years. The lunar year is based on the appearance of the full moon. Since it takes 29½ days for the moon to complete one full revolution around the earth, a lunar year has 12 months of about 354⅓ days. To reconcile the lunar and solar years, a 13th month was added every three years.

The Roman year consisted of 12 lunar months of 29 and 30 days alternately, plus one day, totaling 355 days (ten and a fraction of a day less than a solar year). After various attempts to align their year with the solar year, Julius Caesar, with the help of a mathematician, lengthened the year in 46 BC, and on January 1, 45 BC, introduced what became known as the Julian calendar. It was based solely on the sun and consisted of 365¼ days, which is accurate within a few minutes. From then on, the year has consisted of 365 days divided into 12 months.

Although the Roman system was an improvement, it was still not an exact solar year. Technically, it takes the earth 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds to make one rotation around the sun. The Julian year was off by about twelve minutes. By 1582, it was about ten days behind true solar time. At the Council of Nice, in AD 325, the vernal equinox (the time when the sun crosses the equator, making a day and a night of equal length in all parts of the earth) occurred on March 21st, but in 1582 it fell on March 11th. Pope Gregory issued an edict

declaring October 5th to be called October 15th. Thus, the vernal equinox would always occur on March 21st. To prevent future differences, it was decided that every hundredth year (1600, 1700, etc.) should not be counted as a leap year, except every four hundred years, beginning with the year 2000. As a result, it will take 5,000 years for the solar year to be off by 1 day.

Summary: A universally recognized dating system has been established. The year is now based on an accurate solar year. Biblical chronology needs to be "translated" into this system.

Chapter 3

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

For chronological purposes, the Old Testament can be divided into three periods: from Adam to Abram, from Abram to the death of Solomon, and from the death of Solomon to Nehemiah. These three periods roughly cover the third millennium BC and earlier, the second millennium BC, and the first millennium BC. Working backward, dates for the first millennium BC can be established by correlating the biblical data with the absolute dates of extra-biblical rulers. Dates for the second millennium BC are based solely on data in Scripture, and those for the third millennium and beyond depend on which interpretation is adopted of the genealogies in Genesis chapters 5 and 11.

From Adam to Abram

When was Adam created? What was the date of the flood? When was the Tower of Babel built?

Genesis 5:1-32 (see also Gen. 9:28-29) lists the descendants of Adam from Adam to Noah, giving the number of years a man lived before he had a son, the number of years he lived after that son was born, the total number of years he lived, and the fact that he died. Genesis 11:10-26 traces the line of Seth, a son of Noah, from Seth to Abram, giving the number of years a man lived before he had a son and the number of years he lived after that son was born, but unlike Genesis 5, the total number of years lived and the fact that the person died, are not recorded.

Because Genesis 5 and 11 give the number of years people lived, these genealogies can be used to determine the length of time between Adam and Abram. In fact, assuming that these genealogies are complete and correct, Archbishop James Usher of Ireland did just that and, in the 1658 edition of his *Annales*, announced that the evening of October 22, 4004 BC was the beginning of creation week, the flood occurred in 2348 BC, and Abram was born in 1996 BC. (A few years before, John Lightfoot, a Greek scholar and vice-chancellor at Cambridge, declared that Adam was created at 9:00 a.m. on a Friday morning in 3928 BC.) The 4004 BC date depends on factors beyond Genesis chapters 1-11, but taken at face value, the opening chapters of Genesis do seem to indicate that people lived extremely long lives (Genesis 5:27 says Methuselah lived 969 years) and that from the creation to the flood was 1656 years and that from the flood to the call of Abram was 427 years, totaling 2083 years.

Notable commentators accept that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are complete. Keil and Delitzsch wrote that the

genealogy of Genesis 5 furnishes "a chronology of the primeval age" and that "the duration of the first period in the world's history was 1656 years." They also accepted the genealogy in chapter 11 as "chronological data" and as a "continuation of the one in chap. v" (Keil and F. Delitzsch, vol. I, pp. 120-121, 177-178). Concerning the genealogy in Genesis 5, Leupold remarked, "There is no reason for doubting the correctness" of this "complete chronology." He, too, accepts a strict chronology for chapter 11 (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis,* vol. I, pp. 237, 395). Morris concludes that while gaps are a possibility, "which perhaps cannot be ruled out completely," there is "no internal evidence" for them (Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record*, p. 154; see also p. 284). Concerning Genesis 11, Ross says these verses "seem to present a tight chronology" (Ross, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. I, p. 45).

For many, however, the individual life spans are too long and the whole period is too short. As for the extraordinarily long life spans, they decline after the flood, indicating that pre-flood conditions enabled such longevity. Sources outside the Bible speak of kings before the flood living even longer! Concerning the length of the entire period, several arguments have been used to show gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, including the following.

1. The main purpose of all the genealogies in the Bible is to trace the Messianic line (Gen. 3:15; 5:1-2; 11:10; Ruth 4:18-22; Mt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-38. In the case of the genealogy in Genesis

5, there is also a purpose to demonstrate the fulfillment of the curse of Genesis 2:17, as is done by the repetition of the phrase "and he died."). So, it is not necessarily the primary purpose of the genealogies in the early chapters of Genesis to give a strict chronology.

2. There are gaps in biblical genealogies. The symmetrical arrangement of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 suggests that the author did not intend for the numerical data to be pressed into a strict chronology. There are ten generations between Adam and Noah, and ten between Shem and Abram, which implies a deliberate design that omits names.

The conclusion that names are omitted is not only implied by the symmetry, but it can also be demonstrated. Genesis 11 omits Cainan (Lk. 3:35-36). In Scripture, "begot" has a wider connotation than a father-son relationship. It can mean "descendant of." Other biblical genealogies omit people. For example, Matthew 1 consists of three groups of fourteen, and verse 8 omits three successive kings. In other words, an ancient genealogy only says that a person was either the father or forebear of so-and-so. The purpose was not to necessarily give a strict biological father-son list, but rather to trace a family line by selecting names from the line and arranging them in a symmetrical form, a "genealogical custom both within and without the Bible" (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, p. 82). Thus, the fact that genealogies contain gaps does not mean they are wrong, but it does mean they do not always provide an unbroken chain.

Moreover, the gaps can be large. Jacob had twelve sons, one

of whom was Levi. Levi had three sons, "Gershon, Kohath, and Merari" (Gen. 46:11; Num. 3:17). Kohath's sons were "Amram, Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel" (Ex. 6:18; Num. 3:19). Exodus 6:20 says, "Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram were one hundred and thirty-seven." Notice that this verse is similar to the genealogy in Genesis 5, which gives the total number of years Amram lived. It also sounds as if Amram and Jochebed were the biological parents of Aaron and Moses, but that is not correct.

According to Numbers 3:27-28, at the time of Moses, all the male Kohathites aged 1 month or older totaled 8,600. Since it is highly unlikely that Amram had 2150 sons (8600 ÷ 4 = 2150), Amram, the son of Kohath, was not the biological father of Moses. Amram was an ancestor of Moses. There were 300 years between them! In other words, there is a large gap in Exodus 6:20. As one author said, "an indefinitely long list of generations has been omitted" (cited by Keil and Delitzsch). Ezra 7:3 omits five links, as is evident from 1 Chronicles 6:7-11. Thus, the nature of genealogies allows for gaps, large gaps.

3. A strict chronology of Genesis 11 raises problems. All the postdiluvians (those living after the flood), including Noah, would still be living when Abram was fifty years old. Shem, Shelah, and Eber would have outlived Abraham. While that is not impossible, it does seem highly unlikely. It is more likely that there was time enough between the flood and Abram for most, if not all, of the postdiluvian notables to have died.

4. The Bible implies that the cities and civilizations of Abram's day were already ancient. After the flood, people "were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations" (Gen. 10:5; see also 10:20, 10:31). As a result of the Tower of Babel incident, "the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:9). Abram found the land of Canaan filled with "the Kenites, the Kenezzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites" (Gen. 15:19-21). Genesis mentions 26 cities in Canaan during Abraham's lifetime, seven of which had kings. Thus, there were probably several centuries between the Tower of Babel and Abram.

If the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are complete, meaning there are no gaps, then, based on Thiele's dates for the first millennium BC (Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*) and the biblical data for the second millennium BC, the flood took place in 2459 BC and the tower of Babel incident about 2358 BC. If there are gaps, these dates will be considered later. There is no way to tell how much later. In an appendix to their book, *The Genesis Flood*, Whitcomb and Morris suggest that the flood may have occurred as much as 3,000 to 5,000 years before Abram, but not beyond that (Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 474-489). If the period from Adam to Noah was 2000 years and the time frame between Noah and Abram was 3,000 years, Adam was created as far back as 7,000

BC. Some conservative scholars are willing to push it back to 10,000 BC.

The chronology of the period from Adam to Abram depends on which interpretation of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 is adopted.

From Abram to the Death of Solomon

The Birth of Abram. The chronology from Abram to the death of Solomon is based on Thiele's date for Solomon's death (931 BC) and several pivotal passages of Scripture. First Kings 6:1 dates the Exodus 480 years before the fourth year of Solomon's reign. Thus, the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC. Exodus 12:40 dates the arrival of the children of Israel in Egypt 430 years before the Exodus, which would be 1877 BC. Since Jacob was 130 years old when he entered Egypt (Gen. 47:9, 28), he must have been born in 2007 BC. Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26) and Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5). Therefore, Abraham was born in 2167 BC.

The Dates in Genesis 12-50 In his article, "Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology" (*Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:547, July-September 1980: 248), Eugene H. Merrill lists the dates of the Patriarchs. (He dates the birth of Abraham at 2166 instead of 2167.)

Patriarchal Chronological Data

2296	Birth of Terah	Gen. 11:24
2166	Birth of Abram	Gen. 11:27
2091	Abram's departure from Haran	Gen. 12:4
2081	Abram's marriage to Hagar	Gen. 16:3
2080	Birth of Ishmael	Gen. 16:16
2067	Reaffirmation of covenant	Gen. 17:1
2067-66	Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah	Gen. 19:24
2066	Birth of Isaac	Gen. 21:2-3; *cf.* 21:5
2029	Death of Sarah	Gen. 23:2
2026	Marriage of Isaac	Gen. 25:20
2006	Birth of Jacob and Esau	Gen. 25:26
1991	Death of Abram	Gen. 25:7
1966	Marriage of Esau	Gen. 26:34
1943	Death of Ishmael	Gen. 25:17
1930	Jacob's journey to Haran	Gen. 28:2
1923	Jacob's marriages	Gen. 29:23, 28; 30:4, 9
1918	Birth of Judah	Gen. 29:35
1916	End of Jacob's 14 year labor for his wives	Gen. 29:30
1916	Birth of Joseph	Gen. 30:23
1910	End of Jacob's stay with Laban	Gen. 31:41
1910	Jacob's arrival at Shechem	Gen. 33:18
1902	Rape of Dinah	Gen. 34:1-2
1900	Marriage of Judah	Gen. 38:1-2
1899	Selling of Joseph	Gen. 37:2, 28
1888	Joseph imprisoned	Gen. 39:20; *cf.* 41:1
1886	Joseph released	Gen. 41:1, 46
1886	Death of Isaac	Gen. 35:28
1879	Beginning of famine	Gen. 41:54
1878	Brothers' first visit to Egypt	Gen. 42:1-3
1877	Judah's incest with Tamar	Gen. 38:18
1877	Brothers' second visit to Egypt	Gen. 43:1, 15; 45:6, 11
1876	Jacob's descent to Egypt	Gen. 46:6; *cf.* 47:9
1859	Death of Jacob	Gen. 47:28
1806	Death of Joseph	Gen. 50:22

By the way, Merrill also says, "It is beyond question that traditional and conservative views of biblical history, especially of the patriarchal period, will continue to be favored by whatever results accrue from ongoing Ebla research" (Merrill, "Ebla and Biblical Historical Inerrancy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140:550, October-December 1983: 318).

The Date of the Exodus The date of the Exodus has been the subject of much debate. As has been pointed out, according to the Bible's chronology, the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC. Solomon began to build the Temple in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1). Thiele puts the fourth year of Solomon's reign at 967 BC. Therefore, assuming Thiele's date for the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 1 Kings 6:1 indicates that the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC.

A verse in Judges supports that time frame. Jephthah says the Israelites had been in the land for 300 years (Judges 11:26). The wilderness wanderings lasted 40 years. According to Caleb, the conquest took seven years (Judges 14:7 and 14:10). Hence, the Israelites occupied the land beginning in 1400 BC. Three hundred years later, it would have been 1107 BC, which fits the time frame for when Jephthah made the statement about being in the land for 300 years. Thus, the pharaoh of the oppression who died before the Exodus (Ex. 1:11-14) was Thutmose III and the pharaoh of the Exodus was his successor Amenhotep II.

While there is no direct archaeological evidence for the Exodus (the pharaohs did not record their defeats), there is corroborating evidence, including Garstang's dating of the fall

of Jericho at about 1400 BC and the Amarna Letters (ca. 1400-1350) from Canaan asking Egyptian leaders for help against the Habiru invaders.

When J. Garstang, who excavated Jericho from 1930 to 1936, identified different archaeological levels that had been built on the site over several centuries, he named them alphabetically, beginning with a level he dated to about 3000 BC, and said that the city "D," constructed ca. 1500 BC, was destroyed by an earthquake ca. 1400 BC, which are called "acts of God." He concluded that an earthquake destroyed it because the walls fell outward. He said it was around 1400 BC because out of the 150,000 pieces of pottery found there, only one was of the Mycenaean type, which began to be imported into Palestine in abundance from 1400 BC onward. Moreover, numerous scarabs (the representation of a beetle regarded as sacred by the ancient Egyptians) were found in the burial grounds, but none were later than those of Amenhotep III, and there was no evidence from his successor, Amenhotep IV's reign, which is distinctive and plentiful.

Since then, Garstang's dating of the destruction of Jericho has been debated. In 1952, Kathleen M. Kenyon began her work at Jericho. She concluded that the walls of city "D" should be dated to about 2300 BC and that it is impossible to be certain about the date when Jericho fell. A carbon-14 test, however, put the date at 1410 BC (Bryant Wood, "Did the Israelites conquer Jericho?" (*Biblical Archaeological Review*, March/April 1990).

There is extra-biblical evidence that the children of Israel

invaded Palestine during the 15th century BC, supporting the Exodus's biblical date of 1447 BC. In 1886, a peasant woman discovered hundreds of clay tablets in Amarna, Egypt, about 200 miles south of Cairo. The Amarna Letters are tablets containing diplomatic correspondence between vassal governors in Canaan and their Egyptian Lords, Amenophis III and Amenophis IV, from ca. 1400 BC to 1370 BC. These letters report an invasion by the Habiru, a word meaning "one who passes through" (the land). Since the discovery of the Amarna Letters, the name "Habiru" has been found elsewhere. Scholars generally agree that Habiru (Egyptian) is the same as Apiru (Semitic) and SA. GAZ (Sumerian). Other references to the Habiru/Apiru/SA.GAZ has been found in Egypt and Mesopotamia for hundreds of years. From these references, it is apparent that the term Habiru is used in a variety of ways, including as a term for nomads, soldiers, servants, and foreigners. It came to be used generally for enemies or simply in a pejorative sense of people the writer did not like ("a bad name to call one's enemies").

While there is no consensus among scholars, some have concluded that the Habiru of the Amarna Letters are Hebrews. Habiru may be the linguistic equivalent of Hebrew. The word "Hebrew" is not widely used in the Old Testament, but in several places, it is used by foreigners to refer to the Israelites (Ex. 2:6; 1 Sam. 13:19).

Beyond the linguistic issue, the Amarna Letters provide evidence that the Habiru were the Hebrews of the conquest. There is no communication from cities such as Jericho, Bethel,

Beersheba, Gibeon, and Hebron, which were conquered first. The correspondence from Megiddo indicates that the towns in the region of Arad in the south have already fallen, which agrees with Numbers 21:1-3. Gezer, Ashkelon, and Lachish are other cities listed as having already fallen and been captured early in the conquest. In general, these letters depict disunity among the kings of Canaan, with some forsaking their allegiance to Egypt for an alliance with the invader.

One letter reads, "The Habiru plunder all the lands of the king. If there are archers in this year, the lands of the king, my lord, will remain, but if there are no archers, the land of the king, my lord, will be lost."

In other words, a Canaanite king at the time of Joshua pleads with the king of Egypt to send troops (archers), or all will be lost because of the Habiru invaders. That was exactly the situation when Joshua was subduing the central portion of Canaan. The Egyptian Pharaoh could not send help because his army had been destroyed in the Exodus. In the letter from the Jerusalem king, he accuses Shechem of defecting to the Habiru cause, saying, "Or shall we do like Labayu, who gave the land of Shechem to the Habiru." According to the book of Joshua, the Israelites assembled between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim near Shechem (Josh. 8:30-35).

Critics, however, argue for a later date for the Exodus, usually ca. 1290 BC, about ten years after Raamses II began to reign. They argue that there is no archaeological evidence that Thutmose III built cities in the Delta region (Ex. 1:11). Granted,

there is no archaeological evidence, such as a stele (a stele is a commemorative stone, an upright stone slab engraved with an inscription and usually used as a victory monument) that says Thutmose III built in the Delta region, but that does not prove he didn't. Since he had four or more military campaigns in Syria, he likely built barracks for his troops in the Delta region. It is plausible that he not only built barracks and depots for his troops, but that he also used the Jews in the Delta region to do it. The tomb of his Vizier, Rekhmire, at Thebes depicts Semitic slaves making and transporting bricks.

Critics also say that Amenhotep II could not have been the pharaoh of the Exodus because he had his capital at Thebes, far to the south of the Delta region where the Jews lived, but since he built extensively in the Delta, he could have had a palace and court there. Exodus 1:11 says that the Jews in Egyptian bondage built the cities of Pithom and Raamses.

Critics assume that Raamses II (1290-1224 BC) built the city of Raamses. Therefore, they claim the Exodus took place during his reign, but Raamses and other pharaohs of the 19th dynasty used names employed by the Hyksos kings (ca. 1760-1580 BC). So, the Hyksos kings could have built a city named Raamses. Raamses II may have merely rebuilt or enlarged these cities. After all, the archaeological data reveal that Raamses II took credit for the achievements of his predecessors.

The ultimate issue is that hundreds of years before either 1290 BC or 1447 BC, there was a "land of Raamses" (Gen. 47:11). So, as Shea concludes, "The mere presence of the name

of Raamses in Exodus 1:11 cannot be the final arbiter of the date of the Exodus" (Shea, *ISBE*, vol. II, p. 232).

Critics use other arguments to support a later date, such as Kenyon's conclusion concerning the destruction of Jericho, the Amarna letters, and the conclusions of archaeologists that cities such as Bethel, Lachish, Debir, and Hazor were not destroyed until the thirteenth century.

Among the Amarna letters, those from King Abdi-Hepa of Jerusalem indicate that his city was in danger of capture, but critics argue that 2 Samuel 5:6-7 shows that the Israelites did not capture Jerusalem until David's time. Therefore, the Habiru could not have been the Israelites. The problem with that interpretation is that neither the Amarna letters nor the book of Joshua state that Jerusalem itself was captured or destroyed. According to Scripture, Joshua defeated the Jerusalemite troops along with their allies from Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon at the battle of Gibeon. Adoni-Zedek, the king of Jerusalem, was killed (Josh. 10:1-27). Jerusalem was not captured until after Joshua's death (Judges 1:8), and not all the Jebusites were killed (Judges 1:21). Much later, David conquered Jerusalem. There is nothing in the Amarna account that cannot be reconciled with the Joshua record. The Amarna Letter, from the Canaanites themselves, simply records the Israelite conquest of Canaan ca. 1400 BC. This archaeological discovery, then, confirms the biblical account.

Archaeologists have excavated other cities of the conquest, including Lachish (Josh. 10:1-35; 12:11; 15:39), Debir (Josh.

10:1-39; etc.), Hazor (Josh. 11:1-15; etc.), and Megiddo (Josh. 12:21). Excavations of Lachish indicate that it was completely destroyed by fire around 1230 BC, that Debir was not destroyed until 1200 BC and that Megiddo fell between 1150 and 1050 BC. Critics claim this data proves that the Exodus and the subsequent conquest must have been in the thirteenth century BC, not the fifteenth. The account in Joshua does not say that the Israelites completely destroyed all the cities they conquered. Cities defeated by Joshua were re-inhabited and destroyed later. For example, Joshua 10:32 only speaks of the inhabitants' slaughter, not the city's destruction. It is possible that Lachish was repopulated and later destroyed in 1230 BC.

A 1290 BC date for the Exodus makes biblical chronology nonsense, not only 1 Kings 6:1 but also the period of the Judges. Besides, the Merneptah Stele (1224 BC) depicts the Hebrews as settled in Canaan, which supports an earlier date for the Exodus.

The Time Frame of the Period of the Judges The total number of years for the period of the Judges mentioned in the book of Judges is 410 years (111 years of oppression and 299 years for the Judges and periods of rest), but according to references outside of Judges, the period of Judges could not have been that long. From the Exodus to the building of the Temple, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, was 480 years (1 Kings 6:1). The wilderness wandering took 40 years (Num. 32:13) and the conquest seven (Josh. 14:7, 10). There may have also been a gap of a few years between the conquest of the land and the beginning of the first judge, during which time Joshua and, after him, the elders led

Israel. To those figures needs to be added forty years for Saul (Acts 13:12) and forty years for David (2 Sam. 5:4), plus four of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 6:1). The total of these is at least 131 years (40 + 7+ ? + 40 + 40 + 4 = at least 131), leaving only 349 + years for the period of the Judges (480 + 131 + ? + 349+).

The solution to this apparent discrepancy is to conclude that some of the judges ruled contemporaneously, reducing the total length of the period from 410 years to about 350 years. For example, Judges 10:7 implies that Jephthah and Samson ruled simultaneously since one delivered oppressed Israel from the Ammonites and the other from the Philistines. In other words, not all the judges in the book of Judges ruled over the *whole* land as our President does over the whole nation. Instead, they were like our governors, ruling over smaller areas and, at times, some of them ruled contemporaneously over different areas. Thus, the entire period of the Judges was only about 350 years, from about 1390 BC until about 1043 BC, when Saul became King.

At the beginning of the kingdom, Saul was the first king, but the Old Testament does not give the length of his reign. Acts 13:21 says he reigned forty years (so does Josephus), but that may have included the length of his dynasty, which ended with the death of Ishbosheth, his son, seven years after the death of Saul (1 Sam. 13:1; 2 Sam. 2:10). Solomon reigned for forty years (1 Kings 11:42) and so did David (2 Sam. 5:4). Again, assuming Thiele's date for the death of Solomon, Saul began his reign in 1043 BC. (Thiele says Solomon died in 931 BC; 931+40+40+33=1043.)

From the Death of Solomon to Nehemiah

The Chronology of the Kings The chronology of the kings is a problem because the data is seemingly self-contradictory. For example, 2 Kings 9:29 says that Ahaziah of Judah came to the throne in the eleventh year of Joram of Israel, but 2 Kings 8:25 says it was the twelfth year. Edwin Thiele has resolved this and other chronological problems concerning the old Testament kings. His original work was a doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, which the University of Chicago Press published under the title *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Later, Zondervan Publishing House published it in a condensed version entitled *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*.

According to Thiele, the chronological problems in 1 and 2 Kings can be solved by recognizing the following.

1. In the Northern Kingdom (Israel), the years of the kings were reckoned from the month Nisan (March/April), but in the Southern Kingdom (Judah), they reckoned from Tishri (September/October). Proof of Judah's method can be shown by comparing 2 Kings 22:3 with 23:23, where the discovery of the Law and the subsequent Passover in Nisan, which must have occurred several months later, are both dated in the 18th year of Josiah. Although there is no Scriptural evidence for the Southern system, when it is combined with the Northern method, the discrepancies disappear.

2. Israel used the Egyptian non-accession year (the first official year of a king's reign was reckoned from the day he came to the throne) until 798 BC and the Babylonian accession year (the first official year of a king's reign commenced with the new year's day after the year he came to the throne) after 798 BC. Proof of this is in the fact that, according to Assyrian records, Jehu paid tribute to Shalmaneser III for only 12 years after Ahab fought in the Battle of Qarqar, but Israel ascribed 14 years to the reigns of the two intervening kings, Ahaziah and Joram. To complicate matters, Judah also used both methods, employing the accession year, except for a period between 848 and 796 BC.

3. Each nation employed its system for the rulers of other nations.

4. There are overlapping reigns and coregencies, that is, the son's reign overlaps that of his father.

5. In a few cases in both Israel and Judah, "dual dating" is employed, that is, for one king, two different methods of dating are used, one using the total number of years he reigned and another using only his sole reign.

Thiele has resolved all the seeming conflicts in the chronology of 1 and 2 Kings using these concepts.

Synchronizing biblical people and events with their contemporaries has been a major problem. Several factors make absolute dating (calendar dating) of biblical events possible. First, some events are recorded in both biblical and secular history. For example, Sennacherib's attack on Jerusalem in the

fourteenth year of Hezekiah is recorded in 2 Kings 18:13 and in the extra-biblical records of Assyria. Beyond that example, the Bible refers to Assyrian kings Shalmaneser III (2 Kings 17:3, 18:9), Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 15:29; 16:7, 10; 1 Chron. 5:6, 26; 2 Chron. 28:20), Sargon II (Isa. 20:1), Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13; 19:16, 20, 36; 2 Chron. 32:1, 2, 9, 10, 22; Isa. 36:1; 37:17, 21, 37), and Esarhaddon (2 Kings 19:37; Ezra 4:2; Isa. 37:38), by name in proper chronological order.

Rulers of other nations mentioned at exactly the right time include Merodach-Baladan of Babylon (Isa. 39:1), Shishak, a.k.a. Sheshonk I, of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25), Necho of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29, 33, 34, 35; 2 Chron. 35:20, 22; 36:4; Jer. 46:2), and Ben-Hadad of Syria (several Syrian Kings with this name are mentioned 27 times in 26 verses, including 1 Kings 15:18; 20:1; 2 Kings 6:24; 8:7; 13:3; 2 Chron. 16:2; Jer. 49:27; Amos 1:4).

Nine biblical kings are mentioned by name in Assyrian records. On the Moabite Stone, Omri is mentioned by name, and in Assyrian records, Israel is referred to as the "house of Omri." The Monolith Inscription lists "Ahab, the Israelite." The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III contains a picture of Jehu or his ambassador bowing at Shalmaneser's feet and presenting him with gifts. The Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) speak of Menahem. The annals of Sennacherib, preserved on the Taylor Cylinder, talk about Hezekiah, and his own inscription of the tunnel he had dug has been found. Other kings mentioned in Assyrian records include Azariah, Pekah, and Hoshea. Tablets

found in Babylon include the name of Jehoiachin.

Second, the Assyrians named years after people, and numerous lists of years have been found. (Austen Layard found four such lists at Nineveh. Sir Henry Rawlinson named these Canons I, II, III, IV. Canon I covers 911 to 659 BC, and the others contain parts of that period.)

Third, ancient records contain astronomical information. According to Assyrian records, there was an eclipse of the sun in the month of Simanu in the year named after Bur-Sagale. Astronomists have fixed the date of that eclipse as June 15, 763 BC. With the date for one Assyrian year determined every other year can be identified. The chronology of Ptolemy has confirmed these dates (AD 70-161). It not only listed rulers for Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and Egypt and their length of reign, but also listed over eighty solar, lunar, and planetary positions with their dates. Scholars are confident that the information available today provides absolute dates, that is, calendar dates, for Assyrian history from 891 to 648 BC.

Therefore, since absolute dates for Assyrian history have been established and since some events are recorded in both Assyria history and the Bible, it is possible to establish absolute dates for biblical events, including the conquest of Samaria (722 BC), Sennacherib's attach on Jerusalem (701 BC), the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC), and his deportation of Jehoiachin (597 BC). In fact, the very day Nebuchadnezzar captured Jehoiachin can be determined, namely, Saturday, March 16, 597 BC. It is generally agreed that it is now possible to give

absolute dates for the major extra-biblical rulers during the first millennium BC, which makes it possible to give absolute dates for biblical figures as far back as the death of Solomon in 931 BC.

The Captivity The captivity lasted seventy years (Jer. 25:8-12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2). The seventy years began when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem (Jer. 25:8-12; 1 Kings 24:1-7). Using Tishri years, Daniel says that Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim (Dan. 1:1), but Jeremiah employing Nisan years, says that the attack was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 25:1). According to Thiele, because of two eclipses, no date in ancient history is "more firmly established" than the year of the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar's reign in 605 BC. He says, "With all certainty," 605 BC was the year Nebuchadnezzar first attacked Jerusalem, Daniel was taken to Babylon, and the seventy years of captivity began. Seventy years after 605 BC was 536 BC, when the work on rebuilding the Temple began.

So, the beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple in 536 BC is when the seventy years ended. It is also possible to reckon the seventy years from 586 BC to 516 BC (Zech. 1:12). Nebuchadnezzar again captured Jerusalem and carried another group captive to Babylon, including Ezekiel and Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:8-16) on Saturday, March 16, 597 BC (Thiele's date). Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem a third time, destroying it (1 Kings 25:1-21). The date was July 18, 586 BC (Thiele's date).

The Restoration Actually, there were three returns: one with

Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple, one with Ezra, and one with Nehemiah to rebuild the wall.

In October 539 BC, Cyrus, king of Persia, overthrew Babylon. In his first year, he made a decree allowing captives to return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4). As a result, Zerubbabel led a group back to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1-2), arriving in 538 BC (Ezra 3:1). The Temple was begun in 536 BC (Ezra 3:8). After an interruption, it was finished on March 12, 516 BC (Ezra 6:13-15).

Ezra left Babylon on the first day of the first month of the seventh year of King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:7, 9) and he arrived on the first day of the fifth month (Ezra 7:7-9). It is evident that Nehemiah reckoned from the month Tishri because he puts the month Chislev, the 9th month (Neh. 1:1) and the subsequent month Nisan, the 1st month (Neh. 2:1) both in the 20th year of Artaxerxes. Since Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book, the same is no doubt true for Ezra. Assuming then a Tishri reckoning, the first year of Artaxerxes began on October 19, 465 BC. Therefore, Ezra's expedition must have left Babylon for Jerusalem on April 8, 458 BC, arriving on August 24, 458 BC.

Nehemiah served under Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1). Artaxerxes I of Persia reigned from 464-423 BC. Nehemiah departed from Persia in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 1:1; 2:1-8), probably in April or May 445 BC and returned to Babylon twelve years later in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 5:14; 13:6), probably between October 434 BC and September 433 BC. Some time later, perhaps in the early part of the reign of Darius II (423-404 BC), Nehemiah went to Jerusalem again,

perhaps around 425 BC.

During this period, Jauutama Buddha lived in India (560-450 BC), Confucius in China (551-479 BC), and Socrates in Greece (470-399 BC).

The conclusion is that absolute dates for the first millennium BC can be established. The second millennium cannot, as yet, be correlated with extra-biblical events. For the second millennium BC, there is only one extra-biblical reference to a biblical event, namely, the defeat of Israel by the Egyptian pharaoh, Merneptah (ca. 1224-1216 BC) and it is not mentioned in the Bible. That means that prior to 931 BC, all biblical dating must be computed within the Scripture. The earliest date that can be determined based on biblical chronology is the birth of Terah, the father of Abraham, in 2295 BC, because there may be gaps in the genealogies of the early chapters of Genesis, and there is no conclusive evidence that Nahor was the actual father of Terah.

Critics, however, continue to discredit Old Testament chronology based on their interpretation of archaeological data, but again and again, the accuracy of the biblical chronology has been verified. So even where there is no correlation with extra-biblical data yet, the chronological statements of Scripture should be regarded as correct because where exact harmonization is possible, the Bible has proven uncannily accurate.

Summary: Based on the data given in the Scripture for the second millennium BC and the correlation of the biblical data with the absolute dates of extra-biblical rulers during the first

millennium BC, the chronology of the historical periods of the Old Testament is as follows:

The Patriarchs (The birth of Abram to the death of Joseph) 2167-1806 BC

The Exodus (The birth of Moses to the Plain of Moab) 1527-1407 BC

The Conquest	1407-1400 BC
The Judges	1375-1043 BC
The United Kingdom	1043-931 BC
The Divided Kingdom	931-605 BC
The Captivity	605-536 BC
The Restoration	536-400 BC

Chapter 4

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

To develop a New Testament chronology, a number of dates for the life of Christ and for the apostolic age need to be established and translated into our system.

The Life of Christ

Constructing a chronology for the life of Christ is a complex process. The parameters for several critical points in His life, like His birth, the beginning and duration of His ministry, and His death, can be established independently of each other. In the final analysis, however, the dates for His whole life and death must be considered together.

The Birth of Christ Since our dating system is off by four years, Christ's birth was in 4 BC or earlier. Several factors must be taken into account.

According to Matthew 2:1 and Luke 1:5, Jesus was born before Herod died. In 714 AUC, Rome declared Herod king. Josephus says that he died 37 years after that. Therefore, all agree that Herod died in 750 AUC, 4 BC.

Josephus also mentions that just before Herod died, there was an eclipse of the moon and that when Herod died, after seven days of mourning, Archelaus, the son who succeeded him, "went up to the temple" (a reference to the Passover). The only eclipse of the moon in 4 BC was on the night of March 12th or 13th. In 4 BC, the Passover was on April 12th. Seven days before the Passover was on April 5th. Therefore, Herod died between March 12th and April 5, 4 BC, and Christ was born before that.

Furthermore, according to Josephus, just before he died in Jerusalem, Herod was outside of Jerusalem seeking relief from an illness, a trip that would have taken several months. Then, shortly after Herod returned to Jerusalem, he died. Since the wise men visited a functioning Herod in Jerusalem, it is assumed that they visited Herod before he left to seek relief. If the wise men had visited Herod before his departure from Jerusalem, it would have been no earlier than late 5 BC.

Luke 2:22 says, "Now when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord." The Mosaic Law required that forty days elapse between the birth of a child and the offering in the Temple (Lev. 12:2-8). Therefore, the birth of Christ was even earlier in 5 BC.

Matthew 2:16 says that Herod ordered the execution of all

babies in Bethlehem, two years old and younger. That does not mean that Christ was two years old at the time because Herod, no doubt, extended the age limit to make sure that the Christ child was slain. Some argue that the Greek word for Babe (*brefos*) in Luke 2:12 means newborn or infant, while the Greek word for the child (*paidos*), in Matthew 2:8, 9, 11 indicates that Christ was at least a year old. If so, that would push the date for the birth of Christ back to the fall of 6 BC, but the word for child in Matthew 2 is used elsewhere for infants (Lk. 1:59; etc.). So, Matthew 2:16 has no bearing on dating the birth of Christ.

Matthew 2:2 says the wise men saw a star. Some claim that the star was a natural phenomenon and, therefore, can be used to date the birth of Christ. If, as the text suggests, the star was a supernatural phenomenon, its appearance has no chronological significance.

Luke 2:1-2 says, "And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria" (Lk. 2:1-2). Critics claim these verses prove Luke was wrong because there is no known record that Augustus conducted a universal census and Quirinius was not governor of Syria until AD 6.

Granted, there is no surviving record of a universal census, but that does not prove that there was not one. Important events are mentioned by other ancient authors (for example, Josephus) that are not mentioned elsewhere, and no one claims they are incorrect. Besides, critics have claimed that the biblical record

was wrong, only later to be proven wrong. For instance, critics have also claimed that Luke was wrong in this very passage when he wrote, "All went to be registered, everyone to his own city" (Lk. 2:3), but evidence has been found that a "similar thing took place in that age" (Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 270). A papyrus containing the edict of a Prefect (a high administrative official) of Egypt, Gaius Vibius Maximus (AD 104), and now in the British Museum says, "The enrollment by household being at hand, it is necessary to notify all who for any cause whosoever are outside their homes to return to their domestic hearths, that they may also accomplish the customary dispensation of enrollment and continue steadfastly in the husbandry that belongs to them."

Moreover, there is evidence that Augustus took a census periodically. Ramsay proved from the papyri that Augustus inaugurated a periodic census every fourteen years beginning in 8 BC (Sir William Ramsay, *Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?*). A census was conducted in AD 6 (Josephus, *Antiquities* xviii. 26; it is also mentioned in Acts 5:37). Actual documents have survived for every census held in Egypt from AD 20 to AD 270 *(*William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*). A delay in carrying out the census could place the birth of Christ in 6 BC, even 5 BC (A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 266).

Quirinius indeed became governor of Syria in AD 6. An inscription, however, indicates that Quirinius performed military functions in Syria between 10 and 6 BC. It says, "Quirinius, as proconsul, obtained Asia as his province. As

legate of the deified Augustus a second time, he governed Syria and Phoenicia" (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I, pp. 122-123). So Quirinius was a "military legate" from 10-6 BC and became "full governor" in AD 6. There is no record of a census during his term as legate, but it is likely. Josephus says that about that time, "the whole Jewish people" swore loyalty to Caesar (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xvii. 42), which implies a census. Furthermore, the civil governor at that time was Sentius Saturninus, and Tertullian (AD 160-220) says that Christ was born during his term in office.

Beginning in 4 BC and continuing for seven or eight years, there is a break in the historical record. There is a gap in Josephus' narrative and a loss of manuscript from Dion Cassius, the other authority of this period. In 1854, Zumpt, a German scholar, published a treatise in which he argued that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice and that his first term of office dated from the latter part of 4 BC. Because of his opinion that the star, which led the Magi to Bethlehem, was the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn, he put the birth of Christ in 7 BC. (see also Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, II, pp. 455-456; Sir Robertson Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, pp. 91-93.) Perhaps the time frame for Quirinius pushes the date for the nativity back to 6 BC.

The other chronological question concerning Christ's birth is, "Was He born on December 25th?" Among ancient Christian authors, May 20th, April 18th or 20th, November 17th (Clement of Alexandria), and December 25th can be found as possible dates

for the birth of Christ. The earliest reference to December is in the writings of Hippolytus (ca. AD 165-235). In a sermon delivered in December AD 386, Chrysostom, a pastor in Antioch who later became Bishop of Constantinople, said that the tradition for many years was that Jesus was born on December 25th and that within the last ten years, it had "become sure to us." By AD 430, December 25th became the accepted date. The one objection to it is that Luke 2:8 says that the shepherds attended to sheep at night, but sheep were taken to enclosures from November to March and were not in the fields at night during those months. However, the Mishnah (part of the Talmud, containing Jewish laws, compiled about AD 200) implies that the sheep around Bethlehem were outside all year. It is impossible to be dogmatic concerning the month Christ was born.

There is no record outside the New Testament to confirm that its chronological markers for the birth of Christ are accurate, but nothing has *proven* that they are wrong. In the final analysis, both the year and month of Jesus' birth are uncertain, except that He was born between 8 BC, the earliest date for a universal census by Augustus, and 4 BC, the date for the death of Herod, possibly in either 6 BC or 5 BC, depending on the dating of Quirinius.

The Commencement of Christ's Ministry Luke says, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas

were high priests, the Word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (Lk. 3:1-2).

This six-fold designation of an exact date is for the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist, but all agree that the baptism of Christ could not have been long after this. Estimates range from one to six months. Both were within the same year. It is usually assumed that this dramatic designation is to fix the beginning of Christ's ministry, not the ministry of John the Baptist.

Five of the six designations describe long periods. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea from AD 26 to 36. Herod Antipas ruled from 4 BC until AD 39. Philip was tetrarch from 4 BC to AD 33 and Lysanias was tetrarch from AD 12 (or 14) until AD 34 (or 36). Annas was High Priest from AD 6 to AD 15, when Gratus, the Roman governor, deposed him. The Jews, however, considered a man a High Priest for life. When Jesus was arrested, He was first brought to Annas (Jn. 18:13), and he is called the High Priest in Acts 4:6. His son-in-law, Caiaphas, was High Priest from AD 18 to 36. So, based on these five references, the commencement of the ministry of John the Baptist could not have occurred earlier than Pilate's appointment (AD 26) and not later than Philip's death (AD 33).

The one specific date given in Luke 3:1-2 is the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. There are two possible starting points for his reign (his co-reign with Augustus or his sole rule when Augustus died) and three different methods Luke could have used in reckoning the fifteenth year (Roman, Syrian,

and Jewish).

The first possible starting point for the fifteenth year of Tiberius is AD 12, when he became co-regent with Augustus. Ramsay and others since have contended that according to the writings of historians Tacitus and Velleius, Tiberius was formally recognized as sovereign by Augustus and the Roman Senate on January 16, AD 12. They also point out that Luke wrote in the co-reign of Titus with his father, Vespasian. So Luke applied the official principle used as he wrote. Assuming the AD12 starting point and using the Roman method, which began the year on January 1st, the fifteenth year would have been from August AD 2 6 to August AD 27. In the Syrian system, the year begins near the autumn equinox (ca. October 1st). If that was the system Luke was using, August 19th to September 30th would be the first year, and October 1st would begin the second. In that system, the fifteenth year would be from October 1, AD 27 to October 1, AD 28. The Jews began the year near the spring equinox, ca. April 1st. If Luke followed that method, the fifteenth year was from ca. April 1, AD 26 to ca. April 1, AD 27.

Others reject the co-regency as the starting point, saying there is no evidence for it in historical documents or on coins, but there is abundant evidence in writers like Josephus for beginning Tiberius' reign when Augustus died on August 19, AD 14. Assuming the AD 14 starting date and using the Roman method, the fifteenth year was from August 19, AD 28, to August 19, AD 29. The Syrian method would make the fifteenth year about October 1, AD 27, to around October 1, AD 28. The Jewish method makes the fifteenth

year ca. April 1, AD 28 to ca. April 1, AD 29.

Thus, Luke 3:1-2 can be used to justify dating the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry anywhere between AD 26 and 29. Either one of these possibilities must be accepted on its own, or other factors must be considered.

For example, Luke 3:23 states that Jesus was about thirty when He began His ministry. While some are willing to stretch this to anywhere from 20 years old to 40 years old, it is much more likely that it means somewhere between 28 and 32 or even just 29 to 31. This added detail means the AD 14 starting point for the reign of Tiberius will not fit because Christ was born in 5 BC, so the 15th year from AD 14 would make Him 34 years old. On the other hand, if Christ was born in 5 BC and the beginning of Tiberius' reign was AD 12, then the 15th year would be when Christ was 31 or 32, depending on the time of year He was born.

Another possible factor is the statement in John 2:20, "Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?'" According to the writings of Josephus, Herod began the work of reconstruction of the Temple in the fall of the 18th year of his reign. It is universally agreed that Herod came to power in 37 BC. Therefore, based on Jewish reckoning, the 18th year would be Nisan 1, 20 BC to Nisan 1, 19 BC. Forty-six years later would be AD 27. The incident in John 2:20 took place during a Passover (Jn. 2:13). So the Jews uttered those words in the spring of AD 27, Nisan 14, AD 27, to be exact. That means that Christ began His ministry before the spring of AD 27.

The conclusion is that John the Baptist must have begun his ministry in AD 26. Shortly thereafter, within six months, he baptized Jesus. The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. This best fits the time frame Luke gives in Luke 3:1-2 for the beginning of John's ministry and the statement that Jesus "began His ministry at about thirty years of age" (Lk. 3:23), as well as the statement of the Jews the next year at Passover (Jn. 2:20) that it had taken forty-six years to build the Temple.

The Duration of Christ's Ministry The gospel writers do not record the specific length of Christ's ministry. Consequently, it has been argued from ancient times that it was from one year to fifteen years. There have been only two main theories, one claiming a one-year ministry and another contending for a three-and-a-half-year ministry.

The one-year theory originated among the Gnostics, a group known for heretical views. In his book *Against Heresies,* written AD 182-188, Irenaeus exposes their error. Nevertheless, shortly thereafter, Clement of Alexandria argued for the one-year view based on the phrase "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk. 4:19), saying it indicated that Christ's ministry was confined to one acceptable year. Others, including Tertullian and Origen, adopted this position, using Clement's argument as their chief support but also adding other arguments, such as the paschal lamb must be one year old and without blemish. Some modern scholars have also held to a one-year ministry.

The problem is that while the Synoptic Gospels speak of only one Passover, the one at the time of the crucifixion, the Gospel of John mentions three. The Synoptic Gospels, however, are thematic developments of the ministry of Christ; they do not give much attention to chronology. In contrast, while the Gospel of John is also thematic, it contains seven time references between the baptism and crucifixion of Christ (Jn. 2:13; 4:35; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22; 11:55). Those who prefer to follow a chronology based on some data in the Synoptics must either ignore or mutilate the chronological references in John. Only then can they conclude that the ministry of Christ lasted only a year. It is much more natural and logical to conclude that since John gives chronological information and the Synoptics do not, John should be the basis of determining the length of the ministry of Christ.

John clearly teaches that at least three Passovers occurred during the ministry of Christ (Jn. 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). That alone necessitates at least a two-year ministry. Beyond that, the Synoptics require an additional year between the Passovers mentioned in John 2:13 and John 6:4. All four Gospels record the feeding of the 5,000 (Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:32-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-15). According to John, feeding the 5,000 "was near" a Passover (Jn. 6:4), which is always in the spring. In Mark's gospel, that event is recorded in chapter 6. Much earlier in chapter 2 (Jn. 2:23), he writes about an incident of the disciples picking heads of grain, which had to have been near harvest time, which was also in the spring. That incident was not around

the time of the Passover near the feeding of the 5,000. Therefore, it must have been a year earlier. Furthermore, the Passover of John 2:13 is too early for the incident of the disciples plucking grain because it occurred shortly after He had been baptized and had started His ministry. So, though none of the Gospels specifically mention a Passover between the ones in John 2:13 and John 6:4, there was one. If there were four Passovers (the three mentioned by John and one that is not), the ministry of Christ lasted for at least three years.

Two verses put together in the Gospel of John support the conclusion of an additional year between the Passovers of 2:13 and 6:4. John records that Jesus said, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (Jn. 4:35). Some say that the statement "There are still four months and then comes the harvest" is a proverb. If that is true, this verse has no bearing on the chronology of the ministry of Christ. There is no evidence, however, that this expression ever existed as a proverb. Besides, there were six months between sowing and harvest, not four. If this statement is not a proverb, it is a literal time. As a time designation, it places Jesus in Samaria in January/February after the Passover of John 2:13.

Later in his Gospel, John writes, "After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (Jn. 5:1). Which feast was this that Jesus attended? Numerous suggestions have been made. Although many have claimed that this unnamed

feast was Passover, that is not likely. In all the other places where John mentions a Passover, he identifies it. Moreover, he never calls the Passover "a feast." Another suggestion is that this feast was Purim, but that is virtually impossible because the Jews did not go to Jerusalem to observe Purim; they did it at home in the synagogues. The fact that this feast was not Purim means that an additional year must be added to Christ's ministry because there was no other Jewish feast between January (Jn. 4:35) and the Passover in April (Jn. 6:4). If the feast in John 5:1 is not Passover or Purim, it must be one of the Jewish feasts that followed Passover. The most likely candidates are Pentecost (May/June), Trumpets (September/October), or Tabernacles (October). In favor of the Feast of Tabernacles is the fact that elsewhere in John, it is referred to simply as "the feast" (Jn. 7:2, 10, 14, 37).

The point is, although John does not mention a Passover between the ones in John 2:13 and John 6:4, the events of John 4 and 5 demand that one took place that is not mentioned. Therefore, there were four Passovers during the ministry of Christ (Jn. 2:13; 6:4; 11:55 and one not mentioned), which means that His ministry was at least three years long. Allowing time for the events between the baptism of Christ and the first Passover, His ministry was approximately three and a half years long.

The Date of Christ's Crucifixion There is no disagreement concerning the month Christ was crucified. All agree that he died in the same month as Passover in Nisan (March/April).

There is, however, great debate about 1) the day of the week, 2) the day of the month, and 3) the year He died.

On what day of the week was Christ crucified? According to the Gospels, the answer is Friday. Matthew and John say the day He was crucified was the "Day of Preparation" (Mt. 28:62; Jn. 19:31, 42). Mark leaves no doubt that the "Day of Preparation" was "the day before the Sabbath" (Mk. 15:42). The day before the Sabbath is Friday. On the day He rose ("on the same day," Lk. 24:13), He appeared to two men who were on their way to Emmaus. Concerning the crucifixion (Lk. 24:20), they said to Him, "Today is the third day since these things happened" (Lk. 24:21). Counting Sunday ("today"), the third day before Sunday is Friday. Paul says Christ "rose again the third day" (1 Cor. 15:4). Christ was crucified on Friday.

If the Bible is so clear about the day Christ died, why is there a debate about it? Several verses are used to claim that Christ did not die on Friday. A popular problem people have with a Friday crucifixion is a statement Jesus made: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mt. 12:40). A literal interpretation demands a Thursday or, some say, a Wednesday crucifixion. The answer to this problem is simple. In the Bible, part of a day is equivalent to a day. For example, 1 Kings 20:29 says that Israel and Syria camped opposite each other for seven days, and on the seventh day, they began to do battle. Even today, if a person is sentenced to three days in prison, he or she is discharged on the morning of

the third day, regardless of how late the first day of imprisonment begins.

Nevertheless, some argue for a Wednesday or, even a Thursday crucifixion. Scroggie, the most well-known exponent of the Wednesday view (Scroggie, *Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 569-577), gives two reasons for a Wednesday crucifixion. The first is Jesus' statement about three days and three nights (Mt. 12:40). He admits that the Jews reckoned any part of a day as a whole day but insists that when the number of nights is stated as well as the number of days, the expression ceases to be an idiom and becomes literal. He also claims that the expression "after three days" (Mt. 27:63; Mk. 8:31; 9:31, 10:34; Jn. 2:19) supports his conclusion. His second reason for a Wednesday crucifixion is that in the Friday scenario, there are too many events (he says twenty) between Christ's death at 3 p.m. and His burial before 6 p.m. According to him, Jesus was buried before 6 p.m. on Wednesday, rose just after sunset on Saturday, and the discovery was made early on Sunday morning.

All attempts at a literal interpretation of "three days and three nights" miss its intended target. Three days from Wednesday is Saturday, not Sunday. That is why Seventh-Day Adventists adopt a Wednesday crucifixion. If, as Scroggie insists, Christ was buried on Wednesday and rose on Sunday, five days are involved. The Bible repeatedly says that Christ rose "on the third day" (Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; 24:7; 24:21; 24:46; Jn. 2:19; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4). Granted, it also says He rose "after three days," but the phrase "after three days"

means "on the third day." In the three places it is used in Mark, the parallel passages use "on the third day" (for Mk 8:31 *cf.* Mt. 16:21/Lk. 9:22; for Mk 9:31 *cf.* Mt. 17:23; for Mk. 10:34 *cf.* Mt. 20:19/Lk. 18:33). There is no way Christ could have died on Wednesday and have risen "on the third day" and that day be Sunday. As for Scroggie's list of twenty things, they could have been done simultaneously by various people.

The Thursday theory is also based on a literal interpretation of "the three days and three nights" of Matthew 12:40. This approach allows for parts of three days and three nights. In addition, those who hold this position agree that Friday was Passover and the body was removed from the cross on the "Preparation Day," only they contend that in this case, the Preparation Day was not the preparation for the Sabbath but preparation for the Passover. Therefore, since Christ died on the Preparation Day *for the Passover*, He died on Thursday, the day before the Passover. Their proof for such a theory is that John 19:14 speaks of the "Preparation Day of the Passover," and concerning the Preparation Day, John 19:31 says "that Sabbath was a high day," indicating the Passover Sabbath, not the weekly Sabbath.

The problem with this theory is that the Scripture and Josephus indicate that the Day of Preparation is the day before the weekly Sabbath, Friday. Mark plainly says the "Day of Preparation" was "the day before the Sabbath" (Mk. 15:42). In fact, the term "preparation" came to mean Friday. The Jews designed their days: first day, second day, third day, fourth day,

fifth day, preparation day, and Sabbath. They had no other name for Friday except "Preparation Day." It has even been suggested that the Greek phrase in John 19:14 not be translated as "the Preparation of the Passover" but "the Friday of the Passover week" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, p. 498). There is no evidence that "Preparation Day" was ever used on the day *before* Passover (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 776-77). The phrase "Preparation Day of the Passover" in John 19:14 can mean "Preparation Day for the Sabbath belonging to the Passover Festival," Friday of Passover week. In verse 31, "Preparation Day" refers to Friday as the day of preparation for the Sabbath, and the expression "Sabbath was a high day," literally a "great day," means that this Sabbath was the Sabbath of Passover week. In John 19, it is called "the Jews' Preparation Day" (Jn. 19:42), which Mark defines as the day before the Sabbath (Mk. 15:42). Besides, the Thursday theory includes three full nights but contains four days.

Moreover, all four Gospels are unanimous that Christ rose on the first day of the week, namely Sunday (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1). Therefore, the expression "today is the third day" in Luke 24:21 and Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:4 that Christ rose the third day refute either a Thursday or a Wednesday possibility.

On what day of the month was Christ crucified? The background of this question is related to the Passover. According to the book of Exodus, the Passover lamb was slain in the afternoon on Nisan 14th (Ex. 12:6), and the Passover meal was

eaten that evening (Ex. 12:8). The Synoptic Gospels (Mt.; Mk.; Lk.) seem to indicate that Christ ate the Passover meal (Nisan 14th). If so, He was crucified the next day on Nisan 15th. On the other hand, the Gospel of John seems to be saying that Christ died on the day of the Passover before the Passover meal, that is, on Nisan 14th. Here are the specifics.

The Synoptics indicate that Christ *ate the Passover* with the Disciples the night before He was crucified. Mark says, "They prepared the Passover" (Mk. 14:16). Luke states that Jesus said He was eating "this Passover" (Lk. 22:15-16; see also Mt. 26:2, 17-19; Mk. 14:1, 12, 14, 16; Lk. 22:1, 7-8, 13, 15). So, if Jesus ate the Passover meal, He was crucified the next day on Nisan 15th.

The Gospel of John, however, seems to say that Jesus was crucified *before the Passover meal*. John 13:1 says, "Before the feast of Passover," He ate a meal with the disciples, which was the night before He was crucified. John 18:28 says that at the trial, the Jews would not go into the Praetorium "lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover," indicating that the Passover was that evening, meaning that Jesus could not have participated in it the previous evening. John 19:14 says the day He was crucified was the "the Preparation Day of the Passover." John 19:36 says that when Jesus died, He fulfilled the requirement of the Passover lamb, that the legs not be broken. If He fulfilled the type of the Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), He died at the time the Passover lamb was being slain in the Temple, namely, on Nisan 14th (Ex. 12:6). Thus, if Jesus died before the Passover meal, He died on Nisan 14th.

Numerous and elaborate explanations have been given for this problem. Assuming that the Synoptics and John can be harmonized, three possible basic solutions exist.

1. The Synoptics are correct in saying that Christ ate the Passover meal and the references in John can be explained (A. T. Robertson; Geldenhuys). According to this view, John 13:1 means that before the Feast of Passover, Jesus knew His hour had come (Geldenhuys, pp. 657-660). John 18:28 can be explained by the fact that the word "Passover" in John has a broader meaning. In the Synoptics, the word "Passover" means the Passover meal, but besides John 18:28, in the other eight occurrences of it in the Gospel of John, Passover means the Passover festival. In other words, these Jewish leaders had eaten the Passover meal the night before, but there were other meals in the eight-day-long festival to come, and they did not want to be ceremonially defiled, prohibiting them from participation (Robertson, pp. 282-283). As has been explained, the references in John 19 to Preparation are designations of Friday. Christ didn't need to die at the "very hour" the Passover lamb was slain to fulfill the type of the Passover lamb (Geldenhuys, p. 666). Thus, Christ was crucified on Nisan 15th. (A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of The Gospels*, pp. 279-284; Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 649-670.)

2. The Gospel of John is accurate; the trial was before the Passover meal, and the Synoptics do *not* say Christ ate the Passover meal (Westcott; Plummer; Godet). Various explanations are given to explain that the passages in the Synoptics, like the

Disciples prepared the Passover meal but did not actually eat it or some other kind of meal was eaten. So, Christ was crucified on Nisan 14th.

3. The Synoptics are correct; Christ ate the Passover meal, but He was crucified on Nisan 14th. Christ could not have been crucified on Nisan 15th because it was the first day of Unleavened Bread, during which no work was to be done (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:7). Yet, according to both the Synoptics and the Gospel of John, work was done on the day of crucifixion. Judas was sent to buy supplies (Jn. 13:29). No one was to leave the house until morning (Ex. 12:22), but the Lord and the Disciples did (Mk. 14:26). Men came armed to arrest Christ (Lk. 22:52), etc. Also, the Passover lamb was a type of Christ. Paul says, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). The legs of the Passover lamb were not to be broken (Ex. 12:46). John presents Christ as the perfect Passover lamb, pointing out that He fulfilled this type in that His legs were not broken. He writes, "For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not one of His bones shall be broken'" (Jn. 19:36). The Passover was slain on Nisan 14th (Ex. 12:6). Therefore, for Christ to fulfill the typology of the Passover, He had to have been crucified on Nisan 14th.

Those who hold to a Nisan 15th crucifixion have answers for these objections (see Geldenhuys, pp. 665-669). For example, they say that Christ did not have to fulfill the type perfectly or that the legs were not broken, which fulfills Psalm 34:20, not Exodus 12:6. Nevertheless, some reject those answers. They

contend that to satisfy the most natural explanation of the verses in the Synoptics, that Christ did eat the Passover meal and at the same time have Christ crucified on Nisan 14th, another explanation is needed.

One theory claims that a custom was developed whereby the Passover meal could be eaten the evening before the slaying of the Passover lamb in the Temple on Nisan 14th, that is, on the 13th. Around AD 155, Polycarp said he kept Passover with the Apostle John on Nisan 13th (Leslie Madison, *Problems of Chronology in The Life of Christ*, doctoral dissertation, Dallas Seminary, pp. 205-206). Another theory says that the Pharisees and the Sadducees used slightly different calendars to calculate the date of the Feast of Weeks (originally by D. Chwolson, modified by Strack-Billerbeck). Leviticus 23:15 says, "You shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed." The Pharisees took "Sabbath" to mean Passover and counted from the day following Passover, whatever day of the week it was. The Sadducees took "Sabbath" to refer to the normal Sabbath and counted from the Sunday after Passover. Therefore, according to the calendar Jesus was using, He ate the Passover. The Temple authorities followed another calendar according to which the Passover lamb was slain the next day. Thus, Christ ate the Passover meal, but He was crucified on Nisan 14th (see Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, pp.774-786; Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the life of Christ*).

What year was Christ crucified? Both Pilate (Mt. 27:2; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 23:1; Jn. 18:29) and Caiaphas (Mt. 26:57; Jn. 18:24) participated in the trial of Christ. Since Pilate was governor from AD 26-36 and Caiaphas was High Priest from AD 28-36, Christ died between AD 28 and AD 36. The overall chronology of the life of Christ and astronomical lunar calculations have been used to narrow the possibilities.

In the overall chronology of the life of Christ, several factors are fairly firmly fixed. Christ was born between 8 and 4 BC, possibly 6 BC or maybe 5 BC, and it is generally agreed that the length of Christ's ministry was three and a half years. Thus, the critical point in dating Christ's death is the beginning of His ministry. The issues in dating the beginning of Christ's ministry are the beginning of the reign of Tiberius (Lk. 3:1), the meaning of the expression "about thirty years of age" (Lk. 3:23) and the starting point for the beginning of the building of the Temple (Jn. 2:20). Since it can be argued that the date of the beginning of the reign of Tiberius can be either AD 12 or AD 14, the expression "about thirty years" can be narrow or broad and the starting point for the beginning of the building of the Temple can be either 20 or 18 BC, the death of Christ can be dated from AD 30 to AD 33.

Astronomical lunar calculations have been used to pinpoint which year Christ was crucified. The Jews of Christ's day employed a lunar calendar based on the appearance of the new moon. Since it takes 29½ days for the moon to complete one full revolution around the earth, a lunar year has 12 months of

about 354⅓ days. They periodically added a thirteenth month to keep the calendar in step with the seasons. Working backward from today, astronomers can calculate the day of the week for every month in every year. So, if the day of the month and the day of the week were known, the year can be determined. For example, if Christ was crucified on Friday, Nisan 14th, according to astronomical calculations within the period of AD 28 through AD 35, the only possibilities that Nisan 14th fell on Friday are April 7, AD 30, and April 3, AD 33. There are problems with this approach. By definition, the new moon is invisible! So, the priest announced the beginning of each New Year when they saw the new moon near the vernal equinox and determined the first day of the month by observing the first tiny sliver of the crescent. It has been argued that atmospheric conditions, like clouds, could cause mistakes (Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, pp.99-103). Because of this and for the benefit of Jews living away from Jerusalem, the priest constructed tables that were somewhat crude by modern standards. Furthermore, using a computer, Goldstine has given the exact time for 66,000 new moons from 1001 BC to AD 1651 (Herman H Goldstine, *New and Full Moons*, 1973). According to his calculations, in AD 30, Nisan 14th fell on a Thursday and Nisan 15th fell on a Friday.

Thus, depending on which conclusions are reached on several critical issues, a case can be made for AD 30, AD 32, or AD 33 as the year Christ was crucified.

The traditional date for the crucifixion is AD 30. Based on a delayed census of Augustus and the first governorship of

Quirinius ending in 6 BC, Madison concludes that "the more probable date" for the birth of Christ is the early fall of 6 BC (Madison, p. 58). Assuming that the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Lk. 3:1) is reckoned from AD 12 when Tiberius began to co-reign with Augustus, that the expression "about thirty years old" (Lk. 323) only allows for a year short of or a year over thirty, that the work on the Temple began in 20 BC (Jn. 2:20), Madison says that Christ began His ministry in the late summer or early fall of AD 26. Since the Gospel of John covers four Passover, the ministry lasted for three and a half years. Therefore, Christ died at the Passover of AD 30 (Leslie Madison, *Problems of Chronology in the Life of Christ*, doctoral dissertation, Dallas Seminary).

Showers, who puts the birth of Christ either on December 5 BC or January 4 BC, insists that the beginning of the reign of Tiberius was in AD 14, that about thirty years is a broad expression, meaning that Christ was as much as thirty-two years, old when He began His ministry and that the Temple was begun in 18 BC (He allows two years for preparation for building). He concludes that Christ died in AD 32. He does not refer to astronomical lunar calculations (Renald E. Showers, "New Testament Chronology and the Decree of Daniel 9", *Grace Journal*, Winter 1970).

Hoehner argues that Luke 2:1 ("And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered") means censuses were taken at different times in different provinces, Augustus being the

first one in history to order one of the whole provincial empire (Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, p.15) and that the word "first" in Luke 2:2 ("This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.") means "before" (Jn. 15:18) and therefore, Luke 2:2 means, "This census took place *before* Quirinius was governor of Syria" (Hoehner, p. 22). He concludes that either December 5 BC or January 4 BC is the "most reasonable" date for the birth of Christ (Hoehner, p. 27). He assumes that the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Lk. 3:1) is reckoned from AD 14 (Hoehner, pp. 29-43) and that the expression "about thirty years old" (Lk. 3:23) allows for flexibility of two or three years (Hoehner, pp. 37-38). He argues that there are two Greek words for a temple, one for the small sacred building, the temple proper, and another for the whole sacred courtyard area. The Greek word for Temple in John 2:20 refers to just the building, and "it has taken forty-six years to build this Temple" (Jn. 2:20) means that the Temple building had stood for forty-six years. He then reasons that the small building was completed in a year and a half. So, reckoning from 18/17 BC, he arrives at AD 29 for the beginning of Christ's ministry (Hoehner, pp. 38-43). Since the Gospel of John covers four Passovers, the ministry lasted for three and a half years. Therefore, Christ died at the Passover of AD 33.

One other factor concerning the year Christ died needs to be mentioned. The Old Testament contains a prophecy concerning the date of the coming of Christ and an approximate date for His death.

Gabriel told Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people" (Dan. 9:24). The Hebrew word "weeks" literally means "sevens" (note: it is plural). Seven what? Seven days? Seven weeks? Seven months? Seven years? The Hebrew is like our words "dozen" or "score," which can mean twelve or twenty of anything. In the case of Daniel 9, the answer is years. The fact that 70 years of captivity were discussed earlier in the chapter would seem to imply that years are meant. Furthermore, as the interpretation will demonstrate, only years make sense. In fact, 490 days or 490 months would be meaningless, but a week of years fits the context well. The Jews were familiar with the idea of a week of years and a week of days. The concept of the sabbatical year was based on providing the seventh year as the year of rest, just as the seventh day was the day of rest. Genesis 29:27 speaks of a week of years (*cf.* with our expression, "a month of Sundays"). The point is that Gabriel told Daniel that God has a plan for Israel that covers 490 years (70 x 7 = 490).

After explaining the purpose of this program for Israel (Dan. 9:24), Gabriel reveals *when* the 70 weeks (490 years) will begin (Dan. 9:25). The beginning will be from "the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25). Furthermore, from the beginning, "until Messiah the Prince," will be sixty-nine weeks (483 Years; see Dan 9:25). After that, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself" (Dan. 9:26). In other words, *this Old Testament passage is giving a date for the coming of the Messiah* after which time He will be "cut off, but not for Himself," a reference to His death (The Hebrew word

translated "cut off" was used of the death penalty; see Lev. 7:20; etc.). The only question is when the 483 years begin. There are four possibilities for dating the beginning of this time frame.

The Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1)	539 BC
The Decree of Darius (Ezra 6)	519 BC
The Decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7)	458 BC
The Decree of Artaxerxes (Neh. 2)	445 BC

Some distinguished commentators have used the Decree of Cyrus as the starting point (Calvin; Keil; Leupold; Young, etc.). There are two problems with that view. First, Cyrus's Decree was to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:2-4). It was not a command "to restore and build Jerusalem," although, apparently, the people who returned with Ezra did work on the walls (Ezra 5:9). The second difficulty is that it put the coming of the Messiah at 56 BC (539 – 483 = 56 BC).

Using the Decree of Darius does not solve either problem associated with the Decree of Cyrus. In the first place, it only reaffirmed the Decree of Cyrus "to build this house of God at Jerusalem" (Ezra 6:3, 7). Also, it falls short of the coming of Christ (519 – 583 = 33 BC).

Likewise, at first glance, it seems that the Decree of Artaxerxes concerned the Temple (Ezra 7:19-20), but it clearly included much more than that. Artaxerxes said they could do "whatever seems good to you," "according to the will of God" (Ezra 7:18). Later Ezra thanked God that He "did not forsake

us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem" (Ezra 9:9). Moreover, it fits the coming of Christ perfectly. Calling this the traditional view, Boutflower dates the decree in 457 BC and concludes that 483 years later is AD 26, the year the Messiah was made manifest to Israel *(*Charles Boutflower, *In and Around The Book of Daniel*, pp. 186-191). Archer also dates the decree to 457 BC, but he arrived at AD 25 at the time of Christ's ministry (Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*, Jr., p. 387). Wood says the Decree was in 458 BC and the 483 years ends in AD 26 because only one year elapsed between 1 BC and AD 1 (Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, pp. 252-254).

Because it specifically pertained to the rebuilding of the wall, many have concluded that the commencement of the 483 years is the Decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Nehemiah 2. The problem, of course, is that this starting point places the coming of Christ in AD 38 (445 – 483 = AD 38). In his book *The Coming Prince*, Sir Robert Anderson says that the 483 years are "prophetic" years of 360 days (Anderson, pp. 67-75; Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5), that Christ died on April 6th, AD 32 (Anderson, pp. 88-105, 127) and that the Decree was issued on March, 3, 445 BC (Anderson, pp. 119-124). He concludes that the phrase "until Messiah the Prince" was fulfilled on the day of the triumphal entry, Sunday, April 6, AD 32 (Anderson, pp. 127-128). Sixty-nine weeks of prophetic years of 360 days or 69 x 7

x 360 = 173,880 days. There are 476 years and 24 days between March 14, 445 BC, and April 6, AD 32, plus 116 days for leap year = 173,880 days.). Thus, he dates the crucifixion in AD 32. Showers agrees with Anderson (Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God*, pp. 120-125).

Others begin the 70 weeks with the Decree of Artaxerxes recorded in Nehemiah 2, but not all of them arrive at AD 32 for the crucifixion. Walvoord does not commit himself to a date for the crucifixion (John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, pp. 223-228). Hoehner accepts this Decree as the beginning of the 70 weeks but claims the date is 444 BC instead of 445 BC. Therefore, according to him, the crucifixion was in AD 33 (Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological aspects of the life of Christ*, pp. 115-139). Campbell concurs with Hoehner (Donald Campbell, *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams*, p.110).

So, what year was Christ crucified? Several observations need to be made.

1. The Bible does not give a date for the death of Christ according to any method of reckoning time. Thus, this debate is about attempts to piece together a time frame from the available data. None of this *proves* a contradiction in the Bible. In the final analysis, this is a debate about how to put together various bits of information from within and from outside the Bible, not a conflict between statements in the Scripture. Several scenarios seem to satisfy all the Scripture statements without contradicting each other.

2. Exodus 12:6-8 says the Passover lamb was to be slain

in the afternoon of Nisan 14th and the Passover meal was to be eaten that evening. If Christ died at the time the Passover lamb was slain, He could not have eaten the Passover meal because the Passover meal took place after the lamb was slain. If, on the other hand, Christ ate the Passover meal, He did not perfectly fulfill being a type of the Passover lamb because He did not die at the time the Passover lamb was slain. Technically, the New Testament never says that Jesus fulfilled that part of the type. There are other aspects of the type He did not fulfill, like being only one year old when He died. Yet some theories attempt to explain how Jesus could have eaten the Passover lamb and have died at the time the Passover lamb was slain.

3. The interpretation that says Jesus ate the Passover meal and, therefore, died on Friday, Nisan 15, AD 30, is a simple explanation of all the statements of Scripture. The difficulty (for some) is that it does not have Christ dying at the exact time the Passover lamb was slain. For those, either Christ ate the Passover on Nisan 13th, or the use of two different calendars makes it possible for Him to have eaten the Passover meal (on Nisan 14, AD 30) and have died at the time the Passover lamb was slain (on Nisan 15th, AD 30). The "calendrical confusion" (Morris) makes that seeming impossibility possible!

In the final analysis, perhaps the available data make it difficult to be dogmatic concerning the year of the crucifixion. The conclusion that Christ died on Nisan 15th (April 7), AD 30, is based on the most obvious interpretation of all the issues. It is the least forced explanation of all the available information.

The Apostolic Age

The source of information for the remainder of the New Testament chronology is the book of Acts and bits of data gleaned from the epistles. Acts does not offer a detailed chronology. The few time references it contains are general and sometimes vague (see "many days" in 9:23, 9:43; etc.; "about that time" in Acts 12:1; "a long time" in Acts 14:28). It does give the length of time Paul spent in several places and it mentions some Roman political leaders. Paul was at Antioch for a "whole year" (Acts 11:26), at Corinth for "a year and six months" (Acts 18:11), at Ephesus for "three years" (Acts 20:31), and at Rome "two whole years" (Acts 28:30). Herod Agrippa I killed James (Acts 12:1-23). There was a famine under Claudius (Acts 11:28-30). Sergius Paulus was a proconsul (Acts 13:7), as was Gallio (Acts 18:12). Paul appeared before Felix (Acts 23:31-24:27), Festus (Acts 25:1-12), and Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32).

Even though specific political leaders are mentioned, definite dates are still elusive. The famine under Claudius occurred between AD 44-48. Sergius Paulus was appointed before AD 51. The succession of Festus to Felix has been dated from AD 55 to AD 60. Paul's meeting with Gallio in either AD 51 or AD 52 provides the most definite date.

Since Acts furnishes so few fixed dates, it is challenging to pinpoint some of the events of this period and synchronize them with secular history. The absence of exact chronology data means many of the following dates are approximate, and a

margin of a year or two is possible.

The Ministry of Peter Acts records Peter's activities in Jerusalem (Acts 1-4), Samaria (Acts 8), Lydda and Joppa (Acts 9), Caesarea (Acts 10) and Jerusalem (Acts 11-12). These chapters of Acts do not contain any chronological benchmarks, except that Acts 2 records the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of the Feast of Pentecost, which was fifty days after the Passover when Christ was crucified. If Christ died in AD 30, the events of Acts 2 occurred in AD 30. It is possible that all the events of Acts 1-8 took place in a year.

The Conversion of Paul The story of Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9:1-9, but there is nothing in that passage to indicate the date of his conversion. Galatians contains statements that can be used to pinpoint the year of his conversion, but a number of questions must be answered before the year can be determined.

First, to whom was Galatians written? The term "Galatia" was used geographically of old Galatia in the north of Asia Minor and politically of the Roman province of Galatia, which was in the south. The North Galatian theory holds that Paul visited Galatia for the first time on his second missionary journey, on his way to Troas (Acts 16:6) and on his third missionary journey, he revisited them (Acts 18:23). He wrote Galatians either in Ephesus (AD 53-56) or Macedonia (AD 56). The church fathers supported the North Galatian Theory, but that was probably because of the exclusive use of the geographical sense of Galatia in the second century.

The South Galatian theory contends that Paul visited Galatia on his first missionary journey with Barnabas (Acts 13:13-14:23). According to this view, Galatians was written in Antioch of Syria before the Jerusalem council in AD 49. The support for the South Galatian theory is that 1) Paul consistently referred to locations by using political designations (1 Cor. 16:1, 5, 15, 19). 2) There is no reference to the Jerusalem Council. 3) Barnabas is mentioned three times in Galatians 2. He accompanied Paul on his first journey but not on his second journey, when the churches in north Galatia were supposedly established. Neither theory can be proven conclusively, but the evidence seems to favor the South Galatian theory.

Second, in Galatians 2:1, when Paul says, "I went up again to Jerusalem," to which visit to Jerusalem does this refer: the famine visit of Acts 11:29-30 or the visit to the Jerusalem council in Acts 15? Many argue that Galatians 2 and Acts 15 refer to the same event, claiming the issue is the same circumcision (Acts 15:1); the geography is the same, Jerusalem; the people are the same, Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James; and the conclusion is the same (see Acts 15:22-29 and Gal. 2:3, 6, 10). The difficulty with that position is that if the Jerusalem council had already taken place, Paul would have referred to its official conclusion, which was the issue in Galatians, and it would have supported his conclusion. The absence of such a statement favors the conclusion that the Jerusalem council had not yet met and, therefore, Galatians 2 is a reference to the visit in Acts 11.

A simple comparison of Acts and Galatians confirms that Galatians 2 refers to the Jerusalem visit described in Acts 11. According to Acts, between his conversion and the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, Paul visited Jerusalem three times: 1) Acts 9:26-30, 2) Acts 11:30-12:25, and 3) Acts 15:1-29. In Galatians, Paul only mentions two visits: one in Galatians 1:18-19 and another in Galatians. 2:1-10. Given the point that Paul is making in Galatians that he had very little contact with the Apostles (Gal. 1:12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22), it would be highly unlikely that he would omit a visit to Jerusalem. To leave out a trip to Jerusalem would undermine his case. Therefore, the second visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Galatians, namely the one in chapter 2, is the same as his second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion cited in Acts, that is, the famine visit of Acts 11.

Other facts support such a position: 1) Paul went to Jerusalem on this trip by revelation (Gal. 2:2; Acts 11:27-28). 2) Galatians 2 is a private meeting, whereas Acts 15 was a public meeting. 3) Peter's vacillation (Gal. 2:11-14) is very difficult to understand if it was after the "official" council.

Third, Paul says that three years after his conversion, he "went up to Jerusalem to see Peter" (Gal. 1:18). He adds, "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me" (Gal. 2:1). Are the fourteen years from his conversion or from the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Galatians 1:18 making this seventeen years after his conversion? Arguments have been marshaled for fourteen and seventeen years, but it is impossible to prove either conclusively. To

complicate matters, "after fourteen years" may mean fourteen full years, or it may refer to twelve full years and a portion of the first and last years.

So, if Galatians was written before the Jerusalem council (AD 49) and Galatians 2:1-10 refers to the famine visit of Acts 11:29-30, Paul's conversion was as few as twelve years or as many as seventeen years before the famine visit. In other words, a case can be made for Paul being converted in one of several years between AD 32 and AD 36 or AD 37. Hoehner places Paul's conversion in the summer of AD 35 (Hoehner, *Chronology of the Apostolic Age*, a doctrinal dissertation).

Early Activities of Paul According to the book of Acts, after his conversion, Paul "spent some days with the disciples at Damascus" (Acts 9:19). Then, "after many days" (Acts 9:23), he went to Jerusalem, where he was "coming in and going out" (Acts 9:28). From Jerusalem, Paul went to Caesarea and from there, he went to Tarsus (Acts 9:30).

In Galatians, however, Paul says that he did not go to Jerusalem until he went to Arabia and returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:17). He also says it was three years before he went to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18). After Jerusalem, he says, he "went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:22, that is, Tarsus of Cilicia and Antioch of Syria.).

In other words, in Acts, Luke does not mention the visit to Arabia or the three intervening years between Paul's conversion and his visit to Jerusalem. Luke does say that "after many days" (Acts 9:23), Paul went to Jerusalem, which could mean three

years (Gloag; Bruce; Marshall; etc.).

By the way, Paul does not say he spent three years in Arabia. He says that after his conversion (Gal. 1:15-16), he "went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus" (Gal. 1:17), "then after three years I went up to Jerusalem" (Gal. 1:18). The three years includes time spent in Damascus twice as well as time in Arabia. How much time was spent in each place is uncertain. At any rate, three years after his conversion, Paul went to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26; Gal. 1:18). It has been pointed out that the expression "three years" is probably an example of inclusive reckoning and thus only refers to slightly more than two years. Hoehner (and Hodges) puts this visit to Jerusalem in AD 37.

Martyrdom of James Herod killed James, the brother of John (Acts 12:1). This Herod was Herod Agrippa I, who died shortly after a Passover season (Acts 12:23). According to Josephus, he died in the spring of the seventh year of his reign, that is, AD 44. This is one of the few fairly fixed dates in Acts. James was then martyred in or before AD 44.

The Famine Visit Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch, where he spent "a whole year" (Acts 11:25-26). Still later, because of a famine, Barnabas and Paul took relief money to Judea (Acts 11:29-30). Acts 12 records events involving Herod and concludes by saying Barnabas and Paul "returned from Jerusalem" (Acts 12:25). Although it appears that Barnabas and Paul went to Judea (Acts 11:29), which no doubt included Jerusalem and were there during the event of chapter 12, that was probably not the case. In Acts 11:28, Luke records that Agabus predicted a famine and

adds, "which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar." The next verse says, "Then the disciples sent relief money" (Acts 11:29), which they did by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. In other words, Acts 11:29 and 11:30 are not in chronological order but are a preview of what Barnabas and Saul did when the predicted famine did arrive. Thus, they were not in Jerusalem during the events of chapter 12. They actually went to Jerusalem after the events of chapter 12 and then "returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 12:25). As F. F. Bruce points out, their return, not their departure, is in chronological order (see also Gloag).

In Galatians, Paul says, "After fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem" (Gal. 2:1). As has been pointed out, this was the famine visit of Acts 11 (that is, Acts 11:29-30 and 12:25). Hoehner puts this visit to Jerusalem in the fall of AD 47. Then Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch (Acts 12:25), where they remained until they left on the first missionary journey.

First Missionary Journey Barnabas and Paul traveled from Antioch to Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 13:1-14:28). Assuming that Paul wrote Galatians after his first missionary journey and before the Jerusalem council (AD 49), it is safe to say that his first trip was from AD 48 to AD 49. Hoehner dates the scenario as follows:

Famine visit (Acts 11:21-27, Gal. 2:1)	Fall 47
In Antioch (Acts 12:25-13:1)	Fall 47-Spring 48
First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)	April 48-Spring 49
Encounter with Peter (Gal. 2:11-16)	Fall 49
Galatians was written in Antioch	Fall 49
Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)	Fall 49

The Jerusalem Council A council was held in Jerusalem concerning the issue of circumcision (Acts 15:1-29). Since Paul appeared before Gallio in AD 51 (see the next paragraph), it is fairly certain that the Jerusalem Council was in AD 49. According to Hoehner, Paul spent the winter of AD 49/50 in Antioch (Acts 14:26-28).

Second Missionary Journey Paul spent 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11). During that time, he appeared before Gallio (Acts 18:12). An inscription from Delphi, Greece, containing the twenty-sixth acclamation of Claudius as imperator (that is, the twenty-sixth time Claudius named himself imperator) mentions that Gallio was "proconsul of Achaia." Dating from the twenty-sixth acclamation of Claudius, the inscription is placed between January and August of AD 52. Since Gallio had to have been in office long enough to have made a report and received this commendation, he probably took office in the spring or summer of AD 51. Thus, Paul appeared before Gallio in AD 51 or AD 52 (possibly later). This is another fairly fixed date in Acts.

Hoehner concludes that Paul left Antioch on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:36-18:22) in April AD 50, he was in Corinth from March AD 51 to September AD 52 and he returned to Antioch in November AD 52, spending the winter of AD 52/53 there.

Third Missionary Journey Paul spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). According to Hoehner, Paul left Antioch on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16) in the spring of AD 53. It lasted until May of AD 57.

Arrest and Imprisonment Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-36) and spent two years in prison in Caesarea (Acts 24:27). After two years, Felix was succeeded by Festus as the proconsul of Judea (Acts 24:27). Hoehner says Paul was arrested on June 2, AD 57 and was imprisoned in Caesarea from June AD 57 to August AD 59.

First Roman Imprisonment Paul was taken to Rome to be tried before Caesar (Acts 27:1-28:15). When he arrived in Rome, he was placed under house arrest (Acts 28:16) for two years (Acts 28:30-31). The book of Acts ends with Paul being imprisoned in Rome. Hoehner dates the voyage to Rome to August AD 59 and the first Roman imprisonment to February AD 60 to March AD 62.

The Martyrdom of Peter The earlier chapters of Acts record Peter's ministry in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Acts 12:17 says that he departed from Jerusalem "to another place." The last mention of Peter in Acts is at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), which occurred in AD 49. There is a tradition that Peter founded the church at Rome, but it is unverifiable and unlikely. It is likely, however, that he was martyred in Rome. Rome was burned on July 19, AD 64. According to Hoehner, Peter went to Rome in AD 62 and was martyred there in the summer of AD 64.

The Martyrdom of Paul Acts closes with Paul in prison in Rome. The history of the remainder of his life must be put together from hints in the New Testament and a few statements outside of it. Apparently, he was released from his first Roman

imprisonment. He anticipated that (Phil. 1:19, 25, 26, 2:24) and the pastorals demand it. He then probably sent Timothy to Philippi with the good news as he had promised (Phil. 2:19-23). He went to Ephesus (in spite of his earlier expectation—see Acts 20:38) and perhaps to other churches in the area, like Colosse (Phlm. 22). Evidently, Timothy joined Paul in Ephesus. When Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia, he instructed Timothy "to remain" (1 Tim. 1:3). Once in Macedonia, he saw he was going to be delayed, so he wrote 1 Timothy, perhaps from Philippi in AD 63. As he anticipated, he no doubt returned to Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:14) and Macedonia. He then journeyed to the island of Crete, where he left Titus to continue the work (Titus 1:5). Apparently, after that, he traveled to Corinth from where he wrote Titus (Titus 3:13). After meeting Titus in Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), he went to Spain as planned (Rom. 15:24-28). After Spain, he visited Greece and Asia again (Corinth, Miletus, Troas; 1 Tim. 4:13-20) and may have been arrested in Troas. Paul wrote 2 Timothy in the fall of AD 67, hoping that Timothy would be able to visit him before winter (2 Tim. 4:21). Hoehner concludes that Paul was arrested and brought to Rome in the autumn of AD 67 and was martyred in the spring of AD 68.

Destruction of Jerusalem The Roman general Titus destroyed Jerusalem on September 2, AD 70.

The Ministry of John Tradition says John resided at Ephesus and wrote to the churches of Asia (in western Turkey). Since there is no indication that Timothy and John were at Ephesus simultaneously, John must have come after Timothy. Paul was

at Ephesus several times between AD 53 and AD 57. Timothy was there with Paul in AD 62/63. Timothy was still there when Paul wrote to him in AD 63. Evidently, Timothy left after that. Hebrews refers to an imprisonment, and it was written about AD 68 or AD 69. John probably did not arrive in Ephesus until after AD 67.

Evidently, John wrote his Gospel before AD 70 (see the present tense in Jn. 5:1) and his epistles afterward. John states that he was banished to Patmos (Rev. 1:9) and passages like Revelation 1:11, 22:7, 9, 10, 18, and 19 suggest that he wrote before his release. Clement of Rome, Irenaeus (a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John), et al., declared that John was banished to Patmos in the 15th year of Domitian (who ruled from AD 80-95) and that he was released by Nerva (AD 96). Revelation, then, was probably written in AD 95 or 96.

Summary: By determining individual dates where possible and by considering the life of Christ and the Acts of the Apostles as a whole, the following chronology of the New Testament can be established.

The Birth of Christ	5/6 BC
The Beginning of Christ's Ministry	26
The Duration of Christ's Ministry	3½ years
The Death of Christ	April 7, 30
The Conversion of Paul	Summer 35
First Missionary Journey	April 48 Spring 49

Jerusalem Council	Fall 49
Second Missionary Journey	April 50-November 52
Third Missionary Journey	Spring 53-May 57
Paul's Cesarean Imprisonment	June 5-August 59
Paul's First Roman Imprisonment	February 60-March 62
The Martyrdom of Peter	Summer 64
The Martyrdom of Paul	Spring 68
The Destruction of Jerusalem	September 2, 70
The Death of John	96

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

A universally recognized system of dating has been established. History is divided into BC and AD, and years are based on the accurate solar year.

Dates for the events of the Old Testament in the first millennium BC can be established by correlating the biblical data with the absolute dates of extra-biblical rulers. Dates for the second millennium BC are based solely on the data given in Scripture, and those for the third millennium and beyond depend on which interpretation is taken of the genealogies in Genesis chapters five and eleven. Thus, except for the first eleven chapters of Genesis, a chronology for the Old Testament can be determined to a remarkable degree, especially from about 2000 BC to 400 BC.

The following pages contain lists for the dates in the Bible, including the dates for the Old Testament, for the divided kingdom, and for the New Testament. In the case of the Old Testament dates, the dates for the foreign rulers are in bold print.

Abraham	2167 BC to 1992 BC
Isaac	2067 BC to 1887 BC
Jacob	2007 BC to 1860 BC
Rule of Egypt	1600-1200 BC
The Exodus (The birth of Moses to the Plain of Moab) 1527-1407 BC	
Exodus	1447 BC
The Conquest	1407-1400 BC
The Judges	1375-1043 BC
The United Kingdom	1043-931 BC
Reign of Saul	1043 BC to 1011 BC
Reign of David	1011 BC to 971 BC
Reign of Solomon	971 BC to 931 BC
The Divided Kingdom	931-605 BC
Rule of Assyria	910-612 BC
Fall of Samaria	722 BC
Rule of Babylon	612-539 BC
Fall of Jerusalem	605 BC
	March 16, 597 BC
	July 18, 586 BC
The Captivity	605-536 BC
Fall of Babylon	October 12, 539 BC
Rule of Persia	539-330 BC
The Restoration	536-400 BC
Return of Zerubbabel	July 18, 586 BC
Return of Ezra	April 8, 458 BC
Return of Nehemiah	April or May, 445 BC
Rule of Greece	330-146 BC
Rule of Rome	146 BC- AD 476

There are difficulties and apparent discrepancies in the dates for the divided kingdom. Thiele has resolved the problems and given the following dates.

Kings of Israel		Kings of Judah	
Jeroboam	930-909 BC	Rehoboam	930-913 BC
Nadab	909-908 BC	Abijah	913-910 BC
Baasha	908-886 BC	Asa	910-869 BC
Elah	886-885 BC		
Zimri	885 BC		
Omri	885-874 BC		
Ahab	874-853 BC	Jehoshaphat	872-848 BC
Ahaziah	853-852 BC	Jehoram	853-841 BC
Joram	852-841 BC	Ahaziah	841 BC
Jehu	841-814 BC	Athaliah	841-835 BC
Jehoahaz	814-798 BC	Joash	835-796 BC
Joash	798-782 BC	Amaziah	796-767 BC
Jeroboam II	793-753 BC	Uzziah	792-740 BC
Zechariah	753 BC	Jotham	750-732 BC
Shallum	752 BC		
Menahem	752-742 BC		
Pekahiah	752-732 BC	Ahaz	735-715 BC
Pekah	742-740 BC		
Hoshea	732-723 BC	Hezekiah	715-686 BC
		Manasseh	697-642 BC
		Amon	642-640 BC
		Josiah	640-609 BC
		Jehoahaz	609 BC
		Jehoiakim	609-598 BC
		Jehoiachin	598-597 BC
		Zedekiah	597-586 BC

The day of the week, the day of the month and even the year Christ died are debatable, but the following chronology of the New Testament is probably correct.

The Birth of Christ	5/6 BC
The Beginning of Christ Ministry	26
The Death of Christ	April 7, 30
The Conversion of Paul	Summer 35
Paul's First Missionary Journey	April 48-Spring 49
Jerusalem Council	Fall 49
Paul's Second Missionary Journey	April 50-November 52
Paul's Third Missionary Journey	Spring 53-May 57
Paul's Caesarean Imprisonment	June 57-August 59
Paul's First Roman Imprisonment	February 60-March 62
The Martyrdom of Peter	Summer 64
The Martyrdom of Paul	Spring 68
The Destruction of Jerusalem	September 2, 70
The Death of John	96

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