

## TOWARD A BIBLICALLY INERRANT CHRONOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

A new biblical chronology is proposed which dates the exodus at 1591 BC. This chronology is constructed from the biblical text including the prophecies of Daniel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The results are shown to be consistent with known sabbatic and jubilee years. The archaeological consequences of dating the fall of Jericho to the Middle Bronze (1551 BC) are examined and followed through to the Iron Age. The new interpretation of Palestinian archaeological evidence suggested by the new chronology resolves some longstanding historical problems.

### INTRODUCTION

Scriptures have been written with much more profound purposes than chronology, yet nowhere is it written that the details of the text are less true than the main message. "In the Bible, even if we regard it simply as the annals of the Hebrew race, we have a remarkable exception to the practice of all other nations of antiquity, in respect of keeping their national records, an exception so remarkable that it would be difficult or impossible to account for it apart from the Divine inspiration." Mauro [11, p.2] is referring to the Bible's quality of maintaining an unbroken series of written records that allow dating of events from creation to Cyrus the Great. The credibility of biblical chronology is such that, until the 19th century, scholars determined the age of the world from biblical chronology. The most famous of biblical chronologists was Archbishop Ussher whose 17th century chronology placed Creation at 4004 BC. This chronology is still used in the margin of the King James and other versions of the Bible. Claims that Ussher placed creation at 9:00 a.m. October 23 are untrue. It was, in fact, the opinion of Dr. John Lightfoot, a contemporary of Ussher [7, p.6].

### INERRANCY AND CHRONOLOGICAL CRITERIA

Jesus said that the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). He gave His personal assurance that the Scripture is holy - free from impurity or corruption. Inerrancy is a doctrine supported by the Scriptures themselves and does not need rationalism or archaeology to validate them. Some may argue that the historical accounts in the Scripture are plain enough to be useful in demonstrating inerrancy. In principle this may be true. In practice, there are areas where the currently accepted history and archaeology are in contradiction to the plainest meaning of the biblical text. Is the Bible or is the current evidence and understanding deficient? For example, scholars once claimed that no king of Assyria named Sargon existed in the days of Isaiah the prophet. Decades later, the site of Sargon's palace was uncovered and his reign during the time of Isaiah was accepted. During this time believers had to respond by accepting the Scriptural statements as true by faith in their Author and to wait for God to vindicate Himself. Thus, it is impossible to justify the doctrine of biblical inerrancy by rational interpretations of evidences alone.

Biblical inerrancy rests not just on divine inspiration but also on divine interpretation of the Holy Spirit. An inerrant Bible interpreted by human wisdom alone can be just as misleading and dangerous as any human philosophy or religion. It has been the intent of the author from the beginning not only to use the evidence





that he was the first born and incorporated Neriglissar's years into his own so that he appeared to reign from his father's death. Velikovsky concludes that what Berossus reported is a forgery. I believe the true history is as follows: the battle of Carchemish took place in the year that Nabopolassar died, 608 BC. Neriglissar became king and reigned 4 years until his death in 605 BC. Afterward Labashi-Marduk reigned a few months then was killed or driven away by Nebuchadnezzar who ruled 40 years, 604-565 BC. He was followed by his son Amel-Marduk and his grandson Nabonidus. I differ with Velikovsky's view that there were two Neriglissars.

We then have three perspectives in operation: the Jewish, Nebuchadnezzar's and the historical. Since Nebuchadnezzar in his 8th year captured Jehoiachin (II Kings 24:12) and died 36 years later in the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity he is counted as ruling 44 years from the Jewish viewpoint. From Nebuchadnezzar's view he had an accession year plus 43 regnal years. From the historical view 4 regnal years of Neriglissar were followed by 40 regnal years of Nebuchadnezzar. The astronomers, in order to keep their calculations straight, used the last viewpoint so that Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year (605 - 37 = 568) was 568 BC as indicated in the section on astronomical dating. Amel-Marduk succeeded Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25:27). He supposedly reigned 2 years. In order for Nabonidus' mother to be 104 years in the 6th of Nabonidus Amel-Marduk must have ruled another 7 years. Amel-Marduk, who was followed by his son, Nabonidus. Nabonidus ruled 17 years. Belshazzar, the great grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, was coregent with his father when Daniel interpreted the famous writing of the wall (Dan 5). This revised history agrees with Jeremiah's prophecy as to the number of kings, their familial relationships and their total reign.

## THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

From the 1st of Jehoiakim, here 611 BC, to the beginning of Hezekiah is a simple matter of adding the reigns of the Judean kings: Josiah 31 years, Amon 2 years, Manasseh 55 years and Hezekiah 29 years or 728 BC. In the 6th year of Hezekiah, 9th year of Hoshea, or 723 BC, Samaria fell to Assyrian King Shalmaneser V. Note that this is only 1 year different than the accepted date which supposes that Sargon II ruled 17 years. Actually, events in his reign are sometimes dated ambiguously. Each time, the same event is recorded, it is recorded 2 regnal years apart. Apparently, Sargon II attempted to steal the glory of the fall of Samaria from Shalmaneser V by adding the last two years of his reign to his own 15 years. In conventional history Sargon II ruled from 721-705 BC but should only be credited with the years 719-705 BC. Shalmaneser V should be credited with an extra 2 years (total 7 years) 726-720 BC. In this chronology, Sargon II and Shalmaneser V are moved back 3 years to 722-708 and 729-723 BC respectively. Table 1 summarizes the results to this point

**TABLE 1: FROM THE FALL OF SAMARIA TO THE END OF THE EXILE: 538 BC to 723 BC**

NAME OF KING OR EVENT	DATE BC	DURATION
Shalmaneser V	729	1 (7 year reign)
Hezekiah's 1st regnal year	728	5
Fall of Samaria	723	8
Sennacherib's invasion	715	5
Siege of Jerusalem	710	11
Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoiakim	699	88
1st Jehoiakim	611	3
4th Jehoiakim, 1st Nebuchadnezzar Battle of Carchemish	608	11
4th Zedekiah :Ezekiel's prophecy	597	7
11th Zedekiah : Jerusalem burned	590	25
Neb. dies; Jehoiachin released by A-M	565	27
1st Cyrus -end of exile	538	-

Thiele's interpretation of the late divided kingdom raises real difficulties during the reign of Hezekiah. In the record of King Sennacherib's 3rd campaign, conventionally dated to 701 BC, but here dated to 715 BC, he invaded Judah and Philistia. Having defeated the Egyptians and Philistines at Eltekeh, he captured the towns of Judah, deported 200,000 Jews and extracted tribute from Hezekiah. Then, Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem. On this the Assyrian records and the Bible agree. The Scriptures say that the fall of

Samaria, here dated at 723 BC, was the 6th year of Hezekiah (II Kings 18:10). The invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, King of Assyria, shortly thereafter, was in the 14th year of Hezekiah (II Kings 18:13) - only 8 years apart. Thiele's chronology has the fall of Samaria in 722 BC, Hezekiah's accession year in 715 BC and his 14th year in 701 BC - 21 years apart. He insists that Hezekiah and Hosea had no contact at all. He says "...it is of paramount importance that synchronisms (II Kings 18:1, 8, 10) between him (Hezekiah) and Hosea be recognized as late and artificial." [12, p.174], i.e. they are false. Clearly, this interpretation fails as a BIC. Other scholars resolve this by asserting that Hezekiah was coregent with Ahaz during the time of the siege of Samaria. This is negated by the text of II Kings 16:2 and 17:1 which tells us that Hosea began to reign in the 12th year of Ahaz's 16 year reign and reigned for 9 years. Archer [3] resolves this by amending the 14th year of Hezekiah to the 24th. But the problem here is historical not textual. Anstey resolved this apparent contradiction by noting that Sennacherib's records refer to his third campaign not his third year. He proposed [2, p.213] that Sennacherib did not give a regnal year because his campaign did not take place during his own reign but in that of his father, Sargon II, 8 years after the fall of Samaria.

From the textual values of the synchronisms in the Bible, table 2A was constructed and the end dates are completed and summarized in table 2.

**Table 2A - SYNCHRONISMS USED TO CONSTRUCT TABLE 2**

START DATE	FROM	TO	YEARS	SAME AS	II Kings Reference	END DATE
723	9th Hoshea	1st	8	12th Ahaz	17:1	731
731	12th Ahaz	Accession	12	17th Pekah	16:1	743
743	17th Pekah	1st	16	52nd Uzziah	15:27	759
759	52nd Uzziah	1st	51	27th Jeroboam II	15:1	810
810	27th Jeroboam II	Accession	27	15th Amaziah	14:23	837
837	15th Amaziah	1st	14	1st Amaziah		851
852	40th Joash	1st	39	7th Jehu	12:1	891
891	7th Jehu	1st	6		12:1	897

The date 810 BC for the 1st of Uzziah was reached by both Ussher and Anstey (Ptolemaic date). Amaziah's dates 851-823 BC inclusive leave an interregnum of 12 years. Anstey was of the opinion that this interregnum existed and that Uzziah was only 4 years old at his father's death. For 12 years, there was a regent ruling until Uzziah was 16. Ussher moved the synchronism 12 years so that no interregnum resulted.

**TABLE 2: YEARS FROM JEHU TO THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA**

KING OF JUDAH	FIRST YEAR	TEXT REIGN	KING OF ISRAEL	FIRST YEAR	TEXT REIGN
Athaliah	897	6	Jehu	897	28
Joash	891	40	Jehoahaz	869	17
Amaziah	851	29	Jehoash	852	16
Interregnum**	822	-	Jeroboam II	836	41
Uzziah	810	52	Interregnum**	795	-
Jotham	758	16	Zachariah	772	1
Ahaz*	742	16	Menahem	771	10
Hezekiah	728	29	Pekiah	761	2
			Pekah	759	20
			Interregnum**	739	-
			Hoshea	731	9
Fall of Samaria	723		Fall of Samaria	723	year 9 of Hoshea

\*There is a two regency between Ahaz and Hezekiah \*\*Period with no or unknown ruler

Assyriologists of the 19th century found ancient texts (eponym lists) which could be used to construct another independent chronology in the era of the divided kingdom. Inscriptions and annals also provided





We know Moses spent forty years in the desert but from Joshua's conquest to the first oppression is stated only as a generation, after which the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes and God delivered them into the hands of Cushan-rishthaim. Fortunately, Josephus records these numbers; Joshua ruled for 25 years after which there was an interregnum of 18 years. The Bible also lacks an explicit connection between Samson and Samuel. The most logical point to connect the two is the battle of Mizpeh where Samuel defeated and finally freed the Israelites from the forty-year oppression by the Philistines. This puts Samuel directly after Samson. Josephus also states there were 12 years until the crowning of Saul. Anstey's total of 594 years for Judges is too high due to his inclusion of 40 years for Eli. In Table 4, I propose 568 years (569 inclusively) from the exodus until the construction of the temple.

**TABLE 4: THE YEARS OF THE JUDGES - 1023 BC to 1591 BC**

NAME OF JUDGE	JUDGE YEARS	NON-JUDGE YEARS	SUM YEARS	DATE
Moses	40	0	40	1591
Joshua	25	0	65	1551
Interregnum	0	18	83	1526
Cushan-rishthaim	0	8	91	1508
Othniel	40	0	131	1500
Eglon/Moabite	0	18	149	1460
Ehud	80	0	229	1442
Jabin/Canaanite	0	20	249	1362
Deborah/Barak	40	0	289	1342
Midianites	0	7	296	1335
Gideon	40	0	336	1295
Abimelech	3	0	339	1292
Tola	23	0	362	1269
Jair	22	0	384	1247
Ammonites	0	18	402	1229
Jephthah	6	0	408	1223
Izban	7	0	415	1216
Elon	10	0	425	1206
Abdon	8	0	433	1198
Philistine/Samson/Samuel	40	0	473	1158
Samuel	12	0	485	1146
Saul	40	0	525	1106
David	40	0	565	1066
Solomon's The Temple	3	0	568	1026
<b>Total*</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>568</b>	

\*N.B. If the exodus is counted as Year 1, then Solomon's Temple is Year 1+479 = 480

**SABBATIC AND JUBILEE YEAR IN HEZEKIAH'S REIGN**

Is there any confirmation of the date 1591 BC? Every seventh year in the Jewish calendar was a year of Sabbath rest. From the fall (month of Tishri) to the next fall no crops were planted. The Jews were to live off the extra abundant harvest of the sixth year and that which grew in the seventh year of its own accord. The Jews were to cancel the debts of their fellow Jews from servitude (Deut 15:12). Schurer [16, pp.39-46], a famous scholar of Jewish history, concludes that there are several known sabbatic years. One sabbatic year is stated in I Maccabees as occurring in the year 150 of the Seleucid era. Schurer determined this to be 164/63 BC (Tishri to Tishri). Josephus also mentions a sabbatic year when Jerusalem fell to Herod three years after his appointment by the Romans, dated to 40 BC [10, XIV.16.sec 2]. Shurer identifies 38/37 BC as a sabbatic year. While Jerusalem was under seige God promised Hezekiah a harvest so abundant that they need neither sow nor plant any crops for two years (Isa 37:30). This was God's usual blessing for a sabbatic year followed by a year of jubilee (Lev 25:8-11). To fit with the other known sabbatic years, it must be dated to 710 BC, 19th year of Hezekiah, and 709 BC the year of Jubilee. Thus, it was 5 years from Sennacherib's invasion in the 14th year of Hezekiah until the siege of Jerusalem. After 5 years of warfare one can understand his need for a sign from heaven.

Since 1591 BC was the first year of a sabbatic cycle 1585 BC ought to be a 7th or sabbatic year. This in line with previous known dates of sabbatic years. But also the exodus was the first year in the jubilee cycle. The first year of Jubilee would be 1542 BC. It is 833 years before 709 BC, the next known year of jubilee.

Since 833 is divisible by 49 it is also in line with the previous dates of jubilee years. Only by adding or subtracting multiples of 49 can this alignment be maintained. Given that Solomon's temple is dated to 1023 and there are at least 480 but not more than 620 years to the Exodus only 1542, 1591 and 1640 BC are possible dates for the exodus.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeologists have divided ancient history into many eras. From the patriarchs to the captivity and Jeremiah the prophet is covered by the eras Middle Bronze(MB) II, Late Bronze(LB), Iron Age (IA) I and Iron Age II. Under the revised scheme the exodus and the Israelites under Joshua invade Canaan in MB II, and not in LB age as is conventionally accepted. The United Kingdom occupies the Late Bronze and the Divided Kingdom the Iron Ages.

**TABLE 5: REVISED ARCHAEOLOGICAL AGES**

NAME OF ERA	ACCEPTED DATES	REVISED DATES
Middle Bronze Age II	1900- 1550	1700-1200
Late Bronze Age	1550-1200	1200-900
Iron Age I	1200-900	900-800
Iron Age II	900-600	800-600

A specific problem area for biblical apologists is the archaeology of Jericho. The book of Joshua claims that the Israelites marched around the town for seven days, watched its walls fall, charged straight into the city and burned it without taking any spoils. After its conquest God cursed it so that nobody would rebuild its gates. It was not until King Ahab's day that Jericho's gates were rebuilt. Archaeologists, have placed the fall of Jericho and the conquest at the end of the Late Bronze, circa 1300 BC. At this time there is no city at Jericho for Joshua to conquer, no great wall which collapsed and no devastating burning. Furthermore, there is little sign any invasion in the land of Canaan. Although there is no city at the end of the Late Bronze era, there is a city labelled city IV, which meets uniquely the requirements for the biblical Jericho of Joshua's day. According to Wood [19] city IV was burned to the ground. Its upper walls were situated on top of the Early Bronze walls. These walls toppled outward (almost unique in archaeological sites) and the fallen bricks provided the attackers with a convenient ramp to enter the city. In the rubble of city IV, there were found pots and jars containing charred wheat. This is not unusual except for the quantity - six bushels. Normally in a long siege this grain would have been used up or if not would have been carried off as booty by the attackers. Afterwards, the city remained uninhabited until the beginning of the Iron Age era. The problem of identifying city IV with Joshua's time is chronology. Although city IV was initially dated to 1400 BC by Garstang subsequent work by Kenyon redated it to the Middle Bronze era or 1550 BC. The traditional conservative dates around 1400 BC and the liberal dates around 1320 BC were judged incompatible. Wood [19] together with Bimson and Livingstone [4] have attempted to redate this city to 1400 BC from its pottery. From this chronology, it would appear unnecessary. The city of Jericho fell in 1551 BC, the same date used by Kenyon. This implies that the conquest occurred in the Middle Bronze.

The idea that the Israelites inhabited Palestine in the Middle Bronze is not new. Velikovsky in 1952 suggested that the Amalekites who attacked Moses in the desert after the exodus are the same as the Hyksos of Egyptian history who overpowered the Middle kingdom Egypt (dynasty XII). These Hyksos kings ruled for centuries until overthrown by Ahmose I, the first ruler of dynasty XVIII. Archaeologically, the Hyksos and therefore Joshua, belong to the latter part of the Middle Bronze. Courville [6] reexamined reports for some archaeological sites in order to reposition the exodus, and in particular Shechem. Shechem was burned by Gideon's son Abimelech. The residents when overwhelmed took refuge in the temple of Baal Berith. The archaeologists excavating Shechem found a city which had been a major fortification with tower and walls 17 feet thick. It had been burned severely and contained a large temple which had a stronghold within it which had been burned also. It was initially identified with the Shechem of Abimelech. Later, however, it became apparent from the pottery that the temple and city belonged to the Middle Bronze IIC. This was much too early for the time of Abimelech according to standard chronology. A diligent search was made of the later strata for the Israelite temple. A lesser temple was found but it had not been burned. The city showed a steady decline through the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. The temple of Baal Berith was not found. Like Jericho, the archaeological evidence fit well with biblical history but not the chronology.

The hypothesis that the conquest belongs in the Middle Bronze means the archaeological evidences of the Late Bronze and Iron Ages must be reevaluated. If it can be shown that there is a reasonable interpretation for them then the hypothesis remains viable. James [7, pp.163-203] showed that there is a reasonable





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