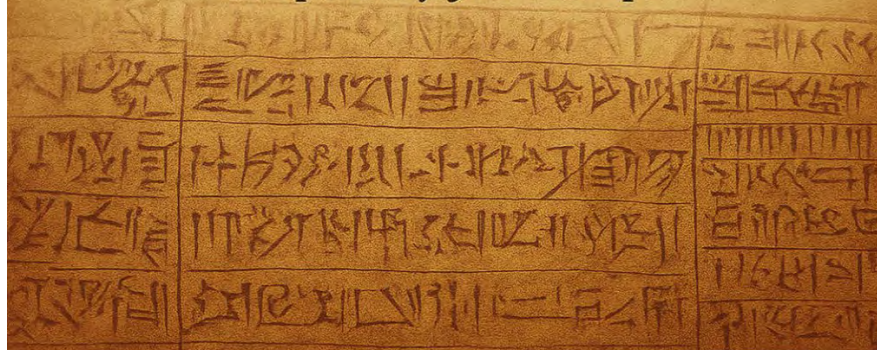


# A COMPARATIVE TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL AND WORLD EVENTS

Aligning the Scriptural Record with  
Ancient Near Eastern and Global History

Compiled by Jim Phillips



## NOTES

## Birth of Arphaxad

The first actual decision that must be made in the Chronology is when was Arphaxad born? The question is, does the term "*after the flood*" refer to after the *end* of the flood, or after the *start* of the flood?

The flood was an 11-month, 17-day event, so this would make a difference of effectively one year. We will choose after the *start* of the flood for this reason. Noah is said to have lived 600 years till the flood, and 350 years, "*after the flood*" and died 950 years old. This would seem to indicate that the dating for the term "*after the flood*" is from the *start* of the flood, for he would have died 951 years old, if the dating was from the end of the flood. Having no reason to reckon any other way, we will assume that the same dating applies to the birth of Arphaxad.

## How Old was Terah when Abraham was Born?

The first perplexing question for this period is, "How old was Terah, when Abraham was born?" We are told:

Gen. 11:26-32 "And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran."

In the above verses, we are not told the specific age of Terah at the birth of Abraham. There is a possibility that Terah had Abraham at age 70, which is why Abraham is listed first. Others say Abraham was listed first because of his significance, not because of his age. Those who take that position point to Acts 7:2-4 and Gen. 12:4-5 to argue that Abraham must have been 75 years old when Terah died, which means he was born when Terah was 130. This decision results in a 60-year difference in Chronology. Those verses say:

Gen. 12:4-5 "So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

Acts 7:42 "And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he

dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell."

As the purpose of this Chronology is to find the youngest period for the age of Creation, it is necessary that we choose Abraham's birth to be when Terah was 70 rather than 135.

The justification, or how we harmonize the above verses for this date is as follows. Abraham departed from Charran at age 75. (Gen. 12: 4-5) He came to the Holy Land, entered the land, received the promises, but did not stay, rather yielding to Lot (Gen. 13:11-12) and settled south of the Land of Promise, on the plains of Mamre near Hebron (Gen 13:18.) Eventually he moved further south East to Beer Sheba, in the land of the Philistines (Gen. 21: 32-34). After Terah had died, when Abraham was 135, he then moved back into the Holy Land to reside there and was living in Hebron when Sarah died.

## **When was the covenant Confirmed to Abraham? & When was the Start of the Seed of Abraham Wandering?**

The second question for this period is when do we start the 430 years of Exodus 12:41, from the covenant to Abraham, which ended on the Passover night in Egypt?

Exo. 12:40-41 "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."

Gal. 3:7 "And this I say that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

The third question is intimately related to the second question, so we must consider them together. That is, when do we start the 400 years of Abraham's seed wandering, of Acts 7:6 which states that Abraham's seed wandered as strangers for 400 years?

Acts 7:5-7 "And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom

they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place."

There would appear to be a correlation between these later two questions. The 430 years from the covenant to Abraham ended on the night that the Israelites came out of Egypt. Abraham's seed wandered the wilderness for 40 years after the night they came out of Egypt. The 400-year period of Acts 7:6 must therefore end 40 years after the night of the Exodus. The starting point for the two periods, then, must be 70 years apart. This is determined because the 400-year period ends 40 years after the 430-year period—40 years difference—and is obviously 30 years shorter--30 more years difference, or 70 years total. So the 430 of Exodus 12:40 must begin 70 years before the 400 years of Acts 7:6. The earliest possible date for the start of the 400 years of Abraham's seed wandering, would be when Abraham first had his seed (Isaac) when Abraham was 100 years old in 2048.

My date, then, for the promise first made to Abraham is made by reckoning backwards from that date, a period of 70 years. Reckoning back, this would make the promise made at AM 1978. If this is the case, then the call to Abraham was first made when he was living in Ur, before having moved to Haran, and when he was 30 years old.

There are no Scriptural references to this time. That is admitted. There are, however, other indications from the Scriptures that this is the correct date. This date would agree, for instance, with the fact that when God references this call to Abraham, He says He took him from the land of Ur to go to the land of Canaan (Neh. 9:7-8). And this also agrees with Moses account of the reason for leaving Ur in the first place (which is said to go from Ur to Canaan). (Gen. 11:31). If this is correct, then the call was made to Abraham while living in Ur, at the age of 30. Not when he was in Padan Aram, some 45 years later, or after having moved into the Holy Land at an even later date.

Neh 9:7-8 "Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:"

Gen 11:31 "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."

The age of 30 is also Scripturally significant. This would be the same age as Jesus was when he was called to his work, the same age that Joseph was called to stand before Pharaoh, and the age of David when called to take the throne as King.

Some chronologists argue that in Gal. 3:7, the account is that there were 430 years from the "confirmation" of the covenant to Abraham to the Passover night. There was

another time when the covenant was said to be "confirmed" to Abraham, after he had married Hagar at age 85. These argue that the 430 years should be measured from this "confirmation" of the covenant." We would suggest that the confirmation Paul is discussing in Galatians 3:7 was the confirming of the promise that Christ had accomplished some 30 years "before" his Galatians epistle, in Jesus' crucifixion, not the confirmation that God gave Abraham after he entered into Canaan.

Gal. 3:7 "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

Gen 15:17-21 "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

If the sojourning of the "seed of Abraham" cannot be reckoned before Abraham had "seed" can the "sojourning of the Children of Israel of 430 years" be started before Israel had children? I would answer, no! But the difference is this. Israel can mean the Power or Strength of God (The Mighty One). Abraham, while Grandfather of Israel, was also the son of Israel, being a son of God (Luke 3:38) and therefore included in the sojourning of the Children of Israel.

## Jericho, and the Controversy Surrounding its fall.

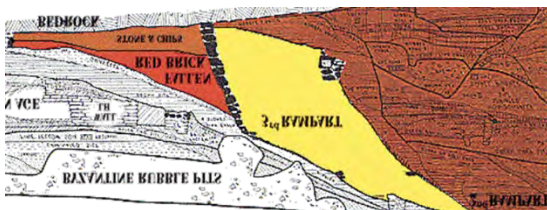
The question of the fall of Jericho was first settled by a man named John Garstang, a professor at the University of Liverpool, who first excavated Jericho between the years 1930 and 1936. Garstang named the ancient site, and the level of it which he excavated "City IV." He concluded that this was the occupation level which was in existence in Joshua's day. He also concluded that the Biblical account was accurate. Jericho had fallen to Israel about 1400 B.C. He wrote: "In a word, in all material details and in date the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative" (1937, p 1222). For several years, scholars generally accepted Garstang's conclusions. This changed drastically with the excavations of Kathleen Kenyon.

From 1952 to 1958, Kathleen Kenyon, of the British School of Archaeology (daughter of famed archaeologist, Sir Frederic Kenyon) supervised an expedition at Jericho. Her work was the most thorough and scientific that had been done at this site. Her team unearthed a significant amount of evidence, but surprisingly, Kenyon's interpretation of the data was radically different from Garstang's. She contended that City IV had been destroyed about 1550 B.C. and therefore there was no fortress city for Joshua to conquer around 1400 B.C. She suggested that the archaeological evidence discredited the biblical record!

One of the most curious elements of this whole matter, however, is the fact that, prior to her death in 1978, Kathleen Kenyon's **opinions** regarding Jericho had been published only in a popular book (Kenyon, 1957), in a few scattered articles, and in a series of preliminary field reports. The detailed record of her work was not made available until 1982-83, and an independent analysis of that evidence is bringing to light some startling new conclusions.

The March/April 1990 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, certainly no “fundamentalist” journal, contains an article titled, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? – A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence,” authored by Dr. Bryant G. Wood. Dr. Wood is a visiting professor in the department of Near Eastern studies at the University of Toronto. He has served in responsible supervisory positions on several archaeological digs in Palestine. In this scholarly article, Wood contends: “When we compare the archaeological evidence at Jericho with the Biblical narrative describing the Israelite destruction of Jericho, **we find a quite remarkable agreement**” (1990, p 53, emp. added). The professor emphasizes several major points of agreement between the archaeological evidence and the record in the book of Joshua. We summarize as follows:

1. The Bible indicates that Jericho was a **strongly fortified city**. It was surrounded by a “wall,” and access to the fortress could only be obtained through the city “gate” (Joshua 2:5,7,15; 6:5,20). *Biblical Archaeology Review* notes: “The city’s outer defenses consisted of a stone revetment wall [some 15 feet high] at the base of the tell [hill] that held in place a high, plastered rampart. Above the rampart on top of the tell was [the remnant of] a mudbrick wall [about 8 feet high at one point] which served as Jericho’s city wall proper” (see Wood, 1990, p 46).
2. According to the Old Testament, the invasion occurred just following the 14th day of Abib (March/April) (Joshua 5:10), thus in the springtime, or **in the harvest season** (3:15). Rahab was drying flax upon her roof (2:6). Both Garstang and Kenyon found large quantities of grain stored in the ruins of Jericho’s houses. In a very limited excavation area, Kenyon found six bushels of grain in one digging season – “This,” as Wood comments, “is unique in the annals of Palestinian archaeology” (1990, p 56).
3. The biblical record affirms that the **conquest was swiftly accomplished** in only seven days (6:15). The people of Jericho were confined to the city with no chance to escape (6:1). The abundance of food supplies, as indicated above, confirms this. Had the citizens of Jericho been able to escape, they would have taken food with them. Had the siege been protracted, the food would have been consumed. The Old Testament record is meticulously accurate.



4. When the Israelites shouted with a great shout on that seventh day, the **“wall fell down flat**, so that the people went up into the city” (6:20; cf.

Hebrews 11:30). Kenyon's excavations uncovered, at the base of Jericho's tell, a pile of red mudbricks which, she said, "probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank" (Kenyon, 1981, p 110; as quoted in Wood, 1990, p 54). She described the brick pile as the result of a wall's "collapse." Professor Wood states that the amount of bricks found in the cross-section of Kenyon's work area would suggest an upper wall 6.5 feet wide and 12 feet high (1990, p 54).

5. According to the Scriptures, Jericho was to be a city "devoted" to God, hence, the Hebrews were to confiscate the silver and gold, and the vessels of brass and iron for Jehovah's treasury. However, they were to **take no personal possessions** (6:17-19). The archaeological evidence confirms this. As indicated earlier, a considerable amount of grain was found in Jericho. Grain, in biblical times, was exceedingly valuable, being frequently used as a monetary exchange (see I Kings 5:11). It is therefore unthinkable, unless by divine design, that the Israelites would have taken Jericho, and left the grain intact. The Bible is right!
6. The Scriptures state that during the destruction of Jericho, **the city was set on fire** (6:24). When Miss Kenyon dug down into the city, she discovered that the walls and floors of the houses were "blackened or reddened by fire...in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt" (Kenyon, 1981, p 370; as quoted in Wood, 1990, p 56).
7. The Bible indicates that Rahab's house was built "upon **the side of the wall**, and she dwelt upon the wall" (2:15). A number of houses were found just inside the revetment wall, which could have abutted the wall [see point (1) above], thus easily accommodating an escape access from the city (Wood, 1990, p 56). The evidence indicates that this area was the "poor quarter" of the city – just the type of residence that one might expect a harlot to have.
8. Whereas Kathleen Kenyon contended that Jericho (City IV) had been destroyed about 1550 B.C., and abandoned thereafter, hence, there was no city for Joshua to conquer in 1400 B.C. (according to the biblical chronology), the actual evidence indicates otherwise. A cemetery outside of Jericho "has yielded a continuous series of Egyptian scarabs [small, beetle-shaped amulets, inscribed on the underside, often with the name of a pharaoh] from the 18th through the early-14th centuries B.C.E., contradicting Kenyon's claim that the city was abandoned after 1550 B.C.E." (Wood, 1990, p 53).

## The Archeological Record of Hazor

The most famous of Jewish archeologists, Yigael Yadin excavated the Tell of Hazor in 1955-58 and again in 1968, looking for lost books from Solomon's reign which he believed to have been moved there. What he discovered was that Hazor had been burned in the 13th century BC. Greatly influenced by the work of Kathleen Kenyon who argued Jericho had been destroyed in the 13th century, Yadin considered this burning to have been the burning of Hazor by Joshua, also in the 13th century, and it has been widely accepted as such.

The obvious problem is that according to our chronology, Hazor is burnt by Joshua in 1450 BC, right in the middle of the 15th century, not the 13th. This has been another of the reasons why the 480-year date regarding the night of the Passover, to the laying of the foundation of the temple in the 4th of Solomon of 1 Kings 6:1 has been widely disregarded.

But Yigael Yadin's prime student and the man who took over his work following his death, Avi-Yonah records in his writing that there were actually two burnings of Hazor uncovered in their digs. The one recorded by Yadin in the 13th century, and another in the 15th century. (Avi-Yonah pp. 481-482). The one in the 15th century is the destruction by Joshua recorded in Joshua 11:1-14.

What then of the destruction of Hazor in the thirteenth century? The book of Judges records that during a time of Israel's disobedience, God raised up Jabin, King of Canaan that reigned in Hazor. This persecution of Israel began, according to our Chronology, in 1304 BC. The account says that Jabin mightily persecuted Israel for 20 years (Jud. 4:3). This means that the revolt against Jabin (and Sisera, his General) took place in 1284 in which Israel routed Jabin's armies and pursued them, killing all. And while no specific mention of burning Hazor is recorded, it is very likely that in such a destruction where all human life was destroyed, that the city again was burned in 1284, in the 13th century as recorded in the archeological record.

## The Period of the Judges

The third period is where the true problem with the Chronologies of the past have occurred. The period has been referred to as "The Gordian Knot" by some because they have believed it is simply not possible to determine the chronology of this period. In one important way, it is the easiest of all periods to determine. The time is very precisely stated.

1Kings 6:1 "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD."

This would seem all quite simple. They left Egypt on the Passover night, and then there were 480 years till the fourth year of Solomon. The problem for chronologists is that there are other related time frames which appear nearly impossible to fit into the 480 years.

Observe the following list.

1. The children of Israel wandered 40 years after they came out of Egypt.
2. Joshua fought for 30 years to drive the enemies of Israel out of the land.
3. The period of the Judges is said to have consumed 450 years. (Acts 13:17-22)
4. Saul's reign is said to have been 40 years. (Acts 13:21)

5. David's reign is said to have been 40 years. (2 Sam. 5:4)
6. The 480 ends in the 4th year of Solomon's reign. (1 Kings 6:1)

Most chronologists have ignored the 480 years period of 1 Kings 6:1 and extended this period anywhere from 573 years to 604 years. As the purpose of this chronology is to take the shortest period for this time frame, thus pushing the end of the 6000 years as far into the future as possible, we will show that the period is truly one of 480 years. But of course it is not enough to just take the 480 years as the correct time frame for the period in question. We must show that there is some reason for doing so.

The biggest conflict there is for the traditional chronologies is harmonizing the period of the Judges with the 480 years of 1 Kings. 6:1. It is easy to see the difficulties. If the reign of the Judges is 450 years, and the reign of David is 40 years, and we have 4 years till Solomon, we already have 494 years, for a period said in 1 Kings 6:1 to be only 480 years. And it gets much worse. Some time (40 years?) must be allotted for Saul's reign. And there was a time in which Samuel judged Israel which is possibly not of the 450 but certainly would be in the 480. (I believe that Samuel's reign *is* included in the 450 years of the Judges.) If the time of the Judges starts (as many start it) after the death of Joshua, (reasoning that by this time, the land is settled, and Israel cannot be said to be going out of Egypt any longer) it is easy to see the impossibility of making all this work out. Earlier dates (such as Passover, or the entering into the land) create even more difficulties.

This is further complicated by the chronology of the Judges itself. If all the times listed in the book of Judges are made to run in chronological order, there would be exactly 450 years accounted for in the book of Judges from the first of Othniel till the 40th of Eli. It is very tempting to say this must be the 450 years of the Judges that Stephen referred to in Acts, even though this would make the harmonizing the 480 impossible. There would still be the 20 after Eli's death till Samuel takes charge in Israel, Samuel's growing old, Saul's reign, David's reign (40 years), and the 4 years of Solomon.

So while it is tempting to consider the book of the Judges (with Eli) to be a period of 450 years, it cannot be the correct method of interpretation. For instance, there is a chronological problem in the book of Judges itself, that would be set up by using the dates this way.

The Judges' account has Jephthah arguing with the children of Ammon, and Jephthah asks them why, if this is their land, they haven't claimed it for the last 300 years in which Israel had controlled the cities in question (Judges 11:26.) This control, Jephthah says, began when Moses defeated Balak on the way into the Holy Land. Using the common dates of the Judges, and presuming the defeat of Balak to be very near the end of the 40 years wandering (for it appears that Aaron has already died prior to the defeat of Balak, and Aaron dies in the last year, the 40th year, fifth month of the wandering) we would have Jephthah as a judge from the 396th year of the Judges, to the 402nd year. This is a period closer to 400 years, than the 300 years Jephthah is arguing for. And since Jephthah is arguing his case for longevity in the land, it would seem far more likely that he would round up to 400 years (from 396 years,) than down to 300 years, if the common dating for the Judges was accurate.

Harmonizing these time frames has another problem which is the length of Saul's rule. Acts 13:21 states clearly that Saul the son of Cis reigned 40 years. Chronologists, reasoning from Josephus (a Jewish historian), say Saul only reigned from 7 - 13 years but Acts is pretty clear to the contrary. Further, to accept the short reign of Saul sets up major conflicts with the life of others. Certain problems would be found in David's life, who is called a stripling when he fought Goliath, but is 30 years old at the death of Saul. If Saul's reign was only 7 years, and Saul reigned two years before his rebellion, then David must be at least 25 when fighting Goliath, not a stripling in any historical period. Further, when the people began to complain that Samuel was old and not able to judge anymore, and his children were not righteous, and therefore they needed a King, Samuel would only be 45 years old. And, at the end of Saul's reign when Samuel is referred to as an aged man, he would only be 52.

While we suppose all of that is possible, it seems too far of a stretch. David could have appeared young for his age, and Samuel could have appeared very old at a relatively young age. And Samuel could have had sons old enough for the priesthood (30) when he was only 45. And there may be some alternative reading for 1 Kings 6:1 and Acts 13:21 that I can't find that justifies other conclusions. But it does appear to be too many difficulties.

We will take a completely different tact for the solving of the "Gordian Knot". Some chronologists have observed that the judgeship of Samson was coexistent with the 40 years of the Philistines persecution. I suggest that in fact, all judgeships were coexistent with their respected enemies, and that the period allotted to persecutors should not be reckoned in the Judges Chronology. This method comes up lacking, because then there are not enough years of judges, but only 299 years accounted for. It appears to me that this is due to the starting point from the first judge.

It is reckoned that the period of the Judges must start after Joshua. This is not the case. The Acts 13 account simply says that God gave them judges after Joshua, not that the first judge came after Joshua. And it says only that the period of the Judges was 450 years, not the period after Joshua was 450 years.

With all this taken into consideration, the question becomes, who is the first Judge, and when did he begin? Acts 7:27 gives us the answer. The Israelite who wronged his brother, asked Moses, who made thee a ruler and a *judge* over us. Stephen says it was God who had made Moses a Ruler and a deliverer. Moses was the first judge of Israel, and his judgeship began at age 40, when he tried to judge Israel but was rejected by Israel, (though not by God). This then, began the 450 years of the judging of Israel.

Having now fixed the starting point of the Judges at Moses' first showing himself to Israel, or 40 years before the Exodus, we go on through the period of the Judges with Moses judging 80 years, Joshua 30 years, and all the period of the Judges adding up to 299 years. As stated in our previous notes, we only count the years in which a Judge judged Israel, excluding all the years recorded as years of captivity. This brings us to 409 years to the start of Samuel's judgeship, when he is 39 years old.

(When we say we exclude the years of captivity, we are not excluding years but including them in the reigns of the various judges.)

There is one main point to be made in this. Our chronology allows no time for the judgeship of Eli. Eli's judgeship was not as the civil judge, but as the High Priest. Therefore, he was judging Israel as the High Priest during the civil judgeship of Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. I believe that the invasion of the Philistines described in 1 Sam. 4 was sparked by the Philistines victory over Samson. The death of the judge Samson gave the Philistines the confidence to come up against Israel, and that these two events happen simultaneously.

Upon the death of Samson and Eli, Samuel will judge Israel for 40 years, till he is 69, to complete the "about 450 years" of judges, actually 449 years. Since we begin the 450 year period of the Judges 40 years before Israel's coming out of the land of Egypt, we are only 410 years into the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1. This leaves 70 years in which to accomplish the 4 years of Solomon's reign, 40 years of David's reign, and 40 years of Saul's reign. This is 84 years, which must somehow be squeezed into 70 years, and this brings us directly to the reign of Saul.

SAUL: Some chronologists believe that Josephus' short period for Saul's reign is supported by the time considerations of the Ark. Some conclude that the reign of Saul depends upon the length of time the Ark abode in Kirjath-jearim. They read 1 Sam 7:2 to mean that the complete time that the Ark was there, was 20 years. This would mean that the judgeship of Samuel and the reign of Saul were both concluded within the 20 years period that the Ark abode at Kirjath-jearim. Again, this makes harmonizing Paul's words in Acts (that Saul reigned 40 years) impossible. It seems that the proper understanding would be that after the Ark had been there 20 years, Samuel (having already judged Israel 20 years) led the rebellion.

Consider why the period of the Ark in Kirjath-jearim must have been more than 20 years. Samuel could not be born till the 2nd of Eli, and the history of Josephus would indicate that this is the correct time. Josephus says that Samuel was 12 years old when God first appeared to him, which was in the 13th of Eli. Eli judged (as High Priest) 40 years, making Samuel 39 at Eli's death. The Ark was brought from Kirjath-jearim in the 8th of David. If this is only 20 years, then Samuel would be 59. Now Samuel died before David became King, which means Samuel would have had to been already dead for 9 years at this point. For this to be true, Samuel had to die as an old man, at age 50-51. (He would be 39 when he became the Judge. 20 years later would be the 8th of David, when Samuel would have been 59. But he dies before David is king, or 9 years previous at 51.) If Samuel immediately anointed Saul king upon the death of Eli, then Samuel would only have been 39: if five years later, as suggested by some chronologists, then Samuel would have been 44. But the Scriptures are clear that they wanted a king because Samuel was too old, and his sons were corrupt. This all appears too young.

The proper explanation seems to be that *after* the Ark had resided in Kirjath-jearim, for 20 years, Samuel led a rebellion against the Philistines, as Israel's Judge. During this judgeship, and as he grew old, the rebellion against his son's occurred. During his judgeship, Samuel anointed Saul King, but Israel did not immediately recognize Saul as king. This did not occur until a later Philistine invasion, in which Saul called Israel to arms and delivered Israel from the Philistines. Saul and Samuel therefore, reigned

jointly for a period of time. We can tell the period of time by working backward. The 480th year was the 4th of Solomon. We subtract 4 years for Solomon's reign, 40 years for David's and 40 years for Saul. This is 94 years, which means that the beginning of Saul was 14 years before the end of the 450 years of the Judges. Saul and Samuel, then, reigned jointly for 14 years until Samuel was 79.

When Saul was anointed, we are told that certain men rejected him, but Saul held his peace. Saul didn't exercise his authority until the Philistines came up against the land. Saul is then king alone, and Samuel withdraws. Saul's reign, then, consists of 14 years of a joint reign with Samuel, two righteous years as the sole king, followed by 24 unrighteous years, during which he begins the conflict with David. After his 40-year reign (only 26 of which he reigns solely), David comes to the throne.

The 450 years of judges then, begins when God made Moses a "judge and a divider" over Israel, 40 years before the Exodus. The 480 years from the Exodus, then, ends 70 years after the end of the 450 years of judges. That 70 years is made up of 26-27 years of Saul's sole reign, 40 years of David's reign, to the 4th of Solomon.

If the 480 years of 1 Kings is ignored, similar difficulties with the age of Samuel occur with the age of David. David becomes king at age 30. If Saul reigned but 7 years, then, David was anointed king by Samuel at an age after 23, even though he is referred to as a youth, and fought Goliath sometime after that when called "a stripling". But most chronologists feel David was anointed King by Samuel at age 12 and fought Goliath at age 17. All of this harmonizes with the 40 years reign of Saul but becomes difficult with a 7 - 12-year reign.

## Othniel and Cushan-rishathaim.

There are only four short verses describing the plague on Israel brought by a Mesopotamian king named Cushan-rishathaim, a name which means Cush "twice" or perhaps "double" evil. Assuming our dates are correct, and they are determined this way, these events take place at the start of the fourteenth century BC.

1496 BC = Exodus

480 years from the fourth of Solomon (the laying of the foundation of the Temple) to the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1).

1455 BC Joshua crosses the Jordan into Israel.

1425 BC Joshua dies at 110 years old.

1425-1386 BC = Othniel's Judgeship.

So we can see that the events are happening at the start of the fourteenth Century. The King James version has translated Aram-Naharaim as Mesopotamia, and this is sort of correct. Aram is of course Syria, and Naharaim means rivers plural). And of course the people of Aram dwelt among many great rivers such as the Tigris and Euphrates, though there were many more, specifically the Pison and the Gihon, of which it is said that it encompasses the whole land of Cush.

Now during this time frame there existed an empire in this very Syrian region called by modern historians the Mitanni empire. The following map shows the extent of the Mitanni empire at its peak, being all the land in light purple around 1490 BC, at the start of the fifteenth century BC., or as the exodus was taking place.



Figure 1 The dark Purple indicates Mitanni Homeland

According to historians, the Mitanni empire begins to crumble at the start of the fourteenth century. What is intriguing about this account is that *right at this time*, which is immediately following the *height* of the kingdom of Mitanni—the 350-year-old kingdom utterly

collapses. Why? According to historians, the answer is multifaceted—the decline being due to various skirmishes and battles with growing neighboring regional powers such as the Hittites and Assyrians who converged upon the Mitanni during this century, causing the kingdom to implode and retreat from its conquered dominions. Eventually, the Assyrians would move into the Mesopotamian region as the Mitanni declined, and Assyria became the dominant power.

This historical picture fits incredibly well with the biblical one of the same century: an early regional Israelite resistance pushing back at the Naharaim dominion at the time of the Mitannite collapse. Perhaps Othniel's resistance was one of the first successful rebellions against the Mitannite empire.

Now as for the king named Cushan-rishathaim, there appears none in the Mitannite line of exactly that name. But the king whose defeat led to the start of the decline of the Mitannite Empire was named Artashumara, and he was killed by one variously named, *Tuhi*, *Udhi* and *Uthi*. The name *Uthi* is speculated to have been a shortened Akkadian name of *Uthniel*, or possibly the Hebrew *Othniel*.

Upon Artashumara's death, his brother Tushrata becomes king at a very young age, and it is Tushrata who then presides over the decline of the Mitanni empire. Now Tushrata's name actually matches well the name Cushan-rishathaim. "Tush" is the Akkadian equivalent of "Cush," and "rata" in Akkadian meant "evil," just as rishathaim in Hebrew meant "evil." Othniel may have fought both brothers, Artashumara and Tushrata, thus the twice evil Cushites.

Now whether or not the names actually match, (and it is really hard to match names from one language to another—like Rameses II, the great king of Egypt was actually called Riyamashisha-miamana)—the one thing that is clear is that the Mitannite Empire answers perfectly to the Hebrew Aram-Naharaim which was translated as Mesopotamia, and that empire declined in the days of Othniel.

## Dating the Book of Ruth

The only way to date Ruth is from the life of David. He was twelve years old when Samuel anointed him King of Israel. This, according to my chronology would have been 1078 BC. This would put David's birth, at 1080 BC. David was a grandson of Obed, and for chronological purposes, a generation is usually 40 years, so two generations would be 80 years or 1160 BC, during the reign of Elon. But David was the last of many sons and daughters. And at least by the time David fought Goliath (probably around age 17. Jesse was too old (over 60) to be a part of the army. This would put the birth of Jesse at a later time than the normal 40 years, Presuming Obed to be the first son of Boaz and Ruth, his birth is the implied conclusion of the book of Ruth.

One of the chronological puzzles related to this, is that Boaz is said to be the son of Rehab the Harlot. Boaz is David's great grandfather, the son of Salmon. Boaz had Obed of Ruth. And Obed had Jesse, David's father. But according to my chronology, there are 299 years between the settling of the land, when Salmon and Rachab could have had Boaz, and the birth of David. So from Salmon settling into the land, to the birth of David, there must be 299 years. By a more traditional chronology there would be  $1581-1096 = 485$  years. So how can this work out? Let's say that Rehab had a child at an old, but reasonable age of 47. She was probably around 12 at the invasion, 17 when they settled into the land. That means if she had Boaz at an older, but still reasonable age, which would account for 30 of the 299 years, leaving 269 years to be accounted for. If we average Boaz having Obed, Obed having Jesse, and Jesse having David, they would each have been  $(269/3)$  or 89 years old, at the birth of their sons. . Now at this time, Aaron lived to 123, Moses to 120, Joshua 110, and I project Samuel to have lived to 105. So clearly men were living long enough in the time of the Judges for this to have occurred. The traditional chronology would have to have the three men having their sons at 151.

If that is right, Obed would have been born 1250 BC., during Gideon's judgeship. This would have been well before the Moabites rebelled and tried to take back the land that Moses and Aaron had captured from Balak. It was in 1178 BC that the hostilities between Moab (the Amorites) and Israel under Jephthah occurred. So perhaps Elimelech was sent to Moab by God and by this way delivered Ruth to the religion of Israel, where she became an ancestor of our Lord and Savior, and one of only five women listed in the genealogy of Jesus, before the hostilities between Israel and Moab broke out anew.

## **The Period of the Kings**

The fourth period is the period of the Kings of Israel. One can pick up any chronology and find the difficulty in resolving this period. Trying to match the Kings of Judah with the Kings of Israel leaves many questions unanswered. For the resolution of this problem, chronologists are indebted to the work of John Thomas. He is the only

chronologist I have seen to unlock the mystery of this period. The key to resolving the chronology is in the prophesy of Ezekiel. Ezekiel wrote:

EZE 4:1-8 "Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, even Jerusalem: And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege."

Ezekiel is taken in the second invasion by Babylon, prior to the destruction of the city. The prophesy he is given is the length of time that will be involved until the city is destroyed. The question becomes, what do these lengths of times mean?

The total time involved is 390 days for Judah in rebellion, and 40 days for Judah in obedience to Temple worship, or 430 days. The principle is clearly stated as a day for a year. *"I have appointed thee each day for a year."* The answer becomes clear looking at the chronology of the kings of Judah. By running only the chronology of the Kings of Judah, and ignoring the dates given for the kings of Israel, there are 430 years from the 4th of Solomon, when the foundation of the Temple was laid, (ending the 480 years of the third period,) to the 11th of Zedekiah, the destruction of the temple, and the end of the period of the kings.

What is to be made of the difference of 40 years. Reckoning the period from the fourth of Solomon, we find that Solomon reigned 40 years. That would be 36 years of the first period. We are further told that Solomon's son, Rehoboam followed God's word for three years, but in the fifth year, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Judah because of their rebellion. The forty years on the right side, would be the last thirty-six year of Solomon's reign, and the first four years of Rehoboam's reign in which they walked in the ways of the Lord, followed by the 390 years of rebellion.

2 Chron.11:17 "So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon."

2 Chron. 12:2 "And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD,..."

What then do we make of the chronicles of the Kings of Israel? The answer is simple. God refused to acknowledge certain rulers, such as those who arose after Jeroboam II, till Zachariah rose to power, (who was the fourth descendent of Jehu to sit the throne

as promised) and again after Pekah there is no king for nine years, unless Elah, father of Hoshea is king, as may be indicated by the text.

### Was Sheshonq I Shishak

The towns that Sheshonq I conquered are carved on a wall in Thebes. They show an invasion into the south, (Arad, Aijalon (possibly), and The Negev. Sheshonq then moved to the Hill Country and invaded Socoh, Adoraim, Ajalon, Gibeon, and Beth-horon. He then moved northward into the Jezreel valley and took Megiddo – the only site where an Egyptian inscription (cartouche of Sheshonq I) was actually found, Taanach, Beth-shean, Rehob, Mahanaim, Penuel, Tirzah (possibly), Shunem, Geba, and Gibeah. Finally he moved north to Dor, and Tannis (near Tyre and Sidon).

Notice that his conquered cities do not include Jerusalem. Yet one of the anchor points of history is his raiding of the Temple in the days of Rehoboam.

### The Shasu of Yahweh

This is an expression found in the Temple of Soleb built by Amenhotep III, one of the later Pharaohs of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. It appears to be a reference to southern Israel, and the land of Edom. The spelling is YHW and is curious in that Rameses II uses the exact same expression at a temple in Amara West in Egypt. There is no indication that Amenhotep III warred in Canaan, though Rameses II clearly did.

### Amarna Letters

Rohl focuses especially on a group of letters around EA 250–270, which mention violent clashes, a rebellious vassal named Labayu, and his sons continuing his conflict after his death — all paralleling Saul and Ishbaal.

Here are a few key examples:

EA No.	Content Summary	Rohl’s Interpretation
EA 252–254	Complaints about Labayu (which means Lion) attacking neighbors and taking cities, especially Gibeah; the Pharaoh is asked to intervene.	Saul’s campaigns against Israel’s neighbors, takes Gibeah.
EA 255	Mutbaal, (which means son of Baal) son of Labayu, writes to Pharaoh defending himself.	Ishbaal (which means son of Baal) (Ish-bosheth) appealing for legitimacy after Saul’s death.
EA 256–257	Mentions Dadua, Ayab, and Yishuya — which Rohl reads as David, Joab, and Jesse — described as military leaders outside Pharaoh’s control.	Corresponds to David’s rise while pursued by Saul.

EA No.	Content Summary	Rohl's Interpretation
EA 289 (from Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem)	Complains about "the Habiru" (outlaws) taking over the land.	Reflects David's men being called <i>Habiru</i> ("Hebrews") by their enemies.

#### . Historical Context in Rohl's Framework

- Akhenaten's Egypt = great power of the region during Saul's and David's day but wasn't warring with Canaan.
- Canaanite city rulers = Israelite and Philistine kings of the early monarchy.
- The "Habiru problem" = refers not to nomadic raiders of the 14th century BC, but to the rise of David's Hebrew followers.

Thus, in Rohl's reconstruction:

The Amarna archive is an Egyptian record of the *political upheavals in Canaan* during the rise of the United Monarchy under Saul and David.

## The Kurkh Monoliths

The greatest mistake both worldly and Christian archeologists make in dating the kings of Judah and Israel in antiquity is directly due to an error they make concerning the Kurkh Monoliths. These monoliths are two large stone tablets ordered by Assyrian Kings Ashurnasirpal II, and his son, Shalmanezar III. According to Assyrian dating, (which is very unreliable) the dating of the two tablets are 879 BC, and 852 BC.

The second tablet contains the result of the largest known battle in antiquity, which occurred at Qar Qar, an ancient city in Syria. As a result of this battle, Assyria came into control of all of Syria. This battle took place between 854 and 853 BC. On the monolith, twelve kings are listed as fighting in defense of Syria against the Assyrians. One of those kings is "A-ha-ab-bu Sir-ila-a-a." It is generally accepted by most archeologists that this is Ahab, king of Israel. However, it is readily acknowledged that A-ha-ab-bu is a very common name in antiquity, meaning "father," and that there is no other inscription anywhere that would link the name Sir-ila-a-a to Israel. Indeed, in other Assyrian inscriptions, Israel is referred to as "the house of Omri," who was Ahab's father.

The problem is that according to Bible dates, Ahab reigned from 922 BC to 902 BC, and he warred continually against the Syrians. He would have been dead 50 years before the battle of Qar Qar took place. He was sentenced to death by God because of leniency towards Syria following a victorious battle against the Syrians, and he died fighting the Syrians. That he would have taken a massive army (2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers) to defend Syria without further condemnation by the prophets of God is all but impossible. (Archeologists themselves acknowledge that there is no way Ahab would have brought such a massive army to Syria, but just say the Kurkh Monolith exaggerates the numbers.)

But archeologists, particularly Christian archeologists anxious to find *any* Biblical character in the historical record, latch on to this and insist this must be Ahab. This causes their dates of the kings to be 49 years off. They imagine that the years of a king

who had leprosy (Uzziah) must be shortened and then come up with other reasons to deny that the Scriptural time frame for the kings of Judah are both complete and accurate.

That the Biblical listings for Judah's kings are accurate, there can be no question. Ezekiel's prophecy in Ezekiel four confirms it. He was to lay on his right side for 40 days, and then his left side for 390 days. So from the foundation of the temple to its destruction was to be 430 years. That was the 40 years from the laying of the foundation of the temple under Solomon to the rebellion in the fourth of Rehoboam, (40 years) and then another 390 years till the 11th of Zedekiah when the Temple was destroyed. The chronology of Judah's kings from the fourth of Rehoboam to the 11th of Zedekiah is exactly 390 years.

This false dating results in distorting the chronology of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. And since the dating of the Exodus is 480 years to the day from the laying of the foundation of the Temple in the fourth of Solomon, it also gives them a false date for the Exodus, by 49 years.

Looking for Biblical events in the wrong time frame is what leads archeologists to conclude that these events never happened. We might say it's only 50 years, but if we looked for the start of World War II in 1989, instead of 1939, we would conclude that World War II never happened.

## Mesha Stele or Moabite Stone

This stone was discovered in 1868, at Dhiban (ancient Dibon) in modern Jordan Found by a German missionary, F.A. Klein. He made a paper mache of the stone before leaving to secure permissions to obtain the stone. While he was gone, local Bedouin tribes broke the stone during disputes over its sale. The pieces were given away as good luck charms, and the pieces were usually placed in local gardens. Using the paper mache for a guide, over 2/3s of the stone was recovered. The stone confirms Moab's rebellion under Jehoram, and it has what was once believed to be the earliest mention of Yahweh in archeology. There are now two known to be older, one Egyptian and one Israelite.

### The Mesha Stele — Translation (c. 900 BCE)

1. I am Mesha, son of Chemosh-yatti, king of Moab, the Dibonite.
2. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father.
3. And I made this high place for Chemosh in Qerhoh,
4. because he has delivered me from all kings, and because he has made me look down on all my enemies.
5. Omri was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days,
6. because Chemosh was angry with his land.
7. And his son succeeded him, and he also said: "I will oppress Moab."
8. In my days he said this, but I looked down on him and on his house, and Israel has perished forever!
9. Omri had taken possession of all the land of Medeba, and he lived there during his days and half the days of his son, forty years.
10. But Chemosh restored it in my days.
11. And I built Baal-meon, and made a water reservoir in it.

12. And I built Qiryaten.
13. The men of Gad had lived in the land of Ataroth from ancient times;
14. and the king of Israel built Ataroth for himself.
15. But I fought against the city and captured it, and I killed all the people of the city as a sacrifice for Chemosh and for Moab.
16. I brought back from there the altar-hearth of David (or Dodo), and dragged it before Chemosh in Keriath.
17. And I settled the men of Sharon and the men of Maharoth there.
18. And Chemosh said to me: "Go, take Nebo from Israel."
19. So I went by night and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon,
20. and I took it, and I killed all — seven thousand men and boys, women and girls, and female slaves,
21. for I had devoted it to Ashtar-Chemosh.
22. And I took from there the vessels of **Yahweh**, and I dragged them before Chemosh.
23. And the king of Israel had built Jahaz and was staying there while he fought against me.
24. But Chemosh drove him out before me.
25. And I took two hundred men of Moab, all its chiefs, and I led them up against Jahaz, and I took it, to add it to Dibon.
26. I have built Qerhoh, the wall of the forests and the wall of the citadel;
27. and I have built its gates, and I have built its towers,
28. and I have built the king's house, and I have made both of its reservoirs for water inside the city.
29. And there was no cistern inside the city of Qerhoh, and I said to all the people: "Make for yourselves a cistern in your houses."
30. And I cut out the ditches for Qerhoh by means of the prisoners of Israel.
31. I have built Aroer, and I made the road through the Arnon.
32. I have built Beth-Bamoth, for it was in ruins.
33. I have built Bezer, for it was in ruins — with fifty men of Dibon, for all
34. Dibon is my loyal city. And I have ruled over a hundred cities which I added to the land.
35. And I have built Medeba, and Beth-Diblathen, and Beth-Baal-Meon, and I carried there my herdsmen to herd the sheep of the land.
36. And Chemosh said to me: "Go down, fight against Horonaim,"
37. and I went down and Chemosh restored it in my days.

## The age of Ahaziah when he becomes King of Judah

The account in 2 Kings 8:24-26 tells us that Ahaziah was 22 years old when he began to reign, but the account in 2 Chron 22:2 indicates he was 42 years old when his reign began.

Some chronologists point to the similarity between the letters for 20 and the letters for 40 and suggest simply an error in transmission. Nearly all modern translations use 22 here. But perhaps there is more to this. Taking the 42 years back from

Ahaziah's reign of 886 BC, we come to the start of Omri's sole reign, which we have recorded as 929 BC. The text in 2 Chron 22:2 emphasizes that Ahaziah is the grandson of Omri. Several times in the account he is aligned with the kings of Israel. So the chronicler may be considering his time from Omri, rather than his age.

2 Chron. 22:3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab:...

2 Chron. 22:4 Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab:

2 Chron. 22:5 He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel.

Ahaziah is also not reckoned in the genealogy of Matthew, along with his son Joash, and his son Amaziah. It could be these men are ignored due to their turning the house of Judah to great abominations like the house of Israel, though this explanation does not explain why Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat is permitted to stay in the genealogy.

## The Black Oblisk

The Black Oblisk, like the Kurkh Stele was built by Shalmanezar III to commemorate receiving tribute from various kings. Among those is thought to be Jehu. The king from the house of Omri appears in the Black Oblisk as “la-u-a.” We know from the Bible that Jehu was not of the house of Omri, but the Assyrians didn’t know, or more likely didn’t care. It was how they referred to Israel.

The Oblisk was supposed to have been made in 841 BC, which would be during the reign of Jehoash. Israel’s kings were Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash. The Christians chronology, which cuts Judah’s kingship by 50 years, would line up with Jehu, but my chronology lines up with Jehoash. And Jehoash has three syllables, matching the cuneiform.

## Invasion of Sennacherib

There is a 10-year conflict with the world's dating and the invasion of Sennacherib. Most of the World's Chronologies run with the start of Sennacherib's reign to be between 707 BC and 698 BC. Prior to this, Sargon II reigned, from 721 BC to his murder, which brought Sennacherib to power. The invasion of Jerusalem is clearly recorded in the Annals of Sennacherib. They read thus:

“Because Hezekiah, king of Judah, would not submit to my yoke, I came up against him, and by force of arms and by the might of my power I took forty-six of his strong fenced cities; and of the smaller towns which were scattered about, I took and plundered a countless number. From these places I took and carried off 200,156 persons, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mules, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude; and Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem

him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates, so as to prevent escape.... Then upon Hezekiah there fell the fear of the power of my arms, and he sent out to me the chiefs and the elders of Jerusalem with 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver, and divers treasures, a rich and immense booty.... All these things were brought to me at Nineveh, the seat of my government.”

The dating of the Assyrians for Sennacherib cannot be correct. Assyrian, Babylonian, and Biblical chronology set the date for the conquering of Samaria by Shalmaneser at 721 BC (who was over thrown by Sargon II in that same year) for the start and 719 BC for the finish, which is quite consistent with Biblical chronology. The Bible records that this invasion of Samaria began in the fourth year of Hezekiah and ends in his sixth year. But the invasion of Jerusalem by Sennacherib is in Hezekiah's 14th year, which would be 711 BC by Biblical chronology. According to Assyrian history, that invasion takes place no earlier than 704 BC.

But more than just Biblical Chronology is distorted by the Assyrian eponyms for this time period. The Babylonian histories also are distorted, because Sennacherib's first ordeal was to put down a rebellion in Babylon led by Merodach Baladan, but this rebellion was in 712 BC, according to Babylonian chronology, 8 years before the Assyrians claim he came into power. In this, Biblical chronology and Babylonian chronology agree. So there is no reason at this point, to demand that the Assyrian eponyms, (which as already explained are known to be inaccurate) should be followed.

## The Decree of Cyrus

Of all the dates in this Chronology, we have no doubt but that our Persian dates in general are, at first glance, the most controversial. Archeologists and historians are pretty set on the dates they have chosen for the Persian rule. We have read much of their work with a very critical eye, looking hard for the mistakes, but our conclusions are that they have good reason to be satisfied. The archeological and historical evidence for the modern dates is overwhelming.

Unlike the earlier periods where most honest archeologists would not strenuously object to a fluctuation of significant numbers of years, this period is well documented in several independent world histories, including Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Persian. There is also significant astronomical evidence for these periods.

The accuracy of history has frustrated Bible expositors on this matter. Jeremiah's prophecy that Israel would be subject to Babylon for 70 years is strained beyond measure by them, abandoning the old true interpretation for what can only be called modern junk. When the dates for Jeremiah's prophecy were BC 612 for the captivity of Israel to BC 542 for the reign of Cyrus, the period of 70 years lined up nicely. But the change in dates set up a conflict that religionists have struggled with, quite unnecessarily.

Jeremiah's prophesy is right. Of that there can be no question. Babylon would reign over Israel for 70 years. As the fall was in BC 604, the reign must have continued to BC 534, even though Babylon fell to Cyrus in 538 BC. I will here explain why our date for the decree of Cyrus (BC 534 as opposed to modern archeology's BC 539) is not out of harmony with modern archeological finds.

The commonly written thought by modern archeologists is that Babylon invaded Israel in the first of Nebuchadnezzar in BC 604. As the date for the invasion of Babylon has decreased, the date for the reign of Cyrus has decreased as well, but not proportionally. For instance, while the date for the conquering of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar has come down 8 years, (BC 612 - 604) the date for the conquering of Babylon by Persia has only been decreased by 3 (from BC 542 to BC 539.) This sets up a conflict with the prophesy of Jeremiah, being only 65 years, instead of the Scripturally required 70 years.

In modern writings, archeologists and chronologists have generally set the date for the freeing of the Jews at BC 539, but this date is not consistent with their own findings. Archeologists believe (through corresponding Greek documents) that Cyrus was fighting in Asia Minor in BC 539 when a weak and tumultuous Babylon became an opportunity for Cyrus, and he left Asia Minor to go to Babylon to conquer the city. The ancient historian Herodotus writes that he did not immediately conquer Babylon, as the BC 539 date would suggest. Rather, he undertook a massive engineering project, diverting the Euphrates River out from under the wall of Babylon, so his troops could march into the city under the river gates, on the river bed. It is generally agreed that his troops did not enter the city until March of the following year, BC 538.

Further, after the fall of Babylon, it is agreed by archeologists that Cyrus himself, does not become King of the city. They believe (as the Scriptures teach) that Gobryus, Cyrus' general was first set in charge of the city. Modern historians believe that Gobryus ruled the city till Darius, the Median King (and Cyrus's uncle) the sharing of power with the Medes was part of the overall agreement for cooperation between Media and Persia. Gobryus ruled from March BC 538 to 537 BC.

The Scriptures indicate that Darius' reign is for at least two years. Darius then reigns BC 537-536, and that *after* the following year (which would be 535 BC), Cyrus is crowned king of Babylon in a large display. The Bible has Darius ruling two years, with Cyrus becoming the point of focus in the third year. Cyrus is crowned King of Babylon in the fourth year following the victory, (535 BC.)

History records this crowning, but historians ignore its significance and herein lies their problem. They date the decree to return the Jews to Israel, from the first year that Cyrus was king of Persia, BC 539 while it is apparent that Cyrus himself numbered his reign from his crowning in Babylon BC 535.

History records that Cyrus declared the Jews free in his second year. The Bible says he freed the Jews in his first year. One year, in chronological terms, is not a significant time period, as it can be explained simply by the use of different

calendars. If Cyrus made his decree a year after his inauguration, but before Spring, this would account for the difference in the two records. In any case, if Cyrus declared the Jews free in his second year of actual reign in Babylon, the date would be BC 534 as we know it must have been.

The custom of the Jews as given to them in the Mosaic Law is that the New Year is on the first day of Spring. The custom of the Gentile nations was that New Years was exactly 6 month later, on the first day of Fall. With that in mind consider the following hypothesis.

March 538 history tells us is the date Babylon fell to Cyrus, when Gobryus begins to rule. Darius (histories Cyaxares II) begins his reign in 537 BC, and if historians are correct, in the fall and reigns through the fall of 536 BC.

Cyrus then comes into the city the year following his victory, after Fall 536 BC. Cyrus, for whatever reason, does not have his inaugural celebration till the following year according to archaeology, which would be after Fall 535.

By Jewish reckoning then, April 535 BC begins Cyrus first year (though the fourth year of his joint reign and one month following the start of his actual reign.) Let us hypothesize that the declaration for the freedom of Israel comes in March 534 BC, before the first day of Spring, so that it can come in Cyrus' first year by Jewish reckoning. Since he decreed himself king (after our example) in February of 535, March 534 can be said to be in his second year according to the Persian reckoning (as we know the Gentile nations and even the Ten Tribes of Israel were not uniform on how to measure the time of a reign.)

Whether or not this is correct, we cannot say. We can say that it fits the Scriptural and Historical record in a manner where both can be correct. Our conflict then, is not with the historical evidence, but rather with the historian's interpretation of that evidence. Cyrus says that in his second year he freed the Jews. We all agree with that. The question is, the second year from when? Historians go back to BC 539 for this declaration, arguing that this is when Cyrus actually became king of Persia, and argue that the Jews were freed upon Darius entering the city, BC 538. They argue the freeing of the Jews in the second year, is from the second year of his beginning to eye Babylon. But this is not the only possible reading of Cyrus' writings.

It is just as reasonable to suggest that the freeing of the Jews occurred after Cyrus himself became King in Babylon. There can be no question that Cyrus himself weighed his coronation in Babylon as a very significant thing. He clearly thought of himself as a "liberator" of Babylon, rather than as a "conqueror." In fact, modern historians fall all over themselves in their praise for Cyrus as the first author of civil rights for the people, based upon Cyrus' actions as "king of Babylon" where he not only reestablished the Jews in their homelands, but many other peoples and religions as well. As we have seen, both by Scripture and by archeology, Cyrus is crowned king of Babylon in BC 535 and if he freed the Jews in the first year, the date for the decree could be as late as BC 534 without doing violence to the Scriptural record. Thus the reign of Babylon over the Jews would be 70 years (BC 604 - BC 534) as required by the prophecy of Jeremiah. There would be another 70 years for the work

of the four carpenters to get all the decrees necessary for the construction of Jerusalem (BC 534 - BC 464) and then 490 years (the prophesy of 70 weeks) from this decree to the crucifixion of Christ, (AD 27).

## Daniel's 70 Weeks 20th Year of Artaxerxes

I doubt if any mystery has fascinated the worlds Biblical archeologists/chronologists like the question of how to resolve Daniel's prophesy concerning 70 weeks. Daniel wrote:

DAN 9:24-27 "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

This prophesy was very clear. There would be a command to rebuild Jerusalem. There would be 69 weeks, after which Messiah would be cut off. That in the final week, Messiah would cause the sacrifices and oblations to cease. Upon those points, most agree. But the first problem was a big one. From what decree?

There were four Persian decrees relevant to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and none of them appear on the surface, to fit the dates correctly. The end is very clear. It ends with the crucifixion of Christ. So whatever date the starting point is, must be 490 years before the any possible date of Christ's crucifixion, which would be between 27-34 AD. The time for the decree must correspond from 457-464 BC.

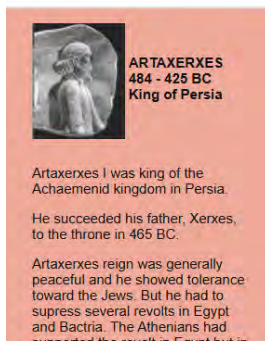
The first two decrees, one by Cyrus the Great in 534 BC, and the other decree by Darius the Persian in 519 BC clearly do not fit. This leaves us with the two decrees of Artaxerxes Longimanus, one in the 7th and the other in the 20th.

Artaxerxes began his reign after the murder of his father (by Artaxerxes' brother) in 465 BC. There is a large body of corresponding evidence which fixes the date at this point, both Persian and Greek. The seventh of Artaxerxes would be 458-457 BC, certainly close enough to satisfy the crucifixion of Christ in 34 AD. But as we have shown elsewhere, the 34 AD date is really quite impossible, since Herod's death is easily pin pointed to have been in March, 4 BC, and Jesus' birth had to precede this

date. Further the specific command concerning the building of the wall were in the decree given to Nehemiah in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1). But the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes (as the New King James translates it) would be impossible for that date would be 445-444 BC, requiring the crucifixion in 55-56 BC.

There is no end to the suggestions to establish this date, and still make the crucifixion happen at the correct time. Very sophisticated and complicated formulas using 365 days vs. 360-day years, plus adding leap years etc. have been advanced. Still others (especially those believing in the rapture) separate the last seven years and claim that they are still to come at some different date, eliminating seven years, with other very difficult formulas to make the times fit. All this is quite needless.

As we said, it is all but certain that Christ was crucified in 27 AD. 490 years previous to that is 464 AD, the second year of Artaxerxes' reign, when the King was 20 years old. That is the simple and straight forward solution. The German Historian Dr. Arno Peters, (the summary of whose work can be found at [HyperHistory.com](http://HyperHistory.com)) set the birth of Artaxerxes at 484 BC. In 464 BC, he would have been in the 20th year of the King, though only starting his second year of power.



*Figure 2 Screen Shot from  
[HyperHistory.com](http://HyperHistory.com)*

This idea is further supported by internal information in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra, in the seventh chapter, verse 8 receives his decree from Artaxerxes to carry great amounts of wealth to Jerusalem. This Ezra does, and while there, he prays to God:

Ezra 9:8-9 "And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem."

The question is how can Ezra thank God for a wall unless Nehemiah had already built the wall? And on a practical point, would Artaxerxes send great amounts of wealth to a distant temple in a city which had no wall to defend itself against the marauders?

In Nehemiah itself we read:

Neh. 5:14-15 "Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God."

This would seem to be an unusual thing for Nehemiah to have said, if the faithful Ezra had preceded him as governor of the land. Did Ezra not fear God? And certainly Ezra came with enough money from the King to not require any more from the war ravaged and poverty-stricken people.

Next, we have the listing of the peoples who had left Babylon for Jerusalem. Ezra lists those who came with Zerubbabel in the days of Darius (Ezra 2:2), and those who came with him (Ezra 8). Nehemiah lists only those that came with Zerubbabel (Neh 7:7), this indicating that those who came with Ezra had not yet come.

Finally, we consider the spiritual state of Jerusalem when Nehemiah arrives. Nehemiah finds he can trust no one. The city does not observe the Sabbath. Marriages with the native population are common, even to the point where Tobiah, a hated enemy, is Father-in-law to a priest, and allowed within the temple. Now, if Ezra came to the city with great wealth in the seventh of Nehemiah, and can be presumed to have stayed at least a little while, how did such wickedness occur in a period of time that couldn't have been more than 12 years?

On the other hand, Ezra does show up in the record in the 8th chapter of Nehemiah, and he comes on the scene as a great religious transformation occurs in Jerusalem. Would Ezra not have forced this same type of transformation on his first visit?

From this it would seem that Nehemiah went first to Jerusalem to lay the foundation for the rebirth of Jerusalem, while Ezra followed him, after the foundation had been laid, to teach the righteous ways of God.

Other writers have observed these discrepancies, and have also suggested that Ezra followed Nehemiah, rather than preceded him. These have sought to resolve these difficulties by suggesting that the seventh of Artaxerxes was the seventh of a different Artaxerxes, Artaxerxes Mnemon, who reigned 46 years from 404 BC, and whose reign began 20 years after the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus. But this sets up many difficulties, as the seventh of A. Mnemon would occur 47 years after the 20th year of A. Logimanus' reign, requiring Nehemiah to be quite old (late 70s) during Ezra's visit. While not impossible, it is unlikely.

## Dating the Reign of Herod

After the battle of Philippi, [42 BC] Octavian went to Italy, while Antonius made first for Greece and then for Asia (Plut. *Ant.* 23-4). On his way through Asia in 41 BC, Antonius met Cleopatra for the first time in Tarsus. She so captivated him by her charm that he followed her to Egypt, where he spent the winter (41/40 B.C.) in idleness and revelry (according to Plut. *Ant.* 25-8). Before leaving for Egypt, he set in order the affairs of Syria, exacted on all sides an enormous tribute (App. *B.C.* v 7/29-31), and appointed L. Decidius Saxa *legatus*, probably with *imperium*; Dio xlviii 24, 3; Liv. *Epit.* 127; see MRR II, p. 376.

Antonius left the established Hyrcanus II and the Hasmoneans in charge of Jerusalem, though they had become quite weak as a political party. This soon led to an invasion by the Parthians, who were anxious to check Roman advancement into the region. They set up an anti-Roman Hasmonaean, Antigonus II Mathias, though not the correct heir as King in Jerusalem.

Josephus reports that when the Parthians entered Jerusalem, Herod, who supported the long time Hasmonean rulers, “made haste himself to Petra of Arabia” (a strong place), leaving behind his broader entourage but taking his nearest relations and the sturdiest followers. He also sent away the most cumbersome part of his retinue (non-essential people) with provisions into Idumea, while he fortified himself with about 800 men as a guard for his family and prepared for a siege.

Herod then left to Egypt to find Antonius who, as described above, was with Cleopatra in Egypt. He had to find Antonius to clear his name of any suspicion that he was in league with the Parthians, and also to try to dissuade Antonius from giving Judea to Cleopatra, who clearly wanted it. But perhaps even more importantly, he needed Antonius’ blessing and money to take back Jerusalem. Herod missed Antonius in Egypt, who had returned to Italy. His wife Fulvia, (probably trying to get his attention away from Cleopatra) and his brother Lucius had raised troops for a war against Octavian. The claim against Octavian was that he had violated the terms of the Triumvirate, by not dividing land fairly with Antonius’ men. This led to the Perusine War, 41 – 40 BC.

Lucius took Perusine but was immediately besieged by Octavian. Lucius was defeated and treated poorly, and Antonius, fearing Octavian intended to consolidate the empire made haste to return. He brought his army to Brundisium, where both armies forced their leaders to reach a peace agreement, called the treaty of Brundisium, September, 40 BC. This left the Triumvirate in place.

As the generals headed to Rome to have the senate confirm their peace treaty, Herod caught up to Antonius who brought him along to Rome. There, as Herod made a pitch to have the old Hasmonean Kingdom restored, Antonius instead recommended Herod to be made King of Judea, and this was approved by the Roman Senate. This was October-November, 40 BC. This was the true start of his Kingdom, though it took another three years for him to actually capture Jerusalem in 37 BC.

Such was the situation when Herod (having been made king) landed at Ptolemais in 39 BC. He quickly assembled an army, and since, on the orders of Antonius, Ventidius and Silo now supported him, he soon made progress. First, Joppa fell into his hands, and then Masada, where his family had been besieged. With his success the number of his followers also increased, and he could set about besieging Jerusalem. But he did nothing about it for the time being because Silo’s Roman troops, which should have supported him, adopted a troublesome attitude and had to be dismissed to winter quarters. Herod finally retook Jerusalem in the fall of 37 BC.

### **Herod’s Death**

The Eclipse of the Moon, March 13<sup>th</sup> 4 BC (Purim)

“4. But the people, on account of Herod’s barbarous temper, and for fear he should be so cruel as to inflict punishment on them, said, “What was done, was done without their approbation: and that it seemed to them that the actors might well be punished for what they had done.” But as for Herod he dealt more mildly with others [of the assembly:] but he deprived Matthias of the High Priesthood, as in part an occasion of this action; and made Joazar, who was Matthias’s wife’s brother, High Priest in his stead. Now it happened that during the time of the High Priesthood of this Matthias, there was another person made High Priest for a single day; that very day which the Jews observed as a fast. The occasion was this: This Matthias the High Priest, on the night before that day, when the fast was to be celebrated, seemed, in a dream, to have conversation with his wife: and because he could not officiate himself on that account, Joseph, the son of Ellemus, his kinsman, assisted him in that sacred office. But Herod deprived this Matthias of the High Priesthood: and burnt the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon.”

### **HEROD’S REIGN 34 YEARS FROM PROCURING ANTIGONUS, AND 37 YEARS FROM BECOMING KING IN ROME**

XXVII.8.i [An. 4.] And now Herod altered his testament, upon the alteration of his mind. For he appointed Antipas, to whom he had before left the Kingdom, to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea: and granted the Kingdom to Archelaus. He also gave Gaulonitis, and Trachonitis, and Paneas to Philip, who was his son; but own brother to Archelaus; by the name of a tetrarchy: and bequeathed Jamnia, and Ashdod, and Phasaelis, to Salome, his sister, with five hundred thousand [drachmæ] of silver, that was coined. He also made provision for all the rest of his kindred, by giving them sums of money, and annual revenues: and so left them all in a wealthy condition. He bequeathed also to Cesar ten millions [of drachmæ] of coined money: besides both vessels of gold, and silver, and garments exceeding costly, to Julia, Cesar’s wife; and to certain others five millions. When he had done these things, he died, the fifth day after he had caused Antipater to be slain: having reigned since he had procured Antigonus to be slain thirty-four years: but since he had been declared King by the Romans thirty-seven. A man he was of great barbarity towards all men equally; and a slave to his passion: but above the consideration of what was right. Yet was he favoured by fortune as much as any man ever was. For from a private man he became a King. And though he were encompassed with ten thousand dangers, he got clear of them all; and continued his life till a very old age. But then, as to the affairs of his family, and children; in which indeed, according to his own opinion, he was also very fortunate, because he was able to conquer his enemies; yet in my opinion he was herein very unfortunate.

## **The Birth of Christ**

There are three clues given to us in the Scriptures as to the date of Jesus’ birth. They are (1) Jesus’ relation to the life of Herod. (2) The reference by Luke to Augustus’ worldwide census. And (3) the occurrence of The Star. It is my opinion that the only date that has any chance of matching all the dates, is the date in 7 BC. There is a

fourth clue that corresponds to the date of the Star (being Yom Kippur) and that is the course of Abia, pertaining to John Baptist's father.

The clues for the date are as follows.

### **I. Jesus had to have been born before the death of Herod.**

Herod died in 4 BC and is recorded as such in Roman and Jewish history. The approximate day of his death is also set astronomically for us. Josephus gives the reign of Herod to have been 37 years from his appointment by Rome, which was in 40 BC (Ant. XVII, vi, 4) and 34 years from the death of his rival, Antigonus, which was in 37 BC (Ant. XVII, viii, 1).

Those who argue for a later date for both the birth of Christ and the crucifixion, argue that Josephus' dating should be taken from the time when he actually took control, which would be 37 BC. Therefore his reign should be considered to be till 1 BC, or 1 AD. Josephus was writing for Romans, and was in Rome when he wrote. It is inconceivable and also would have been quite dangerous to his health, for him to argue that the Roman decree of Herod's leadership was not relevant, and Herod wasn't the King of Syria till he had defeated Antigonus and made himself King.

The approximate date for the death of Herod is set by two lunar events . There was a lunar eclipse on or one day after a fast, on March 13<sup>th</sup>, and Herod died before the Passover of the same year, which would have been April 4, 4 BC. The following is the description by Josephus of the first event .

"But as for Herod, he dealt more mildly with others [of the assembly] but he deprived Matthias of the high priesthood, as in part an occasion of this action, and made Joazar, who was Matthias's wife's brother, high priest in his stead. Now it happened, that during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias, there was another person made high priest for a single day, that very day which the Jews observed as a fast. The occasion was this: This Matthias the high priest, on the night before that day when the fast was to be celebrated, seemed, in a dream, (7) to have conversation with his wife; and because he could not officiate himself on that account, Joseph, the son of Ellemus, his kinsman, assisted him in that sacred office. But Herod deprived this Matthias of the high priesthood, and burnt the other Matthias, who had raised the sedition, with his companions, alive. And that very night there was an eclipse of the moon. (8)" — *Antiquities* XVII:7:4

Josephus records this in *Antiquities* XVII, ix, 3. As stated, this eclipse in 4 BC was on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 4 BC. This date is consistent with all the facts, as this would be one day following the Esther Fast, or Purim; and as it was in the 12<sup>th</sup> month, it was a month prior to Passover.

There was another eclipse in 1 BC which is frequently suggested to be the eclipse mentioned by Josephus. It occurs January 19<sup>th</sup> and is not on a fast day. There can really be no excuse for choosing this date, except to justify the 33 AD date for the crucifixion. None of it really makes any sense. The discounting of the above quote is done on a very legalistic reading of the above Josephus paragraph to suggest that only the murder of "the other Matthias" occurred on the eclipse, not the fast day. But the joining of the depriving of Matthias of the high priesthood for a single day with the conjunction

"and", to the murder of the other Matthias indicates that both occurred on the same day. Josephus then again uses the conjunction "And" to join both events to the eclipse. To interpret an historian's words any other way, is certainly a stretch. Those who wish to move the death of Herod forward to 1 BC, fail to realize that the rest of Roman History has to move with it. Therefore, this doesn't bring Tiberius' reign in harmony with the Scriptural account, because that date must be moved forward three years as well, from 29 AD (the accepted date) to 32 AD.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **II. Jesus was born during or immediately before the time of the taxing when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria. (Luke 2:2)**

Those who deny the infallibility of the Scriptures often point to Luke's account of a census by Cyrenius (whose Latin name was Quirinius) in the days of Augustus. They argue that this census could only have taken place in 6 AD, when Quirinius had been sent to Syria by Augustus to dissolve the affairs of Herod Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, who had fallen out of favor with Augustus. While we would agree with the critics that Jesus could not have been born in 6 AD due to many historical and Scriptural facts, this doesn't discount Luke's testimony at all.

The principal proof that there was a census ordered by Augustus Caesar as recorded by Luke comes from Augustus himself in his own official document, "Res Gestae Divi Augusti" (The Deeds of Divine Augustus). In it he explicitly mentions conducting censuses, in 28 BC, 8 BC, and 6 AD. His 8 BC census recorded that there were 4,233,000 citizens in his empire.

Luke says the taxing was ordered by Caesar Augustus and was for all the world (Luke 2:1) There were different kinds of taxes required by Rome. There was the annual taxing, which was done based on a much broader census, which was taken every 14 years. The taxing between 6-7 AD which Josephus records is obviously the registration, or census required by Rome. Augustus records in his own annals that he had also required this in 8 BC. This would be 14 years previous. Probably the order was given in 8 BC and 6 AD, and carried out in 7 BC and 7 AD. The word "taxing" or "apographo" (GK) literally means "to enroll." This would refer to the required enrollment or registration of all the peoples of the empire, for the purposes of military induction, and to form the basis upon which taxes would be required in future years. Augustus wrote in this in his annals:

"... during my sixth term as consul (28 B.C.), I along with my comrade Marcus Agrippa, commanded a census be taken of the people. I directed a lustrum, the first in forty-one years, in which 4,063,000 Roman citizens were counted. And once again, with imperial authority, I single handedly authorized a lustrum when the consuls of Rome were Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius (8 B.C.), during which time 4,233,000 Roman citizens were counted." (Res Gestae 8 - The Deeds of Augustus by Augustus)

Tertullian, an early Christian writer, also references an "enrollment" (census) that was made by Sentius Saturninus, who was governor of Syria around 9-7 BC. While this doesn't directly mention Augustus ordering the census in 8 BC, it provides

independent evidence of a census having taken place at a time that Augustus claimed it did.

Archaeological and epigraphic evidence from Turkey, particularly the Monumentum Ancyranum in Ankara (which is a complete copy of Augustus' *Res Gestae*), provides significant support for the existence of Augustus' censuses, as described in his *Res Gestae*. This evidence helps corroborate Augustus' own statements and confirms the scale of Roman administrative practices in the region.

So it is clear from history that Augustus ordered and conducted a census in 8 BC, which would be the exact time required by Luke for the census to have been conducted.

Now Cyrenius didn't become legate of Syria till sometime between 3 AD and 6 AD ). His taxing in 6-7 AD, is recorded by Josephus, and it generated much rebellion and resentment by the Jews. This taxing is agreed on all sides to have been much too late for the birth of Christ.

So the objection to this 7 BC census being the taxing of Luke 2, is that Cyrenius was not governor, in the strictest sense, during this time. This is true. But the man Quirinius is quite well known in ancient history. He appears in Augustus' writings, having been made proconsular in 12 BC, a special title granted to only two men per year. These specially appointed men are the ones most generally called upon for special duties, such as governing, or conducting wars. The local governors were often chosen for their organizational skills, not their military ones, so other proconsuls were often sent to settle other matters in a given district, such as conducting wars. It was not at all uncommon for Caesars to appoint a second leader, called a "Duumvir," to a region which was under stress. For a specific task, a second commander was used such as when Vespasian was sent to Jerusalem by Nero to settle the Jewish rebellion, though Cestius Gaius was legate, or governor at that time. In the rebellion of Israel in 67 AD, the great military leader Vespasian, was sent by Nero to put down the rebellion in Jerusalem, as the governor Cestius Gaius was considered incapable of doing so.

Around 25 BC, the Homonadensians killed the King of Galatia, Amyntas. Augustus was the king's heir, and as such, he was obligated to avenge the death of Amyntas. Augustus then built Antioch in Galatia, as a fortress against further Homonadensian invasions. Following the death of Drusus Germanicus in 9 BC, Cyrenius was appointed chief magistrate of Antioch. He appointed another to govern for him, while he warred against the Homonadensians, till they were defeated in 4-3 BC.

So of things we know for sure, there was a census ordered in 8 BC, and that Cyrenius was a very powerful soldier and politician in the area of Syria at that time. He was not the governor but certainly could have been in position to be a ruler over Syria for the particular purpose of the census, especially considering the distrust that Augustus naturally had for Herod.

Does the fact that he was not the governor discount Luke's account? Actually, the Greek word for Governor, "legatus" is never used in the Bible. The word most commonly used is "hegemon" which means "ruler." But the word used by Luke is

"hegemoneuo" which means "to act as ruler" giving a basis for Cyrenius not being actually the governor, but acting as the governor for a specific purpose, that being, I suggest, the census in a potentially hostile situation.

It is interesting that Luke uses the term "hegemoneuo" for Quirinius' role in Syria, which means "to act as a ruler," (and also of Pilate at the start of his rule when he most likely was still in Rome) rather than another form of the word hegemon which more plainly means ruler, as applied to Pilate when Jesus is brought to him (Luke 20:20).

Quirinius' next note in history was when in 6 AD, he became the actual governor of Syria. He was specifically sent by Augustus to settle the affairs of Herod Archelaus, who had fallen out of favor with Herod and was finally banished in 10 AD. This is the governorship which enemies of the infallibility of the Scriptures, insist is what Luke was referring to because with such a date it is impossible to harmonize the Scriptures.

Quirinius' final note in history had to do with divorcing his popular and influential wife, an event which caused him to lose favor among the Romans. This is the sum total of what is certainly known about Quirinius. So it can't be said with certainty from man's history that Quirinius was or was not in Syria at the time Augustus ordered the 8 BC census. But it can be said with certainty that Luke places him there, and based upon the facts of the case, there is no historical reason to doubt him.

There is one more interesting piece of archeology which is often referenced to Quirinus, and that is a damaged grave stone. The stone is fragmented, and the name of the buried person is gone. But from what is there, it can be said that it belonged to a proconsular, one appointed under Augustus (and remember there were only two appointed each year.) The person was a duumvir, meaning he served as a governor alongside another governor. And this particular person served two terms as legate of Syria. The stone claims that this particular legate had two victory march celebrations, showing he was a military man, not merely an administrator. There is a written record of one victory celebration granted to Quirinius for his victory over the Homonadenses, and there could easily have been another one, as he was a trusted general who served the Roman Legions many years. And while the stone cannot be said for certain to have belonged to Quirinius, it certainly can be said that it couldn't have belonged to any of the known Syrian legates, except Quirinius.

## **The Star**

**Quote from "The Bible as History" by Werner Keller (German Historian) translated into English by William Neil pages 330 - 334.**

"Shortly before Christmas 1603, on December 17th, the Imperial Mathematician and Astronomer Royal Johannes Kepler was sitting though the night high above the Moldava in the Hradcyn in Prague, observing with his modest telescope the approach of two planets. "Conjunction" is the technical name for the position of two celestial bodies on the same degree of longitude. Sometimes two planets move so close to one another that they have the appearance of a single larger and more brilliant star. That night Saturn and Jupiter had a rendezvous in space within the constellation of Pisces.

“Looking through his notes later Kepler suddenly remembered something he had read in the rabbinic writer Abarbanel, referring to an unusual influence which Jewish astrologers were said to have ascribed to this same constellation. Messiah would appear when there was a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces.

“Could it have been the same conjunction at the time of the birth of Christ as Kepler had observed at Christmastide in 1603?

“Kepler checked his calculations again and again. He was a mixture of scholar and quack, astronomer and astrologer, a disciple of those doctrines which had been put in the same class as mixing poisons as far back as the Code of Justinian. The result was a threefold conjunction within the space of a year. Astronomical calculations gave the year as 7 B.C. According to astrological tables it must have been 6 B.C. Kepler decided in favour of 6 B.C. and dated the conception of Mary consequently 7 B.C.

“His fascinating discovery was published in a number of books, but this enlightened genius who established the planetary laws named after him eventually steeped himself overmuch in the realm of mysticism. Consequently Kepler's hypotheses were for a long time rejected and finally disregarded. It was not until the 19th century that astronomers remembered them again. But even then, it was impossible to produce clear scientific proof.

“Science has provided it in our own day. In 1925 the German scholar P. Schnabel deciphered the ‘papers’ in Neo-babylonian cuneiform of a famous professional institute in the ancient world, the School of Astrology at Sippar in Babylonia. Among endless series of prosaic dates of observations he came across a note about the position of the planets in the constellation of Pisces. Jupiter and Saturn are carefully marked in over a period of five months. Reckoned in our calendar the year was 7 B.C.!

“Archeologists and historians have to reconstruct their picture of a bygone age with enormous effort, from monuments and documents, from individual discoveries and broken fragments. It is simpler for the modern astronomer. He can turn back the cosmic clock at will. In his planetarium he can arrange the starry sky exactly as it was thousands of years ago for any given year, any month, even any day. The position of the stars can be calculated backwards with equal precision.

“In the year 7 B.C. Jupiter and Saturn did in fact meet in Pisces and, as Kepler had already discovered, they met three times. Mathematical calculations established further that this threefold conjunction of the planets was particularly clearly visible in the Mediterranean area.

“The timetable of this planetary encounter when it is presented in the prosaic dating system of modern astronomical calculations looks something like this:

About the end of February in 7 B.C. the clustering began. Jupiter moved out of the constellation Aquarius towards Saturn in the constellation of Pisces. Since the sun at that time was also in the sign of Pisces its light covered the constellation. It was not until April 12th that both planets rose in Pisces heliacally with a difference of 8

degrees of longitude. "Heliacal" is the word used by astronomers to indicate the first visible rising of a star at daybreak.

"On May 29<sup>th</sup>, visible for fully two hours in the morning sky, the first close encounter took place in the 21<sup>st</sup> degree of Pisces with a difference of 0 degree of longitude and of 0 - 98 degrees of latitude.

"The second conjunction took place on October 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 18<sup>th</sup> degree of the constellation of Pisces.

"On December 4<sup>th</sup> for the third and last time a close encounter of the planets Jupiter and Saturn took place. This time it was in the 16<sup>th</sup> degree of Pisces. At the end of January in the year 6 B.C. the planet Jupiter moved out of Pisces into Aries.

"‘We have seen his star in the east’ (Matt. 2:2), said the Wise Men, according to the A.V. Ingenious textual critics discovered that the words ‘in the east’ are in the original ‘En te anatole’—the Greek singular—but that elsewhere ‘the east’ is represented by ‘anatolai’—the Greek plural. The singular form ‘anatole’ has, it is maintained, quite a special astronomical significance, in that it implies the observation of the early rising of the star, the so-called heliacal rising. The translators of the Authorised Version could not have known this.

“‘We have seen his star appear in the first rays of dawn.’ That would have corresponded exactly with the astronomical facts. But why this ancient, learned expedition of the three Wise Men to Palestine when, as we know, they could see the occurrence just as well in Babylon.

"The sky gazers of the East in their capacity as astrologers attached a special significance to each star. According to the Chaldeans, Pisces was the sign of the West, the Mediterranean countries: in Jewish tradition it was the sign of Israel, the sign of the Messiah. The constellation of Pisces stood at the end of the sun's old course and at the beginning of its new one. What is more likely than that they saw in it the sign of the end of an old age and the start of a new one?

"Jupiter was always thought of by all nations as a lucky star and royal star. According to old Jewish traditions Saturn was supposed to protect Israel: Tacitus equates him with the god of the Jews. Babylonian astrology reckoned the ringed planet to be the special star of the neighbouring lands of Syria and Palestine.

"Since Nebuchadnezzar's time many thousands of Jews had lived in Babylon. Many of them may have studied at the School of Astrology in Sippar. This wonderful encounter of Jupiter with Saturn, guardian of Israel, in the constellation of the ‘West country,’ of the Messiah, must have deeply moved the Jewish astrologers. For according to astrological ways of thinking it pointed to the appearance of a mighty king in the West country, the land of their fathers. To experience that in person, to see it with their own eyes, which was the reason for the journey of the wise astronomers from the East.

“On May 29<sup>th</sup>, in the year 7 B.C. they observed the first encounter of the two planets from the roof of the School of Astrology at Sippar. At that time of year the heat was already unbearable in Mesopotamia. Summer is no time for long and difficult journeys. Besides that, they knew about the second conjunction on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. They could predict this encounter in advance as accurately as future eclipses of the sun and moon. The fact that October 3<sup>rd</sup> was the Jewish Day of Atonement may have been taken as an admonition, and at that point they may have started out on their journey.

“Travel on the caravan routes even on camels, the swiftest means of transport, was a leisurely affair. If we think in terms of a journey lasting about six weeks, the Wise Men would arrive in Jerusalem towards the end of November.

“‘Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.’ ‘When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him’ (Matt. 2: 2-3). For these Eastern astronomers that must have been the first and obvious question, which would however arouse nothing but startled concern in Jerusalem. They knew nothing about schools of astrology in the Holy City.

“Herod, the hated Tyrant, was alarmed. The announcement of a new-born king brought his sovereignty into question. The people on the other hand were pleasurably startled, as appears from other historical sources. About a year after this conjunction of planets which has just been described, a strong Messianic movement came into being. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, records that about this time a rumour went around that God had decided to bring the rule of the Roman foreigners to an end and that a sign from heaven had announced the coming of a Jewish King. Herod who had been appointed by the Romans, was in fact not a Jew but an Idumaean.

“Herod did not hesitate. He ‘gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together’ and ‘demanded of them where Christ should be born.’ They searched through the ancient sacred scriptures of the nation and found the allusion which is contained in the book of the prophet Micah, who had lived 700 years before in the kingdom of Judah: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel...” (Micah 5:2).

“Herod therefore summoned the Wise Men and ‘sent them to Bethlehem’ (Matt. 2:4-8). Since Jupiter and Saturn came together for the time in the constellation of Pisces on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, ‘they rejoiced with exceeding great joy’ and set out for Bethlehem ‘and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them’ (Matt. 2:9-10).

“On the road to Hebron, 5 miles from Jerusalem, lies the village of ‘Bet Lahm,’ which was the old Bethlehem of Judah. The ancient highway, which Abraham had once passed along, lay almost due north and south. At their third conjunction the planets of Jupiter and Saturn appeared to have dissolved into one great brilliant star. In the twilight of the evening they were visible in a southerly direction, so that the Wise Men of the East on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem had the bright star in front of

their eyes all the time. As the gospel says, the star actually ‘went before them.’” End Quote

From the above, does it not seem likely that this was in fact, the star that the wise men from the east were following. Some are disturbed at the impression that the wise men were in fact, Babylonian astrologers, but with no reason. Did not Jesus himself say that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" Luke 16:8.

It is further noteworthy that the second conjunction of the planets occurred on the Jewish Day of Atonement. As the Passover was chosen by God as the day of Jesus' death, would it not be consistent that the Day of Atonement was established as the day of Jesus' birth?

Finally, the third conjunction was two months later, in the month of December. This is also very consistent with the Gospel accounts. When Jesus was born, he was in a manger in an Inn. But when the Wise Men found him, he was in a house (Matt. 2:11.) One can imagine that after the taxes were paid, the demand for space lessened, and Joseph, not wanting to travel with a newborn child found a house for the winter. Some also question the account that the star went before him, indicating that the star itself moved. This seems unlikely, because of the lack of attention received by any other than the Wise Men themselves.

### The course of Abia

Abia (Hebrew: Abijah) was one of the orders of priesthoods, who managed the affairs of the Temple after the order set up by David.

1 Chron. 24:10 “The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,”

These orders served for one week, from Sabbath to Sabbath, twice a year, accounting for 48 weeks. There were four weeks when all the orders served together, two weeks at Passover through the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and two weeks at Yom Kippur through Feast of Tabernacles. Abijah (Greek: Abia) first course served from the 63rd day to the 70th day.

	Month	days in Month	Total days from 1st of Nisan							
1	Nisan	30	30							
2	Iyar	29	59							
3	Sivan	30	89							
4	Tammuz	29	118							
5	Av	30	148							
6	Elul	29	177							
7	Tishrei	30	207							
8	Cheshvan	29	236							
9	Kislev	30	266							
10	Tevet	29	295							
11	Shevat	30	325							
12	Adar	29	354							
1	Nisan	30	384							
2	Iyar	29	413							
3	Sivan	30	443							
4	Tammuz	29	472							
5	Av	30	502							
6	Elul	29	531							
7	Tishrei	30	561							
8	Cheshvan	29	590							
9	Kislev	30	620							
10	Tevet	29	649							
11	Shevat	30	679							
12	Adar	29	708							

Conception of John after 70 days

(70 days because of the eighth order + 2 weeks of joint service from Passover through feast of unleavened bread)

End of sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy at 258 days into the year (188 days)  
(Mary's visit to Elizabeth, start of Jesus conception)

Birth of John after 350 days into the year (70 + 280)

Earliest Date for birth of Jesus 538 days after course of Abia  
ends on the eighth of Tishrei  
(350 days + 188 days)

Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur is 10th day of Tishrei  
This calculation is based on the first of Nisan (Abib) 8 BC being a Sabbath.  
If the first Sabbath was on the third of Nisan, then the tenth is the correct date

## Dating the Ministry of John

There is less controversy with the worldly critics about this date because it is pretty easy to establish that there is a possible harmony with all the items mentioned by Luke, concerning the beginning of the ministry of John. The 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius, by official Roman reckoning would be 29 AD. Pontius Pilate was governor in the region from 26 AD to 36 AD. Herod Antipas was the Tetrarch of Galilee from 4 BC through 39 AD. Herod Philip was Tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis from 4 BC to 34 AD. The rule of Lysanius is not dateable, though an inscription to him has been found which is dateable to between 27 and 34 AD, though he could have reigned longer in either direction. Joseph Caiaphas was High Priest from 18 - 36 AD. He is linked with his Father-in-law, Annas, who was High Priest from 6 - 15 AD. So there can be no accusation of error from the world, as this is all very consistent. The date fits 26 AD, or it fits 29 AD, which are the two dates most often argued for by those who suggest a 30 AD crucifixion, or 33 AD crucifixion.

Criticism usually centers on two minor points. Luke says the word of God came to John at a certain time which we will discuss. Some critics say that this date defines the time John first began preaching in the wilderness and finds certain objections to John's ministry beginning in the same year as Jesus' ministry. We would just point out that the Scriptures do not discuss whether or not this was the first year of John's ministry. It only says it was a year when the word of God came to John. We rather think it was the fourth year of John's ministry, a conclusion we reach by prophesy, not by Scriptural proclamation.

The other criticism is Luke's statement in Luke 3:23 that Jesus was "about 30" when, if these dates are correct, Jesus would have been a little older, from 30 - 36. But the verse being vague and using the word "about" doesn't give them much room for complaint. (Bible critics will not allow earlier dates than 4 BC for the death of Herod-- and Jesus had to be born before Herod's death-- because the 4 BC date is too firmly fixed in secular history.)

Our own view will open the matter up to the critics again, who we care nothing about. We believe that the word of God came to John, and he began his ministry in 23 BC. This date has two problems. How can this be the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the government of Tiberius, and how can it be related to Pontius Pilate, when it is commonly believed that he didn't start his rule in the region till 26 BC.

First, we are not sure that the verse in question bears only the interpretation that this time period marks the preaching of John in the year of Jesus' baptism. There is another possible interpretation, as borne out by Young's Literal Translation of the Bible. Young sets the expression Annas and Caiaphas being Chief Priests, away from the rest of the previous texts with dashes, and it could be understood that Luke was saying that the word came to John in the time of Annas and Caiaphas priesthood, but that the rest refers to the conclusion of the matter, which would be John's death in Herod's prison, 26 AD.

John's death was following the second Passover of Jesus' ministry. We know this from the chronology of Jesus' life. In Matthew 14, Jesus hears of John's beheading in prison, and sets out for a desert place, no doubt to mourn and have solace. But the people, learning of his whereabouts, follow him. It is at this time that he performs the miracle of feeding the 5000 people. When we compare this event with the gospel of John, we see that this miracle occurs John 6:10, but the second Passover is recorded in John 6:4. So John's death is following the second Passover of Jesus' life, which would be in 25 AD. But we acknowledge that the more common and reasonable reading is that the 15th of Tiberius was the year of Jesus' baptism by John when the word of the Lord came to him.

We would explain the matter this way. Concerning the reign of Tiberius, there are many years which could be, and are used to mark the start of his reign. Augustus had been tired of public life for many years, and very much wanted to retire. He really didn't want to leave the throne to Tiberius, as he regarded him as too cruel, and perhaps a bit dull and slow minded. He also held a grudge against Tiberius because he had married Augustus' only daughter, Julia, but had divorced her for adultery, which Augustus reluctantly came to recognize as true. But in the end, there were no other candidates surviving, and so Tiberius was acknowledged by Augustus to be the next Caesar.

When did his reign begin? Augustus died in 14 AD, so that is the officially recognized date for the start of Tiberius' rule. But Tiberius had assumed the control of the Empire in 12 AD, so some begin his reign from this point. And there was a decree made in 10 AD, that Tiberius was the next Caesar, and this is the date the Catholic dictionary uses. And the earliest date (when Augustus realized he had to appoint his heir to settle the unrest) was at a Spring festival in 9 AD, when Augustus ended all questions about who was to be his heir. The 9 AD date works perfectly for the 23 AD date we suggest.

But what about the rule of Pontius Pilate? It is pretty clear from secular history that he did not begin his rule in Palestine till 26 AD. How can his governing be explained back to 23 AD? This too, goes to the heart of Roman politics.

Tiberius was struggling in his later years. Around 20 AD, following his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was becoming very much tired of governing. Tiberius had taken a relative named Drusus, the son of Agrippina and Germanicus to be his heir. Germanicus was Tiberius' nephew, whom he had adopted to himself, and Agrippina was the granddaughter of Augustus, through Julia (Julia being the same Julia who was Tiberius' ex-wife, who Tiberius had accused of adultery to Augustus, and for which he was banned and nearly killed by Augustus.) But in 23 AD, Drusus fell sick suddenly and died. Many historians write that he was actually poisoned by a powerful man named Sejanus. Tiberius now had no heirs old enough to lead the empire. He considered several options, including returning Rome to a Republic, but decided instead to use this same Sejanus as his associate in governing Rome, while he waited for one of Drusus three children, Drusus, Nero, or Gaius to come of age.

Sejanus was the son of Strabo, one of Tiberius' most trusted generals. He is thought to have had a long and personal relationship with Tiberius, having saved Tiberius' life in a cave in, and also having proved himself an able administrator, organizing the

Praetorian Guard and wonderfully completed other difficult duties relevant to governing Rome. So close was the relationship between Tiberius and Sejanus, that in 26 AD, Tiberius left Rome for the isolated island of Capri, and never returned, Sejanus being his voice in Rome.

From 21 AD and onward, Sejanus had worked in getting his friends into all the positions of power, including generals in the army, finding (inventing) cause to execute all his enemies. He was setting himself up to ultimately revolt against Tiberius and take control of the Empire. It is all but certain that it was Sejanus who appointed Pilate as governor of Judea. Both men were in Rome at that time and shared the common bond of extreme anti Semitism.

Luke in writing of Pilate at this time says that Pilate was "acting as Ruler," not that he was the ruler. He uses the same word here for Pilate's governance, that he did for Cyrenius, when he was a military leader, not the actual governor in the area of Syria. In fact, these are the only two places where this form of the word is used. We do not know when Pilate was appointed as Governor. All we know is from Josephus, who tells us that Pilate was in Judea for 10 years, and that he tried to return to Rome before Tiberius died but was unsuccessful. Tiberius died in 37 AD. This is all rather curious because Tiberius was not in Rome, nevertheless, from this it is presumed that Pilate was Governor in Judea from 26 through 36 AD, which is all quite possible without ruling out the possibility that he was appointed Governor some time earlier and was ruler in absentia, while he prepared to come to Judea.

The only testimony concerning the rule of Pilate is this from Josephus:

"(Tiberius)...sent Valerius Gratus to be procurator of Judea, and to succeed Annus Rufus...When Gratus had done those things, he went back to Rome, after he had tarried in Judea *eleven* years, when Pontius Pilate became his successor...So Pilate, when he had tarried *ten* years in Judea, made haste to Rome...but before he could get to Rome, Tiberius was dead." (italics mine)

Tiberius probably sent Gratus to be procurator in 9 AD, who then ruled 11 years till 20 AD, when a change in administrators (Severus ruling for Tiberius) meant a change in procurators, just as it did when Tiberius began to administer the empire, in 9 AD. Pilate was Sejanus' choice, in 21 AD, but who didn't physically go to Judea till 25 - 26 AD.

More to the point that this is correct. The afore named Germanicus is recorded by both historians, Tacitus and Dio, to have died five years after the death of Augustus who died 14 AD. So the true death of Germanicus was 19-20 AD. But Josephus places the death of Germanicus to have been during the reign of Pontius Pilate. Josephus also records that Gratus, who Pilate succeeded, ruled under Tiberius for eleven years (from 9 AD to 20 AD. For both of these things to have been true, that is, for Gratus to have ruled 11 years, and for Germanicus to have died in Pilate's rule, five years after the death of Augustus; then 19-20 AD must be the 11th of Tiberius. And so this further shows that 9 AD would be the start of Tiberius' reign. Gratus would have been procurator of Judea from 9 through 20 AD. Pilate would have become procurator in 21 AD, but not moving to Judea moving to Judea till 25 AD.

## 46 Years Building the Temple

After Jesus told the Jews that if they destroyed the Temple, he would rebuild it in three days, speaking of his body, the Jews responded that they had been 46 years in building this Temple. (John 2:20.) Was the Temple complete in 46 years, and when was the building of the Temple completed?

The temple was not complete in 46 years. The Jewish Encyclopedia records that it took 80 years to build it. The main portion of it was completed in a year and a half, but the work was continuing on the Temple throughout the life of Christ. In the first year of Jesus' ministry, they had been working on the Temple for 46 years, but the work was on going.

From the Jewish Encyclopedia: "The Jews were loath to have their Temple pulled down, fearing lest it might not be rebuilt. To demonstrate his good faith, Herod accumulated the materials for the new building before the old one was taken down. The new Temple was rebuilt as rapidly as possible, being finished in a year and a half, although work was in progress on the out-buildings and courts for eighty years. As it was unlawful for any but priests to enter the Temple, Herod employed 1,000 of them as masons and carpenters."

Josephus records that the work of the Temple began in two different years. The first was in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Herod (Bell. Judah I, xxi, 1) and the second was in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign (Ant. XV, xi, 1). As we have pointed out before, Josephus began his reign in 40 BC, so the 18<sup>th</sup> year would be 23-22 BC.

Josephus records that in the Jews were very concerned about the rebuilding of the Temple after Herod had it torn down, and so Herod took pains to gather all the material before the Temple was started. He then employed the Jews to build the new Temple. The fifteenth year is no doubt when the gathering of the material began, and the 18<sup>th</sup> year is when the fathers referenced in John 2:20, began their work. Forty-six years from 23 BC would be 24 AD., remember, no year 0.

This would be consistent with the baptism of Jesus at the start of his ministry. Luke said Jesus was beginning to be about 30 years of age. The way they counted birthdays under the law was different than our way. You are 1, or in your first year when you are born. Following your 29<sup>th</sup> birthday, you are in your 30<sup>th</sup> year. Jesus began his 30<sup>th</sup> year, after his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday, which would have been in October 23 AD. His first Passover, then, would have been in 24 AD, or starting the 46<sup>th</sup> year, AD.