

PRAISE FOR
FROM ABRAHAM TO PAUL

Andrew Steinmann has placed biblical scholarship in his debt by this meticulous and magnificent addition to (indeed, replacement of) such magisterial works on biblical chronology as those by Edwin Thiele and Jack Finegan, the former limited to Israel's United Monarchy and the latter embracing of the full canon. Grounded in primary texts, Steinmann lays out here a foundation that doubtless will provide the basis for all subsequent discussions of biblical chronology, an indispensable preliminary to a proper understanding of the biblical narrative.

Eugene H. Merrill, PhD

Distinguished Professor of Old Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary
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Theological Seminary

[The] combination of detailed table of contents, well-organized and straightforward presentation, and especially the abundance of charts and graphics suggests that it will serve well as a reference tool. I very much appreciate Dr. Steinmann's even-handed and respectful tone. . . . Where he synthesizes and explains the well-founded conclusions of previous scholarship, he does so clearly and effectively. On the other hand, in those places where he challenges consensus views and presents new proposals, he does so persuasively, on the basis of careful research and well-reasoned arguments.

Robert A. Sorensen, PhD

Associate Professor of Greek and Theology, Concordia University Chicago

Readers familiar with standard works in this field, such as Merrill's *Kingdom of Priests*, will be pleased to find much new information in this volume. New insights into the Quirinius census, the matching of Jubilee/Sabbatical year cycles with the date of the exodus, the timing of the Magis' visit, and the sequence of events of the Passion Week—including the moon "turning to blood" immediately after the death of the Messiah—are part of Dr. Steinmann's intensely interesting study. Laymen and scholars alike will find their faith strengthened by the precision and factuality of the Bible in historical matters.

Rodger C. Young

Independent Historian and Chronologist, St. Louis, MO

Steinmann's approach at point after point confirms the veracity, historicity, and accuracy of what is recorded in the biblical text. He comes to the texts sympathetically and patiently sifts the evidence, seeking explanations that account for all the evidence. This is evangelical scholarship at its best.

James M. Hamilton Jr., PhD

Professor of Biblical Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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FROM
ABRAHAM
TO PAUL

A BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

ANDREW E. STEINMANN



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CONTENTS

List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xiii
Detailed Reference Charts	xiv
Foreword	xv
Preface to the Second Edition	xix
Preface to the First Edition	xx
Standard Abbreviations	xxiv
Resource Abbreviations	xxv
Chapter 1: Time and the Christian Faith	1
Time and the Gospel	1
Chronology and Narrative	2
God's Control of Time and Events	4
Chapter 2: Time in the Ancient World	7
Units of Time	7
Day	7
Parts of a Day	8
Week	9
Month	10
Year	10
Calendars	11
Solilunar Calendar	11
The Calendar in Mesopotamia	11
The Calendar in Palestine	12
The Judean Calendar after the Babylonian Exile	14
The Beginning of the Year in Palestine	15
The Macedonian Calendar	18
Julian Calendar	20
Gregorian Calendar	20
Sabbatical Years	21
Exodus 23:10–11	21
Deuteronomy 15:1–3	22

Deuteronomy 31:10–13	22
Leviticus 25:1–6, 20–22	23
Jubilee Years	25
Chapter 3: Establishing Benchmarks for Old Testament Chronology	31
The Reign of Solomon (971t–932t)	31
Ahab and Jehu	32
Accession-Year versus Non-Accession-Year Reckoning	32
Calculating Solomon's Reign	33
Confirmation—Shoshenq's Invasion	34
Confirmation—Solomon's Father-in-Law	34
Confirmation—The Tyrian King List	35
Solomon's Reign as a Chronological Benchmark	37
The Date of the Exodus	37
1 Kings 6:1	37
Confirmation—Judges 11:26	38
Confirmation—Jubilee Years	39
Traditions Preserved in Jewish Sources	39
Jewish Sources for the Jubilee Years	40
Date of the Exodus according to Jubilee Years	41
The Late-Date Theory of the Exodus	43
Adherents to the Late-Date Theory	43
The Merneptah Stele	44
The Soleb Temple Inscriptions	45
The Late-Date Theory and 1 Kings 6:1	46
Exodus 1:11 and the Late-Date Theory	47
Archaeology and the Late-Date Theory	49
Conclusion	53
Chapter 4: Israel's Patriarchs	55
Exodus 12:40–41	56
Abraham	58
Isaac	59
Jacob	60
Jacob in Laban's Service in Paddan Aram	60
Jacob in Canaan	61
Jacob's Children	62
Judah's Family	63
Joseph	64
Chapter 5: Moses	67
Egyptian History from Jacob to Moses	67
The Exodus and Mount Sinai	68

The Last Year of Moses' Life	70
Chapter 6: The Era of Joshua and the Judges	73
The Conquest under Joshua	73
The Beginning of Joshua's Conquest (Joshua 1–6)	73
The Conclusion of Joshua's Conquest (Joshua 14)	74
Archaeological Evidence for Joshua's Activity in Canaan during the Late Fifteenth Century	75
The Chronology of the Judges	79
Six Cycles of Judges	81
Constructing a Relative Chronology of the Judges	83
Prologue: The Death of Joshua and the Elders	83
Cycle 1: Othniel	83
Cycle 2: Ehud and Shamgar	83
Cycle 3: Deborah	84
Cycle 4: Gideon, Tola, and Jair	84
Cycles 5 and 6: Jephthah and Samson	84
Overlapping Ammonite and Philistine Oppressions	88
A Relative Chronology of the Judges	90
Establishing an Absolute Chronology for the Judges	91
Samuel and Eli as Judges	94
Chapter 7: Saul, David, and Solomon	95
The Basic Chronology of the United Monarchy	95
The Reign of Saul (ca. 1049–1009)	97
The Reign of David (Nisan 1009–969t)	99
David's Reign in Hebron (Nisan 1009–1002t)	100
David's Reign in Jerusalem (1002t–969t)	100
The Reign of Solomon (971t–932t)	105
Chapter 8: The Divided Monarchy	109
Data for the Reigns of the Kings of Judah and Israel	109
The Reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah	110
The Chronology of Edwin R. Thiele	110
Modifications to Thiele's Chronology	113
Chronologies That Reject Thiele's Work	114
Deciding among Competing Chronologies	115
Reading the Tables: The Kings of Judah and Israel	118
Birth Date and Ages of the Kings of Judah	124
Celebration of Sabbatical and Jubilee Years	126
Dated Events during the Divided Monarchy	128
Rehoboam of Judah (932t–915t)	129
Asa of Judah (912t–871t)	129

Jehoshaphat of Judah (873t–849t; Sole Reign from 871t)	130
Ahab of Israel (874n–853n)	130
Ahaziah of Israel (853n–852n)	131
Jehoram of Judah (854t–842t; Sole Reign from 849t)	131
Joash of Judah (836t–797t)	131
Uzziah of Judah (791t–740t; Sole Reign from 768t)	131
Jotham of Judah (751t–736t; Sole Reign from 740t)	132
Hoshea of Israel (732n–723n)	132
Hezekiah of Judah (729t–687t; Sole Reign from 716t)	132
Josiah of Judah (641t–Tammuz 609)	133
Jehoiakim of Judah (Tishri 609–21 Marcheshvan 598)	134
Zedekiah (2 Adar 597–9 Tammuz 587)	135
Daniel 3	135
Dating the Siege of Jerusalem	137
Prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel	137
The Final Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem	138
Judah after the Fall of Jerusalem	141
Chapter 9: The Babylonian Exile and the Persian Period	143
Biblical Events during the Babylonian Exile	143
Nebuchadnezzar (605n–562n)	144
Amel-marduk (562n–560n)	145
Belshazzar (553n or 550n–539n)	146
Biblical Events during the Persian Period	146
Cyrus the Great (538–530)	147
The Early Years of Cyrus's Reign	147
Some Judeans Return to Jerusalem to Build the Temple	150
Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel	151
When Did Zerubbabel Come to Jerusalem?	155
Darius I (521–486)	160
Xerxes (485–465)	161
Artaxerxes I (464–424)	162
The Date of Ezra's Mission to Jerusalem	163
The Date of Nehemiah's Governorship of Yehud	173
Chronology of the Work of Ezra and Nehemiah	175
Chapter 10: Between the Testaments	179
Biblical Sources: 1 and 2 Maccabees	179
1 Maccabees	179
2 Maccabees	180
Ptolemaic and Seleucid Kingdoms	180
Chronology of Events in 1 and 2 Maccabees	180

Chapter 11: Jesus' Birth	183
The Reign of Herod the Great	186
The Consensus View	186
Problems with the Consensus View	188
The Starting Date of Herod's Reign	188
The Date of Herod's Conquest of Jerusalem	192
The Number of High Priests	194
Herod's Death	196
The Timing of Other Events during the Reign of Herod	200
The Reigns of Herod's Successors	202
Herod's Reign and Jesus' Birth	206
Quirinius and the Census	206
The Modern Dating of the Census	207
Josephus Misdated the Census	208
Three Accounts of Rebellion	209
Judas and the Census under Quirinius	212
The Magi and the Star	214
The Births of John the Baptist and Jesus	215
Chapter 12: Jesus' Ministry	221
The Length of Jesus' Ministry	221
A One and One-Half Year Ministry	222
A Three and One-Half Year Ministry	223
Dating Jesus' Ministry	224
An Outline of Jesus' Ministry	226
Dating of Specific Events in Jesus' Ministry	228
4. Jesus' Early Ministry in John 1 and 2	228
7 and 8. John Arrested; Jesus Travels through Samaria	228
11. John the Baptist Beheaded	230
12, 13, and 14. Events of Nisan–Elul 32	230
16. Ministry in Judea and Perea	231
Chapter 13: Holy Week, Crucifixion, and Resurrection	235
The Day of the Crucifixion	235
The Day of the Week	235
The Lunar Date	236
The Year of the Crucifixion	242
A Year with a Friday Passover	242
Roman Politics and the Crucifixion	243
Astronomy and the Date of the Crucifixion	246
The Chronology of Holy Week and Easter	248
Specific Events during Holy Week	250

1. Triumphal Entry	250
6. Cleansing of the Temple	250
5 and 9. Withering of the Fig Tree	250
10 and 13. Teaching in the Temple	251
14, 15, and 17. Events of Wednesday, April 1	251
16. Jesus' Body Anointed	251
The Chronology of the Passover	252
The Chronology of Easter	256
From Easter to the Ascension	256
Chapter 14: The Church: From Pentecost to the End of Paul's Ministry	257
Benchmarks from Extrabiblical Sources	257
Peter and John before the Sanhedrin	257
The Martyrdom of Stephen	258
Paul's Escape from Damascus	259
The Death of Agrippa I	260
The Proconsulship of Gallio	261
Paul's Visits to Jerusalem	262
The Famine Ministry = The Jerusalem Council Visit	265
The Famine Ministry = Galatians 2:1-10	266
The Jerusalem Council Visit = Galatians 2:1-10	270
Chronology of the Early Church	273
From the Ascension until the Stoning of Stephen	273
Philip's Ministry (Acts 8:4-40)	274
Paul's Conversion and First Years as a Christian	275
Peter's Ministry in Judea and Samaria	276
The Church in Antioch	276
Agrippa's Persecution of the Church in Jerusalem	279
Paul's First Missionary Journey	280
The Jerusalem Council and the Church in Antioch	281
Paul's Second Missionary Journey	282
Paul's Third Missionary Journey	283
Paul in Caesarea and Journey to Rome	286
Beyond Paul's Confinement in Rome	289
Appendix: Dated and Datable Prophecies	295
Bibliography	299
Glossary	320
Index of Scripture and Ancient Literature	322

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Greek, Latin, and English Days of the Week.	10
Table 2: Babylonian Months.	12
Table 3: Hebrew Months.	14
Table 4: Macedonian Months.	18
Table 5: Hebrew and Macedonian Calendars before ca. AD 40	19
Table 6: Hebrew and Macedonian Calendars after ca. AD 40.	19
Table 7: The Sabbatical Cycle.	24
Table 8: Lengths of Reigns from Jeroboam I to Ahab	33
Table 9: Lengths of Reigns from Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat.	33
Table 10: Basic Dates in the Patriarchal Period.	55
Table 11: Chronology of Abraham’s Life	59
Table 12: Chronology of Isaac’s Life	60
Table 13: Chronology of Jacob’s Life.	62
Table 14: Births of Jacob’s Children.	63
Table 15: Chronology of Judah’s Family.	64
Table 16: Chronology of Joseph’s Life.	65
Table 17: Chronology of Moses’ Early Life	68
Table 18: Chronology of Events Surrounding the Exodus.	70
Table 19: Chronology of the Last Year of Moses’ Life.	71
Table 20: Chronology of the Crossing of the Jordan River	74
Table 21: Partial List of Artifacts Found in Zertal’s Dumps	79
That Came from the Altar on Mount Ebal	
Table 22: Six Cycles in Judges	82
Table 23: Relative Chronology of the Judges	90
Table 24: Chronology of the Judges	93
Table 25: Chronology of Eli’s Life	94
Table 26: Basic Chronology of the United Monarchy	97
Table 27: Chronology of Saul’s Reign	99
Table 28: Chronology of David’s Reign in Hebron	100

Table 29: Chronology of David's Reign in Jerusalem	105
Table 30: Chronology of Solomon's Reign	107
Table 31: Extrabiblical Synchronizations: Israel and Judah.	112
Table 32: Reigns of the Kings of Judah	120
Table 33: Reigns of the Kings of Israel	121
Table 34: Synchronisms: Israel to Judah.	122
Table 35: Synchronisms: Judah to Israel.	123
Table 36: Birth and Ages of the Kings of Judah.	125
Table 37: Events of Nisan and Ziv 716 BC	132
Table 38: Prophetic Activity during Jehoiakim's Reign	135
Table 39: Sequence of Events Relating to Daniel 3	136
Table 40: Prophecies during the Reign of Zedekiah	141
Table 41: Events Related to the Babylonian Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple	142
Table 42: Kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire	143
Table 43: Nebuchadnezzar's Reign: Biblical Events and Prophecies.	145
Table 44: Achaemenid Emperors	147
Table 45: Chronology of Daniel 6	149
Table 46: Parallels between 1 Esdras 2–7 and Ezra 1:1–6:22.	153
Table 47: Events in Ezra during the Reign of Cyrus	160
Table 48: Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah in 520 BC.	160
Table 49: Biblical Events during the Reign of Xerxes	162
Table 50: Chronology of the Work of Ezra and Nehemiah	177
Table 51: Dated Events in 1 and 2 Maccabees	181
Table 52: Josephus's References to Herod's Regnal Years.	195
Table 53: Herod's Regnal Years Coordinated to Julian Dates	196
Table 54: Lunar Eclipses 7 BC to 1 BC	197
Table 55: Elapsed Times in the Life of Herod according to Josephus	201
Table 56: Chronology of Herod's Reign and the Birth of Jesus	218
Table 57: Jesus' Ministry according to the Gospel of John	224
Table 58: Outline of Jesus' Ministry	227
Table 59: The Jewish Calendar during Jesus' Ministry.	232
Table 60: Holy Week and Easter	248
Table 61: The Passion—14 Nisan, AD 33	255
Table 62: From Pentecost to the Deaths of Peter and Paul	290

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Hasmoneans in 1 and 2 Maccabees	182
Figure 2: Herodians in the New Testament	219

TIME AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

From בְּרֵאשִׁית (“in the *beginning*,” Gen 1:1; cf. John 1:1) to ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ (“Yes, I am coming *soon*,” Rev 22:20), the Bible is a book about God’s work in time. The God who created the world and ordered it in time and space continues to work in time and throughout time to redeem sinners. Time is not secondary or an afterthought in God’s economy but is intimately related to his works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

TIME AND THE GOSPEL

John Oswalt notes: “The New Testament claim that we have eternal life because Jesus walked out of the tomb on the first day of a certain week is not an innovation; it is simply continuing on in the trajectory that was laid out in [the Old Testament].”¹ The Gospel is so intimately bound up with events in time that it is impossible to extricate it from them. Thus St. Paul speaks about God sending his Son “in the fullness of time”:

But when *the fullness of time* had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those who were under law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Gal 4:4–5)

He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved One. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his good pleasure, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for *the fullness of time*, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:4–10)

1 Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 16.

Paul's phrase implies what Oswalt observes—that the Old Testament, including its historical narratives, flows toward the inexorable goal just as rivers flow toward the sea. That goal is the incarnation and redemptive work of Christ in the first century.

Jesus himself taught that the entire Old Testament pointed to him (John 5:39; Luke 24:25–27), and that included the extensive historical narratives found in the Pentateuch, the historical books, and the prophets. Moreover, Jesus made use of God's acts in history as paradigmatic for his own acts (e.g., Matt 12:40–42; 24:36–42; Luke 11:30–32; 17:26–30). Jesus' acts would be accomplished in the flow of time by actual historical events in which he would bring about the fulfillment of God's promises.

This synergy of the Gospel with the acts of God in history is also reflected in the teachings of Jesus' apostles (e.g., Acts 2:29–32; Rom 1:1–6; 2 Tim 2:8; 1 Pet 3:18–22). In doing this, Christ's apostles were doing nothing more than employing the same method used by the prophets of old—declaring that God is determined to act in time and space to redeem his people (e.g., Num 24:17–24; Jer 31:31–34; Amos 9:11–15; Hag 2:1–9).

However, the acts of God in history did not end with Jesus and his ascension but continue onward through what the prophets called “the latter days” and the apostles called “the last days”—the time between Jesus' ministry and his promised return. Those days are times when God continues to speak to his people in word and in actions, even though they are also perilous times with false teachers (Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; Isa 2:2; Jer 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28; 10:14; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:1–2; 2 Pet 3:3).

Since the acts of God are so inextricably connected to time and history, the study of *when* those acts took place—biblical chronology—is inescapable for Christians. This is so because if the Bible's historical claims about the acts of God at particular times and in particular places are false, then Christian faith is built on nothing but invented myth that vanishes like a vapor. But the Christian faith is not a collection of “cleverly devised myths” that have been given a false historical backdrop (2 Pet 1:16). On the contrary—the acts of God, and especially the acts of God in Christ Jesus, are historical. Moreover, they can be arranged in chronological order as a witness to the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 15:1–8).

CHRONOLOGY AND NARRATIVE

One way in which the Bible reflects God's work in time is through the *historical review*, a largely chronological reflection on the great acts of God

in history and in the life of his people Israel. These reviews remember God's works on behalf of his people, illustrate his loving patience with an often recalcitrant Israel, and celebrate his mercy and grace. Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135, and 136 all contain historical reviews. They take the historical narratives of the Old Testament—especially the narratives about the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the conquest of the Promised Land—and use them to create their own narratives about God's love and mercy toward Israel.

While the prophet Ezekiel could also use the historical review to explain God's coming wrath upon the nation of Judah (Ezek 20:5–29), the longest and most complete historical review in the Old Testament is found in the prayer of the Judeans led by the Levites in Neh 9:6–37. Here, as the Judeans review God's historical acts, they are led to confess their sinfulness, admit that God's just wrath had befallen them, and plead for his continued mercy, knowing that in past history he was patient and merciful with their ancestors. The largely chronological arrangement of the historical review points to the theological import of God's acting in history in specific times and places. The God of Israel is a God who is simultaneously transcendent—above and beyond all time and space (1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chr 2:6; 6:18)—and immanent, personally present and involved with his people in time and space.

The historical review also has reflections in the New Testament. Stephen reviews Israel's history immediately before his martyrdom (Acts 7:2–53). His review is arranged chronologically and peppered with chronological details from the life of Moses (Acts 7:20, 23, 30, 36). Paul also employs historical narrative. For Paul this was a way to relay the Gospel. In his case, the historical narrative is autobiographical (Acts 22:3–21; 26:9–23). The writer to the Hebrews also continued in this tradition in his discourse on faith (Heb 11:1–40). While faith may be “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), it is firmly rooted in the acts of God in history in the lives of his saints—things that were seen and served as a foretaste of unseen things to come. These acts of God assure us that “God has provided something better for us” (Heb 11:40).

The authors of the narratives of the Old and New Testaments firmly rooted their texts in history by including chronological notices that enable us to locate these events in past time. These notices not only serve as anchors in time for the narratives of God's work, but they also invite us to investigate the chronology of biblical events, thereby reassuring us of God's intimate involvement with our own lives. In this way we derive comfort in the knowledge that “all things [including the events of our times] work together for good to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

GOD'S CONTROL OF TIME AND EVENTS

Finally, the Bible promises us that God is in control of time and the events that take place within it. That control is demonstrated in the Scriptures by the way he brought about the events of the past at particular times as indicated by chronological markers contained in the biblical text itself. He worked within history to redeem fallen humankind, and no power or authority could thwart his design. Events which may seem at times to careen out of control are never out of his control. All things happen in his time, as seen especially in his sending his Son into the world at the proper time or, as St. Paul reminds us, “while we were still weak, at the right time [κατὰ καιρὸν] Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6).

If God did all this, then we can rest assured that our times are in his hands (Ps 31:15). This assurance underscores much of what the Scriptures tell us about time in this life:²

On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (Ps 62:7–8)

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Ps 90:12)

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt 6:25–33)

For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 6:2)

2 The Bible passages that follow are from the ESV. Unless otherwise noted, throughout this book translations are the author's own.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. (2 Thess 3:16)

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” (Jas 4:13–15)

Because God has worked and continues to work in human history, the study of biblical chronology is not a specialists’ sidelight that holds little consequence for the Christian’s life. It is, instead, integral to the Christian faith. That is why it has occupied Christians from Eusebius of Caesarea through Bishop Ussher and down to the present day.

with two years on the throne, its original text may have read “42 years” with only the number “2” surviving in the now corrupted text. If this is the case, Saul could have taken the throne as early as 1052t or 1051n.

Thus the basic chronology of the united monarchy is:

Table 26
Basic Chronology of the United Monarchy

ca. 1049–1009	Reign of Saul
Nisan 1009–1002t	David’s reign in Hebron
1002t–969t	David’s reign in Jerusalem
971t–969t	Solomon’s coregency with David
969t–932t	Solomon’s sole reign

THE REIGN OF SAUL (CA. 1049–1009)

There are few explicit chronological markers in the narrative of Saul’s reign in 1 Samuel 10–31.³ Therefore, any reconstruction of the events during Saul’s reign will contain some degree of uncertainty.

Before David is introduced in the narrative, Saul led a campaign against the Philistines (1 Samuel 13–14) and a campaign against the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). In both instances, Saul failed in some way to obey God, prompting Samuel to inform Saul that God had already chosen someone else as king (1 Sam 13:14; 15:28). These statements imply that David was already living. Since David was born thirty years before he became king (between mid-1040 and early 1039 BC), these statements imply that, apart from the acts of Saul at the very beginning of his reign (1 Samuel 10–12), at least the first decade of Saul’s reign is passed over in silence. More likely, David was approaching the age of 20—the normal age for military service (Num 1:3)—when Saul was informed that someone else had been chosen to be king. This would place the Philistine campaign no more than about two years before 1019 BC, when David turned 20 (i.e., 1021 BC) and the Amalekite campaign about a year later than the Philistine campaign (i.e., ca. 1020 BC).

David volunteered to confront Goliath (1 Sam 17:32), implying that he was at least 20 years old but not much older, since he was a young man and despised by the older Goliath (1 Sam 17:33, 42). Moreover, David had no experience in armor or with a sword (1 Sam 17:38–39), which also implies

³ The only useful notice for reconstructing the chronology of Saul’s reign is that David spent the last sixteen months of Saul’s reign as a mercenary for the Philistine king Achish (1 Sam 27:7).

that he was just over the age for military service. Therefore, David most likely killed Goliath about 1019 BC and was anointed by Samuel shortly before this (1 Samuel 16).

Well into his reign David did not know of the existence of Jonathan's son Meribaal (Mephibosheth; 2 Sam 9:3). This implies that he most likely fled from Saul's court before Meribaal's birth. Since Meribaal was 5 years old when Saul died, he was born in 1014 BC. David, therefore, fled Saul's court about 1019 BC. This places the events of 1 Samuel 18 between ca. 1019 BC and ca. 1015 BC.

During the last sixteen months of Saul's reign (ca. Tebeth 1011/10 BC to ca. Nisan 1009 BC), David served as a mercenary for the Philistine king Achish (1 Sam 27:7). If we allow a year or two for the events between the death of Samuel and David entering Achish's service, Samuel's death can be dated to ca. 1012 BC (1 Sam 25:1). This, in turn, places the events of 1 Samuel 19–24 between ca. 1015 and ca. 1012 BC.

The archaeological excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, the ruins of a fortress that overlooks the Elah Valley, the place where David fought Goliath (1 Sam 17:2), confirms this dating. The Iron Age phase of the site was an Israelite structure, not Philistine, as evidenced by the lack of pig bones, the construction including casemate walls that were a mark of Israelite architecture, and the presence of three inscriptions at Qeiyafa that were written in Hebrew, not Philistine.⁴ The weight of stone used in construction of the Iron Age fortress has been estimated at between 100,000 and 200,000 tons, implying that a well-established and strong government was responsible for its construction. The Iron Age occupation of the site did not last long. Carbon pits found in its destruction layer were radiocarbon dated, yielding the date of destruction to 1020–970 BC with 95.4 percent probability and 1012–990 BC with 68.2 percent probability.⁵ This puts the median date for the end of the Iron Age I/II level at about 1000–995 BC. The occupation of the Iron Age level lasted only about twenty to thirty years, according to the chief investigator Yosef Garfinkel and his associates, so the approximate time period for the Iron Age I/II occupation would be from about 1025 to 995 BC.⁶ Because of the radiocarbon dates, the ceramic data, and his chronology for the reigns of Saul and David as derived from the Bible, Douglas Petrovich put forth the opinion that the data require that the fortress was built during the reign of Saul, whose reign he dated from 1049 to 1009 BC, in

4 Petrovich, "Connecting Khirbet Qeiyafa to the Proper Israelite King," 87–89.

5 Garfinkel et al., "Lachish Fortifications," 708.

6 Garfinkel et al., "Lachish Fortifications."

agreement with Saul's dates as given in the present work.⁷ After David killed Goliath, the Philistines fled from the place called Shaaraim (1 Sam 17:52), which means "Two Gates." Petrovich makes the observation that Iron Age Qeiyafa had two gates, a rather unusual architectural feature for a fortress. Petrovich's dating for Khirbet Qeiyafa, with which we agree, is contrary to the viewpoint of those secular archaeologists who cannot believe that Saul had as large a government as the Bible ascribes to him and which would have been required for the construction of such a well-built fortress as Khirbet Qeiyafa.

Major events during Saul's reign can be summarized as:

Table 27
Chronology of Saul's Reign

ca. 1049	Saul made king (1 Samuel 9–12)
ca. 1045	Eshbaal (Ishbosheth) born
1039	David born
ca. 1021	Saul's Philistine campaign (1 Samuel 13–14)
ca. 1020	Saul's Amalekite campaign (1 Samuel 15)
ca. 1019	David anointed/David kills Goliath (1 Samuel 16–17)
ca. 1016	David marries Michal (1 Sam 18:27)
ca. 1015	David flees Saul's court (1 Samuel 19–21)
1014	Meribaal (Mephibosheth) born
ca. 1012	Samuel's death (1 Sam 25:1)
ca. 1011	David marries Abigail and Ahinoam (1 Sam 25:42–43)
1010–1009	David in Achish's service for sixteen months (1 Samuel 27; 29–30)

THE REIGN OF DAVID (NISAN 1009–969T)

The narratives of David's reign are found in 2 Samuel 2–24 and 1 Chronicles 11–29. In contrast to the narrative for Saul's reign, there are several notices in the narratives of David's reign that are useful in reconstructing a chronology of events during this period. However, even with this information, many of the dates for individual events will be approximate.

⁷ Petrovich, "Connecting Khirbet Qeiyafa to the Proper Israelite King," 89.

death as vindication for the actions of their rabbis.⁵⁹ They demanded that Archelaus remove the high priest Joazar from office, a demand to which Archelaus acceded.⁶⁰ If almost seven months had passed between the execution of Judas and Matthias (September 5 BC to March 4 BC), it is hard to see how their followers made any connection between the execution of their rabbis and Herod's death. However, if the January 1 BC eclipse was the occasion of the execution of the rabbis, then only about three months had passed between the eclipse and Herod's death, and it would have been entirely possible that their followers would have made the connection between the two.

Having ruled out the 4 BC eclipse, we can note that the 1 BC eclipse fits well with everything Josephus reports. The eighty-nine days between the eclipse and the Passover comfortably fits Josephus's narration of events. In addition, Herod would have been 70 years old in 1 BC. Moreover, the eclipse was a total eclipse, a fitting prelude to Herod's death. Thus, once again, we are led to the conclusion that the Consensus View that Herod died in 4 BC is incorrect. Instead, the evidence indicates that Herod died in 1 BC.

The Timing of Other Events during the Reign of Herod

There are quite a few other events during the reign of Herod that Josephus relays with a chronological notice. These notices do not fit the Consensus View and its assumptions.⁶¹ However, they fit the chronology advocated here—that Herod reigned from 39 BC to 1 BC.⁶² Table 55 summarizes these notices and their fit with both the Consensus View (reign 40–4 BC) and the chronology advocated here (reign 39–1 BC).⁶³

59 *Ant.* 17.206, 213 [17.9.1; 17.9.3].

60 *Ant.* 17.207–208 [17.9.1].

61 The consensus assumptions include: (1) Unless Josephus states otherwise, the calendar used began in Nisan (spring) of each year. (2) Josephus used inclusive reckoning (non-accession reckoning) for Herod's reign. (3) Zuckermann's cycle of Sabbatical years is correct. (4) The consular year notices given by Josephus are correct. (5) Herod's successors reckoned their reigns from actual succession to their positions in 4 BC (see discussion in the following section).

62 The assumptions for this position include: (1) Unless Josephus states otherwise, the calendar used began in Tishri (fall) of each year. (2) Josephus used noninclusive reckoning (accession reckoning) for Herod's reign. (3) Wacholder's cycle of Sabbatical years is correct. (4) The consular year notices given by Josephus are incorrect. Josephus was mistaken. (5) At least two, and perhaps all three, of Herod's sons who succeeded him antedated their reigns to 6t BC, with their first official regnal year being 5t BC.

63 For the details of these events and the calculations based on the two sets of assumptions, see Steinmann and Young, "Elapsed Times for Herod the Great in Josephus."

Table 55
Elapsed Times in the Life of Herod according to Josephus

<i>Event</i>	<i>Fit with Reign 40–4 BC?</i>	<i>Fit with Reign 39–1 BC?</i>
1 Six Hasmonean rulers from Simon through Aristobolus; total of reigns agrees with 79 years between Simon becoming high priest in 142n and Pompey capturing Jerusalem in 63n.	No	Yes
2 Forty-five years from Herod's appointment as στρατηγός in late 47 or early 46 BC, age 25, until his death at about age 70.	No	Yes
3 Herod began siege of Jerusalem in the third year after appointment by Romans.	No	Yes
4 In Herod's eighteenth year from appointment as king by the Romans, Augustus Caesar comes to Syria (20 BC). Work starts on temple.	No	Yes
5 Work begins on temple in Herod's fifteenth year, also called eighteenth year.	No	Yes
6 Jerusalem fell to Herod twenty-seven years to the day after it fell to Pompey in 63 BC (<i>after</i> requires noninclusive reckoning).	No	Yes
7 Hasmonean government ended "after 126 years" (<i>after</i> requires noninclusive reckoning).	No	Yes
8 Aristobolus was high priest for "one year only."	No	Yes
9 Battle of Actium was in Herod's seventh year.	Yes	Yes
10 Herod on his deathbed: Hasmoneans ruled 125 years, to deposing of Antigonus.	No	No
11 Herod reigned twenty-four years after Antigonus was slain, but thirty-seven years after declared king by Romans.	No ⁶⁴	Yes
12 Hyrcanus II, appointed high priest by Pompey in 63 BC, ruled twenty-four years, followed by Antigonus, three years three months, total of twenty-seven years three months, agreeing with twenty-seven years from Pompey's capture of Jerusalem to Herod's capture of Jerusalem.	No	Yes
13 Twenty-eight high priests and 107 years from Antigonus to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.	No	Yes

⁶⁴ Although the Consensus View can account for 4 BC as the year of Herod's death by this datum from Josephus, it cannot fit into the required thirteen days between 1 Nisan 4 BC and Herod's supposed death later that month before Passover. (See discussion of Herod's death beginning on page 196.)

The table clarifies that the consensus chronology is unable to explain any of the information given by Josephus other than the Battle of Actium occurring during Herod's seventh year. On the other hand, the chronology that places Herod's reign from 39 to 1 BC is able to explain all of the data from Josephus except Herod's deathbed statement that the Hasmoneans ruled 125 years (no. 10 in Table 55). See no. 7 in Table 55, where Josephus gives the more exact figure as 126 years. If these were the actual words of Herod (not very likely), then we do not expect a dying man to be overly concerned with an exact chronology. If the words are the invention of Josephus, he can be given credit for a realistic portrayal of a man in distress for whom a meticulous chronology would seem artificial. In any event, 125 years does not fit either approach exactly, and 126 years is what should be taken seriously. Nevertheless, the reign of Herod is once again demonstrated to best align with beginning in 39 BC and ending with Herod's death before Passover in 1 BC.

The Reigns of Herod's Successors

The only remaining evidence that supports the Consensus View that Herod died in 4 BC are the reigns of Herod's sons Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. According to the Consensus View, each of these reckoned their reigns from about 4 BC, which appears to indicate that Herod must have died in that year. However, numismatic evidence from the coins of Antipas and Philip indicates that they antedated their reigns to 6t BC.⁶⁵ This demonstrates that the official reckoning of the reigns of Herod's sons cannot be used to provide evidence for the date of Herod's death, since whether he died in 4 BC or 1 BC, his sons reckoned their reigns to a time *before* Herod's death. To understand how Herod's sons might have reckoned their reigns from 4 BC though Herod died in 1 BC, it is necessary to understand what Josephus tells us about Herod's heirs during his last years.

Originally Herod had named his son Antipater to be his heir and had groomed Antipater to take over upon his death. However, a little more than two years before Herod's death, Herod's younger brother Pheroras, who was serving as tetrarch of Galilee under Herod, was murdered. Herod believed that Antipater was implicated in a plot to murder his uncle. When

65 Steinmann and Young, "Dating the Death of Herod and the Reigns of His Sons," 448–52. Note that in keeping with Jewish custom, the regnal year was reckoned to begin in fall at the beginning of the month of Tishri. 6t BC ran from the beginning of Tishri 6 BC to the end of Elul 5 BC. This would have been counted as Herod's sons' accession year, and their first official year would have been reckoned as 5t BC, starting in Tishri 5 BC.