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Dating the Kings of Judah

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The dating of the Old Testament books of prophecy has been the work of several Bible scholars, including Bishop Ussher, Dr. E.W. Bullinger, Dr. C.I. Scofield and many others. Since the prophets usually are identified with the rulers, it was necessary to establish the dating of the kings (especially Judah). It was first required that a way to tie Biblical dating into the chronology of other Biblical events was needed so the dates supplied in the books of Kings (1&2) and Chronicles (1&2) could be traced. Such an event is recorded in Jeremiah 46:2 where it says, **Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah.** This represents the battle of Carchemish and much archeological study yields much information. The secular date for the battle of Carchemish is about 606 BC (perhaps 608 BC) and would establish Josiah's death about 609 BC, when Eliakim, who was renamed Jehoiakim (2 Chron. 36:4), was named king of Judah by Pharaoh-necho. Josiah was the last good king of Judah who foolishly contended with Pharaoh-necho, and died when Judah was attacked to provide a base to defend Egypt against the Chaldean army. That army had destroyed Nineveh (610 BC) and was threatening to overthrow Egypt's power in the Assyrian protectorates.

With this point of fixity it was also necessary to find another means to establish the death of Solomon so that the computations when completed could be checked. To do this, an obscure passage in Ezekiel provided such information. In Ezekiel 4:5, God is having Ezekiel lie on his right side to depict the sin of the house of Israel. These are the northern ten tribes which had gone into idolatry when Jeroboam became their king after Solomon died (980 BC), and Rehoboam's taxation became intolerable. Israel had gone into bondage in Assyria in 723 BC when Samaria, the capital, was conquered in a siege. The passage says, **I (Jehovah) have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel** (Ezek. 4:5). Since Ezekiel was deported to Babylon in the second group to be taken by Nebuchadnezzar (597 BC) and notes in the *Scofield Reference Bible* indicate this instruction came about 593 BC, the year that Solomon died would be 980 BC. This is the number we would expect to match with the reverse dating of the kings of Judah.

The summary dates and term of office for the kings is tabulated in Chart A, which shows the reverse dating as it was taken from the books of 1 and 2 Kings. The reference verses and tabulated dates are included, and the final date for Solomon's death is given as 980 BC. It will be found that this is not the current conventional date for Solomon's death which is given in *Halley's Bible Handbook* (pg. 194) as 933 BC. This number is also given in Eerdman's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Thomas Robinson's *Bible Timeline* and numerous archeological studies linked to the investigation of Assyrian history, where most of the records were destroyed when Nineveh was totally obliterated by Nebuchadnezzar in 610 BC. As far as previously given dates are concerned, probably the most dependable is the chronology of Bishop Ussher which is placed in the *Scofield Reference Bible* (1945). On page 403 of this Bible at I Kings 11:41-45 the death of Solomon is recorded, under the date of 984 BC. Likewise the date of 607 BC appears above the passage in Jeremiah 46:2 where the battle of Carchemish is mentioned and the Ezekiel 4:5 verse is captioned with 595 BC. Thus Ussher's dates for Old Testament times back to David and Solomon appear to have a good degree of accuracy even though Bible students have questioned his work for years.

Dr. E.W. Bullinger is associated with his detailed studies in *The Companion Bible* (CB), Appendix 77, "The Chronological Order of the Prophets." Unfortunately, the study found that prophets, such as Haggai and Zechariah, were almost contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. When compared with Ussher's work (*Scofield Bible*), the dating numbers are almost 70 years apart. The investigation turned to the foundational aspects of the methods used by Bullinger to formulate his CB Appendix 50, "Chronological Charts and Tables." However, this study, dating the kings of Judah, negates the basic assumption that 69 of Daniel's 70 weeks of years (Daniel 9) were already accomplished and only the last week (seven years) of the Tribulation remained to negate also the need for a non-scriptural rapture.

Chart A

Reverse Dating For the Kings of Judah

0. Jerusalem Destroyed in 586 BC.					
1. Zedekiah	age-21	597-586 BC	The last king and very evil, Captive (11 yrs. 2 Ki. 24:18) in Babylon, blinded, last group.		
2. Jehoiachin/Jeconiah	age 18	597-597 BC	Evil boy king, 2nd group captives (3 months 2 Ki. 24:8) in Babylon, Ezekiel went too.		
3. Jehoiakim	age 25	608-597 BC	Evil king son of Josiah given power by (11 yrs. 2 Ki. 23:36) Pharaoh-necho, 1st captives, 606 BC.		
4. Jehoahaz	age 23	608-608 BC	Boy king son of Josiah given power (3 months 2 Ki. 23:31) by the Judeans but unable to rule.		
5. Josiah	age 18	639-608 BC	A Godly king, began the Passover cel- (31 yrs. 2 Ki. 22:1) ebrations, was killed by Egyptians.		
6. Amon	age 25	641-639 BC	Evil king, brother of Josiah, slain by (2 yrs. 2 Ki. 21:19) his servants.		
7. Manasseh	age 12	696-641 BC	A very evil king, into idol worship. (55 yrs. 2 Ki. 21:1) Used the temple for his gods.		
8. Hezekiah	age 25	725-696 BC	A good king doing that which is (29 yrs. 2 Ki. 18:2, 3rd year of Hoshea) right in the sight of the Lord.		
9. Ahaz	age 20	741-725 BC	As evil as the kings of Israel (16 yrs. 2 Ki. 16:2, 17th year of Pekah) Lost land to Syria and Israel.		
10. Jotham	age 25	757-741 BC	Did that which was right in the (16 yrs. 2 Ki. 15:32, 2nd yr. of Pekah) sight of God, but left high places.		
11. Azariah/Uzziah	age 16	808-757 BC	Did that which was right in the (52 yrs. 2 Ki. 15:1, 27th yr. ? of Jeroboam II) sight of God, became a leper.		
		12. Amaziah	age 25	836-808 BC	Did that which was right in the (29 yrs. 2 Ki. 14:2, 2nd yr. of Joash) sight of God, died by servants.
13. Joash/Jehoash	age 7	876-836 BC	Did that which was right in the (40 yrs. 2 Ki. 12:1, 7th yr. of Jehu) sight of God, people idolatrous.		
14. Athaliah (usurper)		882-876 BC	After Ahaziah's death she killed (6 yrs. 2 Ki. 11:3, Ahaziah's death) the royal seed, all but Joash.		
15. Ahaziah	age 22	883-882 BC	Did evil before the Lord. (1 yr. 2 Ki. 8:25, 12th yr. of Joram, Isr.) Mother, Athaliah.		
16. Joram/Jehoram	age 32	891-883 BC	Walked in the evil ways of Ahab (8 yrs. 2 Ki. 8:16, 5th yr. of Joram, Ahab's son) A daughter of Ahab was his wife.		
17. Jehoshaphat	age 35	916-891 BC	Did that which was right in the sight (25 yrs. 1 K 22:42, 4th yr. of Ahab) of the Lord, except for high places.		
18. Asa	age ?	957-916 BC	Did that which was good and right (41 yrs. 1 Ki. 15:9, 20th yr. of Jeroboam I) in the sight of the Lord.		
19. Ahijah/Abijam	age ?	960-957 BC	Walked in the sins of his father. (3 yrs. 1 Ki. 15:1, 18th yr. of Jeroboam) God protected him for David.		
20. Rehoboam	age 41	980-960 BC	Judah. Did evil in the sight of God, (17 yrs. 1 Ki. 14:21, death of Solomon) built high places, groves, images.		

This chart shows the kings of Judah in perspective. Two of the most God-fearing kings were Hezekiah and Josiah. Other kings like Asa, Joash, Jehoshaphat, Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but the high places, groves and idols remained. Getting back to Bullinger's error, he assumed that the duration from Christ's death

(29 AD) to the “proclamation of Cyrus” (Ezra 1:2) returning the Jews to Jerusalem was 483 years (69 weeks) establishing that date as 454 BC. The secular date for this event was 536 BC in all the other resources. Further he assumed that the word “Messiach” in Dan 9:27 meant “Christ” not just “anointed ruler.” Further, Jeremiah 25:11 predicts that the length of the Jews’ stay in Babylon would be 70 years. The first Jews taken captive to Babylon were deported in 606 BC and included Daniel and his three friends. The 70 years between 606 BC and 536 BC appears to justify the use of secular dating.

Bullinger’s errant assumption would cause the student to be wary of his dates. His date for Solomon’s death is 880 BC (980 BC). He also establishes the battle of Carchemish to be dated at 496 BC (607 BC from secular sources). Appendices in the CB that may be contaminated by this assumption include: 53, 57, 58, 77, 86 and 91. This does not negate *The Companion Bible* as a very good resource and we continue using it. While many Christians still believe as Bullinger that 69 weeks are past and the rapture from the Tribulation is next, John C. Ribbens has written a booklet, *The Imminency of the Rapture: Fact or Fiction?* (available on The Word of Truth Ministry website, www.seedandbread.org) explaining why this is fiction and 70 weeks are future.

Dating the kings of Israel (shown in parentheses on chart) was also done with the kings of Judah even though the lineage cuts off about 721 BC. The first kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, were almost always at war with each other, and were not loyal to God. The kings of Ephraim-Israel were all idol worshippers. The dating of the kings of Judah has been done to more accurately identify their positions in time so that the prophets could be dated and identified with the kings they served. Bullinger’s dating is based on a flawed assumption, and many current systems are in opposition. This study supports the work of Bishop Ussher, using it in further work defining the dating of the prophets as found in **More Seed & Bread** No. 283.

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