TABLES OF REIGN LENGTHS FROM THE HEBREW COURT RECORDERS

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i. understanding the tables

The tables at the end of this article summarize the results of my previous three papers dealing with the chronology of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.[1] These tables are meant to display the chronological data in a format that will make it easy for writers of Study Bibles or commentaries to incorporate the reign lengths and starting and ending years of the kings into their texts. The present paper avoids the various calculations that derived these dates (those calculations were done in the earlier papers) and seeks to focus on how to use the tables, and also on their importance for our understanding of the Scriptures and the doctrine of inspiration.

To use the tables, it may be helpful to review how the calendar of the Hebrews differs from our own. The Hebrew calendar was (and is) lunarsolar. Each month started with the new moon. Since twelve lunar months fall short of a full solar year, in some years a thirteenth month was added. In later years the formula was worked out with some exactitude as to when this should be done. The month that began near the spring equinox was called Nisan. The northern kingdom (Israel) considered the year to start in Nisan throughout its history, whereas for civil purposes Judah considered the year to start in the seventh month, Tishri, corresponding roughly to our October. The Scriptures often give the number of the month instead of the month's name, and when this is done the numbering always starts from Nisan, independently of whether the official year started in Nisan or Tishri.

In the tables, the expression "931n" is used to represent the year beginning on Nisan 1, 931 BC and ending the day before Nisan 1, 930 BC. This is the kind of year that would be used in the court records of the northern kingdom. "931t" represents the year beginning Tishri 1, 931 BC and ending the day before Tishri 1, 930 BC; this is the kind of year that would be used in Judah. The six-month overlap of these two dates is written as 931t/930n, meaning the time period that began on Tishri 1 of 931 BC and ended the day before Nisan 1 of 930 BC. The overlap of 932t and 931n is written 931n/931t. This method of expressing dates may be called the "Nisan/Tishri" notation.

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[1] Rodger Young, "When Did Solomon Die?" *JETS* 46 (2003) 589–603; "When Did Jerusalem Fall?" *JETS* 47 (2004) 21–38; and "When Was Samaria Captured? The Need for Precision in Biblical Chronologies," *JETS* 47 (2004) 577–95.

In column 6 ("Years reigned") of the first two tables and in column 4 ("in") of tables 3 and 4 there is often a number followed by another number in parentheses. When this is the case, it means that the first number is the length of years given in the scriptural text, but that number must be taken in a non-accession or inclusive-numbering sense, so that the second number (always one less than the first) is to be used in formulas for the passage of time. Non-accession numbering means that when a king died, that year was counted as part of his reign, but it was also counted in the total number of years of the king who succeeded him. In this way, a king who died one year after he started would be given two years instead of one, which is the reason that reign length formulas use a number that is one less than the non-accession number.

In the histories of Israel and Judah the decision whether to use accession or non-accession years for the current king was always an arbitrary choice, perhaps made by the king himself. We owe a great debt to Edwin Thiele[2] for determining when the scriptural texts use accession reckoning and when they use non-accession reckoning in giving the total years of a king's reign or the year of that reign in which a king of the rival kingdom began (a synchronism). One general principle is that non-accession years are used when the years are measured from the start of a king's coregency with his father. In Table 2, there are two non-accession numbers where Thiele assumed accession reckoning. The first is for Uzziah, where Thiele went against the usual rule for coregencies and considered that Uzziah's fifty-two years were by accession reckoning, so his starting year for the Amaziah/Uzziah coregency is one year earlier than the 791t shown in Table 2. Thiele's reasoning for this exception is weak and is not adopted in the chronology presented here. The second is for Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. The reason for this is explained in my "Jerusalem" paper.

For the general reader the Nisan/Tishri dates of the tables will need to be expressed in terms of BC years. This might be done as follows.

(1) 931n would be written as 931/930, since the Nisan year falls in both these BC years. 931t would be written in the same way, even though it represents a time period that is six months later than 931n.
(2) The six-month interval 931t/930n would also be written as 931/930 BC.
(3) 931n/931t may be written as simply 931 BC.

II. WHERE THESE DATES COME FROM

1. *Dates for the kings of Israel.*   Thiele's third edition generally expressed starting and ending years as BC dates. By doing this, all the exactness of the dates for Zechariah, Shallum, Pekah, and Menahem was lost. Therefore dates for Israel will be compared to those in Thiele's second edition. The chronology

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of Table 1, for Israel, is identical to that of the second edition, except that the ending date for Hoshea is refined from Thiele's 723n to the first half of that year, as demonstrated by my "Samaria" paper and the various authors cited there. Except for this minor change, the dates for the northern kingdom have needed no alteration since they were published in the first edition of *Mysterious Numbers* in 1951, and they have proved to be useful in settling some issues in Assyrian chronology.

2. *Dates for Judah, Saul to Ahaziah (1051t to 842t).* My "Solomon" paper demonstrated that Solomon died and Rehoboam began before Tishri of 931 BC, not in the six-month interval beginning with Tishri of that year as assumed by Thiele.[3] This slight adjustment for the date of Solomon's death resolved the problem that Thiele's chronology produced in the reign of Jehoshaphat; Thiele's attempt to fix this in his third edition only extended the problem into the reigns of Ahaziah and Athaliah. Since the death of Solomon occurred before Tishri of 931 BC, by Judean reckoning this moved the beginning date for Solomon and his immediate successors one year earlier than in Thiele's chronology.

The beginning year of Solomon is calculated by taking his forty years as a non-accession number, because it is assumed that it is measured from the beginning of his coregency with David. The length of the coregency is not given in Scripture, so we cannot be very specific about when David died. (Actually there were two anointings of Solomon as coregent—1 Kgs 1:39; 1 Chr 23:1; 29:22.) There was enough time after Solomon was installed for David to accumulate some of the building materials for the Temple (1 Chronicles 22), and if we assume that David was dead by the fourth year of Solomon when the foundation of the Temple was laid (spring of 967 BC; 1 Kgs 6:1; 2 Chr 3:2), then we might guess a two-year overlap of the reigns of David and Solomon. Using this assumption, the conjectural dates for David and Saul in Table 1 are provided for convenience. Since we lack precise information about when David's forty years ended, his dates and Saul's cannot be specified as exactly as those of Solomon and all the subsequent kings of Judah and Israel.

3. *Dates for Judah, Athaliah to Hezekiah (842t to 687t).* For Athaliah and Joash the years agree with those in Thiele's second edition; the third edition contradicts itself for the beginning date of Athaliah. The dates for Amaziah through Hezekiah were calculated in my "Samaria" paper, where the differences with Thiele's figures were noted. The major difference was that Thiele did not recognize the Ahaz/Hezekiah coregency.

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[3] Although my "Solomon" paper showed that Solomon died and Rehoboam began before Tishri of 931 BC, I was not justified in assuming that Jeroboam's reign also began before Tishri of that year. Some weeks or even months were necessary for the news of Solomon's death to reach Egypt and for Jeroboam to return from there and be installed as king of the breakaway tribes. Whether this time extended past Tishri 1 of 931 is not known. The scriptural data only allows us to narrow the beginning of Jeroboam's reign to some time in 931n and the beginning of Rehoboam's to some time in 932t.

4. *Dates for Judah, Manasseh to Zedekiah (697t to 588t).*   The years for Manasseh and his son Amon present no special problem and their dates in Table 2 are the same as Thiele's. My "Jerusalem" paper showed that Josiah's thirty-one years (2 Kgs 22:1) are to be taken in an accession sense. That paper also demonstrated that there was a change to non-accession reckoning in 2 Kings for the reign of Zedekiah. It can be shown that the change took place after the reign of Jehoiakim. Zedekiah's eleven years are given by non-accession counting in both 2 Kings and Jeremiah (2 Chronicles follows 2 Kings in its dates). This means that 2 Kings and Jeremiah are in harmony with Ezekiel's dates for the fall of Jerusalem; all three sources date that event in 587 BC.

III. AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

Tables 1 through 4 are meant to be an aid to the writers of commentaries and Study Bibles who want to provide dates for the Hebrew kings or who want to show how the various reign lengths and synchronisms given in Scripture are calculated. Such writers will want to know how solid the reasoning was that produced these dates and formulas. They will also want to know which dates are controversial and likely to be challenged. I have touched briefly on the reasons behind the dates in the section immediately preceding; for the complete reasoning my "Solomon," "Jerusalem," and "Samaria" papers must be consulted. But no matter how much I may be convinced that the calculations are sound in the three papers, it would be naïve to expect that no disagreement will arise regarding these figures, particularly where they disagree with Thiele's dates. Allow me to anticipate where the areas of controversy will be.

1. *My revision for the years of the kings of Judah, Solomon to Ahaziah.* I do not expect much controversy over this, unless it comes from someone who has not understood the method I used to arrive at the results in my first paper. No one, to my knowledge, has written anything justifying Thiele's restriction of the death of Solomon to the last half of 931n—consequently I might hope that my statement that he died before Tishri of that year will be accepted as entirely possible. Further than that, placing Solomon's death before Tishri, i.e. in 932t instead of 931t, solves problems that Thiele was never able to resolve, as explained in the "Solomon" paper. The chronology of this period affects the biblical date for the exodus that is calculated from 1 Kgs 6:1, since it places the laying of the Temple's foundation in the spring of 967 BC instead of in 966 BC as required by Thiele's dates.[4] Accepting 967 BC for laying the foundation of the Temple determines that the exodus was in the spring of 1446 BC, a date which many of those who accepted

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[4] Given that Solomon died in 932t, his fourth year calculates to 968t whether accession reckoning is used for his forty years (start in 972t and subtract 4) or non-accession reckoning is used (start in 971t and subtract 3). The second month of the year 968t, when the foundation of the Temple was laid, was Ziv in the spring of 967 BC.

Thiele's 966 BC date arrived at anyway by incorrectly going back 480 years instead of 479 to determine the time of the exodus.[5]

2. *Dates for the eighth century BC: Ahaz and Hezekiah, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea.* In my "Samaria" paper, the dates I derived for the Judean kings of the eighth century BC are consistent with those of other conservative scholars who accept the Ahaz/Hezekiah coregency that is so definitely implied in Scripture. Some non-conservative scholars continue to reject the coregency but none offer any compelling reason for the rejection. Hezekiah's father, grandfather, and great-grandfather had coregencies with their fathers, and Hezekiah had a coregency with his son; why then rule out a coregency of Hezekiah with his father Ahaz?

Regarding the Pekah/Menahem rivalry there may continue to be controversy. I entered into the fray in my "Samaria" paper with observations about the source documents of the period, and also by comparing the dual-dating for the reign of Pekah with the dual-dating for the reign of Thutmose III, whose career in many ways was similar to that of Pekah. (After submitting the paper, I learned that Gleason Archer had also made this comparison between the careers of Thutmose III and Pekah.)[6] Those who, like myself, accept Thiele's thesis that Menahem and Pekah became rivals on the death of Shallum are able to show that thereby harmony is demonstrated in the scriptural data for the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea—a rather impressive argument for the reasonableness of the assumption. Authors who reject the Pekah/Menahem rivalry can demonstrate no such agreement among the scriptural synchronisms and dates for the period. Neither is there any consensus among these authors regarding their dates for Pekah.

Those who object to the rivalry can make the point that it is not stated explicitly in the Scriptures but must be inferred from the various synchronisms that are given to the reign of Pekah in 2 Kings 15 and 16. It is true that the rivalry is not explained explicitly, although Thiele and Cook[7] give examples of some Scriptures outside of 2 Kings that assume the rivalry. Also, Hos 5:5 clearly distinguishes Ephraim and Israel as separate kingdoms at that point in history (the Hebrew says, "Both Israel and Ephraim . . . ," as does the LXX). There are many places in Scripture and in other historical writings where we could wish for a fuller explanation, and where inference must be used to fill in the details of what happened. Inference is a standard *modus operandi* of historians.

Perhaps surprisingly, there continues to be some ferment over the date of the fall of Samaria, and again there is general disagreement among scholars who do not accept the scriptural data or who read into it unnecessary assumptions. A recent example is Christine Tetley's conjecture that the king to whom Hoshea paid tribute "year by year" (2 Kgs 17:4) was Shalmaneser, rather

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[5] See my "Solomon" paper for an independent verification of the 1446 date from the Jubilee cycles.

[6] Norman Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 71.

[7] Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers* 129–32; H. J. Cook, "Pekah," *VT* 14 (1964) 128–34.

than his predecessor Tiglath-Pileser.[8] By this unwarranted assumption, plus the *a priori* decision that no coregencies would be allowed for the kings of Judah, a chronology is provided which contradicts several Scriptures besides just those referring to the reign of Hoshea.

3. *The date of the fall of Jerusalem (ending date for Zedekiah).* In an article published in 1982, Alberto Green listed twenty-eight scholarly articles or books that were published after Wiseman's publication of the Babylonian Chronicle in 1956 and that took the Babylonian dates in the Chronicle into consideration when trying to determine the chronology of the last days of the Judean monarchy.[9] Other articles on this question have appeared in the years following Green's paper. It was not my intent when I approached the subject to review or evaluate this literature; rather it was to apply the same methods I had used in my "Solomon" paper to the question of when Jerusalem fell. When I began to look into the issue, I had no firm conviction about whether it was 587 or 586 BC, but I had the notion that 587 was accepted by the more recent scholars, among whom were two that I especially esteemed, Donald Wiseman and Kenneth Kitchen.[10] On the other hand, I also respected the work of Thiele, and he settled on 586.[11]

My procedure was to apply the completely neutral tools of Decision Analysis to each of the three biblical sources that bear on this question: Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and 2 Kings (2 Chronicles mirrors 2 Kings). It was possible that the analysis would show that these Scriptures could not be brought into agreement on the date of the fall of Jerusalem and the other dates and reign lengths associated with it. This is the result that would have been predicted by proponents of the various theories that say that the books of Scripture were not authored by contemporaries of the events described, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but were the handiwork of anonymous and late-date editors or post-exilic pretenders who wrote in the name of Jeremiah or Ezekiel. But instead of finding a conflict among the various writings, the results showed that the three scriptural sources were internally consistent, consistent with each other, and consistent with a date for the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC.

The date of the destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar is one of the most important dates in world history. For that reason, along with the great number of scholarly papers and popular articles that have already been written on the subject, it is easy to predict that those who have advocated 586 for the fall of Jerusalem may not readily change their minds, however convincing a case I or anyone else could make for the 587 date. The only primary sources we have at present describing the fall of Jerusalem are the scriptural texts, so anyone who declares a date for that

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[8] M. Christine Tetley, "The Date of Samaria's Fall as a Reason for Rejecting the Hypothesis of Two Conquests," *CBQ* 64 (2002) 63.

[9] Alberto Green, "The Chronology of the Last Days of Judah: Two Apparent Discrepancies," *JBL* 101 (1982) 57–58 footnote.

[10] *NBD* 217.

[11] Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers* 187, 189–91.

event must justify it from the Scriptures, relating the pertinent texts to the latest dates before the fall that are preserved in the Babylonian Chronicle. I would hope that all those who hold a high view of the inspiration of Scripture and who previously advocated 586 will come around to the 587 figure, since it is the only date that can be reconciled with all the texts involved. Even among these scholars, however, there might be some who hold onto the 586 date for some reason such as their presupposition that Zedekiah absolutely must have used accession reckoning for his reign. Why Zedekiah switched to non-accession reckoning I do not know. But anyone who insists that he could not have made a decree to switch to non-accession reckoning should be obliged to tell us why it was impossible for him to do so.

Before someone asserts that I arrived at 587 by forcing my preconceptions on the scriptural data and then manipulating the numbers to come up with this conclusion, let me spell out what my preconceptions might be in the matter.

First, as someone with mathematical training, I would not allow any reign lengths to be measured in a non-accession sense. It is scandalous that one year could be counted for each of two kings, thus throwing into confusion what should be a simple addition of reign lengths to show elapsed time. Non-accession counting will not be allowed.

A second preconceived idea results from my being enough of a moralist to say that we ought to obey the commandments of God. Since God told Moses that the year was to start in Nisan (Exod 12:2), all years must be reckoned that way. But, says someone, the Jewish people to this day celebrate the New Year in Tishri! Such disobedience will not be tolerated; the year starts in Nisan.

My third presupposition arises because I see nothing foolish in consistency, so I must be one of those little minds that Emerson complained about.[12] If a kingdom starts measuring its reign lengths in one way, it ought to keep measuring them that way as long as it exists, even if it got started on the wrong foot (i.e. non-accession reckoning).

Now imagine how I felt when the analysis for the reign of Zedekiah showed that (1) he used non-accession reckoning; (2) he started his years in Tishri; and (3) he changed the reckoning system from that used by his immediate predecessors. Should I force my eminently reasonable preconceptions on the data, declaring that every text that does not agree with my scheme is the late-date invention of an incompetent redactor? Or should I take the place of a learner and think that maybe I need to change some of my ideas?

IV. THE UNEXPECTED (INCREDIBLE) RESULT

The major lessons to be learned from the four tables accompanying this paper are not the dates and the calculations shown in the tables, but the generalities and truths that may be inferred from them. These generalities

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[12] "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

bear the same relation to the figures of the tables that the theories of science bear to a notebook showing the results from an experiment that was testing one of those theories. The results of the experiment are a means to an end, and that end is either verifying or disproving the theory. The results are especially important if the experiment is designed in such a way that the data, properly collected and interpreted, can be used to show which of two competing theories offers the better explanation of physical reality. To use an example from my "Samaria" paper, emission lines from the hydrogen atom were found on the spectrographic plate exactly where they were predicted to be by the theories of quantum mechanics, and the location of these lines could not be predicted by the laws of classical electromagnetism. The immediate result of the experiment was a set of tables representing wave lengths taken from a spectroscopic plate; the ultimate result was the replacement of one theory with another for the explanation of phenomena on the atomic level.

Before any "ultimate results" are deduced from the tables in the present article, some observations need to be made about the characteristics of these tables.

1. *The tables are internally consistent and consistent with each other.* The starting and ending years match with the length of the king's reign, and the end of each reign matches the starting year of the next king's sole reign. The starting dates used in the tables of synchronisms are the same as the starting dates in the reign length tables.

2. *The tables are consistent with several fixed dates in Middle Eastern history.* This point is less trivial than the preceding one, which would have been satisfied by most, but not all, chronologies that appeared before Thiele's work.[13] Thiele's chronology (which differs from that of the present paper in only a few places) won the respect of historians because its dates agree with the following dates in Assyrian and Babylonian history: the Battle of Qarqar in 853 BC; the tribute of Jehu to Shalmaneser III in 841 BC; the capture of Samaria by Shalmaneser V in 723 BC; the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BC; the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC; and the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC.

3. *The four tables are consistent with all texts in Kings and Chronicles that give reign lengths or that match the starting year of a king to the regnal year of a king in the rival kingdom.* These are the familiar texts that either give the reign length by itself or that have the form "In year x of y, king of Israel, z became king of Judah and he reigned w years." My "Samaria" paper, and articles which preceded it by other authors, argued that this stereotyped formula represents extracts taken from the official court records of Judah and Israel. Every scriptural text that has one of these extracts or simple reign lengths, from the time of David to Zedekiah, is represented in the four tables.

4. *The four tables are consistent with the texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel that give synchronisms or dates for the last years of the Judean monarchy.*

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[13] The older interpreters introduced interregna in their chronologies, so that reign lengths do not always match beginning dates of the kings.

My "Jerusalem" paper listed all synchronisms (seven) in Jeremiah and three in Ezekiel,[14] and these are consistent with the dates of Table 2 of the present article. A similar statement cannot be made for any chronology that places the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

All of the numbers in the tables (reign lengths, dates, and synchronisms) were determined by first ascertaining the methods of measurement used in the Scriptures. None of them represents an emendation of the text. To explain these observations and the characteristics listed above, the following conclusion, generalizing theory, or thesis will be stated: Tables 1 through 4 represent the reign length formulas of the official court recorders of Judah and Israel, preserved for us without alteration by the Masoretic and prior scribal traditions.

According to a great number of scholars who have written in this field, for anyone to be able to produce a chronology of the Hebrew kings that is consistent with all the scriptural texts and also consistent with fixed external dates is a most surprising and unexpected result. Many have expressed the opinion that it could never be done. In an article in the *AUSS*, Thiele listed fourteen authors who stated quite dogmatically that the dates and synchronisms in the Books of Kings were in error and no consistent chronology could be constructed from these texts.[15] These were eminent scholars, and their opinions as cited by Thiele included the following:

- S. R. and G. R. Driver: "Since, however, it is clear on various grounds that these synchronisms are not original, any attempt to base a chronological scheme on them may be disregarded."
- R. Kittel: "Wellhausen has shown, by convincing reasons, that the synchronisms within the Book of Kings cannot possibly rest on ancient tradition, but are on the contrary simply the products of artificial reckoning . . ."
- Theodore H. Robinson: "Wellhausen is surely right in believing that the synchronisms in Kings are worthless, being merely a late compilation from the actual figures given."
- R. H. Pfeiffer: "In spite of these discrepancies, inaccuracies, and errors, the chronology of Kings is not fantastic."
- K. Marti: "Almost along the whole line, the discrepancy between synchronisms and years of reign is incurable."
- C. H. Gordon: "The numerical errors in the Books of Kings have defied every attempt to ungarble them. Those errors are largely the creation of the editors . . . the editors did not execute the synchronisms skillfully."

To this list of "assured results" may be added the observation of W. F. Albright: "It is incredible that all these numbers can have been handed down through so many editors and copyists without often becoming corrupt. . . ."[16]

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[14] There is some uncertainty about a fourth possible synchronism in Ezekiel, which is the "thirtieth year" mentioned in Ezek 1:1. It is possible that this refers to the thirtieth year of a Jubilee cycle if Ezekiel was using an archaic method of counting Jubilee years, or it is also possible that it refers to the thirtieth year of the prophet's life. This synchronism has been left out of the present summation.

[15] Edwin Thiele, "Synchronisms of the Hebrew Kings," *AUSS* 1 (1963) 124–25.

[16] W. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *BASOR* 100 (1945) 17.

The context here shows that by "incredible" Albright meant that no one should believe that an authentic chronology could have been passed down to us. But our thesis is that, all these scholars notwithstanding, this is precisely what has happened: the internal and external consistencies of Tables 1 through 4 are the characteristics that we would expect if we did indeed have the original and authentic figures from the period of the Hebrew monarchs. This consistency does not amount to proof of authenticity, but it would be very difficult to understand how it could have come about unless the synchronisms and reign lengths are authentic, i.e. represent historical fact. As was mentioned above, the tables contain *all* the numbers representing exact reign length figures and synchronisms for the thirty-seven kings and one queen who reigned in two kingdoms from Solomon to Zedekiah. The time from the first year of Solomon to the last synchronism given in 2 Kgs 25:27 is 409 years; to describe events in this time span, sixty-five reign length figures and forty-two synchronisms to the rival kingdom are given in Kings and Chronicles. Furthermore, there are six exact synchronisms to events that can be dated in Assyrian and Babylonian history, plus one synchronism to an event (the exodus) that can be independently dated by references in the Talmud. To this should be added the seven synchronisms in Jeremiah and three in Ezekiel that are also consistent with these tables. Altogether this makes 124 exact statistics that are summarized in the chronology of the tables at the end of this article. As Albright said, it is "incredible" that this complexity of numbers and their interdependencies could have been transmitted to us without error, or that all these figures could represent the actual dates of the kings of Judah and Israel. Yet it is our thesis that this is exactly what we have. How could this "incredible" result have come about?

There seem to be three alternatives: (1) a naturalistic explanation; (2) a miracle; or (3) it is all due to the clever manipulation of figures by Thiele and those who followed him; the chronology is not authentic, but is a synthetic formulation of writers who were "trying to prove that the Bible is true." Let us examine these alternatives.

V. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS OF THE INCREDIBLE RESULT

1. *The naturalistic explanation.*

a. *Jeremiah and Ezekiel.*   As a naturalistic explanation, it can be maintained that the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel were written by the two seventh/sixth-century prophets of that name—or if not by them, by someone who lived at the same time, although this is more difficult to imagine than is the simple proposition that Jeremiah really wrote Jeremiah and Ezekiel really wrote Ezekiel, since it would be clear that a fraud was taking place if the two prophets were still alive when the fraud was perpetrated. The authors then would have had direct knowledge of the events that are mentioned in the two books. All dates and synchronisms would be authentic because they were recorded by men who lived through the times.

b. *Kings and Chronicles.*   For the Books of Kings and Chronicles, the naturalistic explanation would be that there was a school of scholars simi-

lar to, if not identical to, the schools of the prophets that Thiele maintained were the sources of the Book of Kings.[17] The school somehow felt responsible for keeping annals of the history of the two kingdoms, and it passed on this responsibility through the centuries. Parallels to this can be found in the schools of Jewish rabbis who preserved learning during the Middle Ages or in the academy of Plato, which endured for nine centuries after its founding.

c. *Transmission to the present.*   Finally, there would have to be a tradition of scribes who instituted very careful procedures and checks to make sure that the copying process was as accurate as it was possible to make it, so that the original writings could be preserved through the centuries. This might be hard to envision if we did not have the example of a scholastic tradition that did exactly these things: the Masoretes. All that is necessary is to imagine a similar reverence and care for the sacred writings among their custodians for the centuries intervening between the original compositions and the beginning of the Masoretic tradition.

These assumptions would explain why the chronology represented by Tables 1 through 4 is internally consistent, consistent with every Scripture in the six books of the OT that gives exact chronological details over a span of four centuries, and consistent with fixed external dates in Assyria and Babylonia. The consistency would be because the dates and numbers are all in accord with reality, and they have been transmitted to us correctly by the scribal schools, many of whose methods of assuring accuracy we know from the traditions of the Masoretes. These are all plausible assumptions, and there is nothing inherently supernatural about them. They offer an explanation that is almost identical to the historic position of Judaism and Christianity, but differing in this one essential: the supernatural supervision of the Holy Spirit, who determined the content of the texts, and who also guaranteed that the autographs were without error and that the copying process preserved for us a text that is close enough to the autographs so that we can have confidence in the doctrines presented. The traditional approach, then, incorporates something from the naturalistic explanation and the supernatural explanation presented next.

2. *A miracle.*   If Jeremiah and Ezekiel were not actually written by contemporaries of the events described, and if Kings and Chronicles were not derived from written records preserved by some such school as was envisaged under the naturalistic explanation, then the alternative is that these various books were written by people of a later time who had no direct knowledge of the events recorded. At this point the imagination can run wild in hypothesizing what the sources utilized by these authors might have been. Anyone who is familiar with the history of biblical criticism in the last two centuries knows that such wild hypothesizing is exactly what has happened. The resultant theories are marked by the scholar imposing his imaginative ideas on the scriptural data, and as would be expected, there arose a great confusion of theories about which sections of Scripture came from which

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[17] Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers* chap. 10.

imagined source. The lack of consensus on what the source documents were should have served as a warning that there was something radically wrong with these theories. They did, however, have one thing in common: they all agreed that the persons responsible for the final form of the OT documents lived later, often much later, than the events described in those documents.

If that were the case, then how could these various late-date authors and editors produce synchronisms and dates that without exception are internally consistent, consistent with those of the other late-date editors and pseudepigraphic authors, and consistent with long-forgotten events from the surrounding nations? The only answer seems to be a miracle: the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit somehow made all things come out right, overruling the ignorance and mistaken ideas of the writers of Scripture. The greater the distance of the writer from the events described, the greater the miracle must have been. The more radical the form critic (as measured by how late he dated the writings), the greater he must imagine the miracle to be so that his late-date writer or editor could have come up with a harmonious chronology for events long past, when even the method of measuring years or assigning reign lengths had been forgotten.

Radical form critics, however, seem from their writings to have a tendency not to believe in the supernatural, so it is doubtful that any who have this outlook will resort to miracles to explain the consistencies found in Tables 1 through 4. They will surely prefer the next alternative, since the first (naturalistic) alternative is contrary to their one unifying principle, which is that Scripture is almost always written later than the date that would be assumed by taking the scriptural texts at face value.

3. *The consistencies and apparent authenticity of these tables are due to manipulation by Thiele and those who followed him.* In this section it will be demonstrated that the harmony in the chronology of Tables 1 through 4 is not the result of a clever manipulation of figures by Thiele and those who corrected the few errors in his work, but is the result of applying a method which is more logical and better suited for determining a chronology from historical data than is the method used by most of Thiele's critics.

To substantiate this statement, some misconceptions about Thiele's method need to be dealt with. Fortunately, that was done very well in a paper by Kenneth Strand, which is highly recommended as an overview that helps us to understand Thiele's approach.[18] Refuting the idea that Thiele, by trial and error, juggled dates until he could match fixed dates in Assyrian and Babylonian history, Strand wrote, "His only 'trial and error' procedure was in seeing how the variable factors used by the Hebrew scribes were involved in producing the numbers given in the MT for the lengths of reign and synchronisms of the monarchs of the two Hebrew kingdoms. No dates whatever—either biblical or extrabiblical—were placed in his charts until he had established a pattern of internal consistency based solely on the bib-

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[18] Kenneth A. Strand, "Thiele's Biblical Chronology as a Corrective for ExtraBiblical Dates," *AUSS* 34 (1996) 295–317.

lical data."[19] This is corroborated by Thiele himself, who wrote, "Let it be repeated that the pattern of reign lengths set forth in the present book is not the product of certain arbitrary adjustments to secure a series of pre-determined results. Rather, it resulted from a quest to ascertain whether or not the numbers now found in Kings could be brought together into some harmonious arrangement of reigns, and whether or not such an arrangement once produced was in harmony with the established dates of Near Eastern history."[20]

The most important point to understand about Thiele's approach, then, is that he started with the scriptural texts and as the first step sought to find the methods used by the authors of Scripture in recording their chronological data. This is the key that explains the successes that eventually came from his efforts. These successes could not have come if the texts were corrupt, as the scholars cited above imagined them to be. Although it was arduous work to ascertain the measuring methods used by the scriptural authors, Thiele wrote of his progress once the methods were discovered as follows: "It was four years after I had begun a serious study of the chronological involvements of the Hebrew kings before I was able to work my way through the data for the first two or three kings of Israel and Judah. But then, having once discovered the various principles involved, in only a few weeks I made my way through to the end."[21]

In contrast with this approach is the method of all those who come to the Scriptures with preconceived ideas and who then force those ideas onto the data. This approach invariably leads to conflict with the scriptural data, which the older conservative scholars attempted to resolve by introducing inter-regna, and which more liberal scholars explained by saying that the data was in error, which of course reinforced their philosophical presupposition about the unreliability of the Scriptures. In my previous papers I have argued that this method of approaching biblical chronology is the single largest source of confusion in the field; my "Samaria" paper labeled it the "Factor One" source of errors. An early example of this was the chronology of Thomas Lydiat, who used an old Jewish notion that it would be 4000 years from the creation to the coming of the Messiah. Lydiat thus set the creation of the world in 4004 BC, a date which became familiar to the world through the writings of Archbishop Ussher.[22] The goal of Lydiat and Ussher was doubtless to reinforce the faith of God's people, but later scholars have produced artificial schemes as a means to try to show that the scriptural texts dealing with chronology were contrived and mythical, as I discussed briefly in a footnote to my "Jerusalem" paper regarding Wellhausen and one of his modern followers.[23]

The relevance to our present discussion is this: It is not Thiele who should be accused of juggling the texts to come up with an artificial and synthetic

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[19] Ibid. 297.
[20] Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers* 18.
[21] Ibid. 21.
[22] Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 262.
[23] Young, *Jerusalem* 28–29 n. 13.

scheme; instead it is those like Wellhausen who had some preconceived idea that they imposed on the Scripture, declaring that everything that did not fit their scheme represented a factual error introduced by the mistaken notions of a late-date editor. "Artificial" and "synthetic" are adjectives that should not be applied to Thiele's method; they are more aptly applied to those who produced these artificial chronologies and consequent "Factor One" errors that are the chief source of confusion in the field.

The reason that Thiele found harmony in his chronology was therefore not because he cleverly manipulated the dates; it was because he started with the proper methodology, and that methodology uncovered the harmony that was inherent in the scriptural texts. The harmony, however, remained hidden until Thiele (and to some extent Coucke before him) discovered the basic dating methods that were used by the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (Tishri years for Judah, Nisan years for Israel, etc.).

Thiele's chronology needed emending in a few places, not because his basic approach was wrong, but rather because it was incomplete: the thesis of my three former papers was that there were combinations of factors that Thiele overlooked, and these combinations resolved some problems that he tended to gloss over.[24] In the first two papers I introduced a method that can help eliminate this kind of oversight. It is to be hoped that future technical papers in the area of biblical chronology will adopt this method—Decision Tables—in the treatment of knotty problems with synchronisms and reign lengths.

Most of the scholars who write in this field are proficient in at least two (usually more) languages besides their native tongue. The effort needed to become proficient in the use of Decision Tables is far less than that required to learn a foreign language. Therefore it should not be too much to ask that this skill be learned by any who, in the future, want to deal with the kind of problems represented by the chronology of the divided kingdoms. Hopefully I have made it clear that Thiele's lack of acquaintance with this methodology sometimes made him overlook more satisfactory solutions than the ones he settled for. But the failure to explore all the possibilities characterizes far more research in this area than that of Thiele. On the negative side, the consequence has been declarations that the Scripture was in error when this had not been demonstrated, and when in fact it was the scholar's method that was deficient, not the Scripture. On the positive side, applying a methodology that reveals all the possibilities can open up rewarding insights. My paper on "Solomon" resulted when I applied Decision Tables to the beginning of the divided monarchy and discovered what Thiele had overlooked there. Even more rewarding was the application to the scriptural texts dealing with the fall of Jerusalem, out of which was revealed an agreement in

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[24] My "Solomon" paper dealt with Thiele's failure to examine the possibility that Solomon died in the first half of 931n rather than the last half. My "Jerusalem" paper examined possibilities for the ways Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and 2 Kings treated chronological data that Thiele apparently had not explored. My "Samaria" paper dealt with the Ahaz/Hezekiah coregency that many scholars suggested but which Thiele did not consider. All these oversights were called "Factor Two" errors in my "Samaria" paper.

all the texts involved that I had never seen before. The method is logically sound; it is not a means of imposing the scholar's views on the data—it is the opposite of that. In a real sense it completes the methodology that Thiele pursued when his first goal was to find the means by which the scriptural authors treated the history of their times, since it can provide all the possibilities that are consistent with foundational principles.

If, however, writers ignore this tool when they examine some problem in the chronology of the kingdom period, they are not justified in declaring that the Scripture is in error because it does not fit their scheme. The number of papers that have done this in the past is legion, but now discerning readers should have the knowledge that enables them to determine when an author has declared that the Scripture is in error, but he or she has not done the necessary analysis to validate that conclusion. Unless a competent use of Decision Tables, or their logical equivalent, has been carried out to show that no reasonable combination of factors can account for these chronological texts, no writer is justified in declaring that the scriptural texts are in error.

The techniques of Decision Tables can be learned from several books that are commercially available. As of the present writing, there is a web site, www.cems.uwe.ac.uk/~jharney/table.html, that offers a good introduction. The basic idea can also be learned from my first two papers, particularly the "Jerusalem" paper.

What all this means for the third "explanation"—that the harmony in Tables 1 through 4 is a result of clever manipulation of the data—is that this explanation is simply not tenable. Scholars who follow Thiele's approach of letting the Scriptures dictate which options are possible have far less freedom to produce arbitrary schemes than do authors who invent their own schemes that contradict the Scriptures, such as Wellhausen and his followers. The only reasonable alternative we are left with is that the harmony of the chronology displayed in Tables 1 through 4 exists because we have in these tables the authentic reign lengths and synchronisms as given by the official court recorders of Israel and Judah, who began their task three thousand years ago and finished it some four centuries later.

VI. LIMITED INSPIRATION

Theories of limited inspiration generally hold that there are major theological doctrines to be found in the Bible and these are inspired and should be believed, but it is too much to expect that the Scriptures are accurate in all matters of history and science. This necessarily produces a contradiction, since one of the major theological doctrines of the Bible is that the Scripture is without error in all its parts.

Despite the logical contradiction, theories of limited inspiration maintain that in matters of minute historical detail we must expect some errors. The authors cited by Thiele whose statements were included in Section IV all believed in limited inspiration. Their advocacy of that doctrine led them to expect that the detailed chronological notes of Kings and Chronicles, spread over more than four centuries and hence necessarily coming from different

authors, could not have all been recorded and transmitted correctly. If errors are to be found, what better place to go fishing for them than in this well-stocked pool, teeming with an abundance of dates, reign lengths, and synchronisms? Any theory of limited inspiration would recognize this as the prime place in the whole Bible to find the errors assumed by those who hold to an errant Scripture. But a diligent search finds no such errors! What is found instead is that *all* of the scriptural texts dealing with exact chronological details in these four books, plus the texts in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, have the characteristics of authenticity. Such a finding strikes at the heart of theories of limited inspiration. It is hard to imagine how a more damaging blow could have been delivered to this doctrine. In an area where, if it were true, we had every reason to expect results, it produced nothing.

Those who, because of their theological or moral standpoints, feel compelled to continue in a doctrine of a defective Scripture can try to ignore this argument (for the authenticity of all exact chronological details in six major books of the Bible), or they can seek refuge in some other area of Scripture where errors are assumed to exist. If they attempt to take the argument for errancy to other areas, this question must be answered: Why do we find apparent authenticity and complete trustworthiness in the one area where previously the holders of this doctrine were confident that we would find not just one, but multiple errors?

Take the example of two witnesses in a murder trial. Witness One has just given a testimony that has 124 details that can be checked by independent means. His testimony also includes statements in areas that the court cannot check. Witness Two comes to the stand and makes several sweeping statements about the unreliability of the details given by Witness One; he alleges that certain individuals were not in the place that Witness One said they were at the time stated, and that many of the time periods in Witness One's testimony are false.

Now suppose that an outside expert is brought in, and the expert's testimony shows that all 124 statements of exact particulars that Witness One gave are consistent with his findings. Furthermore, these 124 items are not matters of common knowledge, but are obscure details that could have been known only by first-hand experience. After this expert testimony, the only reasonable conclusion is that Witness One was telling the truth about these items; the testimony of Witness One must be accepted in this area that was checked by the expert's testimony. But there is another consequence: the statements of Witness One would have great weight in the areas that cannot be checked. The entire testimony of Witness One must be given the most serious consideration in any further deliberations of the court.

Having established the integrity and credibility of Witness One, the court would necessarily decide that the testimony of Witness Two could not be true in the area where Witness One was vindicated, since Witness Two contradicted Witness One in that area. Furthermore, since Witness Two was wrong in the area that could be checked, all statements that Witness Two made in other areas that could not be checked would necessarily be called into ques-

tion; his testimony no longer has weight in any area. Witness Two's credibility has been destroyed.

The analogy can be made more sweeping. Witness Two could have been represented not as a single witness, but as a whole series of witnesses who cannot agree among themselves on what actually happened, and who contradict each other in their sequences of events (chronologies). The one unifying principle in their testimony is that the statements of Witness One must be false somewhere. When asked why they are so hostile to the testimony of Witness One, they reply that it is nothing personal, but they find it incredible that Witness One could have been right in all of 124 precise statements. Their philosophical commitments do not allow them to believe that anyone, in heaven or on earth, could be completely truthful in all that he says.

VII. SOME CAUTIONS

It is possible to make some unwarranted assumptions based on the arguments presented thus far. This section cautions against a few of these.

First, it should not be assumed that all scriptural texts dealing with chronological issues anywhere in Scripture are free from possible textual problems. It is remarkable and even unexpected that the 124 exact synchronisms and reign lengths dealt with in this paper, covering the period from Solomon to Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, fit together harmoniously and not one of them requires emendation. However, when we leave these texts and go back to the time of Saul, we encounter difficulty with the MT of 1 Sam 13:1. Another problem text is Exod 12:40, where the Samaritan version of the verse is more consistent with other chronological texts than is the MT version. It is interesting, however, that in places like this we can find other Scriptures that allow us to state with some confidence what the original reading was.

A second caution is about the use of Decision Tables: it must be realized that the range of issues they can address is limited. There are many problems in chronology for which they can offer no assistance. An example might be the chronology of the book of Judges. The kinds of problems they should be used with are those for which several parameters affect a result, and different values for the parameters combine to produce different values for the result.

Another caution is that the major thrust of my work has been to show that the scriptural texts regarding the chronology of the time are in agreement with each other, while only minimal attention was devoted to external consistency with events in the surrounding nations. It should not be presumed that because internal harmony has been demonstrated, therefore all chronological problems of the period have been solved. There will continue to be debate by Assyriologists, for example, over the dating of contacts of Tiglath-Pileser III with Uzziah and Menahem. Discussions like this over how the Hebrew chronology interfaces with extra-biblical events will still be necessary, but the demonstration of a chronology of the period for Israel and Judah that is internally consistent should lend credibility to the biblical evidence in resolving issues in the chronologies of neighboring kingdoms.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

(1) The proper approach to use in constructing a chronology for the kings of Judah and Israel is one which first determines the methods of dating used in the scriptural texts. Use of this approach is a primary reason for the successes of Thiele's chronology. Failure to use it is the primary reason for the confusion of systems produced by authors who followed a different approach.

(2) This approach could not have produced a chronology that is internally consistent and consistent with fixed extra-biblical dates unless the scriptural texts were characterized by internal harmony and harmony among the six books of Scripture that give exact chronological data for the kingdom period.

(3) The most logical explanation of the internal harmony and harmony with external dates is that all these texts give us the true chronology of the time.

(4) No reign lengths or synchronisms of an exact nature from six books that give chronological details (1 and 2 Chronicles, 1 and 2 Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) were omitted from the studies that produced the chronology of Tables 1 through 4.

(5) The explanation that this harmony, internal consistency, and agreement with fixed external dates from Assyria and Babylonia were brought about by clever manipulation of data by Thiele and those who followed him is not tenable.

(6) Although Thiele's basic approach was correct, his methodology was incomplete. Occasionally he overlooked possibilities that offered a better explanation of the relevant texts than the explanation he settled on.

(7) The use of Decision Tables can provide all the possibilities that are consistent with an author's working hypotheses, and this methodology is therefore recommended as the logical completion of Thiele's approach. It should be utilized in any study which has to deal with the various options (Tishri or Nisan years, accession or non-accession counting, etc.) that characterize the period of the Hebrew monarchies.

It might be contended that Thiele and those who followed him were unduly influenced by a philosophical or theological disposition—namely the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy. The answer to this is simple: there is no place where such a presupposition has produced a result (a date, reign length, or synchronism) that is contrary to reason and to the best historical method that would be used for any other text from ancient times. Rather than being unreasonable, the basic postulates in Thiele's system are simpler and more consistent with the demonstrated practices of the ancient Near East than are the presuppositions of the radical form critics.[25] Inerrancy, then, is not an

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[25] Thus coregencies have been substantiated in the dynasties of Egypt (E. Bell, "The Co-Regency of David and Solomon (I Kings 1)," *VT* 27 [1977] 268–79). Tishri years for Judah are suggested by Josephus's remark (*Ant.* 1.3.3) that before the exodus the years were considered to start in Tishri,

irrational principle that produces unreasonable conclusions in an unreasonable chronology. Instead it was a working hypothesis that led Thiele, as long as he pursued it, to very fruitful results. His abandonment of the principle for the reign of Hezekiah produced the one area of his chronology where he has found very few followers, and where the solution proposed by Kitchen, Mitchell, Horn, and others has all the advantages of simplicity, agreement with the scriptural texts involved, and consistency with the basic principles that Thiele used elsewhere.

There is no doubt that the success of this approach (the approach of assuming that the biblical records were correct until they were proved wrong) has made a strong statement in favor of the doctrine of inerrancy. But even if it could be proved that all the scriptural dates and synchronisms for the kingdom period are authentic, this demonstration would still not be the primary reason why we should believe in inerrancy. Studies which show that the Bible is accurate and true, even in the most unexpected places such as in the minute details of chronology, can never "prove" the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture—any proof would have to establish all facts external to the Bible, and then prove that every item in the Bible is consistent with those facts, which is impossible. The doctrine of inerrancy has an altogether different basis: inerrancy must always find its origin in the belief that it is a major doctrine taught in the Bible itself (Deut 8:3; Ps 12:6; 93:5; 111:7–8; 119:89, 140, 160; 2 Tim 3:16; Titus 1:2; 1 Pet 1:25), that it is unmistakably the position of our Savior, who knows all things (Matt 5:18; Luke 16:17; 24:25; John 5:46, 47; 10:35; 17:17), and that God promises blessing to those who believe his Word (Gen 15:6; 2 Chr 20:20; Rom 4:3; Jas 2:23). To this can be added the philosophical reason that if there is a God and we are his creatures, then there is a certain moral obligation for the Divine Being to make his thoughts known to us in a revelation that is completely trustworthy. No amount of proof of a scientific or historical sort will ever go beyond these reasons for believing in the doctrine of inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Although the demonstration of harmony between any set of scriptural texts and historical fact cannot prove the doctrine of inerrancy, what can be said is that the internal harmony of all the figures in Tables 1 through 4, plus their consistency with fixed extra-biblical dates, are exactly what we would expect if the doctrine of inerrancy of God's Word is true. Furthermore, the consistency and harmony of these tables are not what would be predicted by any theory of the limited inspiration of the Scriptures. Such theories fail to explain the apparent authenticity of the chronology in the tables, and approaches based on these theories (approaches which assumed that the

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as well as by Jewish practice to this day. By observing the New Year in Nisan, the northern kingdom was adopting the system used in Babylonia and Assyria. As for rival reigns (Omri and Tibni, Pekah and Menahem), the case of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III in Egypt offers a parallel; indeed, Egyptologists say that whole dynasties from Manetho's list were contemporaneous rivals. Compare these well-substantiated practices with some of the postulates of, for example, Wellhausen: that writing was not known among the Hebrews in the time of Moses; that there were no coregencies in Judah and Israel; that the use of dual divine names implies dual sources (disproved at Ugarit); etc.

scriptural data was wrong and needed correcting by the author's scheme) have not been able to achieve the success that Thiele's approach has had in predicting the correct dates of events in Assyrian history. It can therefore be said that in the area of chronology, approaches which assume an errant scripture have failed, and progress will only be made when we follow the path on which Thiele (and Coucke, and others) initially set out, of first humbling ourselves enough that we can approach the Scriptures as if they really are the Word of God, a Word from which we need to learn before we brashly produce theories that show our cleverness.

To summarize: the apparent authenticity of all the chronological details shown in Tables 1 through 4 would never have been predicted by a theory of limited inspiration. Any such theory would produce, instead, the confident assertions of the authors cited in Section IV, that the chronological details of the OT are the locus where we can be sure that errors are found. Such "Witness Two" type statements are no longer credible; the apparent authenticity of the chronological details of Scripture is precisely what would be expected if the doctrine of limited inspiration is false and that of inerrancy is true. But, as said before, our reasons for believing in the doctrine of inerrancy are not based on demonstrations like this; the most that we can say is that these findings in the field of chronology are consistent with such a belief. The doctrine will not be finally proven until our Redeemer returns and asks why we did not believe everything that was written in his eternal, inerrant Word.

IX. TABLES OF REIGN-LENGTHS AND SYNCHRONISMS

For instructions on how to read the figures in these tables, see Section I, "Understanding the Tables."

Table 1. *Chronology of the Kings of Israel*

King	Overlapping reigns	Began sole reign	Ended	Official start and end	Years reigned
Jeroboam I		931n	910t/909n	931n–910n	22 (21)
Nadab		910t/909n	909t/908n	910n–909n	2 (1)
Baasha		909t/908n	886t/885n	909n–886n	24 (23)
Elah		886t/885n	885t/884n	886n–885n	2 (1)
Zimri		885t/884n	885t/884n	885n	7 days
Tibni		885t/884n	880n/880t	885n–880n	(not stated)
Omri	885t/884n	880n/880t	874t/873n	885n–874n	12 (11)
Ahab		874t/873n	853n/853t	874n–853n	22 (21)
Ahaziah		853n/853t	852n/852t	853n–852n	2 (1)
Joram		852n/852t	841n/841t	852n–841n	12 (11)
Jehu		841n/841t	814t/813n	841n–814n	28 (27)
Jehoahaz		814t/813n	798n/798t	814n–798n	17 (16)
Jehoash		798n/798t	782t/781n	798n–782n	16
Jeroboam II	793n	782t/781n	753, Elul (Sep)	793n–753n	41 (40)
Zechariah		753, Elul	752, Adar (Mar)	753n–753n	6 mo.
Shallum		752, Adar	752, Nisan (Apr)	753n–752n	1 mo.
Menahem		752, Nisan	742t/741n	752n–742n	10
Pekahiah		742t/741n	740t/739n	742n–740n	2
Pekah	752, Nisan	740t/739n	732t/731n	752n–732n	20
Hoshea		732t/731n	723n/723t	732n–723n	9

Column 5 has the king's start and end dates (in Nisan/Tishri notation) that were used by the court recorders in determining the length of the king's reign. Column 6 has the elapsed years based on those start and end dates. When there are two figures in column 6, this indicates that the reign length given in Scripture (the first figure) is by non-accession counting. The comparison of column 5 with the beginning and ending dates and with column 6 shows that the court recorders of Israel always kept in mind the official starting year of a king and were exact in all their representations of his reign length.

Table 2.   Chronology of the Kings of Judah
(dates are conjectural for Saul and David)

King	Began co-regency	Began sole reign	Ended	Official start and end	Years reigned
Saul		1051t?	1009t?	1051t–1009t?	42?
David		1009t?	969t?	1009t–969t?	40
Solomon	971t	969t?	932t	971t–932t	40 (39)
Rehoboam		932t	914n/914t	932t–915t	17
Abijah		914n/914t	912t/911n	915t–912t	3
Asa		912t/911n	871t/870n	912t–871t	41
Jehoshaphat	873t	871t/870n	848n/848t	873t–849t	25 (24)
Jehoram	854t	848n/848t	841n/841t	849t–842t	8 (7)
Ahaziah		841n/841t	841n/841t	842t–842t	1 (0)
Athaliah		841n/841t	835n/835t	842t–836t	7 (6)
Joash		835n/835t	796n/796t	836t–797t	40 (39)
Amaziah		796n/796t	767n/767t	797t–768t	29
Uzziah	791t	767n/767t	740t	791t–740t	52 (51)
Jotham	750n/750t	740t	(735n/735t) 732t	751t–736t	16 (15)
Ahaz	735n/735t	732t	716t/715n	732t–716t	16
Hezekiah	729t/728n	716t/715n	687t	716–687t	29
Manasseh	697t	687t	643t	697t–643t	55 (54)
Amon		643t	641t	643t–641t	2
Josiah		641t	609 Tammuz (Jul)	641t–610t	31
Jehoahaz		609 Tammuz	609 Tishri (Oct)	610t–609t	3 mo.
Jehoiakim		609 Tishri	598 21 Heshvan (about 7 Dec 598)	609t–598t	11
Jehoiachin		598 21 Heshvan	597 2 Adar (Mar 16)	598t	3 mo. 10 d.
Zedekiah		597 2 Adar	587 9 Tammuz (Jul)	598t–588t	11 (10)

Some reign lengths are measured from the start of a coregency. Jotham's sixteen (fifteen) years ended when his son Ahaz was installed by the pro-Assyrian faction in Judah, in 735n/735t, although some considered him the rightful ruler until his death in 732t, thus giving him the twenty years mentioned in 2 Kgs 15:30. The comparison of column 5 with the beginning and ending dates and with column 6 shows that the court recorders of Judah always kept in mind the official starting year of a king and were exact in all their representations of his reign length.

Table 3.   Synchronisms, Israel to Judah

Reference	King	began	in	Formula	More exact date
1 K 15:25	Nadab	sole reign	2 Asa	912t–910t = 2	910t/909n
1 K 15:28, 33	Baasha	sole reign	3 Asa	912t–909t = 3	909t/908n
1 K 16:8	Elah	sole reign	26 Asa	912t–886t = 26	886t/885n
1 K 16:10, 15	Zimri	sole reign	27 Asa	912t–885t = 27	885t/884n
1 K 16:21–23	Omri	sole reign	31 Asa	912t–881t = 31	880n/880t
1 K 16:29	Ahab	sole reign	38 Asa	912t–874t = 38	874t/873n
1 K 22:51	Ahaziah	sole reign	17 Jehoshaphat	871t–854t = 17	853n/853t
2 K 3:1	Joram	sole reign	18 Jehoshaphat	871t–853t = 18	852n/852t
2 K 1:17	Joram	sole reign	2 (1) Jehoram	854t–853t = 1	852n/852t
2 K 9; 2 Ch 22	Jehu	same time as	Athaliah	841n/841t	841n/841t
2 K 13:1	Jehoahaz	sole reign	23 (22) Joash	836t–814t = 22	814t/813n
2 K 13:10	Jehoash	sole reign	37 Joash	836t–799t = 37	798n/798t
2 K 14:23	Jeroboam II	sole reign	15 Amaziah	797t–782t = 15	782t/781n
2 K 15:8	Zechariah	sole reign	38 (37) Uzziah	791t–754t = 37	Elul, 753
2 K 15:13	Shallum	sole reign	39 (38) Uzziah	791t–753t = 38	Adar, 752
2 K 15:17	Menahem	rivalry	39 (38) Uzziah	791t–753t = 38	Nisan 752
2 K 15:23	Pekahiah	rivalry	50 (49) Uzziah	791t–742t = 49	742t/741n
2 K 15:27	Pekah	sole reign	52 (51) Uzziah	791t–740t = 51	740t/739n
2 K 15:30	Hoshea	sole reign	20 (19) Jotham	751t–732t = 19	732t/731n
2 K 17:1	Hoshea	ended	12 Ahaz	736t–724t = 12	723n/723t

Column 5 has the years that elapsed for the Judean king, giving the synchronism to Judah provided by the court recorders of Israel. Although the court recorders would not have written things in this fashion, the dates they used correspond to those displayed here in Nisan/Tishri notation and their calculations correspond to those shown in column 5. By comparison with column 4 and Table 2, it will be seen that the court recorders of Israel always used an official starting year (a Tishri year) from Judah, and they were always exact in their calculation of the synchronism.

Table 4.   Synchronisms, Judah to Israel

Reference	King	began	in	Formula	More exact date
1 K 15:1; 2 Ch 13:1	Abijah	sole reign	18 (17) Jeroboam	931n–914n = 17	914n/914t
1 K 15:9	Asa	sole reign	20 (19) Jeroboam	931n–912n = 19	912t/911n
1 K 22:41	Jehosh.	sole reign	4 (3) Ahab	874n–871n = 3	871t/870n
2 K 8:16	Jehoram	sole reign	5 (4) Joram	852n–848n = 4	848n/848t
2 K 8:25	Ahaziah	sole reign	12 (11) Joram	852n–841n = 11	841n/841t
2 K 9:29	Ahaziah	sole reign	11 Joram	852n–841n = 11	841n/841t
2 K 9; 2 Ch 22	Athaliah	same time as	Jehu	841n/841t	841n/841t
2 K 12:1	Joash	sole reign	7 (6) Jehu	841n–835n = 6	835n/835t
2 K 14:1	Amaziah	sole reign	2 Jehoash	798n–796n = 2	796n/796t
2 K 15:1	Uzziah	sole reign	27 (26) Jeroboam	793n–767n = 26	767n/767t
2 K 15:32	Jotham	coregency	2 Pekah	752n–750n = 2	750n/750t
2 K 16:1	Ahaz	coregency	17 Pekah	752n–735n = 17	735n/735t
2 K 18:1	Hezekiah	coregency	3 Hoshea	732n–729n = 3	729t/728n
2 K 18:9	Hezekiah 4 (3) = Hoshea 7			729t–726t = 3 732n–725n = 7	725n/725t
2 K 18:10	Hezekiah 6 (5) = Hoshea 9			729t–724t = 5 732n–723n = 9	723n/723t
2 K 14:17; 2 Ch 25:25	Amaziah outlived Jehoash 15 years			782n–767n = 15	767n/767t

Column 5 has the years that elapsed for the Israelite king, giving the synchronism to Israel provided by the court recorders of Judah. Although the court recorders would not have written things in this fashion, the dates they used correspond to those displayed here in Nisan/Tishri notation and their calculations correspond to those shown in column 5. By comparison with column 4 and Table 1, it will be seen that the court recorders of Judah always used an official starting year (a Nisan year) from Israel, and they were always exact in their calculation of the synchronism.