

# Evidentialism— the Bible and As- syrian chronology

Larry Pierce

In the past 100 years, various reconstructions of Assyrian chronology have been used to undermine the accepted chronology of the period of the divided kingdom. Edwin Thiele's work on Hebrew chronology—as reinterpreted in the light of Assyrian chronology—has become widely accepted by evangelicals and secular historians. However, Assyrian chronology is not as simple as Thiele would have us believe, and there is no reason to bend the Bible to fit the current reconstructions of Assyrian chronology.

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It is refreshing to see the creation movement maturing from the strictly evidential approach of the 1960s and 1970s to the Biblically based, axiomatic approach of recent years. This represents a shift in emphasis from science to philosophy, from looking at theories to looking at how to build theories and interpret facts. The emphasis is on the authority of the Bible. Our understanding of the sciences pertaining to origins has been greatly enhanced as a result of using this *Bible first* approach.

One area which has been almost totally untouched is the area of Biblical chronologies, especially for the period when Israel was divided into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Chronological problems are similar to the problems faced by the creation movement in dealing with the early chapters of Genesis. However, the arguments and logic are not simple, and most people surrender when confronted by a wordy argument. Reduced to the simplest terms, we have the same problem we face in Genesis, stated in a more complex way—**‘What is your authority?’** In this article we will concentrate mainly on the latest accepted Assyrian chronology as popularized by Thiele. (There is little to be gained by examining previous reconstructions that have now been abandoned. These older, abandoned reconstructions should make us very wary of accepting newer models that likewise conflict with the Bible.) It will be shown how Thiele has manipulated the Biblical data to make it fit with the current understanding of Assyrian chronology. The following statement sets the tone for Thiele's work:

‘Between the absolute chronology of the Hebrews and that of their neighbours there can be no conflict. If the Biblical chronology seems to be

at variance with Assyrian chronology, it may be because of errors in the Hebrew records, but it may also be because the data preserved in these records are not correctly understood.’<sup>1</sup>

Thiele's book, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* has been published three times, 1951,<sup>1</sup> 1965<sup>2</sup> and 1983.<sup>3</sup> There are major revisions between each printing. Material from all three printings and, wherever possible, the latest printing will be referred to herein. Reference will also be made to the work by Leslie McFall,<sup>4</sup> which has some minor refinements to Thiele's chronology.

### General problems with ancient history

Before we start, let us look at two well documented examples from ancient history that illustrate some of the problems we face in trying to reconstruct an accurate history. Both of these deal with the life of Alexander the Great and have abundant documentation from the ancient writers.

On the west side of the Hyphasis River in India, Alexander had his troops construct an oversized camp containing extra large furnishings. He did this to give an exaggerated impression of his army's stature and deeds to those who saw them in later times. If an Indian archaeologist discovered these a few hundred years later and did not have access to the historical accounts of Plutarch, Diodorus, Arrian and Curtius, he may be misled and come to wrong conclusions about the invading army of Alexander.

In attacking the citadel of the Mallians in India, Alexander was severely wounded. According to some accounts, even those who were present when this happened disagree among themselves in important details. The Latin historian Curtius wryly observed that so great was the carelessness of those old historians, it was hard to know what to believe!

These two items illustrate the problems faced when dealing with secular history. First, the accounts may have been deliberately misrepresented to glorify the doer of the deeds. Secondly, even eyewitness accounts may conflict. (Anyone who has sat on a jury will vouch for that.) Assyrian chronology suffers from all this, and more, as we shall see. Those who accept the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures know that only the records of the Bible are accurate when compared with secular accounts for the same historical period.

### The problem

The problem with Biblical chronology is that it does not fit with our current understanding of Assyrian chronology. Depending on whom you read, the Biblical chronology is too long by about 40 to 50 years. The latest reconstruction by Thiele is but one of many attempts in the past 100 years to adjust the Biblical account to match the current conjectured chronology of the Assyrians. Thiele very creatively manipulated the Biblical data to eliminate about 40 years of history. He did this by constructing viceroy relationships to

collapse the length of a king's reign by overlapping it with the king's predecessor. He is the first to have made such a detailed reconstruction of the divided kingdom using this approach, although variations on his scheme can be traced back at least 75 years before him. By this, he gave his shortened chronology much credibility. Having it published by a well-known university press, instead of by his church denomination, considerably helped his cause.

There are three dates where Assyrian and Biblical histories are supposed to intersect. They are the main reason for abridging the traditional Biblical chronology which is longer. These dates are 841 BC, 853 BC and 701 BC.<sup>5</sup> There is no mention in the Bible of the events that supposedly happened in the years of the first two dates. Their intersection with Biblical history rests entirely on secular interpretations of Assyrian records, not on Biblical data.

### 841 BC

This date is documented on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Thiele states:

‘The date of 841 is established by Jehu's payment of tribute to Shalmaneser III of Assyria in that year and, together with 853, becomes one of the basic dates in Hebrew history. Although the Bible makes no mention of Jehu's payment of tribute to Assyria, Shalmaneser III mentions that in the eighteenth year of his reign he went against “Hazael of Aram”, shut him up in “Damascus, his royal city”, and “received tribute of the men of Tyre, Sidon and of Jehu, the son of Omri”.’

From the Bible, it is easy to deduce that Jehu started to reign about 12 years after the death of Ahab. This would fix the date for the death of Ahab at 853 BC and the first year of Jehu at 841 BC.

At first glance, this seems to be impeccable evidence for discarding the longer Biblical chronology where Ahab died in 897 BC and Jehu started to reign about 885 BC. If this were so, obviously Jehu would be dead and gone long before Shalmaneser III started to reign.

However, remember that very few archaeologists are Christians and most would reject the historicity and authority of the Word of God. Therefore, expect anything they find to be *interpreted* in a way that is unhelpful to Bible-believing Christians. Once these *interpretations* are published, they seem to get a life all of their own, and many *Christian* authors echo them without bothering to check what was actually found. This was the very reason the Christian Church caved in on billions of years then evolution, and why many churches ignore the historical portions of the Old Testament as being unreliable. It is a slippery road to liberalism that is well greased with the opinions of scholars.

Fossils and radiometric dating seemed to provide the *absolute* truth as to the age of the world until someone took



The ‘Black Obelisk’, inscribed with the account of the campaigns of Shalmaneser III, king of Assyria. The obelisk was discovered in 1846 in Kalhu (modern Nimrud).

the time to see what assumptions were involved. Likewise, in this case it is extremely important to determine what was actually found and ignore the *just-so stories* that became associated with the find. Many sources were researched before one was discovered that was honest enough to admit what was really found and what it meant.

The basis of what Thiele stated comes from the inscriptions found on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. We found the following in a Bible dictionary:

‘The text depicts Shalmaneser's triumphs over several kingdoms of Syria and the West. Of special interest to Bible students is one panel in the second row in which a bearded Semite bows before the king while his servants present gifts. The text refers to the humble suppliant as Jehu, son of Omri (a name by which all Israelite kings were identified, whether of the Omride dynasty or not) and describes the gifts he brought. The event, apparently from the year 841 BC, gives us the earliest surviving picture of an Israelite and shows how such a person might have appeared to an Assyrian sculptor. There is no evidence, however, that the obelisk was actually depicting the Israelite monarch Jehu.’<sup>6</sup>

So, except for the fact we are not certain of the actual date of the obelisk and who is in the picture, we are in fine shape! Just as the Israelite kings were described as *sons of Omri*, when many were not, likewise many may have been identified with the name *Jehu*. This mode of expression seems to be common in Hebrewism. In Matthew 1, Christ himself is called the ‘son of Abraham’ and

the ‘son of David’ when in fact He was separated from these men by many generations. Also, the name for a particular person may not resemble the name given to him in another country. Ancient history abounds with examples of this.

Much more damaging is the evidence uncovered by Faulstich. He documents that much of the information on the Black Obelisk that is attributed to Shalmaneser was taken from earlier monuments.<sup>7</sup> Are we so egocentric as to think historical revisionism is a recent phenomenon? This plagiarism was so common in Assyrian history that the father of Shalmaneser III pronounced a special curse on kings who tried to steal his fame by ascribing to themselves deeds he had done. Faulstich goes on to document inconsistencies among the Black Obelisk, the Tigris Inscriptions, the Statue Inscriptions and the Bull-Colossi.

This type of historical revisionism results in the collapsing of historical events into a shorter time frame. From the inspired Biblical accounts, we know this has happened. Rarely do we find historians mentioning the problems with Assyrian chronology when they use Assyrian data to amend the Biblical chronology. Thiele and McFall are very silent on this. As in the case of Alexander’s wound, mentioned earlier, we will likely never know the correct story.

#### 853 BC

This was the date of the famous battle of Qarqar that was fought between Shalmaneser III and an anti-Assyrian coalition. The Bible dictionary lists *A-ha-ab-bu Sir'-i-la-a-a* as supplying 2,000 chariots and 10,000 men for this battle. *A-ha-ab-bu* is taken to mean *Ahab*. *Sir'-i-la-a-a* is taken to mean *Israel*.<sup>8</sup> This is given as proof positive that the Ahab of 1 Kings was present at this battle.

This word may be translated *Ahab* but that does not prove that it was the King Ahab of the Bible. Several possibilities exist. In ancient history, it is the rule, not the exception, that different writers gave the same person different names. Consider this example:

‘After Laborosoarchodus, who was disposed of by his subjects for his acts of villainy, Nebuchadnezzar’s grandchild by his daughter succeeded him. The new king was his son by Evilmerodach and called by Berosus, *Nabonidus*, but by Herodotus, *Labyntus*, by Abydenus, *Nabannidochus* and by Daniel, *Belshazzar* or *Baltazar*.’<sup>9</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson had at least four or five different names depending on who wrote the history! Just because you see a historian use a name that is the same as a name mentioned elsewhere by a different historian, you cannot assume both historians are referring to the same individual.

You must study the context to be sure. This is the major failing of Assyrian history. Because the material is so scanty and fragmentary, we often do not have enough information to be absolutely sure of whom we are reading about and whether we are interpreting it correctly. However, that has

never stopped a scholar from spinning a good story about what he thinks it says. If he has enough prestige, his story will soon become gospel.

Another possibility is that the person in command of the force was a general of a king of Israel and not the king himself. Saul, David, Solomon and Pekah had generals over their armies, and the names are recorded in the Scriptures.

The story may be improbable given the events that happened during Ahab’s reign. He suffered a three-year drought that destroyed most of the livestock in the kingdom. A few years before this alleged event at Qarqar took place, Ahab was invaded by Benhadad. In that battle, Ahab was scarcely able to muster 7,000 soldiers much less any chariots or horsemen. In 1 Kings 20:1–21 there is a detailed description of this battle. However, the story is that he sent 10,000 troops and 2,000 chariots to this battle at Qarqar. This was no small force, especially considering the large number of chariots.

Another explanation was touched on previously—historical revisionism. The events described here likely happened, but at an earlier date, since the inscriptions were most likely doctored by a later king to enhance his glory. As mentioned previously, Assyrian kings made a practice of stealing inscriptions of glorious events from earlier Assyrian kings and adding them to their own monuments to enhance their glory.

No doubt some king from Israel sent an army to the battle of Qarqar. However, it was not likely King Ahab. We shall see later when we look at the Biblical problems, how much the texts of the Bible were twisted to force Ahab into this later time period when the battle of Qarqar took place.

#### 701 BC

We are not certain why this date is essential to Thiele’s chronology. If Thiele had not made this synchronization with Hezekiah, he would have had much less criticism of his scheme. Thiele conjectures that this was the date that Sennacherib attacked Hezekiah in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of his (Hezekiah’s) reign (2 Kings 18:13). By forcing this synchronization, Thiele ignores several synchronizations of the Biblical text. We shall discuss this under the heading of the ‘Third Biblical example’.

#### Biblical considerations

The main problem with all attempts to harmonize the Bible with Assyrian chronology is the violence it does to the Scriptures. To remove about 40 years from a chronology as well defined as the one we have in the Bible, requires some very creative exegesis or, worse, discarding numbers that do not fit our preconceived ideas. This is a classic case of starting with evidence outside the Bible and making the Bible conform to it. In the preface to the third edition, Thiele stated:

‘The only basis for a sound chronology of the

period to be discussed is a completely unbiased use of Biblical statements in the light of all other knowledge we can bring to bear on the problem, notably the history and chronology of the ancient Near East.<sup>10</sup>

This statement indicates Thiele's approach to the Word of God and secular history. Thiele used the supposed dates from Assyrian chronology, which allegedly intersect with the Biblical chronology, to force-fit the Biblical data into the mould of secular chronology. We will only deal with the most serious problems in his work.

### First Biblical example

To collapse the Biblical history, you must create overlapping reigns of kings so that the total length of the period is significantly shortened. The fun really begins with Uzziah. Up until then, the dates on Thiele and McFall's chronology are within a couple of years of the one derived from the longer Biblical chronology.

As we said, there is very little disagreement with the longer reconstruction for the first 150 years, even to the 12-year viceroyship of Jeroboam II with Jehoash. This is not only true for Thiele, but for all reconstructions done in the past 100 years that we have seen published. However, at this point, all the Assyrian-based chronologies diverge from the traditional chronology. Thiele stated that in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam, Uzziah became sole king and that, before this, he had a viceroy relationship with his father for 24 years. The only rationale for selecting a 24-year period is that Thiele can make it fit with current archaeological expectations. Again, Josephus and all the writers before 1850 never inferred that there was a viceroyship of any length, much less 24 years for Uzziah. The Bible says:

‘And they brought him [Amaziah, Uzziah's father] on horses, and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David. And all the people of Judah took Azariah [Uzziah] who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah’ (2 Kings 14:20,21).

‘In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah [Uzziah] the son of Amaziah king of Judah began to reign. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem ...’ (2 Kings 15:1,2).

By all rules of exegesis, one would conclude that Uzziah was made king after the death of his father when he was 16 years old. This event happened in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam. Not so according to Thiele and others! A little arithmetic will show that it is rather difficult to be made king 8 years before you were born! For if you came to the throne when you were 16 but had been a viceroy with your father for 24 years already, you were made viceroy 8 years before you were born!

According to Thiele, McFall and others the text is incorrect. They say that it should read in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Jeroboam not the 27<sup>th</sup>.<sup>11</sup> By happy chance, by having

Uzziah as viceroy for 24 years, Thiele can manipulate the rest of the numbers for Uzziah's reign without violating too many synchronisms. **There is no Biblical or sound logical reason for this amendment.**

Before we proceed to the next example, a little historical note is of interest. Thiele was not the first to propose Uzziah's imaginary viceroy relationship. It can also be found in a very old Bible produced around 1900 and in the 1909 *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (ISBE)*.<sup>12</sup> The latter also postulates this non-existent viceroy relationship that Uzziah had with his father for the same 24-year period. However, it creates a 12-year viceroy relationship between Uzziah and his son, Jotham, and has Pekah becoming king in the 52<sup>nd</sup> year of Uzziah, as one would expect.

Unless one checked the Bible and found out that Pekah ruled for 20 years, one would not notice a problem. However, the *ISBE* chart shows Pekah coming to the throne in 736 BC. This means his rule finished in 717 BC, four years after the fall of his kingdom of Samaria in 721 BC. This is a tad ridiculous. No doubt some wag pointed out this piece of illogic to the theological ‘experts’ and this view was quietly dropped.

This brings us to the next example and how Thiele found another place to delete these 12 years from the chronology.

### Second Biblical example

To delete the 12 years requires incredible ingenuity. Thiele worked on the reign of Pekah just as the *ISBE* had done many years earlier. Read the following Scripture texts carefully:

‘In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah [Uzziah] king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi began to reign over Israel, ten years in Samaria’ (2 Kings 15:17).

‘And Menahem slept with his fathers. And Pekahiah his son reigned in his place. In the fiftieth year of Uzziah [Azariah] king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, two years. ... But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a commander of his, conspired against him and struck him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and fifty men of the Gileadites with him. And he killed him and reigned in his place. ... In the fifty-second year of Uzziah [Azariah] king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, twenty years’ (2 Kings 15:22–27).

There are two views on how to understand this passage.

#### a. *The traditional view*

The traditional view based on a straightforward reading of the Bible, and not influenced by modern scholarship, is that: 1) Menahem reigned for 10 years, followed by his

Tables 1 & 2. The traditional view for the chronology of the Hebrew kings. Accession dating<sup>13</sup> is used in the above examples.

Uzziah Regal Year	Northern Kingdom King		39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	Years of Uzziah
39	Menahem	10 years (2 Kings 15:17)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				Reign of Menahem
50	Pekahiah	2 years (2 Kings 15:23)												1	2		Reign of Pekahiah
52	Pekah	20 years (2 Kings 15:27)														1	Reign of Pekah

son, Pekahiah, who reigned for two years (Tables 1 & 2); 2) Pekahiah was murdered by his commander, Pekah, who in turn reigned for 20 years. By normal rules of exegesis, this would be the most normal way to understand the text.

**b. The Thiele and McFall view**

Both Thiele and McFall would instead have it look like Tables 3 & 4 (opposite).

No Biblical justification is given for starting the reign of Pekah in the 39<sup>th</sup> year of Uzziah. They say Pekah was a rival king in Gilead to both Menahem and Pekahiah and Pekah really started his sole reign in the 52<sup>nd</sup> year of Uzziah. The Bible says that Pekah was Pekahiah’s captain, not a rival king reigning in Gilead. Further, the Bible says Pekah started to reign in the 52<sup>nd</sup> year not the 39<sup>th</sup> year of Uzziah.

Let us look at all the kings of the Northern Kingdom who were dated by the reign of Uzziah (Table 4).

By all rules of exegesis, one would think these kings in the Northern Kingdom reigned sequentially. Not so if you have the guide of enlightened scholarship. It is obvious that Menahem and Pekahiah’s reigns overlap the first 12 years of Pekah’s reign—or is it? Both Thiele and McFall contort the obvious meaning of the Bible (2 Kings 15:25, 27). **There is no Biblical justification for this.** Indeed, they use different rules when it suits them. In the first example we gave, they said the synchronization date referred to the time when Uzziah was made viceroy. In this case, they say the synchronization refers to the time when Pekah became sole king. You cannot have it both ways and, no matter which way Thiele and McFall go, they create logical inconsistencies in the text. Further, the ‘just-so story’ they created about Pekah is pure fiction and contradicts the Bible (2 Kings 15:25). Pekah was a commander of Pekahiah’s and not a rival king to him!

**Third Biblical example**

Thiele holds to a synchronization for the year 701 BC to make it the 14<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Hezekiah when Sennacherib invaded Judah. Thiele is forced to discard three synchronizations to do this. According to the Bible:

- a. Hezekiah started to reign in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Hoshea (2 Kings 18:1, 2).
- b. In the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Hezekiah and the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Hoshea, Israel was captured (2 Kings 18:10).

- c. In the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Ahaz, Hoshea began to reign over Israel (2 Kings 17:1).

Thiele claims these are late amendments to the Biblical text, and is honest enough to admit he cannot make these verses fit his chronology. In forcing this synchronization, Thiele has the reign of Hezekiah and his son, Manasseh, co-reigning for at least 11 years. There is no Biblical evidence to support this, aside from this forced synchronization.

Thiele also runs into problems with the secular chronology of Babylon. The Bible says that Hezekiah was visited by representatives from Merodach-Baladan, the king of Babylon (2 Kings 20:12). According to our understanding of Ptolemy’s canon, this king ruled in Babylon from 721–710 BC and then died. If Thiele did not try to force this connection with Sennacherib for the year 701 BC, he would not have had this problem.

According to Assyrian chronology, this *Sennacherib* went on and reigned for a number of years after his invasion of Judah. The Bible states he returned to his own land and was killed by his sons (2 Kings 19:36, 37). No great time is implied between the unsuccessful invasion and his untimely death. According to Tobit in the Apocrypha, Sennacherib returned and conducted some ethnic cleansing to rid the land of Jews. About 55 days after his return, he was murdered by his two sons (APC Tobit 1:15–22). Verse 15 states that Sennacherib’s ‘estate was troubled’. This may refer to the loss of the 185,000 men in the campaign against Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35), and would account for Sennacherib’s fury against any Jews he found.

McFall tries to salvage the synchronisms that Thiele discards by saying Hezekiah reigned as viceroy with his father for the first 16 years of his reign. Then he commenced his sole reign after the death of his father in 715 BC. Thereby, the synchronizations Thiele could not make fit, McFall does. (This solution is not new and was proposed 40 years ago in the *New Bible Dictionary*. Thiele never accepted it.) This creates some real exegetical problems, for in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of Hezekiah, Israel fell and in the 14<sup>th</sup> year Hezekiah was invaded by Sennacherib. By all rules of logic, you would assume about 8 years elapsed between these events. Wrong, according to this ‘New Math’! Over 22 years elapsed if you use Thiele’s dates of 723 BC for the fall of Israel and 701 BC for the invasion by Sennacherib! McFall tries to wiggle out of this by claiming the first date (6<sup>th</sup> year) was from the time Hezekiah was made viceroy

with his father and the second date (14<sup>th</sup> year) was dated from the time Hezekiah became sole king. How would anyone know this if they were reading just the Bible?

Earlier Bible dictionaries, like the 1909 *ISBE*, did not require this synchronization and nor do we. The Biblical record does not list all the invasions and battles that Israel and Judah fought. Nations generally avoid documenting their disastrous defeats, so it should come as no surprise that the earlier ill-fated invasion is passed by in silence in the Assyrian records. As previously stated, the name for a particular person may not resemble the name given to him in another country. Ancient history abounds with examples of this.

**Other issues**

There are many more problems with Thiele’s chronology (and McFall’s amendments) which space does not permit us to deal with. How much time should be wasted refuting a defective system? Unless there are good Biblical answers for the alleged 24-year vice-regency of Uzziah and the 12-year overlap of Pekah with the other kings of Israel, not to mention the many conflicts introduced by these changes, we should not surrender the older, longer chronology of the Bible.

Since most historians for the Egyptian period have blindly accepted Thiele’s dates, they are labouring under a 40- to 50-year error when they try to align Egyptian history with Biblical history. Egyptian history is challenging enough without being handicapped by the errors introduced by Thiele’s dubious dating procedures! It is interesting to note the conjecture as to who the pharaoh of the Exodus was in 1446 BC when the Biblical date for the Exodus is actually closer to 1491 BC!

**Conclusion**

The arbitrary nature in which Thiele, McFall and others handle the Biblical text is obvious. Their methods are no different than the methods of those who came before them and amended the Bible based on what they thought the Assyrian records stated. All who do this create imaginary viceroy relationships when it suits them. Sometimes they count years from when a king became a viceroy, sometimes from when he became sole king. The only reason for this is to escape the logical contradictions created by their incorrect initial assumptions. The longer chronology consistently measures time from when a king became viceroy. This procedure is in accord with the oldest Talmudic understanding of how this was done. Thiele, McFall and others sweep aside methods of interpretation that are derived from the most ancient writers, in favour of a new capricious way of handling the text according to the external dictates of archaeology. Their work has indeed rendered the numbers

*Tables 3 & 4. Thiele and McFall’s view of the chronology of the Hebrew kings.*

39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	Years of Uzziah
	1	2	3	4	5	7	7	8	9	10				Reign of Menahem
											1	2		Reign of Pekahiah

Uzziah Regal Year	Northern Kingdom King	
38	Zachariah	6 months (2 Kings 15:8)
39	Shallum	1 month (2 Kings 15:13)
39	Menahem	10 years (2 Kings 15:17)
50	Pekahiah	2 years (2 Kings 15:23)
52	Pekah	20 years (2 Kings 15:27)

of the Hebrew kings most mysterious.

Christians have largely abdicated the fields of history and archaeology to those who are worldly-wise. Many have been told, even in Bible colleges, that the historical portions of the Bible are unreliable. This is hardly faith-building! Fifty years ago, most Christians did not have ready access to the wealth of material we have today concerning science and evolution. We can thank Dr Henry Morris and others who have followed in his steps for this. We do not have all the answers about Assyrian chronology and how it fits with the Bible. However, we must learn the same lesson about *history* as we learnt about *science*. True science does not conflict with the Bible. Likewise, true history agrees with and does not refute the Scriptures. Pray that God will raise up Christians in the field of history to help us write a true history that honours the Bible.

Lewis Dabney<sup>14</sup> was a ‘voice crying in the wilderness’ 140 years ago. He recognized most clearly the problems, and sounded a warning against the dangers of science, *falsely so called*, to the church. No one listened, and the church madly pursued a course of compromise which, but for the grace of God, would have destroyed her. At that time, he said concerning attacks made by geologists against the Bible:

‘The authority of the Bible, as our rule of faith, is demonstrated by its own separate and independent evidences, literary history, moral, internal, prophetic. It is found by the geologist in possession of the field, and he must assume the aggressive, and positively dislodge it from its position. The defender of the Bible need only stand on the defensive. That



*Sennacherib, king of Assyria, seated upon his throne before the city of Lachish, and receiving tribute.*

is, the geologist must not content himself with saying that his hypothesis, which is opposed to Bible teachings, is plausible, that it cannot be scientifically refuted, that it may adequately satisfy the requirements of all the physical phenomena to be accounted for. All this is naught, as a successful assault on us. We are not bound to retreat until he has constructed an absolutely exclusive demonstration of his hypothesis; until he has shown, by strict scientific proofs, not only that his hypothesis *may be* the true one, but that *it alone can be* the only true one; that it is impossible any other can exclude it.<sup>15</sup>

What applies to attacks on the Bible from geology applies equally to attacks from historians and archaeologists. The Bible is the only book that provides a continuous history from Creation up to the death of Nebuchadnezzar (and to early AD). More importantly, the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is without error. Assyrian chronology is not inspired and is fraught with errors. Both Thiele and McFall have too low a view of inspiration. If what they claim is true, why should we ever trust any historical portion in the Bible until it has been interpreted by the ‘sure word’ of the archaeologist? If we cannot trust the numbers in the Bible, why should we trust the words between the numbers? Are we to trust the fallible word of sinful fallen men who have yet to get their first theory right? Or are we to trust the infallible Word written by God, who has yet to make his first mistake and never will!<sup>15</sup>

#### Addendum:

The author strongly suggests to any critics that before responding to this item, they first download the work cited in footnote 16 and ensure that their arguments are derived

from and based on the authority of the Bible.<sup>16</sup>

#### References

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5. Thiele, Ref. 3, pp. 103, 104; Thiele, Ref. 2, p. 66; Thiele, Ref. 1, p. 62.
6. Entry, Shalmaneser, Black Obelisk of, *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, p. 409, 1983
7. Faulstich, E.W., *History, Harmony & The Hebrew Kings*, Chronology Books, Spencer, Iowa, pp. 143–157, 1986.
8. Faulstich, Ref. 7, entry, Qarqar, p. 376.
9. Ussher, J., *Annales Veteris Testamenti*, J. Fleisher & L. Sadler, London, p. 139, 1650. (This work is in Latin. On the new English translation that is being prepared for publication, the paragraph number is 908.)
10. Thiele, Ref. 3, p. 16; Thiele, Ref. 2, p. vi; Thiele, Ref. 1, p. vi.
11. Thiele, Ref. 3, p. 119; Thiele, Ref. 2, p. 83; Thiele, Ref. 1, p. 68–70. Each edition treats this matter in less detail than the previous edition.
12. Article, Chronology of the Old Testament, *The International Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, p. 640, 1929. (The original publication was published in 1909—Editor).
13. Accession dating means that a king did not start counting his years of reign until the Jewish New Year was past. So the length of his reign is really given in the number of Jewish New Years he celebrated. According to the Bible this was in Nisan (Exodus 12:2). According to Thiele and McFall, the godly Southern Kingdom used Tishri (about October) and the ungodly Northern Kingdom used Nisan (about April.) No convincing proof is given except that they say *it works*.
14. Robert Lewis Dabney (1820–1898) was a Presbyterian minister, theologian and author, and was Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary, Virginia, for over thirty years.
15. Dabney, R.L., *Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, vol. 3, Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, PA, p. 136, 1982.
16. A detailed outline of the longer chronology is available from the author and is available for download from *Answers in Genesis* web site. In it, he considers all the numbers in not just Kings and Chronicles but from the prophets as well. All popular problems with the chronology are addressed in detail.

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**Larry Pierce** publishes biblically related material as one of his hobbies, and enjoys the study of ancient history. He is retired and lives with his wife, Marion, in Winterbourne, Ontario.