



# Why does Bible Chronology Matter?

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[Bible chronology main page](#)

[Español](#)

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## Contents

1. All Scripture is Useful and Profitable.
2. Bible Chronology Demonstrates the Reliability of the Bible.
3. Just a Few Things a Comprehensive Bible Chronology Chart can Teach Us
  - 3.1. God's Promise to David to Establish his Descendants on His Throne
  - 3.2. Between Abraham and the New Testament there are Two Notable Hiatus Periods.
4. [Suggestions from Readers](#)

You might ask, "Why does Bible chronology matter? What is the value of making this complex chart and writing all of these articles about Bible chronology? What does it matter how long someone lived, or how old he was when his son was born? Isn't the main story of the Bible the most important thing, the message of **salvation by grace through faith alone** in the shed blood of Jesus Christ?" And of course the answer is yes: that is the core message of the Bible, and all of the other details like years and months are added to put that core message in its context.

If you do not yet understand this message of salvation by grace through faith alone, then I invite you to visit this website: [evangelismexplosion.org/resources/steps-to-life/step-1-do-you-know](http://evangelismexplosion.org/resources/steps-to-life/step-1-do-you-know). This is the most important issue you can ever deal with in life. For a more detailed and thoughtful discussion of this question, see [God's Plan of Salvation](#). If visiting either of these websites leads you to a decision point, I would be very glad to know it.

## 1. All Scripture is Useful and Profitable.

It turns out that all of these extra details do matter. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

**NASB:** <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is <sup>1</sup>inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for <sup>2</sup>training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

**KJV:** <sup>16</sup> All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

**ESV:** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God<sup>4</sup> may be complete, equipped for every good work.

**NIV:** <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**Greek:** <sup>16</sup> *πᾶσα γραφή* θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, <sup>17</sup> ἵνα ἄρτιος ᾦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρισμένος.

These verses are one of the key texts in the Bible for the doctrine of [Biblical inspiration](#), the doctrine that God is the ultimate author of the Bible, even though he used human authors to write it (see also 2 Peter 1:20-21). But these verses go farther than that: not only is all Scripture given to us by God, but every bit of it is **useful** and **profitable** for **teaching, rebuking, correcting** and **training in righteousness**. This means that everything in the Bible is important to our understanding of the Bible, including all of the genealogies and all of the chronological information! Sometimes it will not always be clear why

any particular piece of data was included or what it can teach us, but quite often it *is* clear, as shown throughout my [Bible chronology](#). So we must assume that God put each figure in for a reason, even if we cannot always figure out why.

And as the [Bible chronology chart](#) shows, God has provided sufficient information in the Bible so that, when it is synchronized with well-established extra-biblical dates, it allows us to calculate the Bible chronology all the way back to the birth of Abraham's father Terah in 2296 B.C., with a probable accuracy of within a year or two. (For more on this see [Background Information](#).) *This suggests that Bible chronology is an important part of God's revelation*, since otherwise he would not have provided such complete information. *So we should learn as much from it as we can!*

## 2. Bible Chronology Demonstrates the Reliability of the Bible.

The fact that such a chronology can be put together at all, and that it is internally consistent when we compare all of the Bible passages and figures, as well as being externally consistent with secular history, demonstrates the reliability of the Bible. A work of fiction or of legend would not need to show this kind of consistency, and typically does not. For a work of the magnitude of the Bible to be this consistent in its chronology is astonishing, and really demonstrates *its inerrancy and its divine origin*, to the praise of God's glory.

We see this time after time throughout the chronology. A few highlights are:

- The amazing fulfillment of the prophecy of the [Seventy Sevens of Daniel](#).
- The unexpected dovetailing of secular history in the story of [Esther](#).
- The many [Bible characters](#) and [events](#) that are verified by contemporary archaeological records.
- How in spite of the many different *pieces of* biblical and extra-biblical information that must all be taken together to date the years of Paul's life and ministry (and the book of Acts), the resulting chronology is perfectly consistent. (See [New Testament Chronology Expanded](#) and [Chronology and Locations of the Writing of Acts and Paul's Letters and of Key Individuals and Events Mentioned in them](#).)

## 3. Just a Few Things a Comprehensive Bible Chronology Chart can Teach Us

So Bible chronology does matter. But what can we learn from having everything put together in this kind of chart that we wouldn't be likely to notice otherwise? [Here are just a few things:](#)

### 3.1. God's Promise to David to Establish his Descendants on His Throne

In the section called *The Kings and Prophets of Israel* (starting around 950 B.C.) in the [Bible chronology main chart](#) we see that Israel was split into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon, with Judah in the south carrying on David's line, and Israel in the north being ruled by Jeroboam. However, if we then continue to look down those two columns, we see a huge contrast between the two: the kingdom of Judah continues the dynasty of David all the way down without a break for 344 years, from 930 to 586, or if we count from the reign of David, 424 years, from 1010 to 586, 19 kings in David's line, almost all from father to son, an amazing stability for any reign in *the history of the world*. In contrast, the kingdom of Israel shows only an astonishing *instability* and constant regime changes, the longest dynasty, that of Jehu, having only 5 kings.<sup>5</sup>

But this simply demonstrates that God keeps his promises, according to his eternal plan. In 2 Samuel 7:12-16 God says to David:

<sup>12</sup> When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up **your offspring** after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever**. <sup>14</sup> I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, <sup>15</sup> but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. **Your throne shall be established forever.**

So such a long run for David's dynasty was part of God's fulfillment of this promise to David. However, this kingdom as such did *not* last forever, because the kings became too evil, and in fact this promise was ultimately fulfilled in David's descendant Jesus, who is not an earthly king, but who does reign forever on David's throne (see [this John Piper article](#) for a thorough discussion of this). But God still continued David's line far longer than any contemporary kingdom, something Israel, the northern kingdom, couldn't come close to.

### 3.2. Between Abraham and the New Testament there are Two Notable Hiatus Periods.

If we print out the entire table (see instructions at [Format, Searching, and Printing](#)) and look at it in its entirety, one thing that stands out is that the information in the table is fairly dense except for two periods: *Slavery in Egypt* and *The Intertestamental Period*. Thus we find that from the time of Abraham through the end of the New Testament God is directly interacting with his people, through the patriarchs, the judges, the prophets, the kings, or the apostles, and is also making sure the events of these periods are faithfully recorded in the Bible, except for these two periods, which are completely

barren of such interaction or records. It is interesting that in his sovereign wisdom God should choose during these two periods to step back from the intense interaction which characterizes his activity the rest of the time.

In the case of the *Slavery in Egypt*, he had already foretold this period to Abraham in Genesis 15:13, and apparently it was simply intended to be a time in which the Israelite population could grow in number while out of touch with the wicked Canaanites. It also was the period in which the Hebrew language developed its written form, though not by the Israelites (see my article [When Was Hebrew First Written?](#)). But apparently God's interaction with his people was slim to none during this period, and we know essentially no details about the Israelites, up until shortly before the birth of Moses, when the Exodus narrative begins.

In the case of *The Intertestamental Period*, the situation is very different, and much has been written about this period which I need not needlessly repeat, except that apparently to prepare his people for the coming of the greatest prophet, his own son Jesus Christ, God again stepped back from his interaction with his people, perhaps in order to whet their appetite for his son's coming.

(As for the period before Abraham, which I have not included in the chart because I do not think we can date it, as I explain at the top of the chart, the opposite seems to be true: after the fall into sin in Genesis 3, in general God does not seem to interact with humanity other than a very few high spots (Cain, Enoch, and Noah). But once his chosen people appear on the scene with Abraham, God's interaction with humanity begins, and does not falter except for these two interesting hiatus periods.)

#### 4. Suggestions from Readers

- Are there any other things that you have learned from any of the pages on this Bible chronology web site that have demonstrated the reliability of the Bible to you, and that you think should be mentioned here?
- Is there anything you have learned in your own study of the chronological information in God's Word that demonstrates the reliability of the Bible, and that you think should be mentioned on this website?
- Is there anything else that you have learned from having everything put together in this kind of chart that you wouldn't have been likely to notice otherwise?

If you have any suggestions along these lines, please [let me know!](#) As I mention on the [main page](#), I view this project as a **collaborative project**, and will acknowledge any useful information provided by contributors.

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Timothy 3:16** Lit *God-breathed*

<sup>2</sup> **2 Timothy 3:16** Lit *training which is in*

<sup>4</sup> **2 Timothy 3:17** That is, a messenger of God (the phrase echoes a common Old Testament expression)

<sup>5</sup> In 1 Kings 11 God makes clear that he has chosen Jeroboam to rule the northern kingdom, and in 1 Kings 11:38 (NIV) God says to Jeroboam, "I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David", but only if he will obey him. However, Jeroboam does not do so, and so forfeits any hope of stability. Similarly, Jehu is chosen by God in 2 Kings 9 to be king in place of Ahab's wicked dynasty, and in 2 Kings 10:28-30 God grants him a dynasty of 5 generations, because he has destroyed Baal worship, but not more, because he continued with the sins of Jeroboam. So God showed himself willing to provide stability in the northern kingdom, but his conditions were never met.

<sup>6</sup> **2 Samuel 7:16** Septuagint; Hebrew *you*