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CHRONOLOGIES AND KINGS (III)

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The chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel can be divided into three periods with clearly defined boundaries. The first period begins with the death of Solomon and the accessions of Rehoboam in the south (Judah) and Jeroboam in the north (Israel). It ends with the deaths of Ahaziah of Judah and Jehoram of Israel, both of whom were slain by Jehu on the same occasion (2 Kings 9:24-27).

The second period begins at this point, when Jehu took the throne in the north and Athaliah usurped it in the south. The end of this second period is the destruction of the northern capital of Samaria, which is carefully dated in 2 Kings 18:10, "in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was captured."

The third period starts with the destruction of Samaria, and the end of the northern kingdom of Israel, and traces the history of Judah, the southern kingdom, down to the destruction of its capital, Jerusalem.

A general principle in interpreting the chronological data in the book of Kings is this: The years of Judah's kings are absolute, while those of Israel's are relative. That is to say, Rehoboam reigned 17 years, Abijah 3, and Asa 41. These periods are absolute and consecutive, so that the total number of years is 61. This means that if Rehoboam died in the middle of the year, that year is Rehoboam's 17th and Abijah's 0th, or possibly Rehoboam's uncounted 18th and Abijah's 1st. Similarly, the year Abijah died is his year three, and Asa's year zero. Thus, it might be possible to construct a chronology for the period of the kings using Judah's chronology alone. There are, however, some other complications that enter in.

Theologically, as we have seen in the early essays in this series, the core chronology is always tied to the Messianic seed line. Because this line runs through Judah's kings and not through Israel's, the chronology is tied to Judah and not to Israel.

By way of contrast, the years of Israel's kings are relative to those of Judah. The reigns of Israel's kings are given in calendar years rather than chronological ones, a more commonsensical and less technical way of counting. Thus, Jeroboam reigned 22 years, Nadab reigned 2 years, and Baasha 24 years. The total here is not 48, however, but 46. The year Jeroboam died was his year 22, but it was also Nadab's year 1. Similarly, the year Nadab died was his year 2, but also Baasha's year 1.

In sum, the reigns of northern Israel's kings are given in real calendar years, because they are not part of the core chronology. The reigns of southern Judah's kings are given in technical chronology.

examine 1 Kings 15:25 and 33. Verse 25 says that "Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the 2d year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel 2 years." But verse 33 says that "In the 3d year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel." What this has to mean is that Nadab's two years are both only partial years. His first year was Asa's 2d, and his second year was Asa's 3d.

The same kind of thing is found in 1 Kings 16:8 and 10. Verse 8 says that Elah became king of Israel in Asa 26 and reigned 2 years. Verse 10 says that Zimri became king of Israel in Asa 27. Elah's year 2 is also Zimri's year 1.

By way of contrast, consider 1 Kings 15:1-2 and 9. The first verses say that "in the 18th year of King Jeroboam . . . Abijah became king over Judah. He reigned 3 years." Verse 9 says that "In the 20th year of Jeroboam . . . Asa began to reign as king of Judah." (Now, this is complicated, so gird up the loins of your mind:)

If we say that Asa's year 1 was Jeroboam's year 20, then Asa's year 2 is Jeroboam's year 21. Jeroboam reigned 22 years (1 Kings 14:20). Therefore, Asa's year 3 would be Jeroboam's year 22. Since Nadab became king in that same year, Nadab would become king in Asa's year 3. But in fact, Nadab became king in Asa's year 2. This means that Asa's year 1 is Jeroboam's year 21.

But we just read in 1 Kings 15:9 that Asa became king in Jeroboam's 20th year, not his 21st. Correct, but it is now clear that for chronological purposes, the year during which Asa became king is his year zero, because that year is already given to his predecessor, Abijah. Abijah reigned in the first part of this year, and Asa in the second, but the whole year is given to Abijah. This is the way the chronology is reckoned through the Judahite kings.

In summary, the difference is this: When we read of a Judahite king's reign as lasting 4 years, it means that 4 years of the chronology have been given to him, and there is no chronological overlap with another Judahite king. When we read of an Israelite king's reign as lasting 4 years, it means that he reigned during four years of the chronology, but his first and last years are also included in the reigns of his predecessor and successor.

Of course, the Messiah came through the line of Judah's kings, so that is an explanation for the centrality of the Judahite chronology. The priests in particular were aware of the importance of chronology, since they knew that a careful chronology had already been maintained since creation. Possibly it was the priests who assigned years to the kings of Judah.

Abijah became king in the year Rehoboam died. Some-

Rehoboam die toward the end of his own 17th year, and did Abijam fill out the end of that year as his own year Zero? We don't know. We do know, however, that someone made the decision to assign one year as Rehoboam 17 and the next as Abijam 1.

In the case of the kings of Israel, no such decision was necessary. Jeroboam died during his 22d year, and Nadab began to reign. This year is both Jeroboam's 22d and Nadab's 1st. Similarly, Nadab died during his second year, and Baasha began to reign then. That year is both Nadab 2 and Baasha 1.

Let me, in closing, reiterate a point I made above; to wit: The first several reigns in Judah and Israel establish the difference in chronology. Later on, there are complications that we shall have to examine in detail when we get to them.

JUDAH	ISRAEL	EVIDENCE OR PROOF
Rehoboam 16	Jeroboam 16	1 K. 11:42-14:21 Rehoboam reigned 17 years. 1 K. 12:29-14:20 J p t + m a @ @ p -
17	17	
Abijam 1	18	1 K. 15:1-2 Abijam reigned in 18th year of Jeroboam = 3 years.
2	19	
3		
Asa accession	20	1 K. 15:9-10 Asa reigned in 20th year of Jeroboam = 41 years.
Asa 1	21	
2	22	1 K. 15:25 Nadab reigned in 2nd year of Asa = 2 years.
	Nadab 1	
3	2	1 K. 15:25-26 Baasha reigned in 3rd year of Asa = 24 years.
	Baasha 1	
4	2	
5	3	
24	22	
25	23	
26	24	1 K. 16:9 Elah reigned in 26th year of Asa = 2 years.
	Elah 1	
27	2	1 K. 16:10-21 Zimri slew Elah, and reigned in 27th year of Asa, 7 days. Omri and Tibni succeeded, and reigned together as rival Kings.
	Zimri, Omri 1, Tibni 1	
28	Omri 2, Tibni 2	