

Bible History Timeline

Below is a list of some historical events that are important to the study of the Bible and its prophecies. This timeline was updated in July 2000. The research for this timeline was done by George and Raymond Konig. Many dates and years of various ancient events are taken from the "Concordia Self-Study Bible NIV."

2100 BC (4100 years ago)

God promises Abraham many descendants

Abraham lived around 2100 BC in what is now Iraq. God told him to move to Canaan, which later became Israel. Unlike many people, Abraham believed in the one true God. God rewarded Abraham's faith, making him the father of a great nation (Israel).

2000 BC (4000 years ago)

Jacob (Israel) is born

Jacob, the son of Isaac who was the son of Abraham, is born in Canaan, which later becomes Israel. Jacob's name is changed to Israel. He has 12 sons, for whom the 12 Tribes of Israel are named.

1910 BC (3910 years ago)

Joseph sold into slavery

Joseph's 11 brothers are jealous of Joseph, so they sell him into slavery. Joseph ends up in Egypt, where he rises to power as a trusted assistant of a pharaoh. His father and his brothers later leave Canaan, because of a famine, and move to Egypt.

1446 BC (3446 years ago)

Exodus begins

After being enslaved for 400 years, the Jews, led by Moses, leave Egypt and head toward the land of Canaan, which later becomes Israel. Moses and his fellow Jews wander the desert for 40 years before reaching the border of Canaan.

1406 BC (3406 years ago)

Israel begins establishing itself as a country

After Moses dies, Joshua leads the Jews into Canaan and begins conquering the land, establishing the Jewish nation of Israel for the first time in history.

1400 BC (3400 years ago)

Israel is ruled by judges, not kings

From about 1400 BC to about 1050 BC, Israel was not ruled by kings. The people think of God as their King. Instead of an earthly king, Israel is led by judges who settled disputes.

1050 BC (3050 years ago)

Saul becomes Israel's first king

After about 350 years of being ruled by judges, the people of Israel demand to have a king, like the neighboring countries. By demanding a king, the people are turning away from their faith in God as their king. Saul becomes king and reigns about 40 years.

1010 BC (3010 years ago)

David becomes King of Israel

David becomes king of Israel in about 1010 BC and reigns for 40 years. David, unlike Saul, follows the commands of God. He makes mistakes, but repents for them. He seeks to please God. He expands the size of Israel and rules over surrounding territory.

970 BC (2970 years ago)

Solomon becomes king, builds Temple

Solomon, son of David, becomes king in about 970 BC. He too reigns for about 40 years. Solomon builds the Temple in honor of God. The work is completed in about 960 BC. But, Solomon eventually turns away from God and worships false gods.

926 BC (2926 years ago)

Israel becomes a divided kingdom

Shortly after the reign of Solomon, Israel becomes a divided kingdom. The southern kingdom, called Judah, included the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. The northern kingdom continued to be called Israel. The two often war with each other.

721 BC (2721 years ago)

Assyrians conquer northern kingdom of Israel

The Assyrian Empire conquers the northern kingdom of Israel in about 721 BC. The Assyrians torture and decapitate many. They force many Jews (10 of the 12 Tribes of Israel) out of Israel and bring in foreigners. History loses track of these 10 tribes.

612 BC (2612 years ago)

Babylon conquers Nineveh (Assyrian Empire)

The Assyrian Empire's capital city - Nineveh - is attacked by coalition of Babylonians, Scythians and Medes. As explained by the prophet Nahum in the Bible, Nineveh was to be destroyed because of the Assyrian Empire's treatment of Jews and other people.

605 BC (2605 years ago)

Babylon exerts influence over Judah

The neo-Babylonian Empire, under the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar, seeks to expand its size and begins forcing Judah into submission. Nebuchadnezzar takes many Jews as captives to Babylon to ensure Judah's obedience.

597 BC (2597 years ago)

Babylon attacks Judah

Babylonian army attacks Judah and takes more Jews as captives to Babylon. Ezekiel, one of the captives, becomes a prophet of God. Ezekiel explains that God is allowing Babylon to punish Judah because the people have been unfaithful to God.

586 BC (2586 years ago)

Babylon destroys Jerusalem and Temple

Babylon attacks Judah again. This time, the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple that Solomon had built. More Jews are taken as captives to Babylon.

586 BC to 573 BC (2586 years ago)

Babylon king Nebuchadnezzar attacks Tyre mainland

Babylon begins a 13-year siege of the mainland of the Phoenician city of Tyre.

539 BC (2539 years ago)

Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon

After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Neo-Babylonian Empire begins to lose power. It was conquered in about 539 BC by Cyrus the Great. Cyrus was king of the Medo-Persian Empire.

538 BC (2538 years ago)

Cyrus releases Jews from Babylonian Captivity

Cyrus offers the Jews their freedom to leave Babylon and return to Judah. Cyrus' kingdom rules over Judah and many other parts of the Middle East, but Cyrus allows people more cultural and religious freedom than did the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

536 BC (2536 years ago)

Work begins to rebuild Temple

Some of the Jews in Babylon return to Judah and begin work in about 536 BC to rebuild the Temple,

which had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

516 BC (2516 years ago)

Second Temple is dedicated

The Temple is consecrated for worship, 70 years after the Babylonians had destroyed it in 586 BC. For the first time in 70 years, the Jews are able to acknowledge God as their ultimate ruler in a way they had been unable to do.

333 BC (2333 years ago)

Greeks begin rule over land of Israel

The Greeks, under the leadership of Alexander the Great, defeat Persian armies in Macedonia in 333 BC. This marks the end of the Persian Empire; the Grecian Empire expands.

331 BC (2331 years ago)

Alexander conquers Tyre (Phoenician Empire)

Alexander wars against the island fortress of the Phoenician city of Tyre. He takes rubble from the mainland of Tyre and builds a walkway to the island. Alexander's forces then conquer the island fortress, bringing an end to the Phoenician Empire.

250 BC (2250 years ago)

The Old Testament is translated into Greek

A Greek ruler has the Jews translate the first five books of the Old Testament into the Greek language. (Some scholars say this translation included other books from the Old Testament, not just the first five). The translation is called the Septuagint.

175 BC (2175 years ago)

Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes torments the Jews

Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes rules Syria from about 175 BC to about 164 BC. He reigns over Judah and tries to destroy the Jewish religion and copies the Torah (the first five books of the modern Bible). He also defiles the Temple.

166 BC to 63 BC (2166 years ago)

Jews have independence during Hasmonean Period

Maccabean revolt opens way for Jewish independence in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. The revolt is led by Mattathias and his five sons, Judas (Maccabeus), Jonathan, Simon, John and Eleazar. The era of independence runs from about 166-63 BC.

63 BC (2063 years ago)

Romans take over land of Israel

After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided up among four generals. This weakens the empire. Meanwhile, the Roman Empire is becoming increasingly powerful. The Roman general named Pompey takes control of Jerusalem.

about 5 BC (2005 years ago)

Jesus is born in Bethlehem

Jesus is born in the town of Bethlehem. The Apostle Matthew later points out that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfilled a prophecy delivered by the prophet Micah, about 700 years beforehand. (see Micah 5:2).

about 25 AD (1975 years ago)

Jesus begins His ministry

Jesus begins His ministry. He is about 30 years old. He probably began preaching around 25 AD.

about 28 AD (1972 years ago)

Jesus is crucified

Jesus is falsely accused of being an anti-government rebel. He is sent to Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler of the land of the Jews, to be crucified.

70 AD (1930 years ago)

Romans destroy Jerusalem and Temple

In 70 AD, the Roman Army, under Titus, destroys Jerusalem and the Temple, to suppress an uprising of the Jews. According to the historian Josephus, about 1.1 million Jews were killed. Others were taken as slaves.

135 AD (1865 years ago)

Romans destroy and plow Jerusalem

In 135 AD, the Romans, under Hadrian, kill an estimated 580,000 Jews to suppress the Bar Kochva uprising. The Romans ran a plow over Jerusalem to completely destroy the Holy City. The Romans ban the Jews from living in Jerusalem.

1291

Tyre attacked and destroyed, again

Tyre again is attacked and destroyed, this time by the Arabs. The once-great city never recovers its former greatness. This fulfills a prophecy from Ezekiel that Tyre would be attacked by many nations, never to rise again to prominence.

late 1800s

Zionist Movement begins

The Zionist movement gains momentum in late 1800s among Jews living in Europe. They begin a quest to re-establish an independent Israel.

1878

Jews begin returning to homeland

Jews begin returning to their ancient homeland of Israel, which at the time was called Palestine. Many Jews are returning from various Middle East countries.

1896

"The Jewish State" is published, Zionism grows

Theodor Herzl, a journalist from Vienna, Austria, writes "The Jewish State." He calls for the creation of a Jewish nation as a solution to the Diaspora (the scattering of Jews worldwide) and to anti-Semitism.

1897

Jews unite in effort to regain homeland Israel

Theodor Herzl organizes the first World Zionist Congress, unifying diverse Zionist groups into one movement. The meeting helped establish Zionist organizations in many countries that had large Jewish populations.

1917

The British gain control of Palestine (Israel)

During World War I, British forces defeat the Turks in Palestine and govern the area via a League of Nations mandate from 1923. Until then, the land had been controlled by the Turks (Ottoman Empire) for about 400 years.

1933 - 1944

6 million Jews murdered by Nazis

During the 1930s and 1940s, Jews are persecuted by Hitler. Many move to Palestine. The Holocaust - the Nazi's genocide of 6 million Jews - increases international sympathy for the Zionist quest to re-establish a Jewish homeland.

1948, May 14

Jews declare independence of Israel

On May 14, 1948, the Jews declare independence for Israel. This is the first time in 2900 years that Israel is both independent and united. (Israel became a divided country about 2900 years ago, and lost its independence about 2600 years ago).

1948, May 15

Surrounding countries invade Israel

Within hours of Israel's declaration of independence, the surrounding Arab countries launch an invasion of Israel.

1949

Israel prevails in first Arab-Israeli war

Israel prevails in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-9. Israeli forces recapture more of the ancient Jewish homeland, expanding the size of Israel by about 50 percent.

1967

Six-Day War: Jews capture holy city of Jerusalem

During the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel takes control of Jerusalem and other ancient-Jewish territories.

1982

Hebrew becomes official language of Israel

Hebrew was the language of the Jewish people in Biblical times, and most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. The language dies out over time but is revived in the 1900s. In 1982, it becomes Israel's official language.

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