

It is a _____ that the Bible makes no attempt to give a full and accurate finale. This was not part of its purpose. Many of our Bibles contain dates in the margin put in by Archbishop Ussher. These represent his attempt to draw up a system of chronology from the data contained in the Book. This data, however, is insufficient for the purpose, and his dates are liable to error, particularly as one goes further back. It important to point out here one or two of the reasons why they are liable to error.

Our present modern system of ^{numbering} ~~years~~ years one right after another according to a fixed era is something which did not exist in ancient times. Not until the beginning of the Selucid Era in 312 B.C. was the system introduced, and even this was not used universally. Our present system was not introduced until the 5th century A.D., and was based upon a calculation of the ^{time of the} birth of Christ which is now generally believed to be 4 years off, so that Christ actually was born in the year 4 B.C. It was no more the purpose of the writers of the Old Testament to give such a complete chronology than it was to give a complete system of geology or of biology. They tell us how long kings reigned, but they do not make attempts in most cases to make clear whether the king succeeded only on the death of his father, or whether he had become king during his father's lifetime and the two had reigned together for a time. We know this latter to have been the custom in many countries, and we are certain that it was the case in at least point: the instance where King Uzziah became a leper and his son, ^{Jotham} ~~Jotham~~ took over the ~~reins~~ reins of power. Yet Uzziah is said to have reigned 52 years, which of course included some if not all of the years that Jotham reigned.

Another cause for incompleteness in our facts on which to construct a Biblical chronology, is that there are gaps in the geneologies. We are not given the length of life of every man up to the time of Christ, and only by relations ~~by~~ to materials gained from archaeology can we fix dates for the end of the Old Testament periods. Figuring back from that by means of geneologies is hazardous because of these gaps. Thus, in the first chapter of Matthew, the names of three kings of Judah are omitted in the geneology of Christ. Every Hebrew schoolboy was familiar with these names. Their omission was clearly not an oversight, but was intentional. The purpose of the writer was not to tell of every step in the descent, but to show the general line. The same is true in various instances.