

The Chronology of the period of Isaiah.

Isaiah himself tells us (1:1) that his prophetic ministry lay in the days of Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. We might at first be thankful that Isaiah has been so specific in his dating, but when we enter the Old Testament records to reconstruct the chronology of this period we find trouble at once. The difficulty is not that the Biblical data are plain but must be harmonized with secular history discovered by the archaeologist. Rather we find that the Biblical data themselves are confused and must be harmonized with themselves. We do not suggest that the Biblical data are mutually contradictory,¹ but rather that they present in our period the data of a turbulent age, and we are faced with the task of reconstructing a difficult stretch of history. For instance, we are told that Jereboam II acceded to the throne of Israel in the fifteenth year of Amaziah (II Kings 14: 23) and that Amaziah lived fifteen years after the death of Joash, Jereboam's predecessor. (II Kings 14: 17) We should therefore expect Uzziah, Amaziah's successor, to accede to the throne of Judah in Jereboam's sixteenth year. But no, he accedes in Jereboam's twenty-seventh year (II Kings 15: 1,2). Obviously there was a twelve-year interregnum between Amaziah and Azariah or else there was a twelve-year overlap in the reigns of Joash and Jereboam, or else the Bible is somewhere wrong. There is no need to come to the latter conclusion, for elsewhere in the Bible co-reigns are definitely suggested (II Kings 15:5), and they also occurred in other countries.² It is our duty therefore to

1. It should be remembered that the transmission of figures in early Hebrew was done by letters which were rather easily confused with one another. There is therefore a possibility that the records have become changed in transmission. (Cf. Wilson, A Scientific Investigation of the O.T., p.193) But our important conclusions we have tried to base on two or more points of data supporting each other.

2. Dougherty, Nabonidus and Belshazzar, p.200, concludes concerning Daniel 5: (see next page)