I. The Period before the fall of Samaria.

The non-Biblical data. It might be thought derogatory to the Scriptures to start our solution with extra-Biblical material and take it as authoritative, but certain considerations make that the better method. First there is the uncertaintybof the Biblical data as mentioned above together with the fact that the Bible does not aim to be exactly chronological in every detail. Second there is the fact that the Assyrian records which touch he Bible in many points do aim to present an exact chronology. Third there is the astronomical verification of the Assyrian records as far back as 763 B.C., which assure us that those records are precise. An eclipse of the sun was seen at Nineveh in the month Sivan (May-June), 763 B.C.[1] according to the Assyrian limu lists, which has been calculated by modern astronomy also to have fallen in that year.[2] We shall be safe therefore if we trust the Assyrian chronology, though we should be careful when we make the connection with Bible history. For instance, a tablet of Tiglath-pileser III mentions Jehu as son of Omri[3] when we know well enough that the phrase only means he was a successor.

The Assyrian data for our period are briefly as follows: Shalmaneser III in 854 B.C. vanquished Hadadidri (Benhadad) and "Ahab the Israelite" (or a son of his) at the battle of Qarqar.[4] In 842 B.C. the same king defeated Hazael of Damascus and took tribute of Jehu.[5] A century later Tiglath-pileser III invaded the west several times. In his expidition of 738 B.C. he mentions "Azariah the Yandaean", "Rezin the Damascene", and "Menahem the Samaritan" as kings whom he defeated or from whom he took tribute.[6]

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1. Barton, Archaeology of the Bible, 6th ed., p.67.
2. Encyclopedia Brittanica, 11th ed., Vol. VIII, p. 892, article on "Eclipse" places the date on June 14, 762 B.C.
3. Barton, op.cit. p. 458.
4. Barton, op.cit. p. 457.
5. Barton, op.cit. p. 458.
6. Barton, op.cit. p. 462-3.