

Challenging the Narrative

In the archives of human history, few subjects elicit as much intrigue, debate, and division as the chronology of ancient civilizations. The delicate tapestry of time, woven with the threads of diverse cultures, faiths, and interpretations, presents both scholars and seekers with profound challenges. As Albert Olmstead so poignantly argued, "For the historian the framework is chronology," adding, "Without chronology, there can be no history, since history itself is merely a record of human events in time relation. Sad to admit, chronology is the most tricky subject with which the historian must deal, and special attention is always devoted to its intricacies in the historical seminar."¹ With the same insight, Edwin Thiele points out, "Without exact chronology there can be no exact history."²

Among the contested chronologies of the ancient world lie those belonging to the ancient Israelites (both of the house of Judah and the house of Israel), especially while they inhabited the Promised Land. The long journey of these enduring Israelite nations as they passed through the ages is recorded not only in the sacred texts of the Scriptures but is also mirrored in the annals and inscriptions of their contemporaries: the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and others. Yet despite the earnest labor of generations of scholars, the precise chronologies of these people remain elusive, clouded by millennia of interpretative conventions, scribal errors, fraudulent constructs, and well-established assumptions.

It is into this contentious arena that our series entitled *Ancient World Chronology* enters. This series, which will undoubtedly provoke consternation among the custodians of conventional wisdom, proposes a revised chronology for the Israelites as well as for many other ancient nations, which disrupts the long-held paradigms shaped by the misuse and misinterpretations of Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and other ancient records. The thesis presented herein stands at odds with the accepted conclusions of many modern scholars, who, while rigorous in their craft, have inadvertently perpetuated misunderstandings by uncritically adhering to certain chronological frameworks. Such frameworks, rooted in personal interpretations of Mesopotamian and Egyptian dating, have long held sway, casting their influence over biblical chronology and leading to what some would argue is a profound dissonance between the biblical record and extra-biblical accounts.

¹ *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. 2.1 (1943), p. 6, "History, Ancient World, and the Bible: Problems of Attitude and of Method," by A. T. Olmstead.

² *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, by Edwin R. Thiele. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983, p 33.

At the heart and beginning of this revision, and the subject of our first volume, entitled *The Sabbath and Jubilee Cycle*, lies a reconsideration of the dating for the Sabbath and Jubilee years. These divine rhythms, etched into the covenantal consciousness of the early Israelite people, serve as chronological markers that, when properly understood, unlock a coherent timeline, harmonizing the histories of Judah and Israel with that of their ancient neighbors. *The Sabbath and Jubilee Cycle* boldly asserts that by recalibrating our understanding of these cycles, we can achieve a more accurate and consistent picture of Israel's past, one that resolves the perplexing chronological anomalies that have long confounded historians and theologians alike.

Inevitably, this thesis will be met with resistance. It challenges not only the academic institutions that have cemented their theories over the last two centuries but also challenges the very foundation upon which popular histories of the ancient Near East have been built. It calls into question the established dating of ancient Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and other chronologies, which have often been treated as sacrosanct by scholars, both secular and religious. To revise these frameworks, and thereby reorder the history of the Israelites into their original and true form, is no small task—one fraught with implications that ripple far beyond the discipline of chronology.

Nevertheless, truth is not the province of consensus or the handmaiden of tradition. History itself is replete with instances where progress demanded the audacity to challenge the entrenched, to question the popular, and to seek clarity amid confusion. *The Sabbath and Jubilee Cycle*, our first step in this process, beckons the reader to engage with its evidence not with a spirit of preemptive dismissal but with an open mind, prepared to grapple with the difficult but necessary task of re-examination. Only when we release ourselves from the constraints of convention can we begin to reconcile the discrepancies that have thus far obscured a fuller understanding of the ancient world.

This work is not for the faint-hearted or those who cling unyieldingly to the familiar. It is for those who, in the spirit of intellectual curiosity and with a devotion to true history, are willing to entertain the possibility that today's established chronologies for the ancient world are incorrect. Few realize, for example, that these lists are replete with errors made by the ancient scribes who recopied them. Sometimes, the copyists deliberately, while at other times mistakenly, misaligned ancient dynasties by creating King and Eponym Lists with a desire to give greater antiquity and authority to their own nations. Having recovered these old elongated lists, many present-day scholars were drawn to their errors because they wanted to believe that these scribes were superior to those who recopied Scriptures. Indeed, many researchers today, to various degrees, are motivated by an underlying anti-scriptural bias. To our readers, the series *Ancient World Chronology* offers a path forward that, though contested, promises a resolution to the vexing questions that have long surrounded the intersection of Israelite, Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and numerous other histories. Let this be the beginning of a conversation, not its end, as we strive to advance ever closer to factual history.