

PRAISE FOR
FROM ABRAHAM TO PAUL:

Andrew Steinmann has placed biblical scholarship in his debt by this meticulous and magnificent addition to (indeed, replacement of) such magisterial works on biblical chronology as those by Edwin Thiele and Jack Finegan, the former limited to Israel's United Monarchy and the latter embrasive of the full canon. Grounded in primary texts, Steinmann lays out here a foundation that doubtless will provide the basis for all subsequent discussions of biblical chronology, an indispensable preliminary to a proper understanding of the biblical narrative.

—Eugene H. Merrill, PhD
Distinguished Professor of Old Testament Studies
Dallas Theological Seminary
Distinguished Professor of Old Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

I can see this work appealing to both specialists and non-experts in the field, and indeed even to interested laypeople. Its combination of detailed table of contents, well organized and straightforward presentation, and especially the abundance of charts and graphics suggests that it will serve well as a reference tool. I very much appreciate Dr. Steinmann's even-handed and respectful tone. I say this because, although Steinmann assumes an unabashedly conservative posture with respect to the Scriptures and the Church's traditional hermeneutic, he does not shy away from engaging scholarship that proceeds from different presuppositions. While arguing against opinions and conclusions with which he is at odds—for example those of higher critics—Steinmann does not belittle or condescend. . . . Where he synthesizes and explains the well-founded

conclusions of previous scholarship, he does so clearly and effectively. On the other hand, in those places where he challenges consensus views and presents new proposals, he does so persuasively, on the basis of careful research and well-reasoned arguments.

—Robert A. Sorensen, PhD
Associate Professor of Greek and Theology
Concordia University Chicago

Readers familiar with standard works in this field such as Merrill's *Kingdom of Priests* will be pleased to find much new information in this volume. New insights into the Quirinius census, the matching of Jubilee/Sabbatical year cycles with the date of the Exodus, the timing of the Magis' visit, and the sequence of events of the Passion Week—including the moon "turning to blood" immediately after the death of the Messiah—are part of Dr. Steinmann's intensely interesting study. Laymen and scholars alike will find their faith strengthened by the precision and factuality of the Bible in historical matters.

—Rodger C. Young
Independent Historian and Chronologist
St. Louis, MO

FROM ABRAHAM TO PAUL

BOOKS BY ANDREW E. STEINMANN

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FUNDAMENTAL BIBLICAL HEBREW AND ARAMAIC WORKBOOK

As Consultant and Chronologist

THE LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE

FROM ABRAHAM TO PAUL

A BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

ANDREW E. STEINMANN



Peer Reviewed

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS



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Published by Concordia Publishing House
3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
1-800-325-3040 · www.cph.org

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Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Steinmann, Andrew.

From Abraham to Paul : a biblical chronology / Andrew E. Steinmann.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographic references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7586-2799-5

1. Bible--Chronology--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Bible--Chronology--Charts, diagrams, etc.
I. Steinmann, Andrew E. II. Title.

BS637.3.S74 2011

220.9'5--dc22

2011005880

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

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FOREWORD

Ask any American high-school senior today to place into proper chronological order the Attack of 9/11, the Great Depression, the Vietnam War, and World War II, and I would guess that he or she would happily and fairly easily oblige. Quiz any English schoolboy as to the rough dates of William Gladstone, Winston Churchill, and Tony Blair—you would probably get a reasonably good answer. Ask a German schoolgirl the corresponding years of the Unification of Germany, the Berlin Blockade, and the fall of the Berlin wall, I would wager she would get her facts more or less straight. Never mind that so many people are lamenting the state of education these days. Most educated people know the rough outlines of their national history, just as they know that national history matters. The reason it matters is because one cannot really begin to reflect on one's personal self-identity without first reflecting on one's place in history. In order for us to make sense of ourselves, we need to make some sense of history. And history, we find out soon enough, makes absolutely no sense apart from some awareness of chronology, sequence, and causality. Without the ability to place figures and events on a kind of map, the study of history soon degenerates into an insipid exercise of rehearsing assorted and seemingly meaningless facts.

Educated modern-day Christians seem to understand this point reasonably well enough (at least no less so than their peers who have no interest in the Bible or Christianity). This should come as no surprise. There is, so far as I can see, nothing about Christianity that should render its adherents less appreciative of history than any other religion or worldview. In fact, given Christianity's status as a *historical* religion, with roots deeply entwined in the recorded past, one would think that Christians would possess a relatively high degree of historical awareness. Certainly, one might expect that a Christian, who looks for salvation in God's self-revelation in history,

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would place a relatively higher premium on getting history straight than, say, a Buddhist, who searches for salvation within a timeless sphere. One would think this . . . however, I don't think there is any evidence that such is the case. In my experience, Christians care about national and world history about as much or as little as their neighboring Buddhists or Hindus—no more, no less.

But then this observation makes it all the more strange when we also observe that Christians have curious double-mindedness when it comes to history. Sure, when it comes to sorting out the relative order of the Vietnam conflict and 9/11, so-called “secular events”, Christians will likely want to get their facts right—and see the facts as important. But then why is that when it comes to “sacred events” (call it the “history of Israel” or the “human history of the kingdom of God”), it is almost a mark of piety *not* to know about precise dates and times? Why is it considered in so many circles almost a matter of true spirituality not only *not* to know the historical facts but also not to care?

It is an odd state of affairs but it is a dynamic which I think can hardly be denied in the contemporary church. It is a dynamic in which we tacitly agree on the necessity and value of pinning down “real history” with real dates, but somehow make a virtue of keeping biblical history vague, fuzzy and hopelessly muddled in our heads. Part of this, I think, has to do with the way in which we have been conditioned to think about the Bible: not as history, but more as story. Somehow, somewhere along the line, we became unconsciously convinced that the likes of Abraham, David, and Jesus are much closer to the likes of Bilbo Baggins and Luke Skywalker than to, say, Winston Churchill or Osama Bin Laden. Of course, for those of us whose image of the David and Goliath story conjures memories of Sunday School flannel-graph figures or brightly-colored children's storybooks, the slip is easy to make. The problem is that even though we grow up intellectually in how we think about things like law and economics and human psychology, we somehow cordon off the Bible

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from rigorous intellectual handling so that it in fact never grows up along with us. It remains more the stuff of storybook than real history.

Enter Andrew E. Steinmann's *From Abraham to Paul*. It is a book which should have been written decades ago. Here's why. Steinmann not only assumes—quite rightly—that history matters, but he also shows two things about biblical history. First, he shows that in many cases with a little scholarly spadework we can have a pretty good idea as to when key events took place, events like the life of Abraham, the Conquest of the Promised Land, the birth of Jesus, or Paul's Second Missionary Journey. These events are not the yarn of legend: on the contrary, there is every good intellectually-compelling reason to accept them as history, history that really happened in time and space. For the believing Bible reader, there is something faith-building about such assurances when they come; for the casual reader of the Bible (whatever his or her faith commitment), there is something fascinating about them. Every year droves of westerners spend countless millions of dollars on Holy Land trips, guided tours of the sacred space of the Abrahamic faiths. In this volume Steinmann gives a guided tour of sacred time: "Here's what we can know chronologically; here's how we can know it." In these pages both the curious mind and the worshipful soul will find themselves sated.

The second thing Steinmann shows about history—and this is no less important—is its complexity. Some of the questions which the book takes up are thorny questions indeed, having provoked lots of black ink and fiery debate along the way. The author's approach is never polemical, but always clear; the positions taken are not necessarily always the standard positions, but they are always defended from the evidence. Indeed, it is precisely this quality that makes the book such a delight to read. Whereas Bible handbooks and dictionaries have a tendency to settle on the dominant scholarly position of the day without much argumentation one way or another, and whereas so much scholarly writing coming off the press has to justify its existence by cutting against the grain of consensus, *From Abraham to Paul* strikes an elegant balance between the two

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extremes. It succeeds as a reference work, and thus should find its way onto the shelf of every pastor or Bible teacher; it succeeds too as a fresh scholarly contribution, and thus should make its way into the library of advanced students of the Bible who want to stay up-to-date. Some books try to speak to lay audiences and scholars only to fail to address either: this book has hit the two targets simultaneously and hit them well.

We should be grateful for books like this. We should be grateful, because God made history and history matters. Apart from the conviction that our faith is a historical faith, we are left only to cast about. But, when we are fully persuaded that sacred history meshes with the history in which we live and move and have our being, that is when biblical faith becomes a real possibility. Likewise, every intellectually serious reader of the Bible (pious or not so pious) will learn to think twice before allowing himself or herself to be bullied (happily or anxiously) by the skeptics. True, there is so much we don't know. But, by the same token, there is much we can know—and know with some confidence. Whether or not you remember all the detailed arguments of the book you are about to read (of course the best books need to be studied), the heart-and-mind value of re-connecting the biblical world with the “real world” can hardly be overstated. Somehow in our confused modern-day thinking, we have managed to put asunder what God has joined together. A book like this is an excellent and fascinating step towards our re-forging the broken link.

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PREFACE

For many years now I have had an interest in biblical chronology. Knowing *when* some event in the Bible happened can often add to our understanding of its significance. Being able to place an event in its temporal context in relation to other events within the pages of Scripture as well as within its extra-biblical context is useful, enlightening, and important for understanding the event better and more fully. Knowing *when* a biblical event occurred is every bit as important as known *where* and *why* it occurred.

However, it is not always easy to determine when an event took place, even a biblical event that has been provided with chronological information by the biblical author. This is so, because ancient ways of recording chronological data varied over time and from place to place and do not often match modern ways of understanding time. This book is an attempt to provide a chronology for much of the Bible. It also attempts to explain in some detail how we know a particular dating is accurate. It offers a defense for a particular biblical chronology, often accepting some proposals that have been previously put forward and rejecting others. While some readers will find the discussion very detailed and technical, specialists may wish at times for more discussion. This work attempts to find a middle ground by explaining enough for those who come at these chronological issues fresh in order to offer them enough explanation so that they can understand the matter at hand and make their own judgment as to whether the present author has made a reasonable argument in each case. At the same time, for those who wish to explore some of the chronological issues more deeply, an extensive bibliography has been provided. In addition, I would also direct readers to the bibliographic sections of Jack Finegan's *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*.

A few words should also be said about what this book is not:

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- This is not a book about when individual books of the Bible were written, though it certainly has implications for dating the composition of many biblical books. The date of the composition of some books is directly relevant to the discussion and will be treated (i.e., for certain OT prophetic books or for the letters of Paul). However, no attempt will be made to date the composition of every biblical book.
- This is not a book about other proposed chronologies or other Christian chronographers, though at times, when relevant, other chronologies or chronographers will be mentioned. For a survey of other Christian chronographers and chronologies, the appropriate sections in Finegan's *Handbook* can be consulted.
- This is not a book about historical events surrounding the biblical narrative, though at times it will be important to treat such extra-biblical events. Readers may have to consult other works on ancient history for further details on this score.
- Finally, this is not a book about the historiographic methods of ancient historians such as Josephus or Eusebius or the Greek historians that preceded them. At times detailed discussions of such works will be necessary and helpful. However, there are many competent treatments of ancient historiography in general and of the historiographic methods of particular ancient historians. That work will not be reproduced here.

One may also ask why the limits of this book were chosen. Why begin with Abraham and end with Paul? Several reasons led to this choice. First of all, these limits cover most biblical events from the most important person in Genesis to the most important one in the latter parts of the New Testament. That in itself recommends these limits. Second, the heavily intertwined chronological and theological

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issues surrounding the period in Genesis before Abraham would require a book at least as large as the present volume to treat adequately and would detract from an otherwise nearly complete and comprehensive overview of biblical chronology. Such a project is best put aside for a later time and, perhaps, a different author.¹

The choice of ending with Paul is, perhaps, even more obvious. This is where the book of Acts ends, although there are some chronological statements in Paul's letters that allow us to extend the treatment of Paul's life a bit longer than Acts does. However, there is barely any chronological information in the New Testament itself to extend a biblical chronology any further. Certainly whichever James one identifies as the author of the letter of James, that author was martyred before Paul's death. Peter apparently was martyred about the time of Paul, so there is nothing beyond Paul's day in his letters. There are no sure chronological markers in Jude. That leaves only the Johannine letters and Revelation. While these are often placed at the end of the first century based on church tradition, there is no chronological information within them that can guide us to any sure dates for additional New Testament chronology (such as the year of John's exile to Patmos or his death). Thus, the decision to end with Paul is based on practical considerations—there are few events mentioned in the rest of the New Testament and no way to date these few events.

This book also has an apologetic aspect—many biblical scholars doubt the historicity of large parts of the Bible, such as the narratives in Genesis or Luke's portrayal of the church in Acts. This work is written in part to demonstrate that it is not unreasonable to accept the Bible's witness as historically accurate and that in doing so, one can reconstruct a chronology that coordinates well with reliable chronological information from extra-biblical sources. It is not

¹ This should not be taken to mean that the present author has no interest in the chronological aspects of the first chapters of Genesis. For instance, see Steinmann, “ $\tau\pi\theta$ as an Ordinal Number and the Meaning of Genesis 1:5.”

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necessary or even desirable to discount the narratives about Israel's patriarchs as unhistorical or to deny Paul's authorship of some letters attributed to him on the basis of scholarly theories that take for granted that the Scriptures are theologically and ideologically biased, and are, therefore, historically inaccurate and, at times, historically contrived. While the books of the Bible possess a theological viewpoint, that fact does not in-and-of-itself require them to be historically inaccurate.

Throughout this book are numerous citations of previous literature. For modern literature the last name of the author and the title of the work are always listed. Further information on these works can be found in the bibliography at the end of this book. For ancient literature, including the books of the Bible, the standard abbreviations are used as defined in *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*. Bible references are separated by || to indicate that they are parallel passages. References to Josephus are given in two systems. The first is that of the Loeb Classical Library. The second, which follows in brackets, is that of William Whiston's English translation for those readers who do not have access to Josephus in Greek.

No work of this range could be written without the help and support of others. I am grateful to Concordia University Chicago for the sabbatical leave that enabled me to work on this book. I would like to express my gratitude to Rodger C. Young, who was generous in sharing his work on the chronology of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah and who aided me tremendously through e-mail correspondence concerning many technical issues relating to that topic. I would also like to acknowledge my colleague John Rhoads who generously shared his work on Josephus' treatment of the census of Quirinius with me in addition to serving as a sounding board for my ideas. John, thank you for the hours of discussion in my office. They were greatly appreciated.

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Two peer reviewers offered comments and suggestions for improvement to this book: Rodger C. Young and my colleague Robert Sorensen. To both I am greatly appreciative of their time spent in reviewing and offering helpful suggestions for improvements. My son Christopher read a preliminary copy of this work, checked all of the Scripture references for me, corrected a number of typographical errors, and suggested several improvements. His help was also much appreciated. Of course, any remaining errors my responsibility and not those of the reviewers. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wife Rebecca who often inquired about my progress, never complained about my piles and files of materials in our shared home office, and even gave me wide berth when I needed to ruminate over any number of thorny issues. Of her it can truly be said: רְחוּק מִפְּגִינִים מִכְרָהּ.

STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

	Parallel biblical passage
LXX	Septuagint, the ancient family of Greek translations of the Old Testament
n	used after a year date to indicate that the year began in the spring month of Nisan (e.g., 754n began in spring of 754 BC and ended after winter in early 753 BC)
t	used after a year date to indicate that the year began in the fall month of Tishri (e.g., 754t began in fall of 754 BC and ended after summer in 753 BC)

RESOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Abbreviations for biblical books and for ancient literature are the standard abbreviations set forth in Patrick H. Alexander, et. al, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999).

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>AMI</i>	<i>Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica
<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	Josephus, <i>Against Apion</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Ed. J. B. Pritchard. Third ed. Princeton: Princeton University, 1969.
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAIAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>b. 'Arak</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate 'Arakin
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BDF</i>	Blass, F., A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961.

Resource Abbreviations

<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>b. Roš Haš</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>Roš Haššanah</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<i>b. Sanh.</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>b. Ta 'an</i>	Babylonian Talmud, tractate <i>T 'anit</i>
<i>t. Ta 'an</i>	Tosefta, tractate <i>Ta 'anit</i>
<i>y. Ta 'an</i>	Jerusalem Talmud, tractate <i>Ta 'anit</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History</i> . Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970–2005.
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>Chm</i>	<i>Churchman</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Concordia Journal</i>
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>Did</i>	<i>Didaskalia</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Haereses</i>
<i>HALOT</i>	Koehler, L., W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old</i>

Resource Abbreviations

Testament. Trans. and ed. M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.

HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IDBSup	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume</i> . Edited by Keith Crim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IJT	<i>Indian Journal of Theology</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JANESCU	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JBR	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
Joüon	Joüon, Paul and T. Muraoka. <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> . Second edition. Subsidia Biblica. Rome: Biblical Institute, 2006.
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

Resource Abbreviations

<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal of the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Judaism</i>	<i>Judaism</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i>
<i>Levant</i>	<i>Levant</i>
<i>LQ</i>	<i>Lutheran Quarterly</i>
LXX	Septuagint
<i>MSJ</i>	<i>Master's Seminary Journal</i>
MT	Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Old Testament
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
<i>NBD</i>	Douglas, J. D. and N. Hillyer, eds. <i>New Bible Dictionary</i> . Third edition. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1996.
<i>NedTT</i>	<i>Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift</i>
NET Bible	New English Translation Bible
<i>NETS</i>	<i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
PL	Patrologia latina [= Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina]. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris 1844–1864
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>

Resource Abbreviations

<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review & Expositor</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RSO</i>	<i>Revista degli studi orientali</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SacEr</i>	<i>Sacris Erudiri</i>
<i>SAOC</i>	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
<i>SBLSP</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>SJLA</i>	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>S. 'Olam Rab.</i>	<i>Seder Olam Rabbah</i>
<i>Spec. Laws</i>	Philo, <i>On the Special Laws</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
<i>TAD</i>	Porten, Bezalel and Ada Yardeni, <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt Newly Copied, Edited and Translated into Hebrew and English</i> . 4 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986–1999.
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TTE</i>	<i>The Theological Educator: A Journal of Theology and Ministry</i>
<i>TWOT</i>	Waltke, Bruce K., R. Laird Harris, and Gleason L. Archer, <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> . 2 vols. Chicago: Moody, 1980.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>

Resource Abbreviations

<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WBC</i>	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WMANT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>W-O</i>	Walkte, Bruce K. and M. O'Connor. <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> . Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

I

TIME AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

From בְּרֵאשִׁית (“in the *beginning*”; Gen 1:1; cf. John 1:1) to *ναί, ἔρχομαι ταχύ* (“Yes, I am coming *soon*”; Rev 22:20) the Bible is a book about God’s work in time. The God who created the world and ordered it in time and space continues to work in time and throughout time to redeem sinners. Time is not secondary or an afterthought in God’s economy, but is intimately related to his works of creation, redemption and sanctification.

TIME AND THE GOSPEL

. . . the New Testament claim that we have eternal life because Jesus walked out of the tomb on the first day of a certain week is not an innovation; it is simply continuing on in the trajectory that was laid out in [the Old Testament].

So notes John Oswalt.² The Gospel is so intimately bound up with events in time that it is impossible to extricate it from them. Thus, Saint Paul speaks about God sending his Son “in the fullness of time”:

But when *the fullness of time* had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those who were under law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Gal 4:4–5)

. . . he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his

² Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 16.

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glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved One. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his good pleasure, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for *the fullness of time*, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph 1:4–10)

Paul’s phrase implies what Oswalt observes—that the Old Testament, including its historical narratives, flow toward their inexorable goal just as rivers flow toward the sea. That goal is the incarnation and redemptive work of Christ in the first century.

Jesus himself taught that the entire Old Testament pointed to him (John 5:39; Luke 24:25–27), and that included the extensive historical narratives found in the Pentateuch, the historical books, and the prophets. Moreover, Jesus made use of God’s acts in history as paradigmatic for his own acts (e.g., Matt 12:40–42; 24:36–42; Luke 11:30–32; 17:26–30). Jesus’ acts would be accomplished in the flow of time by actual historical events in which he would bring about the fulfillment of God’s promises.

This synergy of the Gospel with the acts of God in history is also reflected in the teachings of Jesus’ apostles (e.g., Acts 2:29–32; Rom 1:1–6; 2 Tim 2:8; 1 Pet 3:18–22). In doing this Christ’s apostles were doing nothing more than employing the same method used by the prophets of old—declaring that God is determined to act in time and space to redeem his people (e.g., Num 24:17–24; Jer 31:31–34; Amos 9:11–15; Hag 2:1–9).

However, the acts of God in history did not end with Jesus and his ascension, but continue onward through what the prophets called “the latter days” and apostles called “the last days”—the time between Jesus’ ministry and his promised return. Those days are times when God continues to speak to his people in word and in actions, even though they are also perilous times with false teachers (Num 24:14;

Deut 4:30; Isa 2:2; Jer 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28; 10:14; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:1–2; 2 Pet 3:3).

Since the acts of God are so inextricably connected to time and history, the study of *when* those acts took place—biblical chronology—is inescapable for Christians. This is so because if the Bible’s historical claims about the acts of God at particular times and in particular places are false, then Christian faith is built on nothing but invented myth that vanishes like a vapor. But the Christian faith is not a collection of “cleverly devised myths” that have been given a false historical backdrop (2 Pet 1:16). On the contrary—the acts of God, and especially the acts of God in Christ Jesus, are historical. Moreover, they can be arranged in chronological order as a witness to the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 15:1–8).

CHRONOLOGY AND NARRATIVE

One way in which the Bible reflects God’s work in time is through the *historical review*, a largely chronological reflection on the great acts of God in history and in the life of his people Israel. These reviews remember God’s works on behalf of his people, illustrate his loving patience with an often recalcitrant Israel, and celebrate his mercy and grace. Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135, and 136 all contain historical reviews. They take the historical narratives of the Old Testament—especially the narratives about the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, and the conquest of the Promised Land—and use them to create their own narratives about God’s love and mercy toward Israel.

While the prophet Ezekiel could also use the historical review to explain God’s coming wrath upon the nation of Judah (Ezek 20:5–29), the longest and most complete historical review in the Old Testament is found in the prayer of the Judeans led by the Levites in Nehemiah 9:6–37. Here, as the Judeans review God’s historical acts, they are led to confess their sinfulness, admit that God’s just wrath had befallen them, and plead for his continued mercy, knowing that in past history he was patient and merciful with their ancestors. The

largely chronological arrangement of the historical review points to the theological import of God's acting in history in specific times and places. The God of Israel is a God who is simultaneously transcendent—above and beyond all time and space (1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chr 2:6; 6:18)—and immanent, personally present and involved with his people in time and space.

The historical review also has reflections in the New Testament. Stephen reviews Israel's history immediately before his martyrdom (Acts 7:2–53). His review is arranged chronologically and peppered with chronological details from the life of Moses (Acts 7:20, 23, 30, 36). Paul also employs historical narrative. For Paul this was a way to relay the Gospel. In his case, the historical narrative is autobiographical (Acts 22:3–21; 26:9–23). The writer to the Hebrews also continued in this tradition in his discourse on faith (Heb 11:1–40). While faith may be “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), it is firmly rooted in the acts of God in history in the lives of his saints—things that were seen and served as a foretaste of unseen things to come. These acts of God assure us that “God has provided something better for us” (Heb 11:40).

The authors of the narratives of the Old and New Testaments firmly rooted their texts in history by including chronological notices that enable us to locate these events in past time. These notices not only serve as anchors in time for the narratives of God's work, but they also invite us to investigate the chronology of biblical events, thereby reassuring us of God's intimate involvement with our own lives. In this way we derive comfort in the knowledge that “all things [including the events of our times] work together for good to them who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

GOD'S CONTROL OF TIME AND EVENTS

Finally, the Bible promises us that God is in control of time and the events that take place within it. That control is demonstrated in the

Scriptures by the way he brought about the events of the past at particular times as indicated by chronological markers contained in the biblical text itself. He worked within history to redeem fallen humankind, and no power or authority could thwart his design. Events which may seem at times to careen out of control are never out of his control. All things happen in his time, as seen especially in his sending his Son into the world at the proper time, or as Saint Paul reminds us “while we were still weak, at the right time (*κατὰ καιρὸν*) Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6).

If God did all this, then we can rest assured that our times are in his hands (Ps 31:15). This assurance underscores much of what the Scriptures tell us about time in this life:³

On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. (Ps 62:7–8)

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Ps 90:12)

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need

³ Translations below are from the English Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, throughout this book translations are the author’s own.

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them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt 6:25–33)

For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 6:2)

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way. (2 Thess 3:16)

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” (Jas 4:13–15)

Because God has worked and continues to work in human history, the study of biblical chronology is not a specialists’ sidelight that holds little consequence for the Christian’s life. It is, instead, integral to the Christian faith. That is why it has occupied Christians from Eusebius of Caesarea through Bishop Ussher and down to the present day.

APPENDIX

DATED AND DATABLE PROPHECIES

This is a list of prophecies in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament that can reasonably be dated to a specific year, month or day. Beginning with the prophets of the last years of Judah a complete accounting by chapter is given for each except Malachi whose work is clearly post-exilic, but who supplies no chronological notices for his prophecies.

JUDGES

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Date</i>
4:4-9	Deborah	1217 BC
6:7-10	Anonymous	1172 BC

SAMUEL AND CHRONICLES

<i>Samuel</i>	<i>Chronicles</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Date</i>
1 Sam 10:1-8		Samuel	c. 1049 BC
2 Sam 7:1-17	1 Chr 17:1-15	Nathan	c. 975 BC
2 Sam 12:1-15		Nathan	c. Summer 997 BC

KINGS AND CHRONICLES

<i>Kings</i>	<i>Chronicles</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Date</i>
	2 Chr 12:5-8	Shemaiah	Tishri 927-Elul 926 BC
	2 Chr 15:1-7	Azariah	Late 897 BC
	2 Chr 16:7-10	Hanani	Tishri 896-Elul 895 BC
1 Kgs 22:13-28	2 Chr 18:12-27	Micaiah	Nisan-Tishri 853 BC
	2 Chr 19:1-3	Jehu	Nisan 853-Elul 853 BC
1 Kgs 22:48-49	2 Chr 20:35-37	Eliezer	Late 853-Early 852 BC
2 Kgs 1:2-17		Elijah	Nisan-Tishri 852 BC
2 Kgs 2:1-24		Elijah	Nisan-Tishri 852 BC
	2 Chr 24:20-22	Zechariah	Late 797-Early 796 BC
2 Kgs 20:1-11	2 Chr 32:24	Isaiah	Tishri 702-Elul 701 BC
2 Kgs 20:12-19	2 Chr 32:31	Isaiah	Tishri 702-Elul 701 BC
2 Kgs 22:14-20	2 Chr 34:19-28	Huldah	Tishri 623-Nisan 622 BC

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GLOSSARY

- Ab**—Fifth month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; began in late July or early August each year.
- Accession Year**—The year in which a king assumed the throne.
- Accession Year Reckoning**—Method of numbering a king's years that does not count his first partial (accession) year.
- Adar**—Twelfth month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; began in late February or early March each year.
- Adar II**—Occasional intercalated (thirteenth) month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; added in some years to align the first month of the following year with the beginning of spring.
- Aviv**—First month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; began in late March or early April each year; after the Babylonian exile called *Nisan*.
- Bul**—Eighth month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; began in late October or early November each year; after the Babylonian exile called *Marcheshvan* or *Heshvan*.
- Coregency**—A period when a king reigns with his son also reigning as king; coregencies were used to ensure an orderly transition of the throne.
- Elul**—Sixth month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; began in late August or early September each year.
- Ethanim**—Seventh month in the Israelite solilunar calendar; began in late September or early October each year; after the Babylonian exile called *Tishri*.
- Gregorian calendar**—Modern calendar in use today; originally decreed by Pope Gregory XIII for use starting in 1582; a modification of the Julian calendar that differs from it only in that intercalary days are not added to the calendar in years that are divisible by 100 but not divisible by 400.

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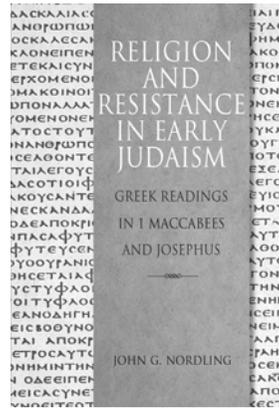
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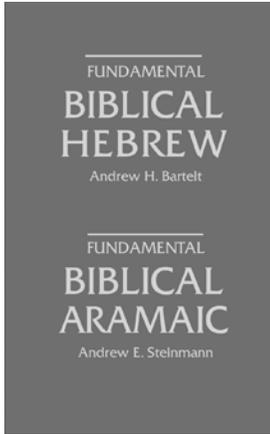


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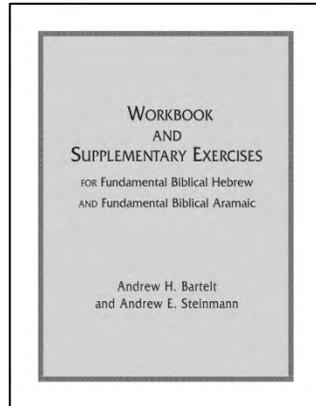
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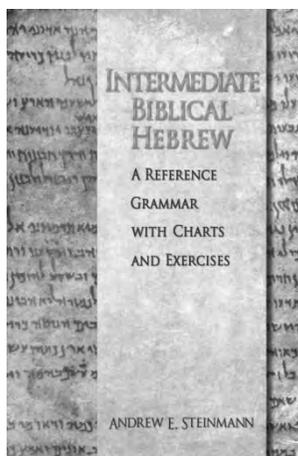
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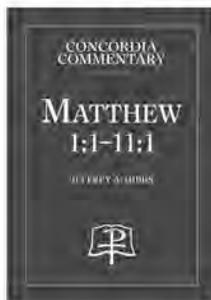
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