

From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology by Andrew E. Steinmann. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011, xxxviii + 421 pp., US\$ 79.99, cloth.

Steinmann is a Lutheran pastor and currently serves as Professor of Theology and Hebrew at Concordia University, Chicago. With this volume, the author compiles a chronological guide for the timespan between the lives of Abraham and Paul, both of whom represent the outer fringes of biblical history that can be dated easily, without specialization in ANE historical studies.

Chapters 1 and 2 set the stage by explaining Time and the Christian Faith, and Time in the Ancient World. Chapter 3 is Establishing Benchmarks for OT Chronology. The in-depth chronological survey of biblical figures and biblical history then begins by discussing Israel's Patriarchs (Chapter 4); Moses (Chapter 5); The Era of Joshua and the Judges (Chapter 6); Saul, David, and Solomon (Chapter 7); The Divided Monarchy (Chapter 8); The Babylonian Exile and the Persian Period (Chapter 9); the period Between the Testaments (Chapter 10); Jesus' Birth (Chapter 11) and Ministry (Chapter 12); Holy Week, the Crucifixion, and Resurrection (Chapter 13); and finally, The Church: From Pentecost to the End of Paul's Ministry (Chapter 14).

The preface contains vital disclaimers, which ensure that readers do not approach the volume with unrealistic expectations. For example, Steinmann notes that his volume does not seek to date the composition of each biblical book, that he has no intention of debating the proposed chronological schemes of other chronographers, and that his book contains no exhaustive list of extra-biblical historical events designed to shed light on biblical history (xxvi).

Steinmann's preface also speaks about the apologetic aspect of such historical study, noting that many biblical scholars doubt the historicity of much of the Bible (xxvii). Yet Steinmann fails to mention that divine co-authorship of the Bible is the driving force behind this optimism, which is the fundamental antidote to the poison of liberal scholarship's false charges and their unstated agenda to discredit the historicity of the biblical text.

Steinmann's volume contains numerous strengths. First, as part of Steinmann's need to defend the value and indispensability of chronological study, he utters the powerful statement, "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" (3, italics his). This statement, which attests to the great value of chronological study, fuels the credibility of his entire venture.

Second, Steinmann (53) perceptively notes that "some historical insights will remain obscured until the chronology of the period under discussion is determined properly." This caution especially rings true given that so many archaeologists, biblical scholars, and (subsequently) Church leaders have championed the late-exodus view (13th century BC, instead of the exegetically sound choice of the 15th century BC) and merely have ignored or reinterpreted biblical data to fit the commonly held opinion that the Israelites could not have resided in Canaan during the 15th or 14th century BC.

Third, Steinmann (Chapter 3) provides conclusive evidence both for dating Solomon's reign to the middle of the 10th century BC, and for establishing 1446 BC as the conclusive date for the exodus. Fourth, Steinmann (91) offers an excellent scheme for a precise chronology of the period of the Hebrew judges, showing truly innovative thought. Fifth, Steinmann (224) offers a strong case for the death of Herod the Great in 1 BC, which in turn dates Christ's birth to 2 or 3 BC, a refreshing break from the commonly held conviction that Herod undoubtedly died in 4 BC.

Steinmann's work also displays a number of weaknesses. First, he suggests that the Merneptah Stele "dates to 1211 or 1210 BC" (55), though a careful chronological scheme from the reigns of Amenhotep I through the 13th century BC yields a date of 1219 BC as far more plausible. Second, he suggests that Kamose, the penultimate king of Egypt's Dynasty 17, ruled until 1540 BC (81), that his successor, Ahmose, ruled from 1539–1515 BC (81), that Moses was born during the reign of Ahmose (82), and that Moses' killing of the Egyptian (Exod 2:12) transpired during the reign of Thutmose I (82). However, all of these assertions are either inaccurate or entirely impossible (Petrovich 2016: 234).

Third, Steinmann (69) states that in Gal 3:17, Paul probably considered Jacob's entry into Egypt as the ratification of the Abrahamic covenant. The entry into Egypt itself, however, is no ratifying act (Petrovich: forthcoming). Fourth, Steinmann (74, 76) misdates the end of the seven years of plenty in Egypt to 1879 BC, when 1878 BC is more accurate. Fifth, he (260ff.) correctly identifies the length of Jesus' ministry to 3+ years in length, but there is no interaction with—or even any reference to—all of the detailed and enriching chronological harmonies of the gospels, such as those of Robert L. Thomas, A. T. Robertson, et al. Sixth, there are repetitive grammatical mistakes and improper uses of punctuation, which on occasion renders Steinmann's text as different than his intended meaning.

Finally, in his discussion on astronomy and the date of Jesus' crucifixion, Steinmann attempts to verify one of the three natural phenomena—the other two being darkness and earthquake—that occurred at the time of the crucifixion (285), namely "the moon turning to blood." He cites Acts 2, but this passage speaks only of the Second Advent, not the crucifixion. Therefore, his example of a partial lunar eclipse on April 3, AD 33 as possibly instigating a reddening effect on the moon's appearance at the time of the crucifixion has no illuminating effect or instructional value.

If a future edition is offered, the present writer suggests that far better editing be done, and that more expert counsel in Egyptian history, chronology, and synchronisms be sought, just as such expert help (from Rodger Young) benefitted Steinmann's chronology of the Hebrew kings and NT history. Yet in whole, the author offers a fantastic addition to the field of biblical chronology, one that features groundbreaking ideas and boasts far greater readability than any previous effort. This volume, easily the best chronological work available for biblical history, is indispensable for biblical studies and should stimulate much future scholarship. This volume is a must for any serious student of the Bible.

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Works Cited:

Douglas Petrovich, *The World's Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2016).

Douglas Petrovich, "Determining the Exact Length of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt" (forthcoming).

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