

**Assyrian, Babylonian and
Egyptian Chronology
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The following demonstrates the serious problems with the usually accepted reliance and confidence regarding chronological positions as they relate to the dating of Biblical events including the destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Seventy Years Desolation, by demonstrating the *paradigm used* to interpret the data is the crux of the situation.

Pages 279, 280 and 281 in part:

“Several times we have referred to the reign of Hezekiah of Judah. Second Kings 18:9 says that Shalmaneser (V) besieged Samaria in year 4 of Hezekiah, and 18:13 says that Sennacherib conquered the cities of Judah in year 14 of Hezekiah. There are 10 years between these two events, but according to the Assyrian chronology, Sargon II reigned 17 years between Shalmaneser V and Sennacherib, so either the biblical or the Assyrian chronology is wrong. Here we have to make a choice, and what is the primary basis for our choice? The paradigm to which we subscribe! Most of the scientific community who work with ancient history and chronology build on the paradigm that the Neo-Assyrian chronology is unimpeachable, therefore they reject the statements of 2 Kings chapter 18. Other persons build on the paradigm that the Bible is unimpeachable, and therefore they reject the Neo-Assyrian chronology of Shalmaneser V, Sargon II, and Sennacherib.

Often this situation has been described as faith versus science, because there is supposed to be an overwhelming amount of evidence in favor of the Neo-Assyrian chronology. True, there are eponym lists and king lists from the Canonic period that seem to confirm each other, and the Babylonian chronicles and kings lists to a great extent confirm their synchronisms between the Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian kings. And there are hundreds of cuneiform tablets whose data fit excellently into the chronological scheme based on the data mentioned. But a chain is not stronger than its weakest link. In connection with Assyria, the whole chronology stand or falls with one single datum: that the solar eclipses of June 15, 763 BCE, is the eclipse that is mentioned in the eponymy of Bur-Sagale. And interestingly, if most of the modern relative Neo-Assyrian chronology is correct, one single change – the choice of an eclipse other than the one in 763 – could push the whole line of Neo-Assyrian kings 25-40 years back in time, with the result that most of the 11 synchronisms between Judean/Israelite and Assyrian/Babylonian kings would fit. Therefore, the basic issue is not science versus faith, but rather faith versus faith. Do we believe that the solar eclipse of 763 is the one reported in the eponymy of Bur-Sagale, or do we believe in the chronology of 2 Kings?

We find exactly the same situation in connection with the Neo-Babylonian chronology. The issue is the same: In what do we believe? What is our paradigm? Before a single cuneiform tablet was unearthed in the nineteenth century, the paradigm was created: The list of Babylonian and Persian kings made by the second century CE astronomer Claudius Ptolemy was

accepted as absolutely correct, and the cuneiform tablets with chronological contents were viewed in the light of this list. Thus, the circular situation existed where the tablets were interpreted in the light of Ptolemy's list and Ptolemy's list was thought to be confirmed by the cuneiform tablets. Some scholars realized that this was an unhealthy situation and they drew a sigh of relief in 1915 when a thorough study of the astronomical diary VAT 4956 was published by Neugebauer and Weidner. Now Ptolemy's chronology seemed to have been established once and for all. After this, a handful of other astronomical tablets have been published, and these are thought to confirm Ptolemy's chronology as well.

However, there is a methodological problem in connection with VAT 4956, which is amply illustrated by the words of Oelsner. Around 1970, he was asked to collate a particular sign on a tablet at his museum, and he confirmed that "there is no doubt that the sign should be read *mu* [year]". But thirty years later after a new collation he changed his mind; the sign was not *mu*, he said, and he attributed the reason for his rejecting of his old reading to the fact that he now had "more experience." This illustrates how modern readers of chronological works are at the mercy of the interpretations of those who have access to particular cuneiform tablets and who are able to read them. The tablets are spread around in libraries and museums in North America, Europe, and the Middle East, and writers of chronology are not able to personally study many tablets themselves, so they must depend on the readings of others, who have their own paradigms and horizon of understanding. Once a transliteration and translation of a tablet and its individual signs is published, it stands until someone else makes a new collation and either confirms or rejects the old readings.

As for VAT 4956, a study of 60 pages was published in 1915, and since then no critical study of the diary has been published. Such a study has been undertaken in connection with the writings of this book, and the conclusion is that VAT 4956 has been seriously weakened as the astronomical pillar that guarantees the veracity of the traditional Neo-Babylon chronology. The tablet appears to have been written in one of the last centuries BCE, but there is evidence that someone, probably in modern times, has tampered with some of the signs on its reverse side. The nature of the signs in line 1 on the obverse side, which connects the celestial observations with year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar, *may* indicate that someone erased parts of them and wrote something else on top of them. The shape of the signs "year 38" on the upper edge *could possibly* indicate that they were incised on the tablet in modern times. But, of course, this is not certain.

A study of the relationship between lunar and planetary positions on the tablet and ominous positions that are lacking, suggest that the lunar positions and the planetary positions do not have any relations to one another, and that the scribes copied the lunar positions from one table and the planetary positions from other tablets, or that they calculated the planetary points. The lunar positions perfectly fit the year 588/87, but only 50% perfectly fit the year 568/67. The planetary position do not fit 588/87 at all, but 20% possibly fit 568/67. However, some of the other planetary position being incorrect, are not very far from being correct, and this suggests that all the planetary position are backward calculations rather than observations. There are six possibilities for the application of VAT 4956:

- 0 The tablet contains observations of the moon and the planets made in 568/67, and this is year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar II.
- 0 The tablet contains observations of the moon and the planets made in 568/67, but the year designations "37" and "38" were added in modern times.
- 0 The tablet contains lunar positions from 588/87 and a few planet positions from 568/67 or another year. The 588/87 is year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar II.
- 0 The tablet contains lunar positions from 588/87 and the planetary positions are backward calculations The year 588/87 is year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar II.
- 0 The tablet contains lunar positions from 588/87 and a few planet positions from 568/67 or another years, but the year designations "37" and "38" were added in modern times.
- 0 The tablet was made in modern times from an ancient original, and the numbers related to Nebuchadnezzar were added.

The above points indicate that the traditional absolute chronology of the Neo-Babylonian Empire can be seriously questioned. Seven other astronomical tablets relating to the Neo-Babylonian chronology were discussed, but none can be used to make an absolute chronology because of the possibility of different interpretations of their information."

End.

The rear cover the book reads in part:

"The book presents new chronological schemes for the Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian empires.

The conclusion drawn on the basis of the study of thousands of cuneiform tablets is that the length of the Neo-Babylonian Empire must be expanded by twenty years. This means that the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar II is 626 and not 605 BCE, as is almost universally believed. The Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian empires are pushed back by twenty years as well.

As a basis for the aforementioned conclusions the following subjects are discussed:

1. The lack of cuneiform evidence in favor of the traditional Neo-Babylonian chronology.
2. Ninety dated business tablets contradict the traditional Neo-Babylonian chronology.
3. The lunar positions of VAT 4956 corroborate a twenty-year expansion of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
4. The Neo-Assyrian Empire cannot be dated by astronomical tablets.
5. There are errors in the Neo-Assyrian king lists and Eponym list.
6. The Egyptian kingdoms cannot be dated by astronomical documents.
7. Different astronomical tablets claimed to confirm the traditional Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian chronologies are discussed."

End.